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Onboarding

An investigation of onboarding processes in a
Swedish grocery store.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to examine and analyse the department head's perspective on the onboarding process, as well as the new employees' experience of the onboarding process at a well-established Swedish grocery store. A semi-structured interview, as well as semi-structured focus group interviews were completed in order to gain an understanding of the onboarding process within the organisation. An analysis of the result presents an understanding of the complexities of the onboarding process that the organisation undergoes in comparison to three well-established models on the subject. The models were also used to form the focus group questions and also helped in determining seven themes to be analysed. The organisation garners a complex onboarding process that encompasses both formal and informal processes that aid the newcomer's assimilation into the organisation. Despite this, there are areas for improvement. Furthermore, despite a functioning onboarding process, different agents have different understandings of when the onboarding process starts.

Key Words

Onboarding, Socialisation agents, Organisational socialisation

Abbreviations

DH - Department heads

NR - New recruit

OB - Onboarding

OBP - Onboarding process

OS - Organisational socialisation

SA - Socialisation agent

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1. Introduction

Paperwork, checklists, registration and administration. Modern organisational recruitment procedures are usually littered with these formal as well as informal processes that must be tackled before one can 'assimilate' into the workforce. It's not unusual to find an array of tasks at one's disposal when joining a new organisation. As such, one must learn to navigate the new intranet, how to fill up paper into the copy machine or how to deal with that one particular client who isn't very nice.

In Sweden, an employer is expected to begin the introduction of a new employee into the organisation as early as possible (AFS 2001:1). This introduction should include a general understanding of their own tasks as well as their relation to others. It should detail how the organisation works, what risks are involved and a description of the work environment (Ibid). The introduction of a new employee is also often referred to as 'onboarding'.

The term 'onboarding' was coined in the 70's but has grown in popularity during the 90's up until now. OB or OS is more important now than ever; for example, in 2005 about 25% of the US population was in some sort of OS or OB effort and on average people alternated between jobs 10.2 times in a 20-year period (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). A successful OBP is not only valuable for the employee. By gaining inside knowledge and learning the ins and outs of the workplace, the organization benefits in both productivity and efficiency. Most importantly, employees that aren't organisationally socialised depart from the organisation faster leading to a higher turnover rate and unnecessary costs of both money and time for the organization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). Another key issue regarding failed onboarding is "role clarity", starting a new job in an unfamiliar environment can be disorienting for a new employee and the expectations from the organization may seem unclear. Therefore, communicating what an organization expects from the employee is crucial as well as having a mutual understanding of each other's needs so that both may prosper.

The inspiration of this study came from a generalized interest of existing research of OB and its various effects and applications within organisations. Having delved into the theoretical realm of this phenomenon, Klein, Polin and Sutton (2015) became one of the main inspirations. As they mention in their report, *Specific Onboarding Practices for The Socialisation of New Employees*, "half of the most commonly offered specific OBPs significantly less often than their organization reported offering them" (Klein, Polin & Sutton, 2015, p. 279). It was interesting to note that despite certain organisations believing that they were establishing solid methods of both formal and informal OBPs, they still may not have been getting through to the new employee in a way that might better benefit them.

Furthermore, it became apparent that one of the central aspects of OBPs are the SAs. While all department heads are indeed SAs, all SAs aren't department heads.

Weighing negative drawbacks and possible opportunities that come with an unsuccessful and successful OBPs outlines the importance for modern organizations to have an effective OBP to establish success in the competitive marketplace. This aspect can be observed in any organisation worldwide, no matter the size. From the global top 100 companies to self-employed organisations in the villages of Sweden. One could ask what steps a grocery store in Sweden takes in terms of OB and OS to ensure their success as an employer and a business. Furthermore, what does the literature suggest being the best practices and methods of an efficient and successful onboarding practice?

2. Aim

The aim of this study is to examine and analyse the DH's perspective, as well as the NR's experience of the OBP at a well-established Swedish grocery store.

3. Background

The turnover rate for staff within food commerce in Sweden today is rather high. Around 30% of employees within the industry leave every year. Furthermore, 13% of staff plan to leave the current job they occupy for another within the same industry, while 31% claim that they plan to leave the industry within the near future all together (Bergren, 2018). This stands in contrast with the general labour market where the average number of the working population who are switching jobs, between 1988-2012 has been around 10,3% (Sannolikheten att byta jobb, SCB, 2016). This difference could be due to the high number of part-time and temporary posts offered in the food commerce industry. It's no secret that recruitment processes, hires and absences cost organisations large sums of money each year. Thus, varying proactive measures that prevent high turnover rates should be of high priority within organisations. Bauer (2010) revises for how OBPs that are effective have both short-term and long-term benefits for both the employee and the organisation. Once employees are effectively assimilated into the organisation, they display higher retention rates, job satisfaction and can receive better customer satisfaction amongst other positive benefits (Bauer, 2010). That being said, most organisations have an inadequate OBP. According to Aberdeen (2011), only 20% of global organisations can define their OBP as 'Best-in-class'. As such, it is interesting that organisations in general don't seem to invest in proper onboarding procedures. Similarly, Caldwell and Peters (2018) review a ten-step model for successful OB, citing several of the most established names within onboarding research, and presenting valuable aspects of the process that need to be attained and maintained by organisations. Regardless of the model, most researchers agree that the OBP starts from the first meeting during the recruitment process. As such, most recommend establishing an immediate connection to the new employee from the start. Models may differ to some extent, but nearly all present the need for a 'buddy' or a 'mentor' that accompanies and supports the new employee. (Bauer, 2010., Caldwell & Peters, 2018). The literature on the subject often regard the 'buddy'

and ‘mentor’ terms as vital aspects of the socialisation process that occurs during OB. First and foremost, however, one must understand OBP itself, in order to define OS.

One can define the OBP in many ways depending on many factors. However, for the sake of this study it became necessary to dig deeper down into a solid definition of the process which this paper centres around. As such, one of the most clear and widespread definitions that was decided upon was Klein and Polin’s (2012), “Formal and informal practices, programs, and policies enacted or engaged in by an organization or its agents to facilitate newcomer adjustment” (Klein & Polin, 2012, p. 268). This particular definition was chosen since it includes the SAs as a defining entity which affects the new employee during the onboarding, which reflects the efforts of this study.

SAs may be described as “an individual who actively participates and has influence over what kind of knowledge, skill sets, attitudes and values that are handed over to the new recruits” (Nilsson, Wallo, Rönnqvist & Davidson, 2018, p. 80).

SAs play a critical role in not only organisational OB but the socialisation process in and of itself. OS may be defined as the “Socialisation of adults that occurs after someone has been recruited into an organisation” (Nilsson, Wallo, Rönnqvist & Davidson, 2018, p. 74). It’s important here, to recognize the limitations with this definition. While it does describe the term, it doesn’t explicitly state that it entails a mutual exchange from both the new recruits and the SA. While this study pertains to investigate the differences in execution and expectation of the onboarding process, it is important to note that socialisation isn’t strictly up to the SA within the organisation. Studies have shown that the individuals being recruited also play an active role in the socialisation process (Ashforth, Sluss & Harrison, 2007). Furthermore, while the definition states that socialisation occurs *after* the recruitment process, one can argue that evidence suggests differently. According to Scholarios, Lockyer and Johnsson (2003), socialisation occurs in different aspects within an organisation and the recruitment process is no exception. While varying organisations have different views on when OB starts, anticipatory socialisation seems to occur regardless of this. Thus, the individual becomes invested within the organisation even before the first day on the job by entering a sort of pre-entry socialisation during the application process (Scholarios, Lockyer & Johnsson, 2003).

The implications of these previous studies, while varied slightly in their approach and results, seem to generalise an understanding of OB as a necessity for organisations in order to develop low retention rates, as well as profitable hires. It becomes rather relevant then, to determine whether the OBP match the experiences of the new employees. In order to do so, one must first determine what kind of OBP are occurring within the organisation. Furthermore, most models state the use of both informal and formal processes as a necessity, claiming that organisational OB should be tailored to the individual as much as possible (Bauer, 2010., Caldwell & Peters, 2018). Since OB is often classified as either formal or informal in the literature above, it becomes relevant to properly revise for their implications in this study as well.

3.1 Formal vs Informal

During OB it is typical to come across the terms ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ processes. These two terms are generally referring to the different types of actions an organisation may invest in when taking on a new employee.

It became necessary to define the two terms as they become integral parts of not only the investigating process but also throughout the analysis of the results as well. As such, the definition that most closely align itself to this study and its results was that of Klein, Polin and Sutton (2015) which states that, “formal onboarding processes are defined as pre-planned, required and occurring for all new-hires” (Klein, Polin & Sutton, p. 268, 2015).

In turn, informal processes are also defined by Klein, Polin and Sutton (2015) as “Voluntary and spontaneous activities” (Klein, et al., p.268, 2015, as cited by Van Maanen & Schein, p. 44, 1979).

The general difference between the two is that formal processes are planned out in advance, and often times generalised towards all employees, whilst informal processes are not planned. Even though formal processes may be relatively time consuming, the results of insufficient OB can be detrimental. Organisations who wish to increase the productivity with their new employees, as well as reducing their first-year turnover rate can begin doing this by implementing an effective OB system (Aberdeen, 2014). Studies have provided evidence for both informal and formal processes being not only effective for OB but also necessary in order to ensure the organisation getting the most out of their personnel (Field & Coetzer, 2011). Furthermore, the more practiced and in place the OB strategy is, the more socialisation seems to occur (Klein et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, not every organisation views this process as something vital. Aberdeen (2014) found that only 32% of companies have formal OBP. This is only reiterated by the fact that most organisations spend a lot of time, resources and money on complex recruitment processes, and yet they don’t begin their OBP until day one on the job. As Aberdeen (2014) revises, Best-in-class companies are 35% more likely to engage their new employee and begin their OBP prior to day one. As a result, Best-in-Class organisations have a significantly more reduced first-year turnover rate than those who underperform. (Aberdeen, 2014) Furthermore, organisations who have invested in thorough OBP are more likely to see their new employee hit their yearly target (Aberdeen, 2011).

4. Models

In this section the models that have been chosen for this paper will be presented and accounted for. The three models will shape the direction of the paper and give a guiding framework in deciding what aspects of OB and OBP to look for during the semi structured interview and focus group interviews.

4.1 Aberdeen “Best-in-Class”

Best-in-class performance is described as an aggregate of the different scores that the researchers have set for organizations regarding OB success. The top 20% of 282 organisations were defined as “Best-in-class”. 50% was described as “Industry average” and 30% was described as “Laggard”

Aberdeen (2011) present their analysis through what they call the “Best-in-class PACE model. PACE stands for Pressure, Actions, Capabilities and Enablers. Simply put, best-in-class organisations orient themselves better within the pressures to meet the company's growth objectives. Their actions are reflected by quantitatively measuring the effectiveness of their OBP and actively involve hiring managers and stakeholders into the OBP. In terms of capabilities, the onboarding process is centralized. Furthermore, accountability for a successful OBP is given to all stakeholders not just on day one, but within the next 90 days. Lastly, enablers entail automated tools that help the new employee adjust and meet the milestones necessary for organisational growth. Such tools include development programs, new employee forms, automated task assignments etc.

Not only are job retention and job commitment improved through a successful OBP, but customer satisfaction increased by 12% in the best-in-class category. A key element of success behind all of the positive aspects of best-in-class OB seems to be standardisation. A formalised and standardised process is more commonly cited by both laggards and Industry average, however in the best-in-class organizations it is 45% and 5% respectively, more likely to actually happen during the OBP instead of only being written in a document. Best-in-class organizations also not only formalise and standardise processes, but they shape and mould them to local offices and tailor the process to their needs. One of the most permeating results that is reflected in all best-in-class organisations is the accountability they place on the stakeholders during the onboarding process. Not only are the goals and targets that need to be met clearly expressed, but the stakeholders involved take accountability for the individual's assimilation and acclimation into the culture. As such, the new employee is not only more likely to remain within the organisation, but also more likely to hit their performance milestones within 12 months of joining the company.

4.2 Bauer “The four C’s”

One of the more well-known models of OB is presented by Bauer (2010) and is often referred to as the “four C’s”. The four C’s stand for Compliance, Clarification, Culture and Connection and can be viewed somewhat as building blocks of the OBP. The further along the scale of the four C’s one goes, the more complex the OBP becomes.

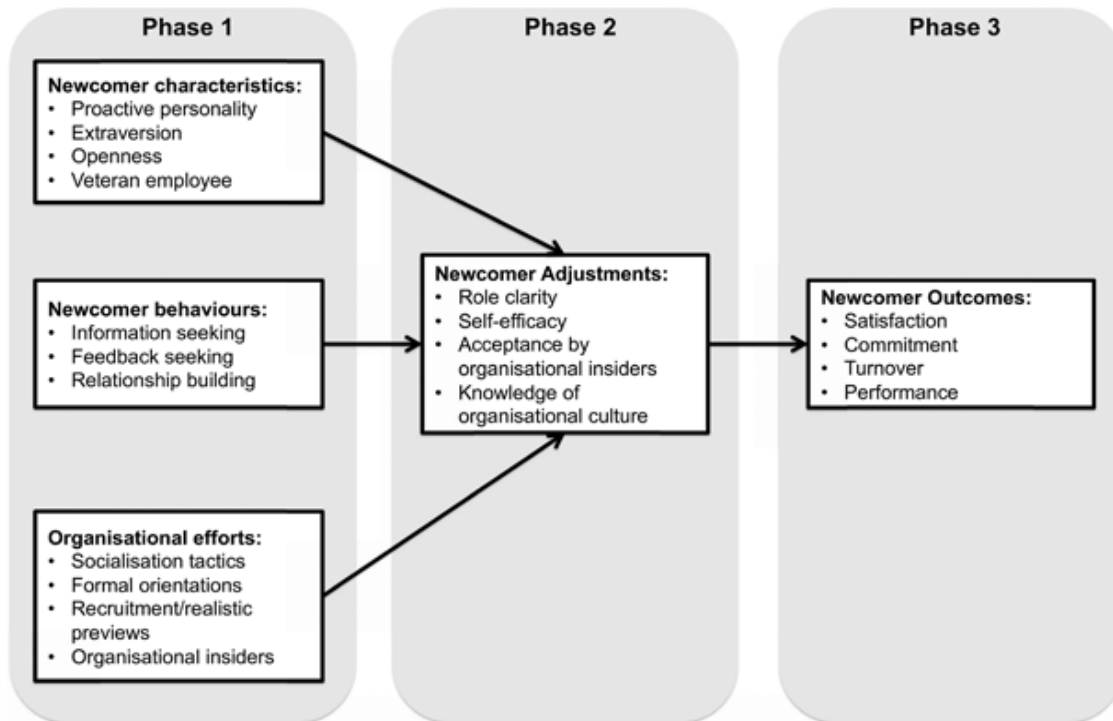
The first C, Compliance, represents a base knowledge of the organisation such as rules and regulations. It is mostly consistent with formal processes and can often be seen as a checklist that needs to be crossed off. As such, nearly every organisation will naturally align with the first C of the model as an OBP.

Clarification entails a general understanding of the organisation and the role the individual plays within it. It is thus an intentional effort on, preferably HR's part, to integrate the individual within the organisation in a manner that allows the new employee to place value on themselves. Culture is the third building block of OB within Bauer's (2010) model. Culture refers to the process of implementing new employees into the norms and values that exist within the organisation. Such processes may be both informal and formal. For the purpose of this study, establishing a solid definition of culture became of essence. The most cited definition of organisational culture is arguably Schein (1985), "A pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way you perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (Schein, 1985, p. 2).

Connection is the last of the C's and it pertains to the individual's establishment of new relationships and informant networks. At this level, the OBP includes not only rules and regulations, an understanding of one's role, norms and values, but also highlights the individual's connections to others within the same organisation on every level.

Despite Bauer's (2010) model being one of the most recited works in terms of literature regarding OB, it is important to note that it has its own limitations too. Most of the studies conducted with this model in mind, look at large, global organisations and 'white collar' industries. This entails that while the model can be generalised to a certain degree, it cannot be applied in the same manner across every type of industry. Furthermore, the model is as living and developing as any organisational culture is. This is only reiterated by the fact that Bauer herself has continued to develop the model to encompass different perspectives of the OBP.

4.3 Socialization model, Bauer & Erdogan



(Taken from Bauer, T. N., & Erdogan, B. (2011). *Organizational socialization: The effective onboarding of new employees.*)

To understand the organizational socialization process, Bauer & Erdogan (2011) approached the subject from three different perspectives; New employee characteristics, New employee behaviours and finally Organizational efforts. These three categories of the organizational socialization process have a significant impact on the outcome of the OB effort and can determine to which extent the OBP is successful. These categories are further divided into subcategories such as ‘proactive personality’, ‘extraversion’ and ‘openness’ under the ‘New employee characteristics’ category, ‘information seeking’, ‘feedback seeking’ and ‘relationship building’ under ‘New employee behaviours’ and ‘socialization tactics’, ‘formal orientations’ and ‘organizational insiders’ under the category of ‘Organizational efforts’.

A new employee's characteristics play a big role in the OBP and Bauer and Erdogan discuss the different subcategories of new employees and what challenges and opportunities they bring to the organisational socialisation efforts of the organisation. A person with a ‘proactive personality’ is more likely to be easily onboarded as they take proactive measures in their work life meaning that they, to a larger extent, will try to become socialized within the organization and become an effective member sooner. Research also shows that people with ‘proactive personalities’ tend to enjoy a higher job satisfaction and a clearer view of their role which is correlated to staying longer with the organisation. This may implicate that finding people with

these proactive traits is better for an organisation in terms of what resources they have to spend on a new hire. Research also shows that characteristics such as ‘openness’ and ‘extraversion’ are desirable in a new employee as it leads to an easier onboarding process where the employee takes much of the task of organizational socialization by themselves by more information seeking, feedback and reframing of negative situations into optimism for new opportunities. New employees who have changed jobs and organisations before also have an easier time with OS as they have been through similar experiences before and can draw upon these to lean on in the process.

One key “new employee behaviour” that may facilitate an easier OS process is ‘information seeking’. This type of behaviour makes it easier for the individual to adjust to their new circumstances and become a functioning member of the team faster. This type of behaviour also makes it easier for an organisation as they have to spend less resources on formal processes concerning the education of a new employee regarding the practical everyday life within the organisation. Being an information seeking employee also shows co-workers that this person is interested in learning and becoming one of them, making it more likely that they will be socialised sooner into the group. Similar to ‘information seeking’ is the behaviour of ‘feedback seeking’ where a new employee actively asks for feedback on the work, they are doing to ensure that they are living up to the expectations of the organisation. The final important behaviour of a new employee is building relationships. Studies show that 35% of new managers quit or are fired within 1.5 years of a new job and 60% of them cite a failure in acquiring effective relationships with their colleagues as the main reason for the failure. New employees who actively seek out social engagements with their co-workers can have a much easier time socialising and it may lead to both increased job satisfaction as well as performance.

This entails that the active engagement of an employee in their new role is key in determining to which extent they are successfully socialised in their new organisation. Thus, one may now investigate in which ways the organisation itself can facilitate more successful OB experiences that in turn lead to more OS employees. This perspective can be seen as transferring ‘blame’ from the organization to the employee as the organisation can blame the person for not being proactive enough. However, both the organization and the employee play a part in the OS and both bear some responsibility regarding the OBP.

4.4 Implications for this study

These three models presented have significant impact in this study. They will not only act as guides for the methodology, but also as boards upon which the results of the study may lean upon. As the methodology will present later on, the execution of this study requires three separate interviews in different formats with different objectives. The three models presented thus serve an important function regarding the interview guides, which are based on the models. The first model, otherwise known as the ‘PACE’ model (Aberdeen, 2011), became vital in understanding the results of the initial interview with the contact person within the organisation.

The second and third model are both presented by Bauer (Bauer, 2010., Bauer & Erdogan, 2011), however they serve different purposes. While the first model by Bauer (2010) became useful guidelines for the focus group interview with the DHs, it also acted as a lens through which one may categorize an OBP. The second model by Bauer and Erdogan (2011) was more invested in the internal relationships and socialisation of the OBP, and thus became useful when planning out the interview guide for the focus group interviews regarding the NRs.

Both the analysis and the discussion following the results, will utilise these three models as filters through which the obtained information may be sifted through, thus serving as a theoretical background.

From this theoretical background, seven themes were chosen in order to be used during the results and analysis later on. These seven themes included: formal processes, informal processes, culture, mentorship, attitude, onboarding and role clarity. While formal and informal processes, as well as mentorship, are mentioned as vital aspects of OB through all three models, other themes were derived from specific ones. Culture was primarily derived from Bauer's (2010) model, while attitude and role clarity were selected from Aberdeen's (2011) model. OB and role clarity was taken from the Bauer and Erdogan's (2011) model.

The reasoning for this particular methodology is to clarify the results of the study in a pedagogical and organised manner that not only individually highlights different aspects of the OBP but also maintains the theoretical validity behind the thematic choice.

5. Method

The choice to conduct qualitative semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews came about through the review of literature regarding onboarding. While quantitative studies focus on numbers, qualitative studies focus on words (Hjerm, Lindgren & Nilsson, 2019). Hjerm et al., also mention that "One can often claim that qualitative analysis focuses on meaning and connotations" (Hjerm, Lindgren & Nilsson, 2019, p. 24, *own translation*). Due to the focus of this study revolving around the perceived experience within OB, it became essential that one could uncover meaning behind the feelings or experiences that the informants were describing through the analysis.

Semi-structured interviews provide an opportunity for participants to openly express their thoughts and feelings on a topic (Hjerm, Lindgren & Nilsson, 2019). This methodology also entails that while there are predetermined questions provided for the interview, the conversation may still be extended and expanded upon depending on the direction both the participant and the interviewer take during the encounter. The positive aspect of this is that the interviewer doesn't have to limit themselves in order to get adequate answers (Hjerm, et al., 2019).

As such, semi-structured interviews were settled upon as the optimal method to uncover necessary information to set up the next stage.

The focus group interviews were chosen as a method of collecting data due to the subject of the research. Holmgren and Dahlin (2017) propose that “Focus groups, through interaction in the group, aim to draw out a multitude of ideas and viewpoints and not to force opinions” (Holmgren & Dahlin, p. 30, 2017 *own translation*). Since the aim of this study was to further investigate a specific subject (OB) and the thoughts and ideas of the people involved, focus groups were settled upon as the methodology.

Initial contact through mail was made with the organisation once the topic and aim of this study had been determined.

Upon further revision of literature and the limitations of both the organisation at hand, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic that restrained the circumstances, a plan of execution was mutually agreed upon. The semi-structured interview with the HR representative was held through Office Teams. Meanwhile, the two focus group interviews were held in person. Safety precautions such as recommended distance and face masks were used in alignment with the Covid-19 restrictions. The interviews were conducted in Swedish, therefore all quotes presented in the ‘Results and Analysis’ section have been translated and presented in English.

5.1 Stage 1 - The introduction (Interview with the HR representative)

Before the interview, personnel handbooks, PowerPoints and checklists were handed over for review. It became apparent that these formal documents were thoroughly integrated into the formal OBP. The PowerPoint and personnel handbooks are something every NR receives on the first day during the introduction with the HR Representative. Through the revision of these formal processes, an interview guide for the HR representative was settled upon. This interview guide was based on the information provided through the Aberdeen (2011) PACE-model. The primary interview lasted for 25 minutes, during which both the recruitment process as well as the OBP was revised.

5.2 Stage 1 - The focus groups (The DH’s)

The second stage of the methodology included two focus group interviews. The DH group included six of the (in total) 7 DH’s within the organisation of which three were female, and three were male.

The departments represented by the DH’s were: online, fruit and fresh produce, fish and delhi, cashier, storage and the bakery.

A prior meeting with the assigned mentor reviewed the questions that had been settled upon for the assignment. The questions for the DH’s were based on the ‘Four-C model’ by Bauer (2010) since the complexity of the OBP may be derived from the results. The focus group interview with the DH’s lasted for 47.54 minutes.

5.3 Stage 2 - The focus groups (The NR's)

The NRs were also selected by the HR representative and had been hired within the span of a year.

At first, the focus group interview was initially believed to include six NRs who had begun their journey in the organisation within the last year. However, only five were able to join, and during the day of the focus group interview, the fifth turned in sick. Thus, only four NRs were interviewed, of which all were female.

For both focus groups the samples were selected by the HR representative. This was partly due to the difficulties of piecing together a working schedule around the shifts that already existed in the workplace, but also due to the needs of the study. In terms of the sample amongst the NR's, two of them were from the online department, while one was from fish and delhi and the final one from the cashier department.

The questions for the focus group of NRs was based on Bauer & Erdogan's model (2011) since it provides more detailed descriptions of newcomer involvement in successful OBP.

The focus group interview with the NRs took place first and lasted for 32.42 minutes. It is believed that the timespan was reduced due to the missing recruits.

Prior to both of the focus group interviews, a standardized issued anonymity sheet was provided for the participants to sign. The contract provided descriptions of the purpose of the assignment, promises of total anonymity, and that they were permitted to remove themselves and their answers from the study at any time both during and after the focus group interview. Furthermore, once signed, the participant would be consenting to having read and understood the information as well as permitting the interview to be recorded and transcribed.

5.4 Coding

When deciding upon the methodology, one must also consider the method of analysing the results derived from the conducted study. Coding is a method that is most commonly used when it comes to qualitative interviews of any kind and so it became natural to use such methodology in this study as well. However, there are many different types of coding. Since the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interviews were based on previously established models within the literature, it became clear that there were defining themes within the interview guide, as well as the literature reviewed previously. Thus, the seven themes were decided upon beforehand in order to approach continuity within the two groups. As such, anything that would be of irrelevance to those seven topics would be discarded (Hjerm et al., 2019).

5.5 Ethical implications

All of the informants were given code names in order to preserve their anonymity. One ethical concern regarding this study is the fact that the HR representative, the contact person, was the one who selected the informants for the focus group interview. This could be subject to criticism

since the HR representative could select people based on political motivations. Since the original plan was to interview all DHs, however, there is no reason to assume the selection was politically motivated.

Regarding the NR focus group, the aim was to interview six NR, however only four were able to participate. This provides a rather small sample size that may provide difficulty in terms of generalising the results across the entire organisation.

6. Results and Analysis

During this section the results and analysis of both the semi-structured interview with the HR representative and the two focus groups will be presented. Since the HR representatives' responses were used to build the interview guide for the two focus group interviews, those results will be discussed first.

The results of the two focus groups will be presented and analysed in seven themes, which will then be built and developed further upon in the discussion. These themes include formal processes, informal processes, culture, mentorship, attitude, onboarding and role clarity.

6.1 The Onboarding Process

During the preliminary interview with the HR informant there were two primary focus points. The first was the recruitment process, whilst the second was the OBP. It was revealed early on that the recruitment process was created internally in a manner that suited their own organisation best. Although the grocery store brand is a part of a larger organisational network, there were no centralized processes that were required. As such, the organisation has compiled a step by step process that relies on a 'one way in' method. The informant who was interviewed carries the main function in this process. Similar to many other organisations, there are formal interviews during the recruitment process.

Interestingly enough, it is revealed that less weight is placed on an individual's education.

Instead, the 'chemistry' and 'personalities that fit into the organisations' are sought after. This is only reiterated by the fact that the informant mentions 'food interest' as one of the top priorities when looking for a potential candidate. The informant goes on to state that while certain jobs require a degree of competence, the defining factor in the recruitment process is the 'gut feeling' that is presented during the first interview. Despite this, the informant preferred to state that the onboarding process for their organisation begins during the informant's first day on the job, rather than during the recruitment process.

The HR role is also presented as a central aspect in the OBP. When new recruits are welcomed, they are all filed into a room and given a PowerPoint presentation by the HR representative. This HR representative is the only one who gives out these educated formats, which has been decided upon previously. By doing this, the organisation can guarantee that every individual within the organisation has been given the same information. Once the PowerPoint presentation has been completed, the individuals are given a personnel handbook that every NR receives during their

first day. Once the handbook has been handed out, the NRs will receive proper clothing depending on the department which they are headed to, as well as access keys and log-in information. After this step, the HR representative then hands over the NRs to the respective DHs who initiate stage two in the OBP.

The DHs are now handed the responsibility to ensure the NR is properly onboarded and socialized.

There are several formal OBPs at play here. First and foremost, the PowerPoint very concisely details the organisation from a top-to-bottom approach. The beginning slides display the organisation's place in the economic market, as well as its own revenue and sales. The PowerPoint goes on to inform the new recruits about this specific organisation's business idea, as well as their values that encompass the organisation. Once that has been presented, a general view of the leadership is shown, granting the new recruits an ability to assess their own placement within the organisation. Lastly, rules, routines and norms are presented. While the norms are heavily directed to please the customers, the rules are directed to the new recruits. These two slides reinforce the values seen previously and allows the new recruit to retain information that they are now expected to be held accountable to.

Another formal process is a personnel booklet that is handed out to NRs on the first day. This booklet contains general information about the organisation, its departments and their functions, as well as the norms, values and rules that have already been presented. The HR informant expects the NRs to read the booklet, sign the final page, and hand that booklet in after their first week on the job. This method not only reinstates what is expected of the NRs, but also presents the HR informant with an opportunity to catch up during the end of their first week to ensure everything is in order and that they are being cared for.

When asked about the freedom that is given to the department heads in the OBP, the informant described how the goal is to ensure that the NRs feel welcomed. Moreover, the organisational stance relies heavier on educating the NRs rather than expecting a performance on the first day. Since the departments vary in their routines, duties and degrees of education, the DHs are given more freedom to aid the NRs during the OBP. This method allows for the different departments to individually cater to the NRs rather than waste energy on broader formal processes that might not lead to anything later on.

The informant also describes how they do tend to work with mentors, but that achieving one single mentor for every NR is difficult. Since the schedules clash, the NRs are often 'handed over' to others when the main mentor is no longer able to be present.

One of the aspects of popular OB models that seem to be missing is the follow up on the process and how it felt for the NRs. The informant mentions that this aspect has been in the works for many years and although they want to implement a system that allows for feedback, it hasn't

been brought to action yet. As a result of this information, it was determined that this was a topic that was going to need to be focused on in future focus group interviews.

6.2 Formal processes

The NRs all state that the very first day of introduction which included a PowerPoint presentation, an employee handbook, orientation (for some), clothing and tags was a thorough and useful stage in their OBP. One informant stated that the “reception was professional” and another that it was “a really good first impression”. Only three of the four informants received an orientation of the grocery store as part of their introduction, and the one that didn’t expressed discontent over the matter.

One of the most interesting findings regarding this topic is the employee handbook that is mentioned. The informants state that they did in fact receive them with the instructions to read them and hand them back in by the end of their first week. Only three of the four informants did this, and one of the informants who did hand it in comments that they “probably have forgotten half of it now, after half a year”. This is a clear example of how an organisations OBP may not apply to the NR in the way it was intended (Klein, Polin & Sutton, 2015, p. 279).

Despite this, it may be wise to assume that while the formal information is lost, the informal behaviours, norms and values adopted through the remaining assimilation processes allows for the NRs to still act in a manner the handbook intended.

When the DHs were asked about the formal processes that take place during their stage of the OBP, they mention that they mostly leave that up to the HR representative. One of the DHs have checklists due to the complexities within that specific department and states that “we have a checklist that we go through two-three weeks after. We sit down with the person and ask them and cross it off, so that they understand what is on the checklist and the meaning behind it all”. As for the rest of the DHs, they mention that they don’t engage in formal processes in the same way. The general understanding is that the DH’s main objective is to teach and introduce the NRs through informal tactics.

The formal processes of a company such as the one studied can help a new employee with numerous things that they need to learn in their new job/role such as role clarity, values and goals (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). As can be seen in the results of the study, the organization's formal OBP is at the hands of the HR representative. The only formal process that any of the DHs use is in the cash register as this is a more structured and formal process in itself. There are legal requirements tied to the role in the cash register as opposed to the other departments. Generally, one can see in the results of the interviews regarding formal processes that there is an assumption of the processes being handled by the HR representative during the formal introduction.

6.3 Informal processes

When asked about the informal processes, the NRs all mention that they received a lot of coaching and learnt through the DHs once they were 'passed onto' them. They do mention that while they receive a general introduction to the department on the first day, they were put to work almost immediately. A consistent theme of security is continuously mentioned throughout the interview and the informants all agree that while the learning process was mostly informal, there was never any pressure to perform on the first day. One informant state that "It's just that, to know that it'll take as much time as it needs." and that "I never felt like I couldn't ask someone something". Another one says that whomever they ask never strays away from the question and thinks they're dumb. They mention that they are continuously told that they have good questions and that it's good to ask them. The importance of being secure and confident in your work is a notion that is mentioned in Bauer 'Onboarding New Employees' (2010) as one of the key factors to a successful OBP. As Bauer writes, the level to which a NR feels certain and confident in the decisions they make lead to higher motivation and better results in the work that they are doing. By making their NR feel like they can ask anything, the organization raises their confidence and makes them more self-assured and certain. This leads to better results for the organization in the end (Bauer, 2010).

The DHs confirm the NR's statements. While one informant has routine checklists, they hesitate to call it a formal process. One DH mentioned that they "show first, and then correct later". All of the DHs confirm that their preferred method of integrating and teaching the NRs is through 'learning by doing'. One informant state that "a lot of it comes as time goes by, when the situations arise". The DHs express, throughout the focus group, that the most important thing for a NR to do is ask questions. By creating an atmosphere where NRs feel like they can ask questions without fear of looking dumb or less knowledgeable the DH can successfully create the type of behaviour that they wish to see. They also confirm that in every department, the NRs are always with someone in the beginning. Whether it's the DH or another SA within the department, they aren't left on their own. They either "walk beside" someone else or someone is "standing behind them". This reiterates the intention that the "learning by doing" method is the informal practice of choice for the DHs. NRs aren't pushed to know everything from day one through some type of formal learning procedure but are instead expected to be in charge of their own learning together with a DH. However, it's not limited to just learning with the DH, the "learning by doing" culture is permeated throughout the organization. NRs do feel like they can ask any question they want as well as asking anyone who is around. There isn't a formal hierarchy where you have certain people you ask questions to, instead every team member is involved in the informal OBP of the NR. This gives the feeling of security that all of the DHs feel is of most importance to the NR. This method leads to the sensation of security when asking questions and as can be seen in the literature, leads to more successful outcomes (Bauer, 2010, p.4).

6.4 Culture

Norms and values, as detailed previously, are both integral parts of cultures. However, since the term ‘culture’ encompasses a wide perspective of organisation, communities or groups, the terms ‘norms’ and ‘values’ were used in the focus group interviews to make it clearer for the respondents regarding the topic at hand.

The NRs respond that they talked a lot about community and positivity, as well as being proud of their jobs during their introduction stage. Another recalls “It was that heart”, referring to the image on the first page of the handbook that had the organisational core values written on it inside a heart. The NR’s detail frequently throughout the interview how there is a very clear norm of saying “Hi” to everyone. Whether they are fellow colleagues or customers, the habits of saying “Hi” to everyone in passing is essential to note down. When asked whether the organisation has enforced them to behave a certain way one informant states “No, I feel like it’s been obvious, that everyone says hello and such. You just do it, even if no one has said it.” This understanding described by the NR can be traced back to the DH’s enforcement of such behaviours. As described by the “Four C’s model”, culture refers to the NRs learning and adopting the norms and values of the organisation (Bauer, 2010). Despite not being actively told to behave in a certain manner, the NRs observe and adopt these mannerisms automatically. Not only does this strengthen the interconnection between the departments, but it is a clear display of how the leadership can implement their own values and norms into a culture without needing to “educate” NRs on the matter.

Another core value that was brought up was customer focus. The informants’ detail that the organisation had informed them during their introduction that when a customer asks for help, they are to help that customer at all costs. One informant states that “We should ...preferably not point to a product, and should instead follow them out.” Another adds on, “They (the DHs) don’t see it as wasted time and would rather want us to work, they would rather we do that than ignoring the customer”. The informant continues to say that “We should follow the customer, we shouldn’t just point, and we should preferably talk to them on the way as well. We shouldn’t just walk and be quiet, we need to talk about something, anything.” The PACE model details how best-in-class organisations involve stakeholders within the OBP for a longer period of time. What is described by the NRs can be seen as value systems that direct their method of working. The stakeholders are continuously reinforcing behaviour and norms that aid in the assimilation of the NRs. Although the core values are indeed presented to the NRs during their first day on the job through formal processes, it is the informal processes that reinforce those values over the course of time (Aberdeen, 2011).

When the DHs were asked about what they assume the most prevalent norms within the organisation was, one responded that “We say hi to each other unreasonably much sometimes. As a NR one usually would feel like I’ve already said hi to you three times today. But we do...it’s probably the most important norm we have, saying hi to each other”. When inquiring why this norm was so ingrained into the organisation, one informant responded with “everyone

is important.” and everyone in the group agreed. Expanding upon this, one stated that “We work pretty departmentally, there are people I’ve never talked to, but we still say hello, that’s the way it is. You show respect by saying hi when you see them.” Since the informant mentioned that they work departmentally they were asked if this was a way to connect the different departments to one another and they all agreed that this was indeed the case. One of the most interesting responses during this line of questioning was the fact that the DHs are aware of the disconnect between the departments within the organisation. They seem to understand that the individuals within the departments will not interact with one another with exception of saying “Hi” to one another or asking each other questions. As presented earlier, the information seeking that is displayed by NRs are desirable traits when it comes to successful newcomer socialization (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). As such one can assume that by enforcing behaviours that interconnect the departments when there are gaps within their synchronicity, can be an organisational attempt to teach NRs about the “open attitude” of the organisation.

When discussing values, it became apparent that what the NRs mentioned is reflected in the DH’s responses. When asked about what the most important values were the six informants in unison chanted them “Smile, trust, order, pride”. That particular reaction points to an incredibly ingrained value system that has been decided upon by the organisational leadership and trickled down very effectively into the departments below. The ‘chanting’ that the DHs performed when asked about their values could also be seen as strings that interconnect the departments. By enforcing the same core values onto every department and converting them in the form of norms and expected behaviours, the DHs can provide a similar mindset within the NRs despite them having completely different work tasks. As such, it might provide opportunities for easier connections to be made cross-departmentally (Bauer, 2010).

This outlook is only reinforced by one informant who mentions that “I think that the values that come from above are very sound. What we have, joy and trust, that is what anyone wants.” It becomes apparent that the NR’s responses are tied very closely together with the DH’s values. One of the DHs claims that “Don’t forget to feel joy, it’s really important to have fun when we work. Make sure to not make mistakes because we have to trust each other, or something can go wrong...we have to trust each other.” The “Smile” that is mentioned reinstates the norms to say “Hi” to everyone, while the trust comes along when one is allowed to learn without performing in safe conditions and where asking questions without feeling like a burden. Order is a more ambiguous term but can be seen in the structured OBP that has a one way in approach and through the way in which one is given several books to help speed the learning process along. This centralized, one-way-in approach is also seen within best-in-class organisations (Aberdeen, 2011). Pride was, unfortunately, one of the terms that NR’s didn’t seem to mention, while the DHs did. One informant state that “Pride is something I usually mention during the departmental meetings or during a shorter meeting. That we’ve reached these numbers, for example, *we’ve* done it, feel it. *We* are a part of that.” When the DHs frequently present numbers for their subordinates it provides them with evidence that their effort matters. This can also be seen in the

statements of the NR's who mention that the organisation values the time given to the customer over the time they spend doing their supposed task. Best-in-class organisations reached a 12% increase in customer satisfaction in comparison to the industry average 5% when it comes to successful onboarding (Aberdeen, 2011). It is entirely possible that by combining core values of customer priority and successful onboarding methods, this percentage could increase at a faster rate. It became clear that the DHs truly resort to the values set in place by the organisation and depend on them to reinforce certain behaviours, norms and individual values to the NRs.

6.5 Mentorship

Mentorship and “buddy systems” are often used to facilitate the OBP and the socialisation of newcomers. When the NRs were questioned about whether they experienced mentorship one informant mentioned that new employees had someone standing behind them and helping them during their first shifts. The NR also explained that this buddy or mentor accompanied them during their lunch break and other breaks, providing even more social support. The other departments seem to have a less formal mentorship or buddy system and after NRs get their initial training and information they are sent out to do the job to the best of their abilities as illustrated by one NR who said, “And then there was the DH who showed us around the store and we quickly went through what date we are supposed to pick when it is refrigerated goods...and then we each got a cart and then it was like, go out and pick, it can take the time it takes, just so we could get a feel of it...”. This difference in methods between the departments could be due to the more formal and strict processes that are specific to dealing with money and customers private information regarding bank cards and identification. The NR for another department mentioned a different experience altogether where the NR was thrown into the job and didn't get the required training according to themselves. The NR mention how their fellow colleagues assume that the NR knows all the routines after 2 months. Meanwhile the NR feels like they actually never got the required education/training due to severe understaffing when the NR was initially employed. This highlights the need for a buddy or mentor type of role to facilitate the NRs learning process in the first critical moments of their hiring (Klein et al., 2015). Only in one department are NRs paired with a buddy/mentor while the other departments rely on the DH and the other employees as a whole instead of one assigned mentor. The NR that did experience specific mentorship mentions that they felt like it was nice to have a buddy following them around, however, none of the other NRs complained about a lack of support. This could indicate that there isn't a necessity for a *formal* or *assigned* buddy, but instead that the informal and helping nature of the employees as a whole can fill that gap.

Similarly, one of the DHs also mentioned the buddy system of their department and added that the most important aspect of this was to provide a sense of security so that they know that they always have a more experienced employee to help them if they're unsure. Pertaining to the mentorship/buddy system question, the DH responded that they felt that they had the main responsibility for the NR however they felt that the OBP was best facilitated through the help of

the other employees. “We have the main responsibility but, everyone wants to teach each other”. This was also described by the DH as a cultural thing and not some type of formal instruction from the board or upper management. Another DH emphasized getting it right from the start which in turn leads to less dependence of a buddy or mentor following the person around: “I won’t get mad if you ask the same question 10 times... I will get annoyed if you ask a question once and don't really understand and then do something wrong.”. Out of the different topics, the mentorship one becomes the strongest contestant in terms of contribution to successful onboarding. Accountability is placed onto the DHs when it comes to the NR’s assimilation into the culture. As revealed by literature on the subject, NRs are more likely to hit their performance milestones within 12 months when this is the case (Aberdeen, 2011). The mentorship doesn’t just provide security in the form of existing in order to answer questions. It also pertains to the notion that one should feel comfortable enough to make connections within the organisation and socialize. As such, the desired behaviours that the DHs foster allow for the NRs to understand the ins and outs of the social cues that have been established. It thus becomes easier to obtain connections within the organisation (Bauer, 2010) as well as maintaining them due to their own proactive personalities (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

6.6 Attitude

The questions regarding attitude were mainly focused on the NR’s perspective on the theme. Thus, when asked whether or not it’s important to take the personality into account when recruiting, one of the informants mentioned that “I don’t believe it’s solely on the HR representative to choose. Because there’s so many different personalities in the department. It’s more like, how do you say it, DH’s. Like our specific DHs create the atmosphere. Like how things should be and what is expected of us to be able to work”. Interestingly the informants seemed to agree that personality and attitude did indeed play an important part in the OBP. One informant state that “We have to have the same attitude for things to work”. Another informant details how it’s important to be open to learn and to listen. Thus, increasing the ability to learn the ins and outs of the organisation quicker.

While the NRs don’t believe the interview to be a long enough time for the HR representative to determine the entire personality, they do indeed agree that similar attitudes are needed in order to create compatibility within the departments. These results can be most intimately connected to the proactive personality that is mentioned by Bauer and Erdogan (2011). Not only does the model present a better job satisfaction and quicker socialization for the newcomers, it also mentions information seeking as a valuable aspect. The HR representative seeks out the “chemistry” while the DHs prioritise proactive personalities (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

The DHs had a similar viewpoint of the same topic; however they were more inclined to detail how the attitude was more important than the skill set. When one of the DHs mentions that “One can always learn things” another responds with “The social aspect is super important”. The latter informant also describes how “If I have someone that arrives here and begins by burning bridges,

maybe are a little bit rude or have a superiority complex, then I will not prioritise that person over the one that comes in with an openness and humility to learn.” The DH’s responses do indeed reflect the response of the HR representative that values chemistry between themselves and the applicant over their skill set. Furthermore, as the NRs mention, the DHs seem to be actively participating in ‘weeding out’ those who do not fit the culture, values and attitudes of the organisation. As such the organisation does, in part, select personality types and attitudes that fit the organisation. This could be one of the reasons as to why the NRs display such comfort being able to ask questions whenever they want. Although it is a habit that is continually reinforced, it could be a result of the proactive personality seeking out information as well (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011).

6.7 Onboarding

Out of curiosity, the topic of the OPB in and of itself became apparent. Not only were the NRs and the DHs not aware of the term, despite engaging in such a complex process, they had different stand points on where exactly the process begins.

The NRs seemed to lean towards the idea that their OBP began as soon as they got the call from the HR representative to go to the interview or even when they are applying to the job. One NR mentions that “I feel like it begins when I talked to the HR representative on the phone the first time. Or if you search where there are job openings and send it in. I sent in a spontaneous application, but if there is a job opening out then that’s important too”. The NRs not only agree with this statement but also include that they have felt “special” since they were being picked out of spontaneous applications and not for specific job openings.

The DHs, interestingly, had a different point of view. They all seemed to agree that the OBP began for the NRs when they were ‘handed over’ to their departments after the general introduction. This is most likely due to the fact that the DHs don’t participate during the interview nor the general introduction. Due to the one way in approach that the HR representative has implemented, there are barriers between the DHs and the NRs before entering the organisation. One of the DHs states that “Unfortunately we are not part of the beginning. I believe that to be unfortunate. We more or less get assigned NRs”. Most of the DH’s agree to this, with the exception of one who does indeed participate in the interview stage due to the need for formal education within the department. This is an interesting result as it is in conflict with one of the ten steps of the Caldwell & Peters study (2018) where in the ninth step they propose that an effective OBP is actively involving higher ups (in this case a DHs) in the onboarding of an NR. The paper implies that the DH can show the NR that they are tied to the organisation's values and it’s goals. However, the organisation being studied in this case handles this differently. The NRs express throughout the focus group interviews that they feel like the norms and values of the organisation are being ‘lived’ everyday, meaning that the informal OBP takes care of this need. Although the DHs wish to be a part of the interview stage, this is not the case. The results from the interview with the HR representative prove that yet another barrier is

present within the OBP. While the NRs believe the OBP begins at the first call or application and the DHs believe it begins during their 'hand over', the HR representative believes the OBP to begin the very first day during the introduction.

This means there is a difference in understanding of the OBP between the NRs and the DHs and the HR representative. Research by Klein (et. al. 2015) shows us that there is no best practice method for the timing of OBP, rather the individual organisation needs to look at their specific situation to determine the best method for them. This is done by the HR representative in the organisation studied and the choice they have made is formal OBP first (the introduction) which then transitions into the informal OBP from the relevant DH and their new colleagues.

6.8 Role Clarity

Understanding one's role was a subject that came up in both the NR and DH focus groups and was an interesting topic to present, analyse and discuss further.

Regarding role clarity two of the NRs responded that they received a basic introduction from their respective DH informing them about the basic structure of the job and the most important tasks. A third one who has worked in another grocery store for 16 years mentioned that even though they knew the basics of working in a grocery store there was still a process to learn regarding the greeting of customers which was provided during the OBP. The fourth NR mentioned that they had joined at a "crazy time" during the Covid-19 pandemic with many sick co-workers so there wasn't much time to learn about the job and the different tasks and procedures that go along with it. The NR further explained that this led to still not having a full grasp on some of the routines associated with their role. This could indicate the importance of mentorship in the early stages of the OBP in relation to role clarity later on (Caldwell & Peters, 2018).

One thing that was mentioned in the focus group interview with the DHs was a tactic that the DH used to make more sense of the work they were doing: "I always show them numbers. It becomes a little more black-and-white, what we pick eventually ends up here.... Yes, something to get a feel for it, instead of just well we're going to pick these wares. Why should I do that? Well because, it eventually ends up in these numbers."

Another DH agreed with the statement and commented that it brings a certain weight to the role and the understanding of it by the NR. The DH also mentioned the relatively big size of the organization mentioning that it is actually serious business that they are dealing with and not some small corner store. As seen in the research for this paper, role clarity has a big effect on the OBP. Bauer (2010) cites that 37 billion dollars are each year lost due to employees not understanding their role. Showing numbers and statistics regarding the businesses bottom line gives the NRs something to reflect upon when they are doing their different tasks (Bauer, 2010). As the DH explains, knowing *why* you are doing what you are doing gives a sense of clarity for the employee and shows them that their work is valued and contributes to the success of the organization. As the jobs performed by the NRs aren't generally complex in their nature, the

basic introduction into the organization done by the HR representative seems to be enough for the NR to feel as though they know what role they are taking on in their new workplace. This combined with the individual DH's approach by giving them more facts and figures regarding the economic bottom line sets the NR up with a more clear and understandable role to fill.

7. Discussion

This study aimed to look into the complexities of an OB within a Swedish grocery store from the perspective of various socialisation agents. This was mainly done through the lens of three well established models within the literature on the subject of OB. The results seemed to provide an insight into a rather different OBP than what the models presented to be the best option. Despite this, the NRs seemed to have a positive outlook on the OBP for the most part. The organisation had implemented a standardised, formal and centralised OBP within the first stage that expanded into a specific, informal and customisable OBP in the second stage. The HR representative played a vital role in the formal introduction, whilst the DHs carried out the extensive assimilation process towards the later stage of the OS for the NRs. This study uncovered the importance of mentorship and SAs within the OBP that this organisation establishes. Furthermore, the study provided important insights about the balance between formalised processes and informal processes. While both are necessary, it can be argued that certain industries require more of one than the other. This seems to be the case for this particular organisation which not only relies more on informal learning, but who continuously form and shape a culture that garners a more useful and safer OBP. As such, the security which the NRs experience in terms of learning and asking questions, becomes vital aspects for the OS that occurs as a result. It's important to note that while all organisations may differ in their needs, it seems safe to determine that this particular organisation carries out a successful OBP for their NRs regularly.

Despite the conclusive elements above, the question remains, what type of OB occurs within the organisation and what are they doing to further the OS? As seen in the various interviews, the organisation focuses a lot on the one way in and formal introduction through the HR representative. This ensures that every NR has the same introduction and welcome into their new role. Standardising this means that the organisation, through the HR representative, gains an effective, structured and replicable introduction serving as a mould which every NR goes through (Aberdeen, 2011). This is the formal and structured approach which the organisation uses for its OBP. When the NR later get assigned to their DH the informal OBP begins. The DH are themselves trained and knowledgeable about the organisation, meaning that they, without any formal measures, radiate the norms and values which make up the organisation's culture. The DH report in the focus group interview that they don't feel the need to go by any type of checklist but instead they rely on their own knowledge and expertise about their department and its needs. By developing a friendly culture where NRs feel like they can ask anyone about anything the DHs are less needed to be at the NR side every day and can instead leave the onboarding to their

trusted team members. This makes the OBP of the organisation a semi-formal process in which the organisation has devised a strategy tailored to its needs to the best of their ability. The DH shoulder a lot of the responsibility for the departments including the onboarding of NR and as they mention in the focus group interviews, the main responsibility of the OB is on them. However, they employ a tactic wherein the norms, values, goals and roles are made clear not only by them but by the entire team which works in the DH. Team members sustain this type of mentorship role together instead of individually reducing the need for such a role.

This study aimed to present and analyse the DH's perspective on the OBP, as well as the NR's experience of the OBP at a well-established Swedish grocery store. As such, the thematic results presented above have provided evidence that may be supported in relevant literature. By applying the contents of the models onto the results, one may gain a better understanding of how the OBP within this particular organisation may be categorised.

First and foremost, when looking at the Aberdeen (2011) PACE model, one may observe that there are indeed certain aspects of this particular OBP that do indeed classify as best-in-class. The centralised aspect of the formal OPB provides security within the organisation. Furthermore, the organisation customizes the OPB in a departmental manner. Once the formal, centralised stage is completed, the NRs are sent off to learn and assimilate into their respective departments. However, one could argue that the expectations of the NRs being assimilated are shorter than what Aberdeen (2011) presents. While the literature presents the accountability of stakeholders for up to 90 days of the first day, the DHs seemed to expect results after only one month. Even more so, the PACE model determines that best-in-class organisations begin their OBP even before the individual is hired. This also contradicts highly with the NR's belief of when their OPB begins in comparison to the DH's.

Secondly, in terms of the 'Four C's' model presented by Bauer (2010); it becomes a matter of evaluating how far along this organisation's OBP is on a spectrum of complexity. The formal aspect of the OBP encompasses the first 'C', compliance. This is not only presented on the first day during the first stage of the introduction for NRs with the HR representative, but also a process that is very in-depth, with many different layers and stages to complete. Whether it's the PowerPoint, the personnel handbook, the receiving of clothes, access keys or login information, the compliance stage includes them all, and seems to provide a great base for the NRs to build further knowledge on.

The second 'C' presented by Bauer (2010) refers to clarification. Interestingly enough, while the model determines clarity to be a formal process, it seems as though this organisation adopts a more informal approach. The NRs do indeed receive some sort of role clarity during the first introductions stage when they are presented with the organisational network which allows them to place themselves within the organisation. However, the true clarification comes along later during the departmental meetings where the DHs present the sales numbers for the NRs. Thus,

the constant reaffirmation from the DHs of the work itself and what it leads to also becomes a part of the OBP for the NRs.

Culture, the third 'C', refers to implementing the NR in such a manner that both norms and values are adopted effectively. Evidence points to the organisation reaching even this building block of the model. The NR's explain how the act of saying "Hi" to everyone hasn't been formally requested of them, yet it's something they do regardless. Meanwhile, the way they interact with customers is a predetermined routine that has been set and presented for them. While certain norms and values are explicitly asked and spoken about, some aren't, and yet NRs have no issues adopting these habits and desired behaviours regardless. It's also interesting to note that despite not having a great OBP as one NR mentions, they had no issues adopting the culture regardless. This could be speculated to have more to do with proactive personalities as Bauer and Erdogan (2011) develop upon.

Despite being able to achieve the first three building blocks of Bauer's (2010) model, it could be argued that there is something missing for the fourth and last one, Connection. Something that is frequently observed throughout this study is the departmental nature of the organisation. NRs explain how even though they are comfortable asking colleagues from other departments for help, there are barriers between them. The certain behaviours that have been ingrained into the culture such as saying "Hi" to everyone in passing does indeed seem to broaden and expand these barriers. However, the DHs confirm that introducing each and every department for their NRs during the OBP is not something that they expect to do. Despite this, neither the NRs nor the DHs seem to feel as if one would be excluded when interacting with another department, such as during lunch in the break room. Thus, it becomes hard to determine whether this particular organisation does indeed match up with the last building block of the model. Especially since Bauer (2010) refers to the connection and networking occurring at every level of the organisation (Bauer, 2010).

Third and lastly, one needs to take the final model into account. The model presented by Bauer and Erdogan (2011) is an extension of Bauer (2010) model. However, it centralizes around the newcomer experience rather than the organisational OB in general. Out of the three models presented, this one in particular seems to be most in tune with the organisation at hand. An individual with a 'proactive personality' is more likely to be easily onboarded (Bauer & Erdogan, 2011). While it may be difficult to determine what exactly constitutes a proactive personality in this particular context, one can confirm from the findings that focus is given to the individuals personality rather than the competence. The HR representative values the chemistry between themselves and the NR, while the DHs prioritise those who fit into the organisational values and directive. Furthermore, the NRs seem to agree that an openness and willingness to learn is essential in order to be integrated as quickly as possible. This is presented by Bauer and Erdogan (2011) as a form of information seeking that becomes vital for the OBP. This information seeking is not only a result of personalities that are highly social and comfortable with interaction. It may also be a result of the pre-existing culture that accepts information

seeking. The DHs and the NRs confirm that asking questions is more important than making mistakes. Thus, while one could assume that selective hiring is in part responsible for the effective OBP in this organisation, it could also be due to the particular culture that nurtures forth and encourages information seeking that becomes beneficial for the profits and marginalization in the long run.

Thus, while they are not perfectly following best practice methods or using a predetermined model for OB, they use what resources are available to them in the best way they can, and through utilising their most valued resource, the employees, they actively show off the values, norms, rules etc. which they want to reflect their organization.

It's important to note that there are limitations to this study as well. First and foremost, the sample size that was selected for the focus group interviews were rather small. Particularly for the NRs. Not only were there only four NRs, but they were all female, and rather young. Furthermore, only three of the seven departments were represented within this group. Thus, one could argue that generalisation across the organisation of the NR's result may be difficult. A larger group, with broader diversity across gender, age and departments would have provided a broader understanding of the results.

One must also consider the sample selection process. While it was optimal in order to conduct the study due to schedule clashes, one must consider the bias that may appear. The HR representative may have chosen specific individuals who either provide political motive or who are known to be talkative. As such, the individuals may have been presented with similar personalities and or outlooks of the organisation as the HR representative has.

In terms of the theoretical background, one must carefully consider the executions of the models of which the interview questionnaires were based upon. These models have been developed over ten years ago and within larger, global organisations. Therefore, being able to adopt the results of these models across a smaller organisation in Sweden may have provided some difficulties in terms of reliability.

It would be interesting¹⁰ to further this topic onto other organisations, perhaps within the same line of industry for comparison. By expanding on this particular subject, one could determine the best OB options for grocery stores in Sweden, and perhaps globally as well.

8. References

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