

# **Onboarding Gen Z at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State**

**by**

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under the supervision of

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A research project submitted to the UFS Business School in the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Masters In Business Administration at the University of the Free State.

November 2023

**Declaration**

*I, Melanie Ridgard, declare that the research project hereby handed in for the qualification Master's in Business Administration at the UFS Business School at the University of the Free State is my own independent work and that I have not previously submitted the same work, either as a whole or in part for a qualification at/in another university/faculty.*

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## Acknowledgements

“Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren’t used to an environment where excellence is expected.” – Steve Jobs

First of all, the author would like to thank God for the strength and patience supplied to them and their spouse during this journey. Next, their spouse and daughter for the unfailing support, love, understanding and motivation throughout this process.

Thank you to the supervisor, Prof. Liezel Massyn, for the guidance and support when it was needed. Thank you to the language editor for sharing their passion and patience through this journey.

Thank you to the Deville, Daya and Ridgard family for the support and encouragement which added to the moral support needed.

Lastly, thank you to the employees of University of the Free State (UFS), Skills Module (UFSS) for being my cheerleaders before, during and after this journey.

## **Abstract**

The youngest and latest entrants into the workforce are known as 'Generation Z'. This generation faces various challenges and obstacles when they are being integrated into the workplace. There is insufficient information and confusion about their expectations, challenges, obstacles, characteristics, work values and preferences, which hinder effort to attract, recruit and retain this generational cohort in the organisation. This study aims to assess the expectations and challenges that accompany the onboarding programme at the Centre of Teaching and Learning (CTL) of the University of the Free State (UFS). Furthermore, the study wishes to propose strategies for an onboarding programme at this centre in the hope of addressing the issues mentioned above. This study adopted a qualitative method and purposive sampling was employed to sample the participants. The sample size was thirteen Gen Z employees between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five years and seven Gen Z supervisors participants, who supervise Gen Z employees, were between the ages of twenty-five to forty, all employed at the CTL. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data and a thematic analysis was used to analyse the results. Evidence from the interviews reveals the expectations and challenges Gen Z employees experience when they enter the workplace; the expectations and challenges Gen Z supervisors have in working with Gen Z employees versus the experience of working in the workplace and how these experiences differ. Additionally, this research explores participants' understanding and experience of participating in an onboarding programme, whether a programme could be created for the CTL and what this programme would look like. Moreover, the study recommends that the CTL, together with the Human Resources Division at the UFS, pilot an onboarding programme for all new employees.

### *Keywords*

Onboarding, Generation Z, Thematic Analysis, Workplace expectations, Human Resource Management

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# Chapter 1

## 1.1. Background

Generation Z (Gen Z) or 'Zoomers' are the new generation joining the workforce. This means those who were born between 1997 and 2015 and who, in 2022, will be between the ages of 7 and 25 (Scholtz, 2019). About one-third of the globe's population now belongs to Gen Z. Therefore, 2.56 billion of approximately 7.4 billion individuals are members of Gen Z. This age group constitutes an estimated 40% of the United States of America's economy and 46% of the South African economy. Gen Zs must be recognised in the workplace because a portion of them have already been employed (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

Gen Z is known for having high levels of ambition and self-assurance as its defining traits (Pataki-Bittó & Kapusy, 2021). They are also known to be realistic and willing to take what is offered (Scholz & Rennig, 2019). This generation is more entrepreneurial than generations before it (Magano et al., 2020). Dobrowolski et al. (2022) state that Gen Z youth prefer to associate themselves, based on the environment in which they live, with the following qualities that suit their personalities: they are commonly described as 'tech-savvy', internationally linked (in the computer-generated world) and agile.

According to Maloni et al. (2019), the top five things Gen Z values most are (1) results, (2) promotion, (3) benefits, (4) future and (5) retirement. These young people have preferences that, in some situations, conflict with the organisational culture where they ultimately find employment.

From an international perspective, we are at a critical turning point in the evolution of employment, namely Gen Z's entry into the workforce. In the past, getting your first job was seen as a rite of passage because it required you to start at the bottom of the ladder, learn how the business world really operates and perform tedious but essential tasks to gain more useful professional abilities. Technology and automation, however, have

changed everything, eliminating many of the more laborious and repetitive duties (Deloitte, 2022).

In South Africa, 'development' is a significant motivator for Gen Z and it is generally acknowledged that South African youth are flexible and open-minded at work, yet they are constantly looking for more (Brockman, 2019). Gen Z youth would prefer a temporary position involving cutting-edge technology and on-demand talents to one that is ordinary and secure. Youth in Gen Z also need to understand how to plan their career path from the outset and diverge across roles and technologies to take on more senior roles five to ten years later (Brockman, 2019). The facilitation of young people's smooth transition into independence and the strengthening of youth development are objectives of the National Development Policy (NYP) (Makoe, 2022).

At the University of the Free State's (UFS's) Centre for Teaching and Learning (CTL), the High Impact Practice divisions (Academic Advising, Tutorial programme and UFSS) are responsible for employing over 300 student youth employees and permanent staff. Most posts in CTL require the candidates to be registered students at the institution; therefore, CTL employs many Gen Z employees on contract basis. Within CTL, new employees receive orientation training in their first month of work, but no formal onboarding programme because this is only relevant for permanent staff and it is conducted by the Human Resource (HR) Division at the university. Onboarding programmes are successful and effective when conducted in the first year of employees' first year of work, regardless of their position in the organisation. According to Newhouse (2022), a good onboarding approach reduces dropout and boosts employee engagement, which impact customers' satisfaction and your financial line.

For the purposes of this study, an onboarding programme addresses the organisation's values, objectives and procedures, the definition includes and focuses on onboarding as a tool to help employees adapt to the interpersonal and performance aspects of a job, which will be looked at in detail in later sections (Chillakuri, 2019).

According to management's experience of employees in CTL, after their orientation training has taken place, Gen Z employees fail to integrate into the workplace and CTL culture. According to Mangano et al. (2020), this generation appears to be driven by the desire to land their ideal job and the chance to develop their careers. Anecdotally, CTL has experienced Gen Z making quick career moves to suit their liking more often than generations before them. CTL supervisors experience challenges in managing and leading Gen Z with regard to the following:

- Professionalism – employees struggle to respect hierarchy, exhibit entitlement behaviour and are unable to uphold good work ethic;
- Time management – employees do not meet deadlines and struggle to balance their academic and work life, showing no sense of dependability;
- Communication - unresponsive to tasks or show disinterest in tasks;
- They do not see value in different skills that can contribute to their growth; and
- There is a lack of integration into the work culture.

These challenges, which supervisors across the High Impact Practice (HIP) departments experience in CTL, have contributed to a high turnover rate of staff who leave CTL for work in other industries, instead of building and gaining experience within CTL. This study aims to highlight the trends emerging from the research on the subject through literature and interviews by Gen Z youth workers in the labour force and in the workplace, particularly in CTL at the UFS.

## **1.2. Problem statement**

For organisations looking to tap into the full potential of this dynamic cohort, integrating Generation Z (Gen Z) into the modern workplace is a complex task. Gen Z, the first generation to be fully accustomed to digital technology, offers special abilities, viewpoints, and expectations to the workplace. Nonetheless, research indicates that conventional onboarding procedures might not adequately address the requirements and inclinations of Generation Z, hence impeding their smooth integration into the labour sector.

According to Harpelund et al. (2019), there is a disconnect between traditional onboarding approaches and the traits of Generation Z, which includes a heavy dependence on technology, a preference for diverse and creative work environments, and a need for rapid influence in their positions. This disparity could eventually affect organisational performance and impede the growth of a dynamic, intergenerational workplace culture by lowering engagement, slowing productivity, and raising attrition rates among Gen Z workers. Gen Z youth in CTL are difficult to manage and understand. This problem has been noted in several management meetings and informal discussions with supervisors at the CTL who work closely with Gen Z youth. In the workplace, they are not conforming to the organisational culture, they have complaints about long hours that are not covered by their salary, they are dissatisfied with feedback turnaround time and they are feeling entitled. This problem has contributed to a lack of performance and has demotivated employees which has, arguably, resulted in high staff turnover. This study suggests that an onboarding programme might support better work integration of Gen Zs in the CTL at the UFS.

Moreover, there is a gap in the literature about customised onboarding strategies intended for Gen Z, taking into account their distinct communication inclinations, preferred methods of learning, and aspirations for career advancement. Inadequate comprehension of these variables makes it difficult for companies to design and execute successful onboarding initiatives that provide Gen Z workers with a fulfilling and productive work environment.

### 1.2.1. Research questions

The following research questions guide this study:

- (i) What expectations and challenges do Gen Z employees have at their workplace?
- (ii) What expectations and challenges do CTL supervisors have while managing Gen Z employees?

- (iii) How can an onboarding programme align the expectations of both CTL management and Gen Z employees?

### **1.3. Research objectives**

#### 1.3.1. Primary objective

The primary objective is to propose an onboarding programme for Gen Z at the CTL.

#### 1.3.2 Secondary objectives

In achieving the primary objective, specific objectives have been established:

- To provide an overview of an onboarding programme from literature.
- To identify challenges and expectations experienced by Gen Z in the workplace;
- To identify the challenges and expectations CTL supervisors experience regarding Gen Z employees; and
- To propose ideas for an onboarding programme for the CTL based on the expectations and challenges found.

### **1.4. Research methodology**

#### 1.4.1. Research design

The research design needs to provide an acceptable structure for this study. The decision to be made about the research approach is a crucial one since it affects how relevant data will be gathered during the study; yet the study design process comprises numerous interconnected considerations (Sileyew, 2019). A research community's shared presumptions and perceptual orientations are known as a paradigm. A research paradigm can also be defined as a philosophical approach upon which research is built. It offers a set of belief systems, knowledge and understanding on which to base research study theories and practices. A research paradigm consists of ontology, epistemology and a research approach.

#### 1.4.1.1. Ontology

In terms of ontology and epistemology, a person's worldview – which greatly impact on how they perceive the relative importance of different parts of reality – is discussed. Ontology is, strictly speaking, the philosophical study of being. Ontology, in its most fundamental form, specifies what is knowable (Berryman, 2019). What we regard to be essential, basic or what we believe to be able to exist, is covered by ontology. One can be a positivist or an interpretive researcher. The link between ontology, positivism, and interpretivism lies in how researchers conceptualise the nature of reality. Positivists tend to align with a realist ontology, while interpretivists often adopt a constructivist ontology. The choice of ontology influences the research paradigm and the methods used to investigate and understand the social world.

#### 1.4.1.2. Epistemology

Epistemology is the study of how we know what we know, how we know it and who can know it (Berryman, 2019). Together, ontology and epistemology define the researcher's worldview and shed light on what the researcher believes to be the nature of truth, the nature of the world and ways of existing in it.

This approach was used because of the nature of the analysis. Research on Gen Z youth in the workplace, especially in CTL, has not been covered before and this approach will give the organisation insight into their experiences.

#### 1.4.1.3. Research approach

The research approach is a qualitative research method in a case study design. Hennink et al. (2020,10) defines qualitative research as a method that allows for in-depth analysis of individuals' experiences using a particular set of research techniques such as in-depth interview sessions, focus group interviews and visual methods. Qualitative research among other methods, can yield verbalised findings. It is employed to understand concepts, ideas or experiences. You can learn in-depth information on subjects that are not well understood by conducting a qualitative study (Streefkerk, 2022).

Upon thinking about the research topic and research design, the researcher chose to follow a qualitative and interpretive approach because it helped the researcher and the public to comprehend participant's attitudes, interactions, behaviours and beliefs regarding onboarding in the workplace (Streefkerk, 2022). Organisations may, subject to certain restrictions, include the participants' opinions, views and proposals to guarantee that Generation Z is properly embraced in these organisations.

Two groups were interviewed, Gen Z employees and Gen Z supervisors. The Gen Z interview questions differed from those asked to the supervisors. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) provide insights into the importance of adapting the research design to fit the unique characteristics of different participant groups. Questions that were posed to Gen Z employees were about workplace expectations, obstacles and challenges experienced in the role, measures that were put into place to combat the challenges and the types of support received from supervisors. This set of questions was followed by questions about onboarding.

The interview questions that were designed for the supervisors of Gen Z employees also looked at workplace expectations, challenges they experienced managing Gen Z employees and what measures were put into place to support the employee. This set of questions was also followed by questions about onboarding. Having different interview guides for different participant groups to ensure that the questions are relevant and meaningful to each group (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Moreover, demographic data was acquired; essential information was especially acquired to establish participants' status. For example, information about the participants' age, work experience and current position in the organisation were gathered to understand the employee-level and experience required in different positions.

### 1.4.2. Sampling

A population is the collective group you are interested in understanding. A sample is the group you have selected for your data gathering. Always, the sample size is less than the overall population (Bhandari, 2020).

In this study, the population consisted of two groups: (i) employees that fell within the Gen Z age group and (ii) supervisors who managed Gen Z employees. Participants were formally approached through the organisation and informally through various communication platforms. Owing to the fact that the goal of qualitative research is to understand rather than generalise, the sample does not have to be representative of the population (Andrade, 2020).

A two-step procedure was used to choose the participants based on the criteria for inclusion and exclusion. Participants were selected from the educational institution, the UFS in this case, specifically from the CTL. The participants of the first group were from a range of student assistants up to senior assistant officers. The participants of the second group consisted of supervisors, ranging from Senior Officers to Directors. For the study, the researcher worked with 300 Gen Z employees and 20 Gen Z supervisors.

#### 1.4.2.1. Non-probability sampling

The sample the researcher used, was a non-probability sample. According to Bhandari (2020), non-probability sampling is used for specific criteria and is easier to access, whereas probability sampling collects a random selection from the entire population, with each unit having an equal chance of selection. Since only a select few participants were needed to give the pertinent themes that emerged, the researcher concentrated on using a purposive sampling technique to choose the subjects that made up the sample. A purposive sample has features that are specified for the goals of the investigation (Andrade, 2020).

For the study, the first sample group consisted of 10 to 30 interviews with a population of 300 Gen Z employees with 10 structured questions; a total number of 13 interviews took

place, for data saturation to be reached. The second sample group consisted of five to 10 interviews with a population of 20 supervisors who supervised Gen Z employees with 10 interview questions; a total number of seven interviews took place. There were two sets of interview questions, one set for the Gen Z employee group which addressed research question 1 and the other for the supervisors which addressed research question 2. The last research question was answered through the findings of research question 1 and 2.

It is important to note that the planned number of interviews and the actual number of interviews that took place did not correspond. Interviews continued until no new or original viewpoints were mentioned and where the researcher only heard what was already stated in previous interviews. At that time, the researcher conducted all necessary interviews for insurance, whether it be one, two, three or ten (Coben & Adams, 2019).

To acquire demographic information about the sample, the first section in the interview asked questions about the interviewee's gender, age, working experience and current position and role in CTL.

#### 1.4.2.2. Inclusion and exclusion

For the purposes of this study, the Gen Z participants formed part of the age range between 18 to 25 years as per the definition of Gen Z youth in CTL, whereas the supervisors of those employees did not need to abide by a specific age range. Only people between the ages of 18 to 25 years of age and their supervisors were invited for interviews. Participants were chosen from among those working as student assistants, teaching assistants, research assistants, learning facilitators, interns, assistant officers. Supervisors of Gen Z were selected from the management team, senior officers, chief officers, assistant directors and directors at the UFS, more specifically from CTL.

#### 1.4.3. Data collection

A qualitative approach was followed, and the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. According to Morgan Brett and Wheeler (2022) semi-structured interviews are

an adaptable interview style that can be used to collect a variety of information. Due to the participants and/or topic explored, the interviews were structured.

Each interview consisted of 10 questions; 10 to 30 Gen Z employees and 7 to 10 CTL supervisors were seen individually. These individual interviews took 20 to 40 minutes. Audio recordings lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and then transcriptions of the interviews were done. Data was analysed thematically as guided by the research questions. The thematic analysis focused on analysing meaning patterns. To determine significance, the researcher examined the themes in the data sets. Thematic analysis is highly useful when working with massive amounts of data since it can separate and organise huge volumes of information in a manner that makes it much simpler to consume. (Crosley, 2021).

The method which the researcher used, was to conduct face-to-face interviews in a closed, booked room in the CTL as this centre has open-plan offices. Interviews were conducted face-to-face for consistency in data collection (Crosley, 2021)..

#### Research procedure

Email addresses were obtained from the supervisors of Gen Z employees in the different CTL divisions. The researcher emailed the informed consent forms and letters requesting participants to participate in this study to the supervisors to disseminate to the Gen Z employees. The participants' supervisors also forwarded the email on behalf of the researcher to all who were willing to participate and who contacted their supervisor. This communication was forwarded to the researcher in order to reach out to the participant. Once the researcher had received feedback from the participants, they arranged for a convenient date and time for the interview to take place.

In the interview, the researcher proceeded to remind the participants of the informed consent form that was emailed to them and collected the signed documents. If the participants forgot to bring their own copy, backup copies were made available to sign

before the researcher continued. Thereafter, the researcher proceeded to review the informed consent with the participant.

The researcher used a laptop and joined a Microsoft Teams link for the purposes of transcription only with the permission of the participants. The option to transcribe was selected to transcribe the entire interview and the session was recorded. Even though the transcriptions that Microsoft Teams produce, might not have been 100% accurate, this software programme assisted with most of the transcriptions. The researcher then went through the recording and edited the transcriptions so that these reflected the interviews more accurately.

#### 1.4.4. Data analysis

Once the data was transcribed, the data was analysed using Atlas.ti, which is a qualitative data analysis application that was downloaded from the internet. The researcher went through the data to indicate the different themes that emerged from the interviews. The researcher followed a thematic approach in which various issues were covered in the discussion section. Firstly, the researcher conducted the interviews and recorded the sessions using Microsoft Teams. Thereafter, the interviews were transcribed from Microsoft Teams but the researcher played the recordings back to make sure the transcriptions were accurate and then saved the documents individually. Once that was done, the Gen Z employee transcription documents, as well as the Gen Z supervisors' individual documents, were grouped and combined to be uploaded to Atlas.ti for analysis. Once the documents were added to Atlas.ti, the researcher read through everything looking for codes and themes that emerged, highlighting quotes that supported statements substantiated in the literature review.

During the process of thematic analysis, the researcher made use of codes. A code is a label given to a text document that is used to identify and list the main points of a set of data, such as an interview transcript (Crosley, 2021). Codes are necessary because they form the foundation of themes. Crosley (2021) asserts that a trends in data sets can be recognised as themes since they regularly appear in the data. By organising codes into

themes, the researcher effectively summarised data sets to assist in answering the research question(s) and in achieving the research objectives and aims.

#### 1.4.5. Ethical considerations

Bhandari (2022) asserts that ethical research considerations are a set of rules that control the designs and techniques of a study. Researchers are required to always follow certain ethical guidelines when collecting data from subjects. Research ethics are necessary to uphold credibility, dignity, human rights and to work with society. These requirements guaranteed that the participants could participate freely, knowingly and securely. The researcher abided and followed the ethical considerations of the UFS by following and obtaining the necessary permission, informed consent, voluntary participation while adhering to confidentiality and causing no harm.

##### 1.4.5.1. Permission obtained.

The UFS makes use of InfoEd Global's eRIMS platform, also known as RIMS. All enrolled UFS students and employees have access to this site, which is used to submit applications for ethical clearance. Ethics reviewers examine each application that is submitted to the General/Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) for ethical clearance. Based on the ethical considerations raised by the study, reviewers gave recommendations about the outcome of the application (University for the Free State, 2023).

Once approval (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2023/0568) was received, the researcher proceeded with the study and stipulated to the committee with whom, where, when and how they would be collaborating. For this study, the researcher obtained written permission from all collaborating parties. Permission was obtained from the Assistant Director of the focus area: Transition for development and success (TDS) and from the Senior Director and head of the CTL at the UFS.

#### 1.4.5.2. Informed consent and voluntary participation

According to Bhandari (2022), all information needed for prospective participants to decide whether to cooperate must be supplied and understood by all participants. Participants must be fully notified about the study process in accordance with the informed consent principle. This includes information on the benefits, risks, financing and institutional support of the study.

The researcher respected the participants' choice to decline participation in the study and to end it at any time. Participants gave their informed voluntary consent to partake in the study. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and outcome in a language they understood, as well as any other elements that may fairly be anticipated to influence their willingness to participate. (Bryman et al., 2021).

Before the interview began, the researcher handed out the indemnity form and went through the information in the document to make certain the participants were aware of what the study was about and what the purpose of the interview was. The researcher went through the logistics of the interview, how it would be conducted and how the data would be saved. The indemnity form was stored, saved on a drive as an extra copy, and only required should the Business School request it.

#### 1.4.5.3. Confidentiality

If the researcher failed to manage study data security and participants' anonymity, harm might result to the participants. Recognising the participants but omitting all key data from the report demonstrates confidentiality (Bhandari, 2022). By modifying identifying information such as a person's name, confidentiality can be preserved so that the participant's identity is unknown to anybody outside the research team (Morgan Brett & Wheeler, 2022). This fictitious name is known as a pseudonym. The researcher respected the participant's' privacy by not revealing their names or any staff information throughout the semi-structured interviews. No private information was requested in the interviews. Because confidentiality was highly valued, no names or staff numbers were required.

#### 1.4.5.4. No harm

Research should prioritise preventing harm and minimising risk and exploitation. The term, 'no harm' refers to putting a participant in the least amount of danger. It is the researcher's responsibility to protect the interviewees (Githaiga et al., 2023). The researcher ensured that the participants' information was stored in a file management system on their personal laptop, where no one could access it. The information was only used for evidence and only if the Business School requested it.

#### 1.4.5.5 Conflict of interest

Field (2009) defines conflict of interest as a set of circumstances which raises the possibility that a secondary interest would improperly influence professional judgment or conduct with respect to a principal interest.

The researcher headed one of the divisions in CTL that employed more than 100 employees who potentially formed part of the Gen Z cohort invited to participate in the research project. The researcher could not attempt to reach out or contact this specific group, as it would have caused a conflict of interest; the employees could have thought that they would need to partake in this study as part of their employment roles and responsibilities, which would eliminate voluntary participation. Therefore, the researcher came up with a strategy that avoided this from happening. One way in which this was done, was to use the Teaching Coordinator (to whom the group directly reports) to send out communication about the study on behalf of the researcher. In this way, the researcher avoided participants feeling coerced or obliged to participate in the study but rather to participate of their own free will. Contrarily, the researcher directly emailed supervisors who managed Gen Z employees and invited them to be interviewed owing to their role as Gen Z supervisors.

### **1.5. Demarcation of the study**

The results of this study are only applicable to UFS employees who belong to the department of CTL. The study is interdisciplinary because it crosses and belongs to the

field of Leadership and Management as well as Human Resource Management; it aimed to assess onboarding of Gen Z at CTL.

The study's researcher is a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) candidate from the University of the Free State (UFS) with a B. Com Law degree and a Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration (PGDiP). She has been in a managerial role in the CTL since September 2021 at the University of the Free State. The researcher's interest and experience with people management matches her comprehensive approach to the study because she has been aware of the need to design a better working environment in which Gen Z youth could actively participate in the CTL.

Consequently, the researcher invited all Gen Z youth employees and supervisors in the CTL to partake in the voluntary interviews during face-to-face contact sessions at the CTL offices in the Sasol Library of the UFS between January and December 2023. The empirical research phase took place from August to November 2023.

## **1.6. Chapter layout**

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature review

Chapter 3: Research methodology

Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

## 1.7. Conclusion

This study has aimed to provide valuable insight into onboarding Gen Zs in the workplace in CTL. Every generation has its own unique characteristics and behaviours. To ensure that everyone gets what they need, organisations must develop internal onboarding or supportive programme that appeal to this new generation.

Gen Z's entry into the workforce could lead to a paradigm shift in how organisations and academic institutions that hire these young people organise their daily operations. Moreover, the transitioning and adaptation of youth to their working environments could play a pivotal role in addressing organisational conformity and high Gen Z staff turnover. In addition, this study could also help in youth development. It is of utmost importance for employers to learn how to manage youth and create programmes to assist them in their transition from their academic careers to their careers in the workplace. Gen Z management presents several difficulties in the workplace (Gaidhani and Sharma, 2019). However, employers could establish a work environment that encourages efficiency with a little bit of time and expertise. Given the necessary resources and encouragement, this generation could be destined to be very productive.

## Chapter 2: Onboarding

### 2.1 Introduction

Establishing an onboarding programme for new workers to help them familiarise with the new environment is an efficient way of dealing with the issues presented by the modern workplace (Gaidhani and Sharma, 2019). Organisation socialisation is the process through which a new employees start feeling at home in their new surroundings (Harpelund et al., 2019). The meaning of the terms, 'socialisation' is distinguished in more recent literature by letting socialisation define the person's learning and adjustment process, whereas 'onboarding' deals with the process of introducing a newly hired employee into the organisation, the knowledge, abilities and behaviours necessary for success in the new environment (Scholtz, 2019).

Instead of being a one-time event, onboarding is now a continuous process that lasts for the duration of employment (Maurer 2021). There are several steps businesses may take to simplify onboarding, which will be covered in more detail later. The human resources department starts the onboarding process by finding the best applicant who fits the organisation, the culture and the job objectives (Palmer-Roberts, 2020). According to Humantelligence (2021), even as many as 20% of employees quit within the first 45 days, while Maurer (2021) believes it takes 90% of new hires 3 to 6 months to decide if they will stay in the role. The success of onboarding is seen as a key component in making that decision. However, it is crucial to define onboarding to gain a general idea of the subject.

### 2.2 Definitions of onboarding

In a review of the literature, onboarding is defined in various ways. The definitions presented below differ somewhat from one another.

- Chillakrui (2020) defines onboarding to welcome new hires to their new positions, familiarising them with the organisation's objectives, beliefs, regulations and procedures as well as integrating the new employee into corporate culture.
- According to Harpelund et al. (2019), the terms 'onboarding' and 'orientation' are frequently used interchangeably. Although crucial, an orientation programme is

only one step in the onboarding process. Its purpose is to involve the new hires in various activities while educating them about the organisation for which they will be working.

- Chillakuri (2020) continues to define onboarding as a process of introducing hires into the new job, familiarising them with the organisation's goals, values, rules, responsibilities and procedures, including socialising the individual into a workplace culture, thereby helping the new hires adapt to interpersonal and performance aspects of the new job. according to the definition of onboarding.

In the definitions above, the focus is on different understandings of onboarding in different perspectives. The two definitions offered by Chillakuri (2020) are similar in nature and focus on welcoming and introducing new employees to all information relating to the organisation and its culture. Whereas the definition provided by Harpelund et al. (2019) focuses on the term 'orientation' versus 'onboarding' and how each term involves educating them about the organisation. It is obvious that neither of these definitions is all-inclusive nor mutually exclusive. In fact, the variations in terminology within the literature reflect the fact that businesses really approach onboarding in a wide variety of ways.

For the purposes of this study, I have used Chillakuri's (2020) definition of onboarding as cornerstone. Although, Chillakuri (2020) also addresses the organisation's values, objectives and procedures, the definition includes and focuses on onboarding as a tool to help employees adapt to the interpersonal and performance aspects of a job, which will be looked at in detail in later sections. Businesses can take a variety of actions to make onboarding simpler and these actions will be further discussed.

### **2.3 The onboarding process and programme**

All organisations need an efficient onboarding programme. Wigert and Pendell (2019) also recommend connecting the onboarding process data to other organisational key performance indicators (KPIs), including "engagement, performance, and exit data". The onboarding procedure should be modified to meet the demands of each organisation and

new hire because they are all unique. Lalwani (2019) defines onboarding as a continuous process that lasts from the time a choice to hire a new employee is made until that employee has fully integrated into the organisation, which suggests that onboarding starts at the hiring and selection stage.

Although the length of the onboarding process varies, staff and HR departments, generally agree that it should span at least a year (Maurer 2021), beginning with a job offer and lasting up to 12 months (Chillakuri, 2020). There are many ways to design an orientation process, but whatever it may contain, the overall objective is to immediately make new workers feel accepted and prepared for their employment so that they may successfully contribute to the organisation's goals and prepare new employees for their positions' responsibilities and make them feel at home in their new environment (Harpelund et al., 2019). New hires are acquainted with their new roles, educated on the organisation's objectives, core values, policies, practices and workflows, as well as socialised into the organisation's culture throughout the onboarding process (Bell, 2021).

In contrast to more conventional onboarding that begins on the first day at the office, Binder Consulting (2019) explains that an increased interest in onboarding initiatives during the contractual signing stage can minimise the time to reach efficacy and boost the value gain, as indicated in Figure 2.1.

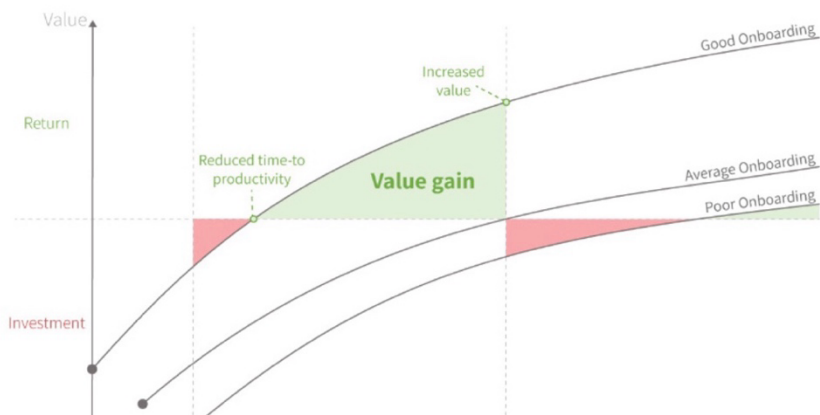


Figure 2.1: Impact of onboarding process on an employee's value for the organisation (Binder Consulting 2019).

Time to productivity can be conceptualised as a process, with a newly hired employee serving as the input and the onboarding process, which consists of several steps, as the output (net contribution). While some operations, like the learning experience of newly hired employees, are unknown, some are planned and known. Some freshly hired employees will never achieve net contribution because they will leave the organisation before it happens Binder Consulting (2019).

There are two sorts of onboarding programmes: informal and formal. Without a defined organisational plan, Bell (2019) defines informal onboarding as the method by which new entrants in an organisation become familiar with their new roles, whereas formal onboarding is the method by which new entrants learn about their new positions through a scripted set of organised processes and guidelines that assist an employee in transitioning to their new position in terms of both tasks and sociability (Bauer & Erdogan, 2010; Bell, 2019).

The employee is given an idea of the organisation's standards and group behaviour both formally and informally as part of the culture component in the process Chillakuri (2020). The new hire oversees the connecting component. This part of the process involves creating communication channels and information networks within the organisation. To the advantage of everyone concerned, organisations can modify the elements of onboarding in a way that best suits them and their new recruits. Before a new hire shows up for their first day of work, onboarding programmes are created and customised to connect with them. They last for the first year of employment. (Bell, 2021).

During the educational component of a programme, the employee receives tools and information in addition to visits and check-ins from supervisors at predetermined intervals. Supervisors can spot areas where the worker might require clarification or support to contribute successfully to the team during these scheduled sessions. The success of the new staff members and the overall operation of the organisation is impacted by each participant and process in the onboarding process.

Another factor directly affecting an organisation's bottom line is the direct financial expenditure made when hiring new staff. The many financial effects of recruit attrition include hiring costs, training costs, learning and development costs, time spent on the vacant position and effects on other workers' productivity because of the turnover (Altman, 2020). Wigert and Pendell (2019) agree with the abovementioned factor, whereas the cost of re-running the recruiting and onboarding process once an employee leaves the organisation can be as high as twice the person's pay. Methodical planning and preparation prior to onboarding could greatly reduce the efficiency loss and, in the long run, improve the organisation's bottom line by reducing staff turnover and time to competency (Eklund 2018, 31–32; Humantelligence 2021).

Chillakuri (2020) reveals that the top three factors that need to be addressed in the process are meaningful work, performance management and work-life balance in a study that aimed to identify Gen Z expectations on effective onboarding. Bauer (2010) and Chen (2020) are of the opinion that onboarding programmes should have four elements, regardless of their format, namely compliance, clarity, culture and connections. Education about the organisation's policies, rules and regulations is part of the compliance component. The component of explanation clarifies the new hire's job and job-related responsibilities (Bell, 2021). Supervisors play a crucial part in the onboarding process because they are the ones who should help new hires understand how they fit into the organisation and how they can contribute to its success, which forms part of the culture and connection elements. Onboarding also consists of different types within in the process of planning for onboarding and many organisations can choose how the onboarding will take place (Harpelund et al., 2019).

## **2.4 Types of onboarding**

According to Babajide and Yagoub (2019), three alternative onboarding approaches could be appropriate for use in various organisational contexts. These are as follows:

- 1) Instructor-led programme (Babajide & Yagoub, 2019): This conventional style of training is both a component of the onboarding session as well as an effective

internal session in organisations where instructors lead the session through a predetermined agenda.

- 2) Online and e-learning led programme (Babajide & Yagoub, 2019; Britto et al., 2020; Buchan et al., 2019a): This strategy is cost-related and relies on employers using technology as a tool to guide the session. This training may include the use of videos, online courses, evaluation sections and other technologies.
- 3) Rotational onboarding programme: this technique is divided into two categories:
  - a. a tailored approach that might be considered for deployment based on the features or characteristics of new hires such as individual, unstructured, random, variables, disjunctive and divestment.
  - b. a practiced tactic that is considered when brand-new hires share similar traits.

The first two tactics are helpful for acquiring the necessary common knowledge or skills for the organisation or team, but they do not consider the probable diversity of onboarders' experience or the unique requirements of various teams. Owing to the world experiencing and witnessing how COVID-19 changed the world of work, organisations need to find a more flexible option and for the purpose of this study, the researcher investigated the online and e-learning led programmes in more detail.

#### 2.4.1 Online and e-learning led programmes

There are several important factors to consider while doing onboarding in an online setting. An essential component of the entire process, namely providing a positive intense experience for the newbie, is made more difficult by remote onboarding. The organisation should make an investment in developing virtual solutions that will enable distant workers to communicate the atmosphere of the workplace and foster social interaction (Harpelund et al., 2019). Researchers such as Rodeghero et al. (2021) and McDonnell (2020) have concentrated on virtual onboarding that covers specialised professional groups, software engineers and financial teams in 2020 and 2021 motivated by an increased focus on distant, virtual labour because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In their research, Rodeghero et al. (2021) looked at the issues and requirements of highly technical teams by examining the remote onboarding of Microsoft software developers. They found the following obstacles to remote onboarding: hardware and permissions; technical issues; and communication and teamwork. They also noted the specific things that the teams had done, such as interaction with the manager, team meetings to welcome them, colleagues getting in touch with them to see how things were going and to see if they needed any help, virtual social events and lastly, the onboarding buddy that had been assigned.

One of the suggestions made in research by Rodeghero et al. (2021) on the topic of the onboarding of teams working on software in a remote work environment, was to specifically motivate staff members to turn on their cameras in virtual meetings to promote interpersonal bonding. Also, supervisors ought to lead by example by keeping their individual cameras on throughout meetings. To make up for the lack of engagement that the new employee might feel because of not being onboarded at the physical offices, online onboarding may demand more onboarding assignments. The learning path must be very clearly designed in a virtual environment and the procedure must involve efficient follow-up and progress tracking (Harpelund et al., 2019). Additionally, a well-designed onboarding programme, which offers a clear picture of the timing and substance of the process, is a great remedy for this (Harpelund et al., 2019). A new employee will benefit from having a clear understanding of their onboarding tasks before the process even starts.

According to Rodeghero et al. (2020), the work from home policy hindered communication. Also, they discovered that those who had been onboarded had trouble approaching others for assistance, forming bonds with their team and cooperating with co-workers. They compiled ten suggestions for onboarding computer programmers based on their study based on the survey findings and supplementary interviews conducted as part of the scientific data gathering (see Figure 2.2).

**Recommendations  
for Online  
Onboarding**


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 Encourage communication and asking for assistance
 

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 Urge teams to activate the cameras.
 

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 Plan 1:1 meeting
 

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 Provide information about the organisation
 

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 Emphasize team building
 

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 Assign an onboarding technical mentor
 

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 Assign an onboarding buddy
 

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*Figure 2.2 Online onboarding guidelines (Rodeghero et al., 2020)*

It was suggested that online technologies be used to assist the onboarding procedure so that mentors may monitor a participant's activity and provide feedback (Britto et al., 2020). Although there were some accessibility and usability issues, alternative programmes and systems can be put in place to improve the educational experience of employees (Godinho et al., 2020). With or without software, there is quite a bit that organisations need to abide by, in terms of regulations and procedures set out by its HR department.

## **2.5 The role of HR in onboarding**

Ramford (2022) states that leaders in human resources are crucial to the onboarding of new employees. HR leaders can help to pave the way for a fruitful and enduring connection between employees and their business by collaborating with fresh hires to guarantee that they have the resources and knowledge needed to succeed in their new roles. Ramford (2022) discusses in a blog how communication of expectations in a clear and concise manner is one of the most crucial things HR professionals can accomplish. By posing crucial questions that the firm must answer, understanding strategic HR management as well as data analytics can help to narrow the gaps in employee onboarding, recruitment, promotion and retention.

New employees should be mindful of what is required of them right away in terms of their behaviour, attendance and job performance. Leaders in HR should also provide new hires a thorough rundown on the policies and procedures of the organisation. HR executives may help to guarantee a seamless integration into the workplace by taking the time to make sure new hires have a solid foundation (Ramford, 2022). The human resources department of businesses should be aware of many of these traits as things to watch out for when recruiting, hiring and keeping younger people, but it is not yet time to make significant adjustments that are expensive both monetarily and in terms of time (Harris, 2020).

A thoughtfully created onboarding programme is the secret to engagement, early engagement and enduring loyalty. The effectiveness of a new hire's onboarding process influences the likelihood that they will contribute effectively and long-term to the organisation (Ramford, 2022). It is wise to make quality hires from the beginning because it is less expensive to retain an existing employee than to locate a new one. Having looked at what the literature says about onboarding and how the organisation needs to cater to its employees by meeting them halfway, HR sets the outline of what the programme must entail and their role in the process (Ramford, 2022). The next step is to understand the cohort of employees that are entering the workplace to set up a well-planned onboarding programme.

## **2.6 Gen Z characteristics in the workplace**

The Post-Millennial Generation (1996–2010), commonly known as Gen Z, made up 41% of the world's population in 2021 and constituted a sizable share of the labour force (Bryce, 2021). Gen Z's are the first generation to be born into a world totally shaped by digital technologies. People access and absorb information via the internet. They are used to communicating with one another and having continuous, immediate internet access (Machová et al., 2021). Generation Z members are thought to be the most goal-oriented of all prior generations (Schroth, 2019). Younger generations, according to

Nabahani and Riyanto (2020), are more ready to pursue better possibilities if they find themselves in advantageous positions, which makes it difficult for firms to retain young talent.

According to Ran et al. (2019) Gen Z characteristics were defined as pupils with skills to respond fast, who aspire to continuous and immediate relations, see themselves as experts and are tech savvy, have high hopes of using technology to their advantage, tend to learn autonomously and are content in a digital environment. Stahl (2019) adds to this by pointing out that although being technologically inclined, 90% of Gen Zs indicated that they prefer visual and interpersonal communication in the workplace and that they would prefer to have an online or virtual call over a telephonic call. Advocating this notion, Gen Z's like in-person interactions and real-time feedback. They do not wait for the annual report since they want to fix their shortcomings on a continuous basis due to their aspirations for their careers (Gaidhani et al., 2019).

People in Generation Z have favoured open, well-lit work settings that offer chances for both solitary and collaborative work (Schenarts, 2020). However, the desires of Generation Z for social connection at work have been the subject of conflicting studies in the past. According to Schenarts (2020), Gen Z's like to work independently before contributing to their group, rather than wanting to work in groups all the time. Yet, according to Hampton and Welsh (2019), Gen Zs also favour flexible employment arrangements that allow people to balance their duties both at work and at home. Additionally, they contend that if performance is unaffected, there should be no excuse for not introducing flexible working schedules (Chillakuri, 2020).

Across 12 nations, the Workforce Institute of Kronos and Future Workplace (2019) published a report on Gen Z attitudes in the workplace. According to this research and in support of Chillakuri's theory, Gen Zs want flexibility at work, prefer face-to-face communication and are concerned about their ability to succeed as employees. Members of Generation Z believe that their education did not adequately equip them for negotiation, network, self-assured employment and long hours. Maybe most importantly, this research

has addressed what Generation Z seek from their supervisors, including clearly defined goals and feedback, current workplace technologies, appreciation and respect, meaningful tasks and work-life balance.

In the workplace, Gen Z individuals exhibit a strong desire for purpose and fulfilment. They are driven by the need to make a positive impact in their organisations and society as a whole (Macmillian, 2023). An expert on Gen Z health and employment, the director of technology and mental health at Harvard Alumni for Mental Health, states that Gen Zs want to work with people who work collaboratively and have meaningful work that gives them a sense of autonomy, flexibility and work-life balance. Gen Zs are less hesitant to ask for what other people actually need and desire, despite the stigma that they are entitled and narcissistic that occasionally exists in the workplace (Peterson, 2023). According to Segel and Hatami (2023), Gen Zs consider workplace flexibility to be just as important as meaningful employment when deciding whether to take a new position. Some of the ambiguity concerning Gen Z's expectations for the workplace can be resolved by understanding these findings.

It is interesting to get insight into Nadu's (2020) research on how the decrease of child births in a family household from more than 4 children to 2 or less, has strengthened parents' inclination to box their children in and has added to the Gen Z self-centredness. Overprotective parents have denied Generation Z the chance to develop life skills, necessitating frequent communication and input from Generation Z (Schroth, 2019). This distinguisher helps to understand the need for constant support and feedback. The New York Times Magazine describes Gen Z as tech aware, pragmatic and determined (Hughes, 2020). They also prefer supervisors giving them individualised training and attention (Hughes, 2020). Distinctively, Generation Z does not retain the need for collaborative or open workplaces that the preceding generation has desired; rather, they crave individualised connection from their bosses.

Gen Zs are also known as the 'job-hopping' generation due to their desire to experience different areas of their life and career. Kirchmayer and Fratricova (2020) reinforce this

statement that Gen Zs look for a meaningful career as a key factor. Generation Z anticipates climbing the corporate ladder swiftly and will probably quit a job if they cannot see their career path (Goh & Okumus, 2020). When it comes to traveling for work, they are open to being flexible if it would lead to more opportunities for career progress. To win over Gen Z's allegiance to the firm, Nabahani and Riyanto (2020) advise employing an organisational commitment model. In addition, psychological assets including self-confidence, optimism and resilience have shown a favourable impact on Gen Zs commitment.

Berge and Berge (2019) suggest that Gen Z workers do appreciate financial benefits and have a strong need for substantial remuneration. While it may be possible that Gen Z values purposeful work over financial security, the contradictory research implies that this generation's workers may not fully dismiss money; instead, they place less emphasis on it than earlier generations (Dobrowolski, 2022).

Most of the research that looked at Gen Z and its characteristics has drawn its sample from developed nations with high internet access rates. Farrell and Phugsoonthorn (2020) remark that because researchers have not adequately considered people living in developing nations with poor internet connection and where the generation grew up in various societal settings, their findings might not accurately represent Gen Z workers around the world. Given the impact technology has had on Gen Z, there may be a great disparity in expectations, values and experiences between people from developed and underdeveloped countries around the world.

Continuing with the notion that theory collected is predominantly from developed countries, HR departments of businesses should be conscious of many of these traits as things to watch out for when hiring, recruiting and keeping younger people. However, it is not yet time to make significant adjustments that are expensive both monetarily and in terms of time (Bell, 2019). Yet, businesses should consider the common traits that tend to hold true across a variety of sources and implement plans for those variations. Based

on what we now know about Generation Z, some options will be offered later in this study to accommodate them.

## **2.7 Gen Z career intentions and onboarding expectations**

In 2019, the COVID-19 epidemic caused the loss of many jobs in various industries, which influenced the ecosystem of the entire sector. Businesses in certain industries relied on youthful, enthusiastic personnel to meet the demands of more picky consumers (Robinson & Schänzel, 2019). Youth and businesses depended on one another for employment because of this. Most often, a young person's first paid job experience has a big impact on how they view work.

Following a review of the literature, Gaidhani et al. (2019) provided the Generation Z expectations for employers and the workplace. The Z generation consists of individuals who have their own demands and, as a result, have expectations of employers. The organisation must establish suitable working conditions to meet their needs. The Generation Z representatives:

- prefer transparency and treat self-reliance, flexibility and individual liberty as non-negotiable aspects;
- must be given appropriate freedom to ascertain themselves and get instant acknowledgment;
- favour face-to-face communication and want to be taken seriously; and
- wish supervisors listened to their ideas.

Finally, Schroth (2019), asserts that if Gen Zs had received clearer instructions and on-the-job training, they could have achieved closer to their supervisors' expectations. The generational divide has caused Gen Zs to have distinct expectations for the onboarding process.

According to research, motivated and educated youth are frequently dissatisfied after their first-job or intern experiences (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021). So, knowing and understanding Gen Z, their beliefs, expectations and motivations is extremely beneficial.

Research on the distinguishing characteristics of Gen Z is still in its early stages as seen in the section above because of divergent viewpoints among academics (Chillakuri, 2020). In contrast to earlier generations that focused on training early in their careers, Berge and Berge (2019) added that Gen Z anticipate continuous training from the start of their profession to the finish.

The purpose of this study is to better understand Gen Z and how they view an efficient onboarding process. To be more specific, the research is being conducted to determine whether and to what extent an effective onboarding experience might favourably influence the CTL organisation. In the next section, information on Gen Z benefits of following through on an onboarding process will be provided.

## **2.8 Benefits (advantages) of onboarding Gen Z**

The onboarding procedure aids workers in achieving maximum productivity as soon as feasible and, in turn, contributing to the business. A successful onboarding process will result in a partnership that benefits both the organisation and the employees (Chillakuri, 2020). Additionally, by educating new hires on their job within the organisation, onboarding can assist in lessening the anxiety and uncertainty that they encounter (Schroth, 2019). Good onboarding procedures are now more important than ever because Gen Zs are more anxious than previous generations. Workers with roles that are too loosely defined and unclear in their tasks may endure stress, which may even result in burnout. A failed adjustment phase may thus lead to a loss in job satisfaction, a reduction in levels of commitment and a desire to quit the job or the firm altogether (Harpelund et al., 2019).

Making a new hire feel valued and appreciated generally contributes to a positive emotional adjustment to working in a new setting (Harpelund et al., 2019). According to several studies, good onboarding leads to improved performance, career satisfaction, commitment and self-efficacy (Chillakuri, 2020; Schroth, 2019). Moreover, Palmer-Roberts (2020) has discovered that engaged workers who desire to contribute to the

business are less likely to quit and that good onboarding can motivate improved employee performance.

A good and well-designed onboarding programme can produce significant benefits for both the new staff member and the business they are joining when it is performed successfully. Effective onboarding has been shown to have several advantageous outcomes, including an increase in recruit commitment, quality of work life and retention rates, a reduction in stress and a shorter period for the new employee in which to achieve maximum performance (Harpelund et al., 2019). In figure 2.3 below, a summary of the benefits of a successful onboarding programme or process.

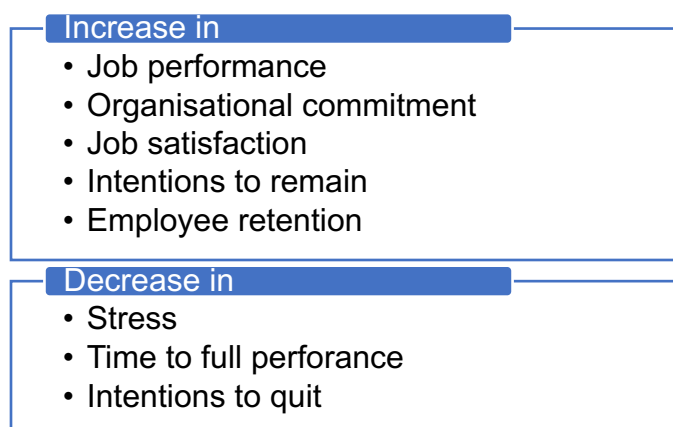


Figure 2.3: Benefits of effective onboarding for Gen Z's (Harpelund et al. 2019).

Twelve per cent of employees in recent research by Schroth (2019) said that the onboarding was beneficial, while the remaining 88% said that it did not give them adequate information about their positions. According to Valamis (2021), setting up meetings for new hires with representatives of various departments and co-workers with whom they would be collaborating directly, will help them comprehend the organisation's structure and enable networking at an early stage.

## 2.9 Risks (disadvantages) of onboarding Gen Z

Information overload is one of the major problems that new workers run across during onboarding. Assimilation of all the knowledge can be challenging as there is a lot to learn. To make the process as simple and feasible as possible, onboarding should be carefully

planned and matched to the new hire's rate of learning. Interactive exercises and discussions with the instructor and trainers are a few examples of these (Murphy, 2020).

It is crucial that businesses promote employee development during the onboarding process because the success of the firm reflects the performance of the individuals who work there (Talmundo, 2020). Top talent finds it simple to switch professions since organisations who put a lot of money into employee development have a more skilled labour force as a competitive edge (Cilluffo & Cohn, 2019). Several studies investigated what prevented new hires from being productive after onboarding or what caused them to quit the organisation early after some time there, necessitating the need to repeat the recruitment process for new hires. Both money and time are spent on this.

According to research, 25% of workers who intended to leave their positions in the first six months identified the absence of a transparent, educational onboarding as the cause (Schroth, 2019).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

The pertinent onboarding literature was evaluated in this chapter. It began by outlining some of the most well-known definitions and concepts concerning onboarding. Following this, onboarding processes, programmes and types of onboarding were described, including whether onboarding can be done online. The literature review also went into detail about the role HR plays in onboarding and then detailed the salient traits and characteristics that distinguish Gen Z from earlier generations, looking at Gen Z youth's career intentions and expectations of an onboarding programme. The literature review concluded by identifying the benefits and risks of having an onboarding programme.

With this literature and theory provided, supervisors can better understand the behaviours of the current generation being employed and what influences them by learning about the shared values and experiences of others.

The attention now shifts to how employers can manage and engage with members of the generational cohort in a way that promotes maximum production and cooperation for both the organisation and Gen Z employee if they have a thorough understanding of the traits, expectations and challenges of the group. However, there are gaps in the current literature and to identify some of these, the researcher investigated the values and expectations of Gen Z employees in comparison to how supervisors view their expectations. This would assist in dispelling any misunderstandings that Gen Z employees or supervisors may have about the workplace (Jensen, 2021).

The research methodology and design used to solve each of these parts of the customised onboarding design problem are described in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 3: Research methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Imam (2021) defines research as an investigative process in which a topic is examined from various angles to uncover the truth. This author continues by stating that a research process is a methodical and scientific method of inquiry that entails in-depth analyses of the themes, probing deeply into the fundamental problem statements and gathering data for additional analyses and interpretation to develop recommendations for the original problem statement. The researcher's ability to inductively reason is crucial (Rahi 2017). An inductive thinking style involves using specific evidence to devise a broad conclusion (Imam: 2021).

A range of research methodology-related factors were considered for the purpose of this study. The study's design, target demographic and sample, methods employed, including participants' protection, data collecting and analysis, study tools and ethical issues are described in this chapter.

### **3.2 Research design**

The research design is meant to offer an acceptable framework for a study. The choice of the research methodology was carefully considered because it determined how pertinent the data for the study was acquired (Sileyew, 2019).

A paradigm is a set of shared assumptions that guide researchers on how to approach an inquiry. A philosophical perspective that serves as the foundation of a study can alternatively be described as a research paradigm. To support research study theories and methods, a research paradigm provides a set of beliefs, information and understanding. Ontology, epistemology and a research methodology constitute a research paradigm.

The section below discusses three types of research designs: exploratory study, descriptive study and explanatory study. The selection of the research design relied on the purpose(s) of the research (Saunders, 2009; Saunders, 2019):

- An exploratory study focuses on finding out what is going on, poses questions, looks for fresh perspectives, evaluates phenomena from a new angle and develops theories to inform further research. A flexible design is what defines an exploratory investigation (Robson, 2002; Al-Ababneh, 2020).
- A descriptive study presents a precise portrait of the people, circumstances or event under examination. This type necessitates gathering a lot of data about the situation being researched. The design of a descriptive study may be flexible or rigid (Robson, 2002; Al-Ababneh, 2020).
- An explanatory study looks for patterns that relate to the phenomenon being studied as well as an explanation of the situation or issue that is being examined. The design of this study may be flexible or fixed (Robson, 2002; Al-Ababneh, 2020).

From the definitions and explanations of the different research designs that exist, the researcher followed an exploratory study following a research approach of an inductive research approach. The inductive method should be used when gathering data and creating a theory because of the data analysis (Saunders et al., 2019). Research methodologies and research philosophies must be compatible; the deductive approach is more in line with positivist philosophy, whereas the inductive approach is more in line with interpretivist philosophy (Saunders et al., 2019).

### 3.2.1 Research philosophy

Saunders et al. (2019) describe a research philosophy as a set of beliefs and assumptions regarding the development of knowledge. The researcher followed a research philosophy of interpretivist epistemological consideration and qualitative research. Epistemology is the first component, which is embedded in the theory standpoint as a method of examining the natural world and constructing meaning from it. Objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism are the three main subtypes of epistemology. The

second component, a theoretical perspective, explains the underlying philosophical stance of the methodology. It supports the major suppositions of methodology selection. Positivism (and post-positivism) is one major kind of theoretical perspective as are interpretivism, critical thinking, feminism, postmodernism, etc. The third component, research methodology, refers to the strategy, action plan and study design that influence the selected research methodologies. The choice of a method and the specific ways in which this method is used, is justified by its methodology (Crotty, 1998; Al-Ababneh, 2020).

#### 3.2.1.1. Epistemology

The research into knowledge is called 'epistemology'. Knowledge is involved in epistemology, which embodies a certain concept of what knowledge entails and illustrates how we come to know something we know (Crotty, 1998; Al-Ababneh, 2020). Epistemology provides the answer to the question: 'How can we know the reality?'. Owing to the nature of the present research, this method was used. This method provided the organisation with insight into the experiences of Gen Z in the workplace, particularly in CTL, where research on the topic was not yet done before this study.

#### 3.2.1.2 Interpretivism

Studies on performance management, leadership, organisational work-life balance practices, sustainable human resource management and others are frequently examined using the interpretive approach (Godinho et al., 2018). (Podgorodnichenko et al., 2020). For two key reasons, the study used an interpretive research methodology. Firstly, when a study tries to understand the subjective experience of humans, in this case Gen Z employees, such an approach is helpful when scientific evidence is lacking and it aids in theory development (Smith & Bowers-Brown, 2010). Secondly, the method assists in identifying undiscovered facts and pertinent research issues for further research and studies. The interpretivist's job, according to Saunders et al. (2019), is to combine the social environment of the research participants and understand it from their point of view.

### 3.2.2. Research approach

This sub-section sets out the research strategy using a qualitative research method. According to Hennink et al. (2020), qualitative research is a technique that enables an in-depth examination of people's experiences utilising a specific set of research methodologies such as focus group interviews, in-depth interview sessions and visual tools. Results from qualitative research are expressed verbally. These are used to understand concepts, theories or personal experiences. By carrying out this kind of research, comprehensive knowledge on topics that are not generally understood is obtained (Streefkerk, 2022). The researcher's goal was to grasp the aspirations of Generation Z as they get ready to enter the workforce or while they are in the workforce, which does not generalise the findings but instead offers an insight into the issue being examined (Maroun, 2012).

The researcher used a qualitative research strategy to collect data for the study to understand and assess the information and to provide an in-depth understanding of the creation of the concept from the title: "Onboarding Gen Z at the Centre for Teaching and Learning at the University of the Free State". This enabled the researcher and the public to better understand participants' attitudes, interactions, behaviours and beliefs regarding onboarding in the workplace. An interpretive research by a way of structured interviews with individuals from the sampled population of the CTL department, made this possible. As a result, CTL may have included thoughts, perspectives and proposals of the participants to ensure that Generation Z were appropriately embraced into the organisation, subject to certain constraints.

These were the objectives that the studies qualitative and interpretive approach addressed:

#### Primary objective

The primary objective is to assess an onboarding programme for Gen Z at the CTL.

#### Secondary objectives

In achieving the primary objective, specific objectives have been established:

- To provide an overview of an onboarding programme;
- To identify challenges and expectations experienced by Gen Z in the workplace;
- To identify the challenges and expectations CTL supervisors experience regarding Gen Z employees; and
- To propose ideas for an onboarding programme for the CTL.

Two interview question documents were developed for this study, because of the nature and information needed in order to address the objectives. (i) Gen Z employees, and (ii) Gen Z supervisors were invited to participate in interviews to learn more about the subject matter and gain some perspective on the current environment.

The Gen Z participants were asked different questions from those asked to the supervisors. Questions that were posed to Gen Z employees were about their workplace expectations before commencing the role and after experiencing the role, obstacles and challenges experienced in the role, measures that were put into place to combat the challenges and the kind of support that was received from supervisors. This set of questions was followed by questions about onboarding.

A different set of questions was posed to the supervisors of Gen Z employees about their workplace expectations of the employee before they commenced their role and how they experienced the employee after a few months in the role, challenges they experienced in managing a Gen Z employee and what measures were put into place to support the employee. This set of questions was also followed by questions about onboarding.

Moreover, demographic data was acquired, especially essential information to establish participants' status such as the participants' year of birth, gender, ethnicity, years of work experience and current job level they hold in the organisation.

### 3.3 Sampling

It is important to establish certain fundamental terminology that are pertinent to debates regarding sampling in this context (Robson & McCartan, 2011, p. 276):

- population: ‘the entire collection of pertinent cases’; and
- sample: ‘a section of the general public’.

Upon reflection on the differences between population and sample in this context, sampling acts as a link between methodological and theoretical discussions that have their roots in the selected theory (Robson & McCartan, 2011).

#### 3.3.1 Population

The two terms ‘population’ and ‘individual’ are not necessarily synonymous in this study. The group that you are interested in assessing is called a population. The group you chose for your data collection is referred to as a sample. The sample size is always smaller than the total population (Bhandari, 2020).

The most popular method of gathering data for interpretive research is interviews, which can be conducted over the phone, in person or in focus groups (Busetto et al., 2020). Along with conducting interviews, another technique used is direct observation, in which the researcher can either act as a passive spectator or an active participant who contributes their thoughts on the experience under research. Participants were identified from one educational institution, the UFS, they were students employed at CTL, specifically at the High Impact Practice Division. CTL employs over 300 student employees; the majority falls within the Gen Z age category.

Supervisors who supervised Gen Z employees constituted an additional population. At the time of the study there were 20 supervisors who supervised and managed Gen Z employees in the High Impact Practice Division of the CTL. The sample did not need to be typical of the population, because the aim of qualitative research is to understand rather than to generalise (Andrade, 2020).

For this study, the work of Crilly and Moroşanu Firth (2019) in qualitative research as the underlying principle; the researcher employed a thematic analysis to gather insights from several in-depth interviews. The researcher used analytical generalisation, even though it was not stated explicitly, and moved back and forth between the data, earlier research and literature, as well as theory for the insights that were written up.

### 3.3.2 Sample strategy and sampling

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is employed to gather in-depth information on a particular experience rather than drawing conclusions from statistics (Rahi: 2017). The researcher concentrated on the use of the purposive selection technique to choose the participants who made up the sample because only a chosen few could give the pertinent themes that emerged, due to either not having the necessary work experience or not understanding and answering the question correctly.

When the audience is relatively small and focused, a purposeful sampling is typically used. According to Silverman (2020), a smaller sample size is often used in qualitative research to allow for the development of the concepts and the acquisition of deeper knowledge. When investigating a certain topic, qualitative research aims to answer the 'how', 'why' and 'what' questions (Haven & Van Grootel, 2019). This information may be collected verbally, in writing, through interviews or in focus groups.

For the study, two sample groups were used, (i) participants that fall within the Gen Z age cohort in CTL and (ii) participants that supervise Gen Z employees. The reason why two groups were chosen, was that research question 1 and 2 had to be addressed; the findings of research questions 1 and 2 also had to address research question 3 in order to cover the primary and secondary objectives of this research project. The first sample group consisted of 10 to 30 interviews with a population of 300 Gen Z employees with 10 structured questions; a total number of 13 interviews took place, as data saturation was reached. The second sample group consisted of five to 10 interviews with a population of 20 supervisors who supervised Gen Z employees with 10 interview questions; a total number of seven interviews took place. Two sets of interview questions were created and

asked, one set was for the Gen Z employee group and the other was for the Gen Z supervisor group.

The first criterion required participants to have any work experience as members of the Gen Z cohort and the supervisors to have some experience managing Gen Z employees. The participants were given an overview of the study's goals and were asked to mention as part of the biographical detail section, how much work experience they possess. Participants in interpretive research should have first-hand experience of the phenomena being examined, according to Chillakuri (2020).

The second criterion for this study was to identify the challenges Gen Z employees experienced in the workplace and, from the supervisors' perspective, to identify the challenges they experienced working with Gen Z youth.

The third criterion, crucial for this study, was to ascertain whether participants had experienced onboarding at a prior or current organisation. Some of the participants did not experience an onboarding programme; this was due to their appointed position, as not all appointed employees took part in an onboarding programme set up by Human Resources (HR) at the university. However, the participants were aware of how the organisation worked and how employee interactions were handled.

Sampling techniques can be roughly divided into probability-based techniques and non-probability-based techniques or convenience samples. When conducting an exploratory or formative research with populations that have not been studied before, non-probability-based sampling techniques can be helpful. Samples created using non-probability-based sampling techniques, however, have a limited capacity for generalisation and are not suitable for testing hypotheses about a larger population (Raifman et al., 2022).

#### 3.3.2.1 Non-probability sampling

The participants in this study were chosen by the researcher using a non-probability sampling technique. Rahi (2017) asserts that non-probability sampling is chosen based on certain criteria and that little effort is made to develop a representative sample.

According to Bhandari (2020), non-probability sampling, in contrast to probability sampling, gathers a random selection from the total population; each person has an equal chance of selection. Rahi (2017) adds that this type of sample is simpler to obtain. The participants took part in the study voluntarily and therefore no criteria were used for the sample.

The researcher focused on using a purposive selection strategy to determine the subjects that made up the sample because only a smaller number of participants were required to provide the essential themes that emerged. A purposive sample has characteristics that are predetermined for the objectives of the study (Andrade, 2020). To create a purposeful sample of cases with characteristics of interest, Crilly and Moroşanu Firth (2019) employ several criteria (e.g., the development of totally new material with potential for in-depth data access). This limits the scope of research and serves as a foundation for the growth of rich in-depth discoveries.

### 3.3.3 Inclusion and exclusion

For the purposes of this study, the Gen Z responders had to form part of the 18–25 age as per the definition of Gen Z youth in CTL, whereas the supervisors of those employees did not need to abide by a specific age range. Consequently, only employees between the ages of 18–25 years of age and their supervisors were invited for interviews. Participants were chosen from among those working as student assistants, teaching assistants, research assistants, learning facilitators, interns and assistant officers. Supervisors of Gen Z were invited from the management team, senior officers, chief officers, assistant directors and directors at the UFS and, more specifically, from the CTL.

Only participants who had some work experience from their current position and or had prior work experience were included. Next, the researcher separated the participant's feedback into two groups; (i) information gained from Gen Z participants and (ii) information gained from those who have experience supervising Gen Z employees. This was crucial for the study because the researcher needed to gain first-hand knowledge from the groups, which helped in making a comparison between the two groups. All employees of CTL were not typically exposed to all UFS HR practices in CTL throughout

their employment. However, these participants should be aware how organisations work and how employee interactions are handled.

The participants for the first group were from a range of Student Assistants to Senior Assistant Officers and the participants from the second group were supervisors from a range of Senior Officers to Directors.

The first criterion for the study was that the participants should have had work experience from a previous or current position and should have formed part of the Gen Z cohort. The supervisors should have had experienced managing Gen Z employees. The participants were given an overview of the study's goals at the start of the interview. It turned out that some participants in the group did not have prior working experience due to their age.

The second criterion for the study was to identify the challenges Gen Z employees experienced in the workplace and on the supervisor's end, to identify the challenges supervisors experienced when working with Gen Z youth.

The third criterion, which was crucial for this study, was to ascertain if participants had experienced onboarding as a programme at their prior or current organisation. Some of the participants had not had onboarding experience due to their position because not all positions at the university were visible to HR practices. However, the participants were made aware of how the organisation worked and how employee interactions were handled.

#### 3.3.4. Data saturation

This topic has often focused on obtaining saturation across academic disciplines and approximately over the past 50 years (Morse, 1995; Guest et al., 2020). In the 1967 book, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*, Glaser and Strauss (1967) introduced the idea of saturation as 'theoretical saturation' to the area of qualitative research. They defined the term as the moment when no new data was found where the researcher could develop attributes of the category. The term, which refers to the phase when the theoretical model,

which is being developed, steady state was created expressly for the practice of creating and evaluating theoretical models using qualitative data. Yet, many qualitative data studies used the inductive thematic analysis rather than the specialised grounded theory method. Over time, the term 'data saturation' has been increasingly embraced to reflect a wider applicability of the term and concept. In this larger sense, saturation is sometimes defined as the stage of data collection and analysis when new data gives little to no additional information to address the research issue (Guest et al., 2020).

### **3.4 Data collection method**

Data gathering is the legwork needed to produce information in the investigation. After deciding on the research approach to be used, in this case a qualitative approach, the data gathering techniques were chosen. Quinlan et al., (2019) emphasised that the data gathering techniques employed must produce the necessary data. Primary and secondary procedures are used to obtain data. Observation, interviews, focus group discussions, surveys and questionnaires are the main techniques for gathering data.

The researcher employed a qualitative methodology and conducted semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, according to Morgan Brett and Wheeler (2022), are a flexible interview method that may be used to gather a variety of information. They may be structured according to the participants and/or topic investigated. One of the data collection methods used in this study, was a thematic method, where the researcher had a range of topics to discuss.

#### **3.4.1 Data collection technique**

The researcher employed semi-structured interviews to gather data for this study. According to Tracy (2019), interviews can reveal participants' motivations, experiences and opinions in addition to their beliefs. These explanations and reasons for specific behaviours and opinions are useful in a qualitative research method (Tracy, 2019). A semi-structured interview does not follow a particular order, so new ideas may be proposed based on the responses from the participants (Tracy, 2019).

Thirteen Gen Z employees and seven CTL supervisors were interviewed individually and a total number of 10 questions were asked. Through the interview procedure, the researcher was able to establish a meaningful rapport with each participant. The responses to the issues and the subsequent discussion between the parties enabled the researcher to delve into the study objectives and so help answer the research question. Interviews, by their very nature, represent the viewpoints of the interviewees, which necessarily introduce some bias (Barrio et al., 2022). The researcher had to ensure that any interview-related bias would be considered when drawing research conclusions and findings.

Interviews had a runtime of 20 to 60 minutes and audio was recorded and transcribed. Data was analysed thematically in response to the research questions; the researcher went through the data and isolated certain themes and patterns that stemmed from it. Themes were looked at in the collected data sets, Gen Z employees and Gen Z supervisors and assessed for relevance. According to Crosley (2021), thematic analysis is quite helpful when working with a vast data set because it can separate and arrange vast sets of data in a way that makes it much easier to consume.

Whereas CTL is designed as open offices, the researcher's procedure entailed conducting the face-to-face interviews in a closed, reserved space. Interviews were only conducted face-to-face for uniformity in data gathering. The researcher emailed the informed consent forms to the participants that showed interest and agreed to being interviewed. In the interview, the researcher reminded the participants of the informed consent forms that were emailed to them and collected the signed documents. If the participants forgot to bring their own copy, backup copies were readily available for them to sign before the researcher continued. The researcher proceeded in running through the informed consent and outlined the purpose of the interview and the intended use of the data.

The sessions were recorded and the option to transcribe was chosen only if the participant was comfortable enough to proceed. The researcher used a laptop and joined Microsoft Teams for the purposes of the audio recording and transcription with the participants' permission. The researcher went through the recording and altered the transcription so that it accurately represented the interview because Microsoft Teams is not 100% correct in its transcriptions due to different accents that pull through on the application.

The interviewees responded to the questions and shared their opinions on their working experience and how they envisioned their professional development. This approach proved useful and enlightening, which gave insight into the behavioural attitudes of Generation Z employees working at CTL. The questionnaire was divided in two parts, first section looked at the research objective 1, the challenges and expectations of working versus having experienced working. The second section, looked at research question 3, all about onboarding, to ascertain whether the participants knew what onboarding was, if not then a definition was provided.

The background to the study, the format and duration of the interviews, the confidentiality statement, the consent form and the participants' contact information were all provided to the participants by email. After sending out communication via email and responding, participants were invited to the interviews at a time which they found convenient. The completed consent forms were acquired prior to the interviews.

The researcher followed a script that included information on the duration of the interview, the purpose of the interview and data, the importance of their participation, a reminder that the interviews were being recorded, and confirmation to proceed with the interview. An introduction covering Generation Z, a synopsis of earlier generation cohorts and the goal of the interview was delivered to the participants. The sample had participants who had some job experience, either from their current position or from a former position. It is essential that participants in interpretive research have had first-hand knowledge and experience under the study (Gioia et al., 2012). The interviews started on time and were scheduled apart from one another so that the other participants would not have to wait if

one interview took longer than expected. All the interviews were completed by the scheduled time, see Appendix C for the interview schedule.

### **3.5. Data analysis**

After the data was transcribed, the data was analysed using the qualitative data analysis programme Atlas.ti, which was obtained and downloaded from the internet. The researcher reviewed the information to highlight the themes that emerged from the interviews.

The researcher employed codes during the thematic analysis procedure. A code is a name given to a word document that is used to identify and list the key aspects of a piece of data, such as an interview transcript (Crosley, 2021). Codes are essential since they serve as the basis for themes. According to Crosley (2021), a dataset trend can be identified as a theme because it frequently shows up in the data. The researcher effectively synthesised the data sets from the data by grouping the codes into themes, which helped in addressing the research question(s) and fulfilling the study objectives and aims.

The coding and transcripts were typed and put in a folder. The researcher underwent training on how to work on the analysis programme and learned how to identify and categorise the codes into themes. Several codes were grouped in the validation process, further grouping sub codes for easy examination. This was done to ensure the researcher's objectivity and to guard against any potential biases. The researcher attentively read each transcript several times to become familiar with the data and identify recurring patterns and new topics.

A comparison of the replies from supervisors and employees was done to find connections, similarities or differences between the groups. The analysis determined whether the leaders' initiatives were attractive to Gen Z in terms of their reaction times and what would motivate them to remain in the organisation.

### 3.5.1. Trustworthiness of the data

The experience of reading papers on qualitative research can vary greatly. There are numerous approaches for organising qualitative data and rhetorical frameworks for writing (Stahl et al., 2020). The researcher made use of the technique, data saturation to enhance the credibility of the data (Guest et al., 2020). To guarantee that the conclusions in a study are reliable, qualitative researchers must provide evidence of the following four main criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability.

#### 3.5.1.1. Credibility

“How congruent are the findings with reality?” is the question of credibility. The goal is to comprehend how the findings as reported ‘hang together’ or how the concepts relate to one another. The construct of credibility involves the reporter(s) and the reader(s) who come after them (Stahl et al., 2020). The strategy used was to increase trustworthiness by using several triangulation techniques. According to Stahl et al. (2020), triangulation is a process of continually establishing recognisable patterns, utilising data or procedures from several sources in the field. More precisely, data triangulation refers to the process of establishing conclusions using multiple sources of data (e.g., transcript data, all centred on the same phenomenon).

#### 3.5.1.2. Transferability

Transferability, as its name suggests, assesses how much or how little the study's findings apply to different situations, locations and environments. Enough information about the CTL, participants and data collection techniques were included in the study. This aids in other researchers' assessment of the generalisability of their findings (Stahl et al., 2020).

#### 3.5.1.3. Dependability

The outcomes of a study can be measured or shown to be consistent and reliable using dependability (Stahl et al., 2020). The first step in ensuring that the study can be hypothetically repeated by other researchers and provide consistent results is to keep

note of the exact procedures that the researcher employs for data collection, processing and interpretation. In chapter 1 and 3 of this study, more context is provided about each piece of data so that the study may be replicated. Starting procedure would be to establish the group of interviewee's. then set up a time and date for the interview which is recorded via Microsoft Teams and transcribed and recorded for analysis. Transcription is downloaded and validated and uploaded into Atlas.ti, the software for analysis and code the data so that themes emerge.

#### 3.5.1.4. Confirmability

For qualitative research, objectivity need not always be crucial as long as the author discloses any personal biases (Stahl et al., 2020). A common way to prove confirmability is to provide an audit trail that explains every stage of the data analysis and demonstrates that the research conclusions are unbiased and fairly represent the responses of the participants.

### **3.6 Ethical considerations**

According to Bhandari (2022), ethical research concerns are a collection of guidelines that regulate the study's design and methods. When gathering data from participants, researchers must always adhere to a set of ethical principles. Maintaining credibility, respecting human rights and dignity and collaborating with society all require strong research ethics. These standards ensure that the participants participated freely, knowingly and securely in the research. This researcher abided by and adhered to the UFS's ethical guidelines by securing the required authorisation, informed consent and voluntary participation, as well as maintaining confidentiality and avoiding harm.

The researcher obtained ethical approval from the necessary parties for the research project before it proceeded (Arifin, 2018). According to Arifin (2018), ethical approval is the general safeguarding of the subjects through a procedure of acceptable ethical principles that will enable the subjects to feel safeguarded throughout the course of the study. In this study, the following ethical issues were considered:

### 3.6.1 Permission obtained

Usually, the integrity of the researcher determines the quality of any research effort, as noted by Quinlan et al. (2019). Permission from the department, which conducts the study among the participants, is essential to obtain (Arfin: 2018). The researcher followed the ethical guidelines of the UFS and the Business School. The eRIMS platform, often known as RIMS, is used by the UFS. This website, which is used to submit applications for ethical clearance, is accessible to all enrolled UFS students and employees. Each application for ethical clearance submitted to the General/Human Research Ethics Committee (GHREC) is examined by ethics reviewers who make suggestions for the application's outcome based on the ethical issues revealed by the study (University for the Free State: n.d).

Before the application was submitted, a scientific review process was followed and approved by the researcher's supervisor. In the scientific review, a document of approval by the organisation where the research would be conducted, was obtained. The researcher had sent through an email and letter to the Director of the CTL to conduct the research, followed by an email. After approval (see Appendix D) was obtained from the Director (see Appendix D), permission was obtained by supervisors in the High Impact Division at the CTL.

When approval (ethical clearance number: UFS-HSD2023/0568) was granted, the researcher moved forward with the study and specified who the participants were and all information relating to the interviews. All participants in the study gave their written consent. The Director of CTL and supervisors granted the researcher authorisation to proceed with the study.

### 3.6.2 Informed consent and voluntarily consent

According to Bhandari (2022), all potential information required for participants to decide whether to partake in the study, must be provided and understood by all participants. In compliance with the consent forms principle, participants must get complete information

about the study's procedures. This includes details on the advantages, dangers, funding and institutional support of the study.

The goal of the study was explained to participants in a language that they can understand, together with any other factors that may reasonably be expected to affect their willingness to participate (Bryman et al., 2021). The participants were given a full understanding of the interview process and provide their consent in the form of the signed informed consent forms, which were sent via email the day the interview date and time was communicated, which was a week before the interviews were conducted.

The researcher respected the participants' right to decline participation in the study and to discontinue at any time during the process; this means that participants could refuse to answer any questions or withdraw at any time. All participants, according to Clark-Kazak (2017), must formally consent to participate in the study after being advised of the risks and potential rewards of doing so. Each subject should agree to participate willingly in the study and should not feel coerced (Clark-Kazak, 2017). To participate in the study, participants had to provide their completed informed consent forms that indicated their informed and voluntary consent.

### 3.6.3 Confidentiality

Especially in situations where the sample group is small, all researchers have a duty to respect the privacy of the participants and refrain from disclosing or sharing any identifying traits that would jeopardise their anonymity (Clark-Kazak, 2017). Participants may suffer harm if the researcher doesn't maintain study data security and participants' confidentiality.

Confidentiality is demonstrated by identifying the participants but leaving out all personal information such as their names in the report on the study (Bhandari, 2022). Pseudonyms are used instead. Throughout the semi-structured interviews, the researcher respected the participants' privacy by withholding their names and any employee details. The interviews did not ask for any personal information apart from age, gender, work

experience and position held in CTL. No names or personnel numbers were necessary because confidentiality was protected.

In the semi-structured interviews conducted, the researcher safeguarded the confidentiality of every participant by refraining from disclosing names or personnel information. Their private information was not requested in the questionnaires. An additional measure was to have a password protecting the document where the transcription was saved.

At the CTL, working with data is very important and keeping in line with the POPIA Act, no employee information was provided or used other than what was agreed upon. Pseudonyms were used to identify the different participants who were interviewed and there was no mention or differentiation made between the High Impact Practice Division and other divisions to safeguard the employees working for the various divisions.

#### 3.6.4 No harm

According to Clark-Kazak (2017), unless they are pertinent to the study, researchers should steer clear of sensitive information and/or information which could cause potential harm to the participants. Preventing harm and reducing danger and exploitation should be top priorities in research. Putting a participant at a level where danger could least be experienced is what is meant by the phrase 'no harm'. It is the researcher's duty to safeguard the interviewees (Githaiga et al., 2022).

The researcher weighed the advantages and disadvantages of inviting participants into the study. Physical danger, loss of privacy, unanticipated side effects, emotional pain or embarrassment, costs, physical pain, job security and lost time were a few examples of the participants' risks. Access to a potentially beneficial intervention, a better understanding and the gratification of assisting others with comparable problems were potential advantages (Johansen, 2008; Githaiga et al., 2022).

The signed informed consent form sent out before the appointments were made for the interview, specifically mentioned the potential risks and advantages. To adhere to the beneficence principle, the researcher placed safeguards to reduce any suffering or harm. According to the beneficence principle, researchers are also required to safeguard participants from exploitation. It is necessary to safeguard any information that study participants may have submitted.

Throughout the study, no participant was coerced or otherwise physically or psychologically abused. The researcher made sure that the participants' information was kept confidential by storing it in a management system for files on their personal laptop. It would only be used as evidence if the Business School requested it.

### 3.6.5 Conflict of interest

Field (2009) defines conflict of interest as a set of circumstances that raises the possibility that a secondary interest would improperly influence professional judgement or conduct with respect to a principal interest. This is supported by Østergaard (2007). Conducting a pertinent and objective inquiry should be the researcher's main goal in a research study. A risk of being influenced by a secondary interest is known as a conflict of interest.

The population (up to hundred of the population) that was identified for the research, works in the same division as the researcher who heads one of the divisions in High Impact Practices at the CTL; therefore, the researcher could not send out any communication regarding the research study. If the researcher had contacted or communicated with this specific group, many employees could have thought that they would need to participate in the study as part of their employment roles and responsibilities, eliminating voluntary participation.

The researcher devised a strategy to establish an independent data safety and monitoring board, minimise undue influence from conflict of interest, facilitate impartiality and appear to be conflict-free (Field, 2009; Østergaard, 2021). Therefore, the researcher used the Teaching Coordinator (to whom the group directly reports) to send out the communication

regarding the study on the researcher's behalf. In this way, the researcher avoided participants feeling coerced or obliged to participate in the study but rather to participate of their own free will. Whereas supervisors who manage Gen Z employees, were emailed directly; they were invited to be interviewed due to their role as Gen Z supervisors.

### 3.6.6 Risk-benefit ratio

According to the Business School (2023), the risk-benefit ratio should be examined in every research effort. The risks or potential harm to the participants will, at the very least, be outweighed by the potential benefits of the research. This does not imply that just because there could be advantages to the research, participants could be subjected to needless risks or injury. In a research study project, the scope of the advantages and disadvantages should both be considered.

In a perfect world, vulnerable participants and those who might be exposed to risk or injury should not participate in study. When including vulnerable people in research, great thought should go into the justification for doing so, which should highlight the significance of the inclusion and the value it contributes to the study (Business School, 2023).

For the purposes of this research study, the researcher's goal was to benefit from conducting such a study that has not been done at the CTL before or in fact in the higher education space in the country, therefore, there was no risk to any participants, as they were merely a means to gain understanding and data to be used in future studies.

## **3.7 Conclusion**

The researcher has tackled this study with a solid foundation thanks to consideration and the presence of literature and methodology. An inductive technique and an interpretative perspective were used to support speculative research conclusions. The research question was explored using a qualitative approach that included questions based on the research objectives, semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis. Based on the findings from the interview process and the literature review, this study was able to draw

some preliminary conclusions about the investigation. Research constraints, ethical concerns, as well as reliability and validity issues have all been noted and considered. The following chapter analyses and interprets the data that was gathered.

## **Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter covered the research strategy and methodology that were applied in this investigation. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate and interpret the data that the researcher collected during the process of gathering data. To gain understanding of the data gathered, the researcher will analyse and gain insight into the following: as the primary objective looks at proposing an onboarding programme for Gen Z at the CTL. With secondary objectives such as; (i) providing an overview of a onboarding programme from literature, (ii) identifying challenges and expectations experienced by Gen Z in the workplace; (iii) identifying challenges and expectations CTL supervisors experience regarding Gen Z employees; and (iv) proposing ideas for an onboarding programme for the CTL based on the expectations and challenges found.

## Chapter 4: Data analysis and interpretation

### 4.2 Introduction

The previous chapter covered the research strategy and methodology that were applied in this investigation. The purpose of this chapter is to evaluate and interpret the data that the researcher collected during the process of gathering data. To gain understanding of the data gathered, the researcher will analyse and gain insight into the following: as the primary objective looks at proposing an onboarding programme for Gen Z at the CTL. With secondary objectives such as; (i) providing an overview of a onboarding programme from literature, (ii) identifying challenges and expectations experienced by Gen Z in the workplace; (iii) identifying challenges and expectations CTL supervisors experience regarding Gen Z employees; and (iv) proposing ideas for an onboarding programme for the CTL based on the expectations and challenges found.

The thematic coding of the data produced the following themes regarding onboarding: definition, experience in onboarding and its programme and process, type of onboarding and onboarding experiences. The themes that emerged from expectations and challenges were: time management, communication, redundancy of work and ongoing support. This chapter defines each key theme, before outlining and interpreting each subtheme and discussing how they interact to form the overarching findings.

In this qualitative study, data saturation was attained and the collected information reached a point of redundancy from the thirteenth interview for Gen Z employees and reached data saturation for Gen Z supervisors from the seventh interview, where additional interviews or observations yielded no substantially new or transformative insights. As the researcher delved into the experiences, expectations and perceptions of Gen Z employees that reached data saturation signified a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors influencing integration into the workplace. This saturation point was essential for offering nuanced recommendations and strategies that align with the distinctive needs of Gen Z, contributing to the efficacy of onboarding practices and, consequently, fostering a more engaged and productive workforce.

Empirical data was employed in a strategy to evaluate saturation that was attained in less than twenty-five interviews, or between nine and seventeen interviews excluding outliers, in all sixteen tests of saturation using data from in-depth interviews. According to Constantinou et al. (2017) saturation varies from five to twenty-four interviews throughout sixteen tests with different techniques to evaluate saturation.

## 4.2 Analysis and interpretation of biographical data

### 4.2.1 Biographical information

Participants in the study included a sample of 10 to 30 Gen Z employees and seven to 10 Gen Z supervisors who were part of the CTL at the UFS.

Regarding the Gen Z employee cohort, all the participants were African and regarding age groups, 4 individuals were in the 21 to 23 years age group, while 9 individuals were in the 24 to 25 years age group. Biographical information also included years of work experience and job level for each participant, who were student assistants, teaching assistants, research assistants and interns. The work experience data was as follows; five Gen Z employees had one to two years of work experience; four Gen Z employees had two to three years' work experience and four Gen Z employees had three to four years' work experience (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Gen Z employee biographical data summary

Participants	Participants' age range	Ethnicity	Work experience
A	21 - 23	African	1-2
B	21 - 23	African	2-3
C	21 - 23	African	1-2
D	21 - 23	African	2-3
E	24 - 25	African	2-3
F	24 - 25	African	2-3

<b>G</b>	24 - 25	African	1-2
<b>H</b>	24 - 25	African	3-4
<b>I</b>	24 - 25	African	3-4
<b>J</b>	24 - 25	African	1-2
<b>K</b>	24 - 25	African	1-2
<b>L</b>	24 - 25	African	3-4
<b>M</b>	24 - 25	African	3-4

Regarding the Gen Z supervisors' cohort, three participants were African, with the minority covering the coloured and Caucasian races. The majority was female, except for two males and regarding age groups: two individuals were in the 28 to 32 years age group, three individuals were in the 33 to 37 years age group and one individual was in the 37 to 42 years age group. The last biographical information includes the years of work experience and job level of each participant who were officers, senior officers and assistant directors. The work experience data was as follows: three Gen Z supervisors had one to five years' work experience; two Gen Z supervisors had five to 10 years' work experience, one Gen Z supervisor had 10 to 15 years' work experience and one Gen Z supervisor had 15 to 20 years' work experience (see Table 4.2).

*Table 4.2: Gen Z supervisor biographical summary*

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Participants age range</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Work experience</b>
<b>A</b>	28-32	Female	1-5
<b>B</b>	28-32	Male	5-10
<b>C</b>	33-37	Female	1-5
<b>D</b>	33-37	Female	1-5
<b>E</b>	33-37	Male	5-10
<b>F</b>	33-37	Female	15-20
<b>G</b>	37-42	Female	10-15

### 4.2.2 Interview approach

There was a total of 13 participants from the Gen Z employees' sample and 7 participants from the Gen Z supervisors' sample who were interviewed virtually via the Microsoft Teams platform. Each interview was 20 - 40 minutes on average. The interview questions were structured to gain information on challenges and expectations versus the experience of working and assessing onboarding within the CTL at the UFS (see Appendix A and B for sample questions). The researcher used semi-structured interviews to allow for room to ask follow-up questions on certain themes or topics that emerged to have a better understanding and perspective on participants' answers and point of view on onboarding. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were typed in Arial 12 on 1,5 line spacing and were, on average, 120 pages long. The data was analysed by the researcher by taking notes during the interview and after all interviews, a thematic analysis of the themes identified.

## **4.3 Analysis and interpretation of Onboarding**

### 4.3.1 Definition of onboarding

In terms of the definition of onboarding, most of the Gen Z employee participants did not know and had not heard of onboarding prior to the interview; they needed a definition to be provided. The few Gen Z employees who provided an understanding, mentioned that onboarding took place when new recruits were introduced and socialised into the organisation, were trained and when policies and expectations about a job are explained to them. This was in line with what Chillakuri (2020) describes as onboarding, however, essential elements were missing. In the sample interviewed, an example of a definition of onboarding is illustrated below.

Gen Z employee Participant A:

*“Okay. So my understanding from onboarding, because I’ve done HR modules in my undergrad, is, um, the new hire or the newly appointed employee is, um, after they’ve signed the contract, before the training, is to, I’m going to say, Socialise them to the environment that they’ll be in so onboarding can, you know, taking the new hire around*

*their surroundings. So this is where you're Um, so it's, it's almost like an introduction to the workspace. So some of the things that are not mentioned in the contract, that is where you get a feel of the next phase."*

Additionally, Gen Z employee Participant B had this to say:

*". . . it has to do with, uh, training people into the work environment, giving them a proper, um, uh, giving them a proper training as to how things work inside the way, at the workplace..."*

As expected, Gen Z supervisors had a better understanding of onboarding and Gen Z supervisor A, a senior supervisor, noted the following:

*"Okay, um, from my side, I think, um, onboarding means creating a welcoming environment. Um, and also a sense of belonging to newly appointed employees. So I think it firstly start with hr, whereby they have an induction session to explain the package that you'll be getting for your employment, the medical, the type of medical aid information, and so forth. And then it has to go down to the departments that you are working at, like the focus area. Um Like where you will be employed at. So you should be, um, introduced to their policies, the culture of the organization, of the department, um, and then, uh, also being matched with someone who's doing a similar job."*

What stands out is that Gen Z supervisor Participant A mentions that onboarding starts with HR just like Palmer-Roberts (2020) defines it, whereas Gen Z Participant A and B have little knowledge about what onboarding is in comparison to Chillakuri's (2020) definition. According to the aforementioned author, new hires are familiarised with the organisation's goals, values, rules, responsibilities and procedures, that help new hires adapt to interpersonal and performance aspects of the new job.

#### 4.3.2 Experiences in an onboarding process and programme

When we look at the data from the participants about the experiences and participation in onboarding programmes, all participants had some kind of experience. Most of the Gen Z employees' responses mentioned taking part in orientations, inductions and training

within the CTL, whereas onboarding programmes were conducted by HR at the UFS. All Gen Z supervisors had participated in an onboarding programme for new recruits, but many Gen Z employees did not express the same idea as onboarding was linked to the employees' position. The following response by Gen Z supervisor C mentions this:

*"It does depend on job level, though, so I am seeing more and more that even if it's a full day appointment, assistant researchers, etc. are not, uh, required to attend that sort of onboarding, um, which is why the orientation that we provide within CTL is quite important as well. Uh, though that orientation often does not include all of the HR processes."*

From the above statement, it is clear to see that employees in more full-time positions like interns had opportunities to experience HR onboarding programmes at the UFS, whereas contracted employees experienced the internal trainings, orientations and inductions arranged as per individual departments. This means that Gen Z employees at CTL do not experience the same introduction or onboarding at all, depending on which job level they are. Furthermore, HR takes a more formal approach in a scripted set of organised processes to the programmes, according to Bell (2019).

According to Maurer (2021), the length of onboarding should span at least a year, beginning with the job offer and lasting for 12 months (Chillakuri, 2020). It was interesting to note that the Gen Z employees who took part in onboarding with HR, mentioned that it took place only for a day or two. The rest of the Gen Z participants mentioned that internal orientations, inductions and training took up to a day to two weeks, depending on the department and job level at which they were appointed. Gen Z employee Participant C confirms this in the statement below:

*"The training, you know, is very intense. To do it in a very short and then just acclimatize and then immediately get back to doing your job."*

This was reaffirmed by Gen Z employee Participant D:

*"So, yeah, I can't say my experience have been great or like because sometimes it's just like for an hour and two hours. And sometimes you don't understand some of the things, but you have only limited time and sometimes you have to go back to the recording and sometimes the recording is not uploaded yet."*

*And a suggestion added by Gen Z employee Participant E:*

*“I think they could have been more time given to it because I think it was more focused on, uh, content. Uh, it was more focused on content more than any other thing. And then when you actually go into, um, the work field or start actually having some work, the navigation around it becomes almost like you never had an onboarding or an induction or training of some sort.”*

The fact that not all participants experienced onboarding, yet all of them experienced some sort of orientation, induction and or training taking place in different formats and time durations, is an indication that the challenges Gen Z employees and supervisors experience could be a result of not having a standardised programme to introduce these employees in the workplace.

#### 4.3.3 Types of onboarding

Something interesting that also came out of the study and which was not necessarily something that was asked in the interviews, was the type of onboarding that was conducted. Apart from the fact that the introduction into the workplace differed among job levels in terms of programme and duration, participants experienced onboarding in different formats, as described in the following two extracts below.

Gen Z employee Participant F had some face-to-face experience:

*“It was great because, um, having the training face-to-face instead of just going through the material, reading the material on what is expected of you is, um, I don’t, I don’t have the correct word for it, but I appreciated it. So getting the training and someone explaining to you in detail what is going to be expected of you and you also being given a platform to ask any questions that you have instead of just.”*

Whereas Gen Z supervisor Participant D’s experience was online:

*“So the experience for me, it was not very good because although they played that session, we couldn’t hear most of the things because the session was online and it was conducted from another campus.”*

The extracts above reinforce Chillakuri’s (2020) and Brockman’s (2019) standpoint on finding a flexible and adaptable option for onboarding for Gen Z due to a technologically evolving world. Even though there can be accessibility and usability issues for both face-to-face and online programmes, having mix or hybrid programmes may enhance and improve the experience.

Overall, looking at the data from the sample about the experiences and participating in onboarding process and programmes, Bauer (2020) and Chen’s (2020) four elements of an onboarding programme, namely compliance, clarity, culture and connections are present in various processes being used at the CTL. HR has played its role in providing the policies and procedures of the organisation but there needs to be more integration and implementation between HR and CTL. There also needs to be a generic and standardised approach to onboarding that all recruits, regardless of their job levels, experience at the CTL. Furthermore, every participant, employee and supervisor indicated that they were interested in partaking in an onboarding programme if a programme was created in the CTL.

#### 4.3.4 Onboarding expectations

Gen Z employee participants noted that they would like to be given an overview of what would be expected from them as employees; be introduced to the staff members with whom they would be working; and be informed about the different divisions and values that exist within the CTL, as well as the departments and systems used at the UFS. As expected, they would want to be informed about the culture that exists in the CTL, their roles and responsibilities.

In addition, they expressed that having a person who could guide new recruits in their job, like a mentor of some sort, would be beneficial. Valamis (2021) states that collaborating with representatives in the organisation will help new recruits comprehend the organisations' structure.

Gen Z employee Participant G stated:

*“So that will be my expectation of the onboarding process. And also, um, Yeah, I would say like, that would be my expectations being welcomed into the organisations and then having somebody that will guide me that has already been there for some time so that I can be able to be free and understand that, okay, this person was also in my state and then this is how they gradually adjusted to the environment.”*

Another popular aspect that emerged was the duration of an onboarding programme, which Gen Z employee Participants H and I mentioned:

*“So I think implementing longer periods of training, uh, making sure that everyone is on board, like as a term on boarding, making sure that everyone is on board and. I think that can also yield, like, proper results, and it can also, because now we have to have meetings before we start a new project, that can also eliminate that time of, like, of constant meetings, because we had extensive training, like, we know what to do.”*

*“So it should be continuous. And I'm thinking maybe within three months or so there should be a up session just to get an indication of, um, if the employees understands the new working environment or if they have questions is.”*

These quotes lean into what Berge and Berge (2020) stated, namely that Gen Zs anticipate continuous training from the start of their profession to the finish.

## 4.4 Gen Z employee and supervisor expectations, challenges and support in the workplace

### 4.4.1 Expectations in the workplace

Gen Z employee participants' expectations of their current role had one major thing in common and that was communication. Many participants felt that they would be communicating with their supervisors on a frequent basis but it turned out that the communication was on a needs basis. Many also indicated that interactions with people would be face-to-face but due to the new move to a hybrid learning environment, many interactions were online only.

After Gen Zs worked in their particular role at CTL, communication and human interactions, the expectations of Gen Z employees were not met. When the Gen Z employees reported on whether their expectations were met after working in the role after a while, it seemed that the majority felt that their expectations were not fully met, this is what Gen Z participant B had to say:

*“Um, partly it has in terms of, um, being provided the training to go about or perform our duties. Um, however, there are some aspects that, um, were part of the expectations but were not fulfilled currently. Um, and that is... Um, getting a broad information of the services that we have around at the university. So the training was provided here at CTL, however, just more training on the other services at the institution that I think was not really provided.”*

When Gen Z supervisors commented on their expectations versus their experience of Gen Z employees, many mentioned that transitioning is difficult for them. Gen Z supervisors understand that the new environment might be too much or overwhelming for them and that it takes some time to adjust; others mentioned that if support and guidance were provided, they were likely to transition faster into the role. A higher ranked Gen Z supervisor added that if the employees came into the workplace with a year or two work

experience, they would have a better sense of the organisation's culture and meet the expectations that supervisors have.

Another big expectation that Gen Z supervisors have regarding the Gen Z youth, is that they would be well versed in technology. Gen Z supervisor Participant F mentioned this: *“Um, one of the expectations is that, um, they would be well orientated or well versed in the use of technology. Um, so that's the number one expectation, um, and that could be your basic technological platforms like, of course, your Microsoft Office, um, or even other, um, Technology engines here, things like your, um, let's say, you know, expect them to be well versed in social media, technological platforms as well.”*

However, this expectation also became a challenge that Gen Z supervisors experienced after having worked in the organisation for a few months, Gen Z supervisor Participant F said:

*“Um, so some might not be as familiar and others, and that's really where the challenge comes in, just to get them up to date or on the same level at least then. Um, because the way we then use these technologies is still different to what, you know, they've used it for in the past. Um, so that takes some time for them to get used to it.”*

Looking at the quotes above, we can see a gap between expectation versus experience when it comes to working with technology. According to the literature, Gen Zs were born into a world shaped by digital technologies and are tech savvy (Stahl, 2019). However, from the responses, we can see that there is a clear contradiction and that Gen Zs may use technology to their advantage but need guidance in the workplace with technologies they have not used or seen before.

#### 4.4.2 Challenges in the workplace

Gen Z employees experienced time management as a popular challenge. The majority of Gen Z employees at CTL were students, therefore their time was divided into studies and working at the same time, apart from any co-curricular activities they might have had. Therefore, the anxiety that Gen Z employees felt, stem from this and the pressure of

delivering good results in their studies, while meeting deadlines at work with a high-quality standard. Stemming from time management as a challenge, many Gen Z employees mentioned having to compromise things in their social life to maintain a balanced lifestyle. Gen Z employee Participant B said:

*“The deadlines and also being a student because there were times in life, like, like, for example, last year, I had to do like my third year and fourth year modules at the same time and time management for me at some point, like, was a challenge. Then I had to compromise on some other things and then so that I can be able to balance everything like your social life and everything. So those are the challenges, I had, um, time management and, yeah, finding balance between working as a student, um, yes, and having, actually having, what is it, the social life, so those are the challenges that I had, I’ve been having, um, or have faced, um, in the current role.”*

Another challenge that was popular, particularly among interns, was the redundancy of the work they needed to do. The repetitive work did not challenge them and their skills; therefore, they saw the work as redundant at times, which could lead to being demotivated in doing the work or needing to look for something else. This is what Gen Z employee Participant E had to say:

*“Um, the challenges that I’ve faced, it would be the redundancy of the work that we do. Because generally what we do is we contact students or different students from a specific list that we get. So we do get a rapid response list. And what we do is that we contact plus minus 200 students and in capturing the responses or students responses. That is repetitive work. So that’s a bit of a challenge, um, in terms of that.”*

It is interesting to see that Gen Zs, contrary to popular belief, have a desire for more meaningful work and see redundant work as a challenge. This can also be backed by Peterson (2023), where Gen Zs are less hesitant to ask for what they need and desire.

#### 4.4.3 Gen Z characteristics in the workplace

A positive characteristic that was detected in the data, was that Gen Z supervisors found Gen Z employees adaptable. This is what Gen Z supervisor E had to say about them:

*“I think the number one thing that stands out for me is their adaptability. So when it comes to, let’s say, change management, for instance, in adopting new things, um, they are very quick to adapt, um, they understand in terms, you know, why we are, um, making this change to, let’s say, a certain platform, for instance, if we’re referring back to technology again, um, and, Yeah, the understanding of it is quite well as well.”*

Communication was mentioned by Gen Z supervisors to be a characteristic that they struggled with regarding the Gen Z employees, knowing that they may be tech savvy and use their devices for everything, communicating in the workplace seemed to be a problem. Gen Z supervisor Participant B stated:

*“So, I do experience that I think communication is a little bit lacking. Or we just prefer different communication, um, types. I, I’m experiencing them to be quite verbal and they do the quick response thing. So they would either send, um, a Skype message or a WhatsApp or quick phone call, but not so much phone calls if they can, or they just pop into my office. So there’s a lot of quicker communication, if that makes sense. And a lot of verbal communication. Um. We as we prefer to capture things on email also so that you have that track, especially if you’re discussing an issue or problem or finding a solution up for the email track. And that is interesting to know that there is that communication preference difference that we have.”*

In this instance, the quotes above align with what the literature says about communication; Gen Zs prefer visual and interpersonal communication, having online or virtual calls or a quick pop in face-to-face (Stahl, 2019). Being technologically inclined, the most convenient way of communicating will be the most preferred method of communication with Gen Zs (Ran et al., 2019).

#### 4.4.4 Support in the workplace

An interesting trend among the Gen Z employees was that even though Gen Z supervisors are readily available for support in overcoming challenges and obstacles that are faced, the employees feel more comfortable to reach out to their peers and colleagues for help and/or being self-reliant in trying to troubleshoot the challenges themselves. Yet, they have difficulty collaborating with other stakeholders and people in the organisation due to different personalities. Working together on projects or tasks was also an obstacle that was raised by Gen Z employees. This can be confirmed by a Gen Z supervisor Participant F's experience:

*“ . . . building close relations with everyone that they work closely with them and those that they don't work closely with them, because like, for instance, we're working with internal and external stakeholders, so they have to ensure that they build close relations with everyone, not only those that they are in office with.”*

Having supportive supervisors who are patient may thus represent an incentive for Gen Z employees to stay longer in the job and will allow for results to be seen faster so that they can work independently.

Other challenges that were mentioned, had to do with the specific department and job level tasks that would normally be referred to as 'on-the-job training'. Support was required and provided by Gen Z supervisors most of the time, if not, then colleagues and peers would assist.

The themes analysed were very interesting as the participants were very positive when it came to ideas for a possible onboarding programme, given the hope that CTL were to create one. Gen Z employee participants had very specific expectations when they came into the workplace and they persisted in their roles whether their expectations were addressed or not; some reached out for support and others opted to overcome the challenges themselves. Looking at the literature and the themes that emerged, we can clearly see an alignment as major elements like communication, continuous feedback and purposeful work are present in the literature and in Gen Zs' experience from the

interviews. According to Hughes (2020), Gen Zs prefer individualised training and attention, which can be seen in how Gen Z employees prefer going to their colleagues or peers for assistance.

## **4.5 Discussion**

The onboarding experiences of members of Gen Z employees and Gen Z supervisors at the CTL are the focus of this qualitative study. The findings and discussion section presents the themes that emerged from the interview data sets from the interviews as discussed below.

### **Meaningful work**

Managing Gen Z's expectations is a challenging issue for organisations because they have an idealistic view of the work that they are allocated; they believe that it is interesting and relevant and that their bosses would implement their ideas (Schroth, 2019). Redundant work has emerged as a prominent subject, which emphasises how crucial it is to match onboarding procedures with Gen Z's expectations and skill set. Concerns about monotonous work and the need for more interesting and difficult assignments were raised by the participants. Consequently, managers have an obligation to assist staff members in realising how their work contributes to the success of the company. Employees sense a connection to the organisation's mission and purpose when they find significance in their work. The definition of work is less rigid in today's commercial world. Therefore, it becomes difficult for the company to talk about the work in the onboarding orientation programme because positions in the companies frequently change.

### **Communication**

Gen Z is engaging and quick-to-respond (Chillakuri, 2018). Owing to the fact that they are digital inclined, they prefer instantly to communication (Machová et al., 2021). Additionally, the current study supports earlier research, which found that the majority of the participants recommended instantaneous and real-time communication. Gen Zs are better able to comprehend priorities and receive appropriate guidance when they have

meaningful and frequent conversations with supervisors (Chillakuri, 2020). Furthermore, they think that receiving immediate feedback on their performance is crucial to learning because it allows them to concentrate on their areas of growth rather than waiting for the year-end evaluation (Chillakuri, 2018). Gen Z participants frequently emphasised the value of continuing assistance and contact during the onboarding procedure. Open channels of communication, mentorship programmes and routine check-ins were considered essential for a seamless transition into the job.

### **Technology**

One cannot overemphasise the importance of technology to Gen Z workers' professional lives. Being the first generation to grow up with access to the internet, they acquire the most sought-after skills for their employment and understand that learning new things is a lifelong learning process. Although they are eager to learn new skills, they also anticipate receiving the required training from their new workplace so that they can begin contributing right away. Our results show that participants strongly favour technology-driven onboarding approaches and they emphasise the value of first-hand familiarity with pertinent tools and platforms, which aligns with what Brockman (2019) talks about in literature.

### **Support**

The Gen Z generation indicated that they would like to be mentored by their supervisor. They said they were excited to learn and that they would be new to full-time employment. For students, receiving training in the workplace is essential. They believe they can quickly learn a significant amount of information in this way. The people who should provide the first training and serve as mentors are their superiors and more experienced co-workers. Mentees believe they have an ideal employer who is constantly available to help with queries and provide practical instruction. This holds true for the onboarding process as well, since students assume that their ideal company will provide them with training right away. They need someone to rely on, someone who has answers to all their inquiries because they know have not graduated with all the skills and information they

need. Therefore, the need for constant support and feedback that Schroth (2019) talks about in his literature, holds true.

### **Onboarding**

The findings of the study suggest that the experiences of the interviewees are also in line with the onboarding theory and literature done in chapter 2. The characteristics of Gen Z employees, their intentions and onboarding experiences were mentioned as part of the study; the expectations and challenges that the interviewees experienced were in line with the theory (Gaidhani et al., 2019). What was prevalent was how the themes addressed above spoke to a positive encouragement of the CTL to have its own onboarding programme either in collaboration with HR or as a stand-alone. This result stems from the interviewees who advocated participation in such a programme and had an interest in whether this would be implemented in the near future. The participants also indicated in a positive manner what topics should be included in such a programme. A good indicator of this, was that many participants asked the researcher by when this could be implemented, showing positive interest.

The results imply that an effective onboarding programme could address Gen Zs' expectations of the workplace before they would work in the position; it could keep employees motivated in the workplace and also address other challenges that they experienced. However, there is a gap where a few Gen Z employees did not have an understanding of what onboarding means or its purpose was before they received a definition and example. that could enhance the experience in their first few months in the role. Another important factor to take into account was how long the onboarding programme would take. Gen Z participants agreed that a thorough onboarding process was necessary, they also agreed that programmes should be lengthy.

### **Work expectations**

In the initial stages of the interviews, an important aspect was revealed. Gen Z employees were fully aware and informed about their work experiences and what to expect from their

early careers but the expectations from their supervisors contradict this. According to Schroth (2019), Gen Z workers might have performed more in line with their managers' expectations if they had gotten clearer instructions and on-the-job training.

## **4.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter, the data that the researcher collected during the study was analysed in-depth and interpreted above. The collected data was used to gain an understanding of whether the participants understood the term onboarding and what it could offer as a programme to new recruits but also to understand the onboarding programmes that have already been established at the CTL and/or at the UFS as a whole. The data also looked at the expectations, challenges versus the experience of working in the roles, followed by what support the Gen Z supervisors have made available to the Gen Z employees. Additionally, the participants within the CTL at the UFS expressed their views on what a potential onboarding programme could look like if developed for the CTL and how this could have an impact on work integration issues.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter will provide a summary, conclusion and recommendations of the study. The primary objective was to assess an onboarding programme for Gen Z at the CTL. In achieving the primary objective, the secondary objectives are:

- To provide an overview of an onboarding programme.
- To identify challenges and expectations experienced by Gen Z in the workplace.
- To identify challenges and expectations CTL supervisors experience regarding Gen Z employees; and
- To propose ideas for an onboarding programme for CTL.

The chapter presents the findings of a thematic analysis of the semi-structured interviews conducted individually with 13 Gen Z employees and seven Gen Z supervisors.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

The researcher used semi-structured interviews to gather data about the onboarding concept, challenges, expectations and work experiences of Gen Z employees and supervisors in the CTL at the UFS. The data provided information about the participants' experiences of onboarding, the challenges Gen Z employees experienced, what Gen Z supervisors experienced and what could assist in developing a programme for CTL. In Chapter One, the initial objectives were outlined. Chapter Two presented a literature review on onboarding and the factors surrounding Gen Z and their characteristics in the workplace.

The main findings from Chapter Two firstly established what onboarding is and set this apart from other terms such as 'orientation', 'induction' and 'introductions'. According to Chillakuri (2020), onboarding is a process of introducing hires into the new job, familiarising them with the organisation's goals, values, rules, responsibilities and procedures, as well as socialising the individual into a workplace culture, which helps the new hires adapt to the interpersonal and performance aspects of the new job. Secondly,

an understanding of the onboarding process, duration, type of onboarding and what is included in the programme was obtained. Moreover, it was noted that these elements would be specific to each organisation with the overall objective of making new employees feel accepted and prepared for employment (Harpelund et al., 2019). Thirdly, it was mentioned that HR should set an outline of what an onboarding programme had to entail and their role in the whole process. Lastly, the findings from the literature in terms of the Gen Z characteristics and expectations of the workplace, interestingly pointed out that Gen Zs would benefit more from going through an onboarding programme than an ordinary orientation or training, as they are goal-oriented (Schroth, 2019), prefer visual communication with in person interactions (Ran et al., 2019), want to have interpersonal relationships and participate in teamwork (Hampton & Welsh, 2019) and, most importantly, have a strong desire for purpose and fulfilment in their work.

Chapter Three laid out a detailed description of the methods that were used by the researcher in performing the study. The researcher conducted an exploratory study by following an inductive thinking research approach, using a qualitative research method. Gen Z employees and Gen Z supervisors were invited to participate in semi-structured interviews of ten questions each to learn more about the subject matter and gain some perspective on their environment at the time of the study. Non-probability sampling was used in two sample groups, the first sample group consisted of a population of 300 employees. The second sample group consisted of a population of 20 supervisors who supervised Gen Z workers. There was a total of 13 participants from the Gen Z employees' sample and 7 participants from the Gen Z supervisors' sample who were interviewed. Data was collected using MS Teams to record and transcribe. This was followed by uploading the transcriptions into Atlas.ti, a tool to assist in analysing the information to identify themes by coding the information.

In Chapter 4, a few themes were identified from analysing the data, mainly that the majority of the Gen Z employees did not know or understand what onboarding was about: however, the Gen Z supervisors did. Stemming from this, many Gen Z employees did not have any or enough experience in taking part in an onboarding programme but were very

eager to become part of one if it were offered to them in the CTL. Additionally, Gen Z employees, when asked, provided great suggestions about what should be added in an onboarding programme, given that it were created specifically for the CTL. Regarding the expectations and challenges versus the actual experience of working in a role, we can see in the responses and themes that Gen Zs identified once they worked in the workplace, after a few months. Themes such as transparent communication, time management, redundancy of work and support from their supervisors were expectations and challenges that were mentioned.

### **5.3 Recommendations**

Recommendations are arranged according to the points and themes that emerged from Chapter 4. The study revealed that even though the Gen Z employee participants did not fully understand what onboarding was, they were willing to participate in a programme if it were to be developed by CTL. Both groups, the Gen Z employees and the supervisors gave good insight into what the onboarding programme could include.

#### **5.3.1 Developing an onboarding programme for all CTL employees**

The first of the solutions is to cover the gap of when some employees are onboarded and some experience things such as training or induction or an orientation and make a standardised onboarding programme for CTL. In view of the fact that onboarding does exist at the UFS, I would suggest that CTL works and collaborates with HR for a programme that specifically caters for CTL because they hire a big cohort of employees who are perhaps students and who fall within the Gen Z age group. Tailor the onboarding experience to align with each employee's role, fostering a sense of purpose and relevance from day one. Provide opportunities for new hires to explore different departments and roles, facilitating a smoother transition into their specific job responsibilities.

This programme needs to cater for any type of position which a new employee at the CTL holds so that everyone experiences and is exposed to the exact same information about the CTL and the institution. This can reduce the expectations of understanding the institution and being introduced to the various departments that exist, if there is a need to

make use or reach out to those departments. This can also assist Gen Z supervisors in knowing that regardless of the job levels, the employees have a good foundation that can be built on, depending on their position and the tasks that need to be done.

#### 5.3.1.1 Topics to be covered in the onboarding programme

A list of topics that need to feature in an onboarding programme, which is based on the participants' interviews and responses, follows:

##### **Welcome and introduction**

- Expectations in the workplace: Go through general information that will assist employees in knowing and understanding what is expected of them when they enter the workplace. Touch on things such as professional behaviour and mannerisms in the workplace, dress code and how people greet one another, etc. Look at bringing in past experiences of older employees about how they transitioned from student to young professional.
- Policies and regulations at the UFS: Cover important information that HR provides but also things pertaining to your contract or appointment and rules of the organisation.
- Departments and systems at the UFS: Provide information and knowledge about other departments that exist at the university and systems used at the institution.

##### **Company overview**

- Culture and collaboration at CTL: Go through the values of CTL and how this division collaborates with other divisions within the department. Introduce Arbinger, which is unique to CTL, regarding how people work with people.
- Hierarchy in CTL: Introduce the new staff to the existing staff in the different divisions and indicate who will be working with who.

##### **Job role and responsibilities**

- Role clarity: Provide a breakdown of the daily tasks to get clarity on their role, which is specific to each department.
- Communication and feedback: Look at internal communication tools and channels and what platforms to use to get information or request for assistance more easily. Frequent check-ins to assess development and resolve any issues.

### Introduction to the team

- Social connections: Facilitate connections and communication between employees, employers and colleagues.
- Include cultural components to help the new hire feel like a member of the team.

### Training and work setup

- Job specific training: overview of tools, systems and processes.
- Tour of the office and assistance with work-related technology.

#### 5.3.1.2 Duration of onboarding

It is crucial to find a balance between in-depth instruction and effective time management. To maintain continuous engagement, organisations should customise onboarding durations to the unique demands of Gen Z. This should involve a combination of fundamental training and ongoing learning opportunities. From the literature, onboarding typically ranges from six to 12 months; however, due to the fact that there are different roles for which people are appointed, they could create two types of programmes: one for permanent and one for contract employees. Ad Hoc and contract appointments less than six months need to be reviewed. In addition, the amount of exposure to the workplace needs to be considered to determine an orientation or mini-version of an onboarding programme for ad hoc or contract appointments. The CTL could start with onboarding and then move into different phases that lead into orientation, welcoming and then training per division in CTL, followed by a transition period which would apply to your more permanent or longer durational positions. The onboarding could possibly begin a month or a few weeks prior to the position dependent on HR's recruitment processes, this process can be orchestrated as illustrated in the figure below.

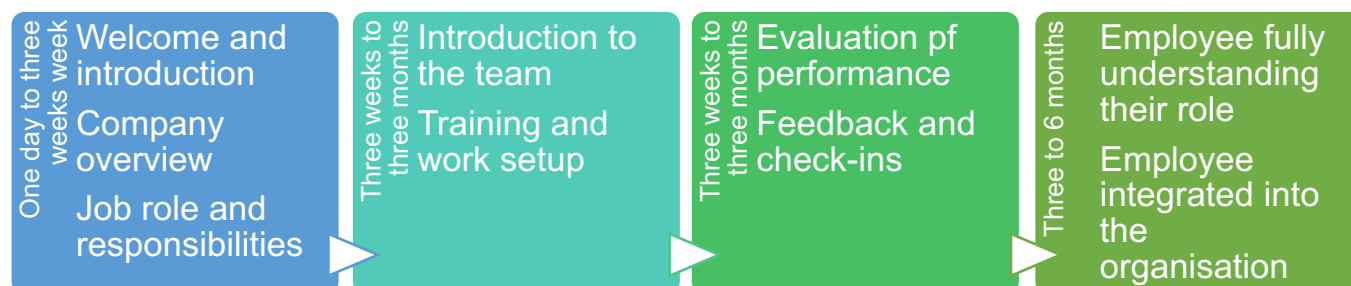


Figure 5.1: The ideal duration of onboarding an employee at the CTL of the UFS

### 5.3.2 Hybrid onboarding programme

In this new digital era, it proves to be more beneficial than disadvantageous to have any programme in hybrid format. The positions offered at CTL require employees to work online, face-to-face and using a combination of the two. Some tasks can and should be done in office; however, some positions require work to be done remotely due to the positions being student positions. Therefore, timetable schedules may differ. There are many motivations for having programmes solely online or face-to-face, but even more motivations for a hybrid model. Onboarding that is recorded can help when employees need to go back to information or use it as a refresher. This will also be useful to Gen Z supervisors who can remind employees of what was mentioned in the onboarding session when they have disciplinary meetings. Having a hybrid programme will ensure that any type of interruptions that may surface, will be avoided and accounted for in a proactive approach and will keep deadlines on par. This can also allow for potential employees time to relocate if need be and continue to be onboarded.

### 5.3.3 Onboarding mentor

Encourage open communication channels from the outset of the onboarding process. Establish mentorship programmes or buddy systems to connect new hires with experienced employees who can provide guidance and support. Utilise digital communication tools such as instant messaging and collaboration platforms to facilitate seamless communication, ensuring that Gen Z employees feel connected and informed. The onboarding programme that takes place at HR at the UFS talks about an onboarding buddy. However, the buddy does not necessarily operate as a mentor because this person only interacts with the new recruit when or if the onboarded requires assistance.

Here, the idea is to have a mentor assigned to the new recruit to show the new employee the ropes but also to have someone they can rely on for support and on-the-go training, which will assist in the work integration into the organisation. The mentor can be a colleague who has been in the organisation for more than one year and who is familiar with the role in which the Gen Z employee has been appointed. Gen Z's expect a high level of support from supervisors, who provide a hands-on approach. At the same time,

supervisors want employees to take initiative. Therefore, having a consistent focus on the employee is not only a learning process to acquire new skills or competencies, but rather a long-term development and integration into the workplace for the employee. The integration and long-term success of Gen Z employees in the company can be significantly impacted by establishing mentorship programmes and encouraging an environment of open communication.

#### 5.4.4 On-the-job training

Many Gen Z employees had challenges that were specific to their role, which is very operational; therefore, the training provided needs to be an on-going process until they have the hang of it in a few months' time. It was mentioned that if employees have none or too little work experience, this requires patience but if they have work experience, this will not be too problematic. Having weekly sessions about things that are challenging will assist, perhaps also having older employees ready to assist new employees on demand. Weekly team meetings can be another thing that can assist; employees can include challenges that they are experiencing on the agenda.

#### 5.3.5 Addressing challenges and expectations

The onboarding experiences of members of Gen Z at the CTL were the focus of this qualitative study. The study examined a number of important topics such as time management, meaningful work, using technology, ongoing support and communication, the components of onboarding programmes and their duration. The combination of these elements provides a thorough grasp on the special opportunities and difficulties related to onboarding this particular group.

To accommodate Gen Z's preference for flexibility, the CTL's subdepartments should consider incorporating more adaptive deadlines. This may involve a mix of in-person and virtual sessions, allowing new hires to manage their time effectively and engage with their work at their own pace. Additionally, provide access to on-demand resources to cater for diverse learning styles and time constraints.

Onboarding programmes should be engaging, providing chances for skill development and encouraging a feeling of mission. Resolving meaningful work issues may help Gen Z workers be more satisfied with their jobs and stay on the team. Minimising redundancy by identifying and eliminating overlapping content will ensure that Gen Z employees receive relevant and concise information. Integrate interactive work material and simulations to engage employees actively, which provides a more dynamic and efficient work ethic.

Organisations should engage in current technology training to make sure Gen Z employees have the digital skills required for their roles and to maximise the onboarding experience. Including immersive and interactive components in onboarding programmes could improve participants' engagement and recall of information. Integrate cutting-edge technology into the onboarding process to align with Gen Z's tech-savvy nature. Implement virtual reality (VR) or augmented reality (AR) simulations for hands-on training experiences. Utilise collaborative platforms for team-building activities and project work that fosters a tech-enabled workplace culture which resonates with the preferences of Gen Z employees.

By incorporating these recommendations, organisations can create an onboarding experience that not only addresses the unique needs of Gen Z, but also enhances overall employee satisfaction and productivity. Recognising the importance of flexibility, personalisation and technology will contribute to a more effective onboarding process, which will ultimately lead to the successful integration of Gen Z into the workplace.

#### **5.4 Limitations of study**

In this particular study, the researcher found four limitations: one, the findings in this study are based on a specific sample of Gen Z individuals in a particular workplace setting and as such, may not be fully applicable to other industries, organisational cultures or regions. The unique characteristics of each workplace and the diversity in the Gen Z demographic make it challenging to generalise the results. The second limitation is the sample size that

was used in this particular study, is another limitation. The sample for this study primarily consisted of employees from one department at the UFS. It would be intriguing to evaluate the perspectives of Gen Z in other sectors and industries, along with employing a bigger participant sample size.

Thirdly, the study was conducted within a specific time frame; workplace dynamics, as well as the onboarding process, may evolve over time. The findings may not fully capture emerging trends or changes in the workplace environment that could impact the onboarding experiences of Gen Z employees. The fourth limitation was the time constraint for gathering data or for interviewing participants is another restriction. As a result, this study employed a purposive selection sampling strategy, which limits the scope of research.

Acknowledging these limitations is essential to interpret the findings of the study and to apply them judiciously in different contexts. Future research should consider addressing these limitations to enhance the robustness and applicability of insights gained from studying the onboarding experiences of Gen Z in the workplace.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

The objective of the study was to assess an onboarding programme for Gen Zs at the CTL of the UFS. The results above enhance the understanding of both Gen Z employees and supervisors regarding the experiences with work integration, specifically looking at the expectations and challenges versus the experience of working in a particular role. The data can be utilised to gain a deeper understanding of the youthful generation that has already begun to enter the workforce. Additionally, the study investigates how onboarding might help Gen Z employees achieve higher emotional organisational commitment and work engagement outcomes. The findings and recommendations can be utilised to address issues that Gen Z employees and supervisors encounter at the CTL.

An onboarding programme indicates its potential and benefits. As depicted in this study, there are many factors that affect the effectiveness of an onboarding programme. Furthermore, proposing an idea about what such a programme could look like, is not difficult but perhaps the implementation of a recommended programme could prove to be more difficult. Also, if the said implementation is not done correctly then it will waste time. From the data provided above, it is evident that the challenges and expectations Gen Z employees have can be curbed by an onboarding programme and therefore address the challenges which the Gen Z supervisors experience.

The best arrangement for the CTL is to pilot an onboarding programme for all new hires, despite their job level, before the commencement of the said job to reap the benefits of what the study has to offer.

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## Appendix A: Interview questions - Gen Z employees

**Welcoming:** Welcome the participant/respondent.

**Introduction:** Researcher introduces themselves and explains the aim and objective of their research project and that they are a MBA candidate at the Business School at the UFS.

The researcher will proceed in reminding the respondents of the informed consent formed that was emailed to them and collect the signed documents. If the respondents forgot to bring their own copy, backup copies will be available for them to sign before the researcher continues. The researcher proceeds in running through the informed consent.

The researcher proceeds in making the participant/respondent comfortable and at ease by asking them if they wish to participate in the study willingly and voluntarily? They are further advised by the researcher that they are welcome to leave the interview at any stage of the process.

The researcher will also ask the participant/respondent whether they have permission to record this interview session for transcribing purposes and the recording will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher and or if the study supervisor wishes to see the raw data.

The participant/respondent will be advised that no harm will be caused from partaking in the interview and neither will their identity be shared in the recording or in the write up of the section.

Finally the researcher will ask the participant/respondent if the interview can proceed, then the biographical data will be collected.

### **SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

#### **1. WHAT IS YOUR AGE?**

18	
19	
20	
21	x
22	
23	xxx
24	xxxxxxx
25	xx
Older than 25	

#### **2. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?**

Female	xxxxxxxxxxxx
Male	x
Other and/or Prefer not to say	

#### **3. WHAT IS YOUR ETHNICITY?**

African	xxxxxxxxxxxx
Caucasian	
Coloured	
Indian/Asian	

Other and/or Prefer not to say	
--------------------------------	--

**4. HOW MANY YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?**

0-6 months	
6-12 months	
1-2 years	XXXXX
2-3 years	XXXX
3-4 years	XXXX
5 years and more	

**5. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT JOB LEVEL?**

Student assistant	X
Tutor	
Teaching assistant	XXXXXX
Research assistant	X
Learning facilitator	
Intern	XXXXX
Assistant researcher	
Assistant officer	
Senior assistant officer	

**SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Research Objective 1: What are the challenges and expectations vs experience of working ? (Asked to employees)**

1. What was your expectations of the your current role before you began the job?
2. Have your expectations been met through working in your current role?
3. What challenges and obstacles have you faced in your current role?
4. What measures were put into place to overcome the challenge and obstacle by you?
5. What support or assistance did you receive from your supervisor regarding your challenge/obstacle?

**Research Objective 3: Onboarding**

6. Have you ever heard of the term Onboarding?
7. If yes, what is your understanding of onboarding? If no, provide the respondent a definition and explanation of what Onboarding is.
8. If you have experienced or participated in an Onboarding programme as a new recruit, how would you describe your experience of onboarding? If not, what would you expect that experience to be like?
9. If Onboarding existed in CTL, would you want to participate in such a program?
10. What aspects would you like to see be covered in an onboarding programme at CTL?

## Appendix B: Interview questions - Gen Z supervisors

**Welcoming:** Welcome the participant/respondent.

**Introduction:** Researcher introduces themselves and explains the aim and objective of their research project and that they are a MBA candidate at the Business School at the UFS.

The researcher will proceed in reminding the respondents of the informed consent formed that was emailed to them and collect the signed documents. If the respondents forgot to bring their own copy, backup copies will be available for them to sign before the researcher continues. The researcher proceeds in running through the informed consent.

The researcher proceeds in making the respondent comfortable and at ease by asking them if they wish to participate in the study willingly and voluntarily? They are further advised by the researcher that they are welcome to leave the interview at any stage of the process.

The researcher will also ask the respondent whether they have permission to record this interview session for transcribing purposes and the recording will not be shared with anyone other than the researcher and or if the study supervisor wishes to see the raw data.

The respondent will be advised that no harm will be caused from partaking in the interview and neither will their identity be shared in the recording or in the write up of the section.

Finally the researcher will ask the participant/respondent if the interview can proceed, then the biographical data will be collected.

### **SECTION A: BIOGRAPHICAL DETAILS**

#### **1. WHAT IS YOUR AGE RANGE?**

<b>18 – 22</b>	
<b>23 – 27</b>	
<b>28 – 32</b>	xx
<b>33 – 37</b>	xxxx
<b>37 – 42</b>	x
<b>43 – 47</b>	
<b>Older than 47</b>	

#### **2. WHAT IS YOUR GENDER?**

<b>Female</b>	xxxxx
<b>Male</b>	xx

Other and/or Prefer not to say	
--------------------------------	--

### 3. WHAT IS YOUR ETHNICITY?

African	xxx
---------	-----

Caucasian	x
-----------	---

Coloured	xxx
----------	-----

Indian/Asian	
--------------	--

Other and/or Prefer not to say	
--------------------------------	--

### 4. HOW MANY YEARS OF WORK EXPERIENCE DO YOU HAVE?

1-5 years	xxx
-----------	-----

5-10 years	xx
------------	----

10-15 years	x
-------------	---

15-20 years	x
-------------	---

20 years and more	
-------------------	--

### 5. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT JOB LEVEL?

Senior assistant officer	
--------------------------	--

Officer	xx
---------	----

Senior officer	xxxx
----------------	------

Chief Officer	
---------------	--

Assistant Director	x
--------------------	---

Deputy Director	
-----------------	--

Director and higher	
---------------------	--

## **SECTION B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

**The researcher will proceed in providing definitions and an explanation of what Onboarding is and what it entails for 5-7 minutes.**

### **Research Objective 2: What is the expectations vs experience of working? (Asked to supervisors)**

1. What is your expectations of a Gen Z employee before they begin their job?
2. After a few months, what is your experience of the Gen Z employee in their role?
3. Have your expectations of the Gen Z employee been met through their work ethic?
4. What are the challenges you face managing and working with a Gen Z employee?
5. What measures have you put in place to overcome the challenges you identified in the question above?

### **Research Objective 3: Onboarding**

**Managers are an essential component of a successful employee onboarding process, but without the proper HR support, they are likely to fall short of giving new recruits the engaging, educational experience they require to succeed.**

6. Have you ever heard of the term Onboarding?
7. If yes, what is your understanding of Onboarding? If no, provide the respondent a definition and explanation of what Onboarding is.
8. Has your HR department ever asked you to participate in an Onboarding programme for a new recruit/employee in your division, and how would you describe your experience? If not, what would you expect that experience to be like?
9. If your HR or CTL initiated an Onboarding programme for CTL, would you want to participate in such a program?
10. What aspects would you like to see covered in this Onboarding programme?


### Appendix C: Interview schedule (Data collection)

Interview schedule September & October 2023			
Date	Time	Link	
06-Sep-23	14:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9491268964226?p=r5NRS19JTUtbP1V">https://teams.live.com/meet/9491268964226?p=r5NRS19JTUtbP1V</a>	Complete
07-Sep	09:30	MS teams	Complete
08-Sep	10:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9463817322347?p=e1lgOTORnjS8AVe2">https://teams.live.com/meet/9463817322347?p=e1lgOTORnjS8AVe2</a>	Complete
08-Sep	11:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9442971325114?p=c2mvntaXIS5X6qW5">https://teams.live.com/meet/9442971325114?p=c2mvntaXIS5X6qW5</a>	Complete
08-Sep	14:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9447636464546?p=Q8INvD41d3PDYALS">https://teams.live.com/meet/9447636464546?p=Q8INvD41d3PDYALS</a>	Complete
15-Sep	10:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9486405295940?p=RmGsmPJ1LhIQCTOR">https://teams.live.com/meet/9486405295940?p=RmGsmPJ1LhIQCTOR</a>	Complete
19-Sep	10:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9454828842677?p=U65FqK2YZUMaCTyE">https://teams.live.com/meet/9454828842677?p=U65FqK2YZUMaCTyE</a>	Complete
20-Sep	12:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9454828842677?p=U65FqK2YZUMaCTyE">https://teams.live.com/meet/9454828842677?p=U65FqK2YZUMaCTyE</a>	Complete
26-Sep	11:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9486355889702?p=FCOrR37apdLobvbS">https://teams.live.com/meet/9486355889702?p=FCOrR37apdLobvbS</a>	Complete
26-Sep	11:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9424463470714?p=sdCQUreta7UOn0js">https://teams.live.com/meet/9424463470714?p=sdCQUreta7UOn0js</a>	Complete
26-Sep	12:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9436543986604?p=5xG5fIAB40EhW2i5">https://teams.live.com/meet/9436543986604?p=5xG5fIAB40EhW2i5</a>	Complete
26-Sep	13:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9432920585939?p=jgXMInRCfjRT2Cw8">https://teams.live.com/meet/9432920585939?p=jgXMInRCfjRT2Cw8</a>	Complete
03-Oct	10:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/945623375261?p=7MXKdv6FLe91t1Za">https://teams.live.com/meet/945623375261?p=7MXKdv6FLe91t1Za</a>	Complete
03-Oct	12:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/949284080715?p=p0OcSVTzcToCwPqv">https://teams.live.com/meet/949284080715?p=p0OcSVTzcToCwPqv</a>	Complete
05-Oct	11:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9428782956405?p=zpWwPfsShzvlbbcW">https://teams.live.com/meet/9428782956405?p=zpWwPfsShzvlbbcW</a>	Complete
05-Oct	11:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9474923590090?p=ECUfttoBiB6aKE0Y">https://teams.live.com/meet/9474923590090?p=ECUfttoBiB6aKE0Y</a>	Complete
06-Oct	13:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9478311105313?p=PuFe8HAOf9GMoBwW">https://teams.live.com/meet/9478311105313?p=PuFe8HAOf9GMoBwW</a>	Complete
06-Oct	13:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9419529811826?p=cPeCEWvz4BIGIbXv">https://teams.live.com/meet/9419529811826?p=cPeCEWvz4BIGIbXv</a>	Complete
06-Oct	14:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9450669459572?p=TCWZTWdpnnEMr4F8">https://teams.live.com/meet/9450669459572?p=TCWZTWdpnnEMr4F8</a>	Complete
06-Oct	14:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9420072476933?p=3gmdtUTqClclGYIm">https://teams.live.com/meet/9420072476933?p=3gmdtUTqClclGYIm</a>	Complete
06-Oct	15:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9460327329372?p=SA5Qpx1saBBVAff9">https://teams.live.com/meet/9460327329372?p=SA5Qpx1saBBVAff9</a>	Complete
06-Oct	15:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9457008898235?p=2KyNuxGn4TL1qlUy">https://teams.live.com/meet/9457008898235?p=2KyNuxGn4TL1qlUy</a>	Complete
11-Oct	11:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9466412290597?p=E6JDJgY3ODcG7ERK">https://teams.live.com/meet/9466412290597?p=E6JDJgY3ODcG7ERK</a>	Complete
11-Oct	12:30	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9421454047644?p=nEh3qx8XnoEkx0cz">https://teams.live.com/meet/9421454047644?p=nEh3qx8XnoEkx0cz</a>	Complete
12-Oct	10:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9487070748493?p=9yv1uQKBpRNneGQo">https://teams.live.com/meet/9487070748493?p=9yv1uQKBpRNneGQo</a>	Complete
12-Oct	12:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9433300593195?p=kQ6JOUwhaox6Lsrs">https://teams.live.com/meet/9433300593195?p=kQ6JOUwhaox6Lsrs</a>	Complete
13-Oct	09:00	<a href="https://teams.live.com/meet/9492357652493?p=4JTxkTFHUw7Sw39F">https://teams.live.com/meet/9492357652493?p=4JTxkTFHUw7Sw39F</a>	Complete

## Appendix D: Permission letter organisation (Ethical considerations)

**Francois Strydom**  
 RE: MBA Mini Dissertation study request  
 To: Melanie Ridgard, Cc: Bernice Oss, Lauren Oosthuizen

Approved with interest, Bernice please sign


**Francois Strydom**  
 Senior Director, Centre for Teaching and Learning  
 UNIVERSITY OF THE FREE STATE  
 PO Box 330, Bloemfontein 9300, Republic of South Africa  
 051 401 9306  
 084 536 2196  
[Strydom.F@ufs.ac.za](mailto:Strydom.F@ufs.ac.za)

---

**From:** Melanie Ridgard <[DevilleM@ufs.ac.za](mailto:DevilleM@ufs.ac.za)>  
**Sent:** Friday, April 21, 2023 2:52 PM  
**To:** Francois Strydom <[Strydom.F@ufs.ac.za](mailto:Strydom.F@ufs.ac.za)>  
**Cc:** Bernice Oss <[OssBG@ufs.ac.za](mailto:OssBG@ufs.ac.za)>; Lauren Oosthuizen <[HingLI@ufs.ac.za](mailto:HingLI@ufs.ac.za)>  
**Subject:** FW: MBA Mini Dissertation study request  
**Importance:** High

Good day Prof,

I hope this email finds you well.

I would like to share with you, good news regarding my MBA studies. I have been approved to proceed with my mini dissertation by my supervisor, in the Business School. I am conducting a study on **Onboarding Gen Z in the workplace** and would like to request permission to conduct my study on staff employed at the Centre for Teaching and Learning.

The request consists of interviewing Gen Z employees (between the ages of 18-25) and supervisors of Gen Z employees. I have attached the consent forms that will be circulated to individuals who make up these cohorts and the approval document for you to complete given, your approval.

I have attached the necessary documents that is needed for my application to be submitted for Ethical clearance. If you approve, please can you sign off the preliminary request document.

I trust the above is in order and feel free to ask questions you may have regarding my study.

Kind regards,  
 Melanie Ridgard  
 2010054332

## Appendix E: Ethical clearance letter (Ethical considerations)



Office of the Vice-Rector: Research and Internationalisation  
Kantoor van die Viserektor: Navorsing en Internasionalisering

11-Jul-2023

Dear Mrs Melanie Ridgard

### **UFS AUTHORITIES APPROVAL**

Research Project Title:

**Onboarding Gen Z at the Centre for Teaching and Learning, at the University of the Free State.**

This letter serves as confirmation that your request to collect data from students and/or staff members at the University of the Free State for your research project has been approved **provided that you also have ethical clearance for the research from the ethics committee at the University of the Free State.**

**Please make sure that you also obtain your ethics clearance letter containing your reference number from the ethics committee after you have received this letter before you conduct your research.**

Kind Regards

**PROF RC WITTHUHN  
VICE-RECTOR: RESEARCH & INTERNATIONALISATION  
CHAIR: SENATE RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE**

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