An evaluation of an onboarding program at ZF Friedrichshafen AG. Differences between intended and perceived objectives.

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Purpose: This research aims to structure the intended objectives for onboarding programs in relation to orientating and integrating newcomers as well as to evaluate the perception of the newcomers regarding onboarding.

Methodology: A literature review is used to identify the intended objectives for onboarding programs that provide the basis for the theoretical model. In-depth interviews are conducted with newcomers from ZF Friedrichshafen AG to evaluate the perception of newcomers regarding onboarding. Open coding is applied to categorize the responses from the in-depth interviews in relation to the intended objectives.

Findings: The intended objectives of onboarding programs can be modeled on an orientation and integration continuum. The in-depth interviews showed a perception for both orientation and integration. However, the perception does not confirm the theoretical model where orientating newcomers is located before integrating them.

Research limits: This research has proposed a new model, but it has not been validated. The amount of in-depth interviews resulted in a first impression. There is a language barrier present as the interviews are constructed in English within a German organization.

Practical implications: ZF Friedrichshafen AG illustrates the focus on the procedure for their onboarding program instead of the end goals. More attention is given to orientating newcomers than integrating them.

Originality: This research has developed a model placing intended objectives in analogy with Maslow's hierarchy.

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Keywords

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1. INTRODUCTION

Imagine you just finished your studies and got your first job opportunity at the organization you always wanted to work for. As a newcomer, you enter your new working place, you meet your new colleagues and your boss. You are placed behind your desk and they wish you a good day. So where do you start? What programs and techniques are available to you?

Organizations have a choice to implement an onboarding program as a first introduction for their newcomers. The onboarding program may include showing the newcomers which programs and techniques are available to them or provide the newcomers with a list of contacts to call when they have questions. The importance of onboarding programs is to find the best way to introduce the newcomers and develop them into productive members (Ross, Karen, Huang & Jones, 2014; Serbin & Jensen, 2013). In addition, when newcomers feel comfortable when entering the organization, this can result in increasing the retention rate (Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Woolforde, 2012).

The current literature describes the objectives of onboarding programs from an employer perspective and how they are being achieved. However, we do not know if new employees also perceive the objectives. Organizations implement onboarding programs for their newcomers (Fagerholm, Guinea, Borenstein & Münch, 2014; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011). When the newcomers do not perceive the intended objectives or maybe not find the objectives useful, is the onboarding program really the right tool to use for organizations and not just a waste of effort? The theoretical relevance is to evaluate the onboarding program from the newcomers' perspective.

This research is focused on the newcomers' interpretation of the objectives for the onboarding program at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF); more particularly in their Materials Management department. Therefore, the research question is:

"How to structure intended objectives of onboarding programs in relation to orientating and integrating newcomers?"

To answer this research question, it is first important that the intended objectives from the literature are identified that are used as the basis for the theoretical model. Then a comparison can be made between the intended objectives of ZF with the literature and evaluate the perception of the newcomers. For that reason, this research has three sub questions:

- What are the intended objectives found in the literature for a successful onboarding program?
- What are the intended objectives set by ZF Friedrichshafen AG for their onboarding program?
- Are the intended objectives set by ZF Friedrichshafen AG for their onboarding program perceived by their newcomers?

In order to answer these three sub questions, the following steps will be taken. First a literature review will highlight the common intended objectives of onboarding programs. Then the intended objectives at ZF will be identified through an in-depth interview with the manager responsible for the onboarding program. Comparing the intended objectives of ZF with the literature allows us to evaluate the similarities and differences providing a first impression of ZF's onboarding program. For question three, the interpretation of the intended objectives by newcomers will be evaluated through in-depth interviews conducted with ZF's newcomers. The practical relevance for this research is to evaluate if new employees of ZF perceive the intended objectives and thus perceive the onboarding program as intended.

2. DEFINITION OF ONBOARDING AND OBJECTIVES

The word 'boarding' is recognized from traveling from one place to another by plane where boarding defines the process where an individual gets onto the plane. Onboarding within organizations includes a similar process where individuals travel from one place to another to get on board at their new organization they want to represent.

I use Goldschmidt and Rust (2011) definition to define an onboarding program as a formal, intentional process, initiated by a company, that welcomes new employees, let them know that they are valued members of the team, and prepare them for their role. Since the onboarding program is a formal, intentional attempt of the company, there are intended objectives identified. The intended objectives shape the onboarding program regarding its structure, learning methods and delivery (Mathews et al., 2001). The objectives are aimed to turn into deliverables after the onboarding program.

The onboarding process may involve orientating newcomers as both Danielson, Craddick, Eccles, Kwasnik and O'Sullivan (2015) as well as Goldschmidt and Rust (2011) explain where newcomers require an orientation of their new practice site to clarify their role, prepare them for their tasks and connect them with their peers. Another onboarding process described by Fagerholm et al. (2014) is that newcomers require integration through learning the new knowledge, skills and behavior to be successful at their role.

It has been shown by Ross et al. (2014) that orientating and integrating newcomers can be combined for the onboarding program. On the one hand, orientation is focused on the transition process of the newcomers through building up a relationship with the organization and on the other hand, integration is focused on learning the organizational culture, structure and procedures present at the organization.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this section I focus on the objectives of onboarding. I first summarize the objectives that have been found in the literature. I continue by trying to synthesize the literature into a framework. I found five objectives namely (1) Efficiency (Danielson et al., 2015), (2) Organizational Commitment (Solinger, Van Olffen, Roe & Hofmans, 2013), (3) Integration (Fagerholm et al., 2014), (4) Full-Functioning Member (Serbin & Jensen, 2013; Steinmacher, Silva, Gerosa & Redmiles, 2015), and (5) Smooth Transition Process (Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Ross et al., 2014; Woolforde, 2012). The objectives are described in more detail here.

3.1.1 Efficiency

Danielson et al. (2015) explained the need of organizations to have a structured program where newcomers are introduced to the organization and their functions. He explains that resources like streamlined placement and block scheduling can welcome multiple newcomers at the same time and thus enhances the efficiency of an onboarding program. In addition, newcomers are provided with information and tools that enhances the efficient work regarding their role (Danielson et al., 2015).

3.1.2 Organizational Commitment

Another objective described is organizational commitment. Organizational commitment is defined as *"the degree of strength of the bond between a person and the organization"* (Solinger et al., 2013, p. 1642). When a strong bond is present, there is a higher chance that the newcomer stays with the organization and therefore increases the retention rate. Onboarding programs can be used to improve the person-

organization fit. Resources like socialization tactics or other types of interventions may be applied to enhance organizational commitment. As a result, the onboarding program can be used to improve the organizational commitment of the newcomers (Solinger et al., 2013).

3.1.3 Integration

Another objective mentioned in the literature is integration. As Fagerholm et al. (2014) describes, the use of virtual teams and projects is more common nowadays and that requires newcomers to be integrated in the project or team. The integration is required for newcomers to be able to contribute to organizational success. Integration is accomplished by socializing the newcomers with the insiders of the project or team. Additionally, a mentor is used who stimulates the integration process by teaching the newcomers the skills, knowledge and behavior of what is expected (Fagerholm et al., 2014).

3.1.4 Full-Functioning Member

Another objective found is the development of newcomers into full-functioning members. Full-functioning members are the ones who are able to show high performance and contribute to the overall organizational success. The transformation from newcomers to full-functioning members is achieved through clearly communicating what is expected from the newcomer and providing support, tool, education and/or information (Serbin & Jensen, 2013; Steinmacher et al., 2015).

3.1.5 Smooth Transition Process

A last objective found in the literature is where onboarding programs are applied to create a smooth transition process from outsider to insider. The main resources involve a streamlined process including self-learning, networking and ongoing support (Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Ross et al., 2014; Woolforde, 2012). Ross et al. (2014) argues that providing enough feedback and an explanation of the organizational culture sets the tone for newcomers that additionally provide a platform to create a relationship with the organization. Woolforde (2012) argues that the importance of a structured framework of the organizational standards, policies, procedures and team members creates a smooth transition process.

3.2 Simplified Framework

I have tried to organize the intended objectives in a framework that consists of two dimensions of orientation and integration in such a way that orientation and integration can be combined (Ross et al., 2014). Orientation is defined as the process whereby the newcomers are introduced to an organization so that they develop an understanding of the organization (Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Woolforde, 2012). Integration is defined whereby the newcomers become a part of the organization by enabling them to work within teams located at the organization (Fagerholm et al., 2014; Solinger et al., 2013). The difference between the two dimensions is that orientation provides the knowledge and integration the procedures required for newcomers.

Integration can be located in the framework after orientation as onboarding includes but also extends well beyond orientating newcomers (Serbin & Jensen, 2013). Orientation is a necessary but insufficient condition. Integration is the final objective for onboarding programs in this framework.

The distinction between the orientation and integration phase is not strict. I believe orientation is when newcomers are still receiving new insights regarding tools, structure and/or processes. Once the newcomer does not receive any new insights, the newcomer is slowly being integrated as he/she learns how to work with the insights given. The newcomer

slowly moves away from being orientated and enters the integration phase. This transition seems to happen somewhere in between the processes of full-functioning member and efficiency. The newcomer has the equipment to perform his/her function but still needs to improve his/her efficiency. Therefore, the newcomer may still receive new insights concerning how to perform more efficient but most of the insights are given before. The orientation phase is becoming less dominant and the integration phase is becoming more dominant (Fagerholm et al., 2014; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Solinger et al., 2013; Woolforde, 2012).
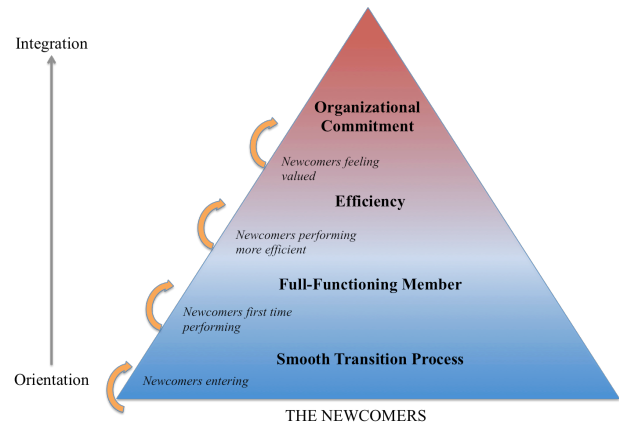

Figure 1. The onboarding intended objectives placed in relation to orientation and integration

The framework can be visualized by a pyramid structure including orientation at the bottom and integration at the top. There is a parallel with the famous Maslow's hierarchy. Maslow's pyramid presents the hierarchy of needs for motivation. The pyramid is structured where the most dominant human needs are located at the bottom of the pyramid. The motivation moves up the pyramid ones the most dominant needs are satisfied. The motivation moves higher up the pyramid after the second most dominant needs are satisfied and so on (Maslow, 1943; McKenzie & Tullock, 2012). I have used the framework of Maslow to organize the intended objectives of an onboarding program in a similar way. The objectives represent the needs newcomers have when getting onboard at the organization as Roa and Shah (2012) recommend trainings to link the training priorities to the needs of the participants. I assume that one priority of the onboarding program is to match the objectives with the newcomers' needs. The intended objectives are organized regarding their importance. The most important objective will need to be satisfied before continuing to the next objective. The importance of the objectives is based on the three scenarios from Solinger et al. (2013).

The first scenario is called falling in love where the newcomer imagines him/herself at the organization. The newcomer develops expectations and prepares him/herself for the transformation. In the following scenario the newcomer is transformed from outsider to insider by adjusting to the organizational expectations and learning the functional requirements. The last scenario is where the newcomer is transformed into an organizational member and has fulfilled the expectations and functional requirements to be committed in the new organization (Solinger et al., 2013).

The three scenarios describe a process that newcomers can go through when entering a new organization. The intended objectives identified from the literature are now linked to the process described.

The newcomers start by entering the organization. The first objective is to welcome the newcomers. The smooth transition process allows the newcomers to transform into insiders (Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011; Ross et al., 2014; Woolforde, 2012). Once the first objective is satisfied, newcomers can move up the pyramid to the following objective.

The following objective is developing the newcomers into full-functioning members. As Serbin and Jensen (2013) explain, after recruiting and hiring comes onboarding. Onboarding includes clarifying the expectations and providing ongoing support during the process (Serbin & Jensen, 2013; Steinmacher et al., 2015). The newcomers are slowly being integrated at the organization. Again, the newcomers have reached a satisfactory level of the objective before moving up the pyramid to the next objective.

The next objective is efficiency. Efficiency is related to the newcomers' performance. For example, when someone is shown for the first time how to perform, he/she might still have many questions and doubts. Things may not go correctly at once and the overall performance may take a little longer. However, when the process is repeated, the newcomer is likely going to remember the previous mistakes made and not make them a second time. Therefore efficiency is improved through experience and practice. Onboarding programs can provide tips and tricks from previous experiences to improve the performance of the newcomers and thus efficiency. This prevents each newcomer to learn by trial and error and benefit from the experiences of others (Danielson et al., 2015).

Ones the efficiency objective is satisfied, the newcomers can continue to the last objective mentioned in the pyramid namely organizational commitment. The newcomers realize the improvements he/she has made and feels the need to continue the professional development (Ross et al. 2014). The newcomer feels committed to the organization and the final objective for onboarding has been satisfied (Solinger et al., 2013).

4. METHODOLOGY

In the following section, I will outline the procedure for the data collection in detail to justify the quality of the data and provide transparency on the way I researched. I will start with the literature review and continue with the data collection regarding the in-depth interviews.

4.1 Data Collection: Literature Review

This literature review is limited to the research of onboarding programs. Only articles are selected which are available as full papers written in English and are peer-reviewed. The main databases used are 'Web of Science', 'Scopus' and 'Business Source Elite' since those consist of academic journals including the peer-reviewed articles.

This research started with a focus to improve the current onboarding program at ZF. The focus is on improving the program through the application of different learning techniques and therefore the literature search began with the search terms onboarding and blended learning. However, it soon appeared that this search field included two relatively broad concepts providing a large range of information. Focusing on the onboarding concept narrowed the literature search down. For that reason, blended learning was replaced by key success factors (KSFs) to find out what the KSFs are for onboarding programs. This search revealed in a long list of possible KSFs for onboarding programs but did not apply to the current onboarding program at ZF. At the end, it was decided to only focus on the term onboarding to get an understanding of the factors involved in onboarding programs.

The literature review developed an understanding what onboarding programs include but it was not clear yet how to help ZF to improve their current onboarding program. It was therefore decided to meet with a consultant from UPlearning, who is specialized in supporting organizations with their development of onboarding programs. The consultant was asked to advise this research for a direction. She explained that to start a development of an onboarding program it is important to start analyzing the intended objectives set by the organization first. Once the intended objectives are defined, the development of the onboarding program can continue by analyzing if the newcomers also perceive the intended objectives. For that reason, I decided to focus first on the evaluation of the intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program and continue by analyzing if the objectives are also perceived by their newcomers.

The onboarding literature search revealed the following results:

Table 1. Literature results regarding papers found per database

Databases	Scopus	Web of Science	Business Source Elite	Google Scholar
Total	96	34	3900	326
First-screening	10	2	1	0

The articles chosen are based on a first screening made regarding its availability and the title as well as the abstract. The title and abstract have been read to select the articles that seemed to be useful for this research. The selection is based on articles that demonstrated a structure of an onboarding program and where the onboarding program has been tested in relation to its use. The first screening resulted in 13 selected articles that were evaluated one more time by a second screening. The second screening involved reading the entire articles. The articles are chosen on the fact that they describe an onboarding program and its application of resource used to achieve the intended objectives. At the end, eight useful articles have been selected for this literature review and are used to answer the first sub question by identifying the intended objectives found in the literature. The intended objectives identified provide the basis for the theoretical framework as well as for the evaluation of ZF's onboarding program.

4.2 Data collection: Interviews

4.2.1 Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling technique is used for selecting the onboarding group whereas a probability sampling technique is used for selecting the interviewees within the group (Babbie, 2013).

The judgmental sampling procedure is applied where I have decided to focus on newcomers who are participating at the onboarding program of 2015; more particularly group 1 module A as the program was planned in the first week of May. That provided the opportunity to conduct the in-depth interviews soon afterwards so that the memory of the onboarding program is relatively fresh with the newcomers. The onboarding program is available for newcomers entering the Materials Management department. As a result, the two profile criteria's for the interviewees are (1) participating at the onboarding program 2015 and (2) located at the Materials Management department.

The multiple groups of the onboarding programs are the result of a pre-selection performed by ZF concerning the newcomers' background. Since the groups represent a mix of newcomers, I decided to follow through with a random sampling procedure

after having selected group 1 module A. A sign-up list has been developed where the newcomers could voluntarily sign-up for the in-depth interview selecting a suitable date and time. The sign-up list was shortly introduced to the newcomers at the start of the onboarding program. I was in direct contact with the manager who informed me about the date and time when I had volunteers for the in-depth interview. Three newcomers used the list to sign-up. The sign-up list can be found at appendix 9.1.1.

To increase the validity of this research, I decided to increase the number of interviewees by quota sampling. I searched for newcomers who matched the two profile criteria's and directly asked them to participate. All three additional newcomers agreed to participate and that is how I got to a total of six newcomers participating.

4.2.2 In-Depth Interview Questions

The in-depth interviews take around 30 minutes that include 5 minutes introduction to the research followed by another 5 minutes used to ask demographic questions regarding the participant. The remaining 20 minutes are used for the interview questions related to the intended objectives. Each in-depth interview is recorded and transcribed.

There is an in-depth interview with the manager responsible for the onboarding program to identify the intended objectives of ZF for their onboarding program and thus answering the second sub question. The intended objectives identified by ZF will be compared with the intended objectives found in the literature.

There are in-depth interviews with newcomers before the intended objectives of ZF are known and afterwards. The in-depth interviews before are used to evaluate the expectations newcomers have and how they have perceived the onboarding program. The in-depth interviews afterwards are used to evaluate if the newcomers have perceived the intended objectives identified by ZF and thus answers the third sub question.

The first in-depth interviews with the newcomers include the following questions:

1. How do you feel about your responsibility for personal development and growth within an organization?
2. What are the opportunities presented by ZF to continue growth for newcomers?
3. How is the communication between you and the organization regarding integrating you within the new department?
4. How was your first introduction with the onboarding program?
5. How was the procedure for the onboarding program that you have followed clarified to you?
6. How did you overcome the unclear aspects of the onboarding program, if any?
7. How was the timeline presented to you and used during the onboarding program?
8. What is the missing content regarding to your job experience? More information regarding your area of specialty or more information regarding the organization ZF?
9. Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding program and your job description?
10. How would you describe the information flow concerning your field of specialty within the onboarding program?

11. How were the teaching methods used during the onboarding program?
12. What is your opinion about the trainings that are currently being offered by ZF?
13. If you could wish for another training to be added to the onboarding program, what would it be?
14. What effect did the onboarding program have?
15. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Four newcomers have answered the questions related to this in-depth interview. The in-depth interview starts by evaluating where the responsibility for onboarding is located. The in-depth interview continues by asking the newcomers' opinion regarding their expectations for onboarding programs, the methods applied and how the onboarding program could be improved.

The following in-depth interview conducted involved the manager responsible for the onboarding program at ZF. The in-depth interview is used to identify the intended objectives for their program. The questions are the following:

1. Why has ZF opened up this research for their current onboarding program?
2. What are the reasons for ZF to need to change or develop their current onboarding program?
3. What are the objectives for the onboarding program?
4. Please rank the objectives from most important too least important.
5. Why have those objectives for the onboarding program been chosen?
6. What is the importance for achieving those objectives for ZF?
7. How is the program used to achieve those objectives?
8. What tactics are applied to achieve the objectives?
9. What are the expectations towards the achievement of the objectives?
10. For which objective(s) do you see the most difficultly to achieve it?
11. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

The first two questions are intended to find the reasons why ZF is interested in the use of an onboarding program. The in-depth interview then moves on towards directly asking what the intended objectives are for their onboarding program. During the moment where the manager is answering this question, the interviewer writes down the intended objectives mentioned by the manager. This list is applied to the following question, namely question four, where the manager is asked to rank the intended objectives. In case the manager has forgotten the exact objectives he mentioned before, the list can be used to remind the manager. The in-depth interview then moves on to find out how ZF is trying to achieve their intended objectives. The in-depth interview ends by finding out where ZF sees their weakness concerning the onboarding program as a starting point for potential improvements.

Now that the intended objectives of ZF have been identified, the second in-depth interview with the newcomers can be conducted. The in-depth interview involved the following questions:

1. Which expectations did you have for the onboarding program?
2. Why did you have those expectations for the onboarding program?
3. Why are those expectations important for you?
4. The objectives placed in front of you are the intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program.

What is your first reaction when reading the intended objectives?

5. Please rank the objectives from 1 being the most important for you and 10 being the least important for you?
6. How has the onboarding program helped to achieve the intended objectives? For example, which tactics have been used during the onboarding program?
7. What is your opinion regarding the achievement of the intended objectives?
8. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Two newcomers have answered the questions related to this in-depth interview. The first three questions are related to their expectations regarding the onboarding program. The expectations may provide additional objectives or other insights for the onboarding program. The last five questions ask the newcomers how they have perceived the intended objectives during the onboarding program.

The intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program are written down on cue cards by the interviewer. Each cue card represents one intended objective. The cue cards are used when the newcomer is asked to rank the intended objectives from what seems to be the most important objective to the least important objective. The cue cards allow the newcomer to move the intended objectives physically around showing his/her thoughts. Additional cue cards in another color are optionally offered when the newcomer wants to add missing objective(s). The ranking of the cards is documented by taking a photo of the end result and are applied with a photo protocol. The ranking is used to analyze the theoretical framework concerning the intended objectives.

4.2.3 Coding

This research follows a case-orientated analysis where in-depth interviews are performed within the organization of ZF. Open coding is used to analyze the interviews. The categories used to analyze the interview with the manager are in relation with the onboarding program. The core concept is the identification of intended objectives regarding the onboarding program (Babbie, 2013). Therefore the categories and their descriptions are the following:

- o **Onboarding program** – reasons for performing the program
- o **Intended objectives** – points identified that are seen as intended objectives
- o **Tactics** – resources used in relation to the intended objectives

The categories used to analyze the in-depth interviews with the newcomers are linked to the intended objectives identified by ZF. The core concept is the newcomers' perception regarding the intended objectives. Therefore the categories and their descriptions are the following.

- o **Efficiency** – providing an efficient start
- o **Information** – providing basic information and practical experiences
- o **Networking** – developing a network
- o **Orientation** – an overview of the Materials Management department
- o **Impression** – other locations and divisions
- o **Team working** – working with others across the organization

The coding and their results are organized in tables where the intended objectives stated by ZF are located on the left side and the related responses on the right side. The responses are taken as quotes. See appendix 9.1.2 for the tables.

5. RESULTS

I could not derive the intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program from a document and therefore I had to ask the manager to identify the intended objectives. The in-depth interview can be viewed in appendix 9.2.7. The current onboarding description is based on my experience of the onboarding program that I followed in July 2014. The following intended objectives have been identified.

5.1 What are ZF's Intended Objectives for their Onboarding Program?

The first objective she mentioned was efficiency. "*The main aim is efficiency*" (Interview 7, p. 6). She explained that efficiency refers to providing newcomers with everything they need to give them the efficient start within the organization. The efficient start includes knowing where to find what information. ZF therefore places high value towards providing information and has identified it as another objective for their onboarding program.

Providing information involves two parts. On the one hand, the information is simply provided to the newcomers. On the other hand, information involves building up practical experiences regarding tools, processes and systems located within the organization. The current onboarding program consists of handouts with written information for the newcomers. Additionally, the current onboarding program includes group assignments where the newcomers are forced to work with different tools, processes and systems to build up practical experience.

She continued that the efficient start also includes networking. Therefore, another objective is to stimulate networking across the organization. "*It is really important for many people that you have a network*" (Interview 7, p. 6). Bringing together newcomers from the different divisions and locations currently provides the opportunity for networking. Furthermore, the program consists of an evening program where the newcomers have dinner with a department leader where they are able to ask questions.

Another objective identified is giving newcomers the option to get an impression of other divisions and locations that are included within ZF. Since ZF currently has a matrix structure, the newcomers for the Materials Management department come from different divisions and thus locations. The impression provides the opportunity to learn from each other as the newcomers come from different backgrounds. Moreover, the current onboarding program consists of two modules where each module takes place at another location including a plant tour of the location.

Orientation is also an objective identified by ZF. Orientation refers to providing the newcomers with an overview of ZF's Materials Management department. The current onboarding program creates the overview through multiple short presentations that explain the different roles and their related responsibilities.

A last objective identified is teamwork. Team working is referring to working with multiple colleagues who come from different divisions. It is common that each division has its own working manners expected. Understanding the differences will help the newcomers be able to work together with other divisions. The current onboarding program includes multiple group assignments to stimulate the team working behavior.

Summing up the intended objectives for ZF's onboarding program identified by the manager, the objectives are:

- o **Efficiency** – providing an efficient start for their newcomers
- o **Information** – giving the basic information needed for newcomers including building up practical experiences regarding tools, processes and systems.
- o **Networking** – giving the contact possibilities to stimulate networking across the organization
- o **Orientation** – providing an overview of the Materials Management department including its functions and responsibilities
- o **Impression** – viewing the other divisions and locations
- o **Team working** – enabling working with others across the organization

5.2 What are the Similarities and Differences between ZF's Intended Objectives and the Literature?

The objectives identified by ZF appear to be resources that can be used to achieve actual objectives. The 'objectives' information, impression, team working, and networking are resources used to achieve the actual objectives identified that are orientation and efficiency. For that reason, I will compare the results from ZF and the literature with the same pyramid where the identified resources from ZF are connected to the objectives identified by the literature.

The pyramid is structured in the same way as with the literature. Green words have been added to illustrate the resources identified by ZF in relation to their use to achieve the objective. The two actual objectives identified by ZF, namely orientation and efficiency, have not been marked green since efficiency is related to networking and orientation is related to impression and information. The resources are located in analogy to Maslow's hierarchy where the basic resources are placed at the bottom of the pyramid. The basic resources, from the perspective of the manager, are providing information and an impression. When newcomers enter ZF, they first inform themselves and get a first impression. I have linked impression and information with the objective for achieving a smooth transition process.

Figure 2. The intended onboarding objectives for ZF in relation to orientation and integration

The next step involves preparing the newcomers for their role. For newcomers to perform means that working with other people is involved. I have placed team working as a next resource to develop newcomers into full-functioning members. Team working requires newcomers to be integrated within teams or groups and therefore team working is placed higher up the pyramid.

The following step is to improve the efficiency related to newcomers' performance. One way to improve the efficiency is to know the right people to ask. For example, at the beginning the newcomer might be searching for the right person and does find the right person at the end but via many detours. The efficiency is improved when the newcomer knows how to find the right person right away for the next time. With a bigger network, the chance of finding the right person is higher and therefore efficiency is improved. However, efficiency is not only based on networking and there might be other factors playing a role like the efficient use of tools and processes.

At the top of the pyramid is the objective organizational commitment. However, there is no matching resource identified by ZF that could be used to achieve organizational commitment. That brings us to evaluate the differences and similarities between ZF and the literature.

First of all, ZF is identifying resources instead of objectives for their onboarding program. As ZF is focused on achieving the resources, it is missing the bigger picture that is achieving actual objectives. ZF is applying several resources to their program but not understanding why. It seems like that ZF is concentrating on the procedure concerning their onboarding program instead of the end goals.

Secondly, ZF is focusing their resources more to the lower part of the pyramid and thus orientating their newcomers more than integrating them. The importance for orientating its newcomers is also brought forward during the interview as the manager explains, *"It is just that you have an overview of how ZF organization works, what tools are there that you have this overview"* (Interview 7, p. 5).

A similarity between the literature and ZF is that both see the importance for efficiency. ZF provides the opportunity to develop a network to enhance the efficiency of newcomers. More resources are not provided for efficiency and thus limit ZF the improvement of efficiency by depending on networking.

To sum up, the resources identified by ZF are related to orientation. Networking and team working is stimulating the newcomers to be integrated by using the insights learned to their benefits. However, newcomers still learn new people and working manners and thus continue being orientated. Therefore, there is no resource identified that is completely focusing on integrating the newcomers like socialization tactics described by Solinger et al. (2013).

5.3 How are the Intended Objectives Perceived according to the Newcomers?

The total amount of in-depth interviews held involved six newcomers and the transcriptions can be found in appendix 9.2. The group consisted of 67% female and 33% male. The average age of the group is 26,5 years old. Most newcomers entered in the year 2014 with two exceptions. The first exception is a newcomer who has entered ZF in the year 2012 and the other in 2013. 33% of the newcomers worked in another organization before entering the organization of ZF. The Materials Management department is the first department for all the six newcomers within ZF. 50% of the newcomers realized that they have participated at an onboarding program whereas the other 50% stated that they have not. The objectives are perceived when at least 50% mentions an experience in relation to the intended objective.

The newcomers were first asked about their expectations concerning onboarding programs. 67% of the interviewees

explained that the first days at a new job are the worse. 75% who explained that their first days are the worse stated that the feeling of being lost caused it. The remainder 25% explained that it was the information overload that caused it. Therefore their expectations concerning onboarding programs are related to making their first days better. Some expectations are *"Typical topics that I believe belong to the classical tasks of purchasing"* (Interview 5, p. 5) or *"What I expect is that when I ask for something that the organization also enables me"* (Interview 1, p. 5).

Orientation is an intended objective set by ZF to provide an overview of the Materials Management department but have the newcomers also perceived the overview? 67% of the newcomers stated that the basic knowledge and trainings are provided during the onboarding program and that they were able to orientate themselves because of that. *"The basics and the foundations were thought by the onboarding program"* (Interview 1, p. 9). The other 33% of the in-depth interviews showed different opinions. One newcomer mentioned that he did not receive an overview, which would have been helpful (Interview 2). Another newcomer mentioned that he does not really understand what is meant with orientation, as orientation is the result of working together (Interview 6). Overall, it seems that the newcomers have perceived the orientation as at least 50% of the newcomers have mentioned the experience. However, there is clearly room left for improvement as the opinions differ.

As the manager explained, orientation is achieved through providing enough information and an impression of the other locations. 83% of the newcomers realized the connection where information and impression provide an orientation. However, the connection might not always be clear as the newcomer in interview 5 stated, *"Impression, it belongs somehow to this point (orientation)"* (p. 6).

The two roles for information, which have been described by the manager, have been realized by one of the newcomers. He explained that information consist of two parts namely information that comes from guidelines and information that comes from the team members (Interview 6).

The impression of other locations is valued between the newcomers. However, one has noted why the impression is limited to Europe. *"I think it would be more interesting if people join from abroad"* (Interview 2, p. 5). The resources information and impression appear to be perceived as at least 50% has experienced the resources.

The following objective in the pyramid is developing the newcomers into full-functioning members through the use of teamwork. 50% of the newcomers realized the importance of teamwork. One newcomer even explained that working without teamwork is not possible. Furthermore, he explained that with teamwork information is created and thus the need to work within teams (Interview 6). Another newcomer explained that teamwork helps to understand the information better. *"To make the people better remember the information they get"* (Interview 5, p. 6). As a result, teamwork is perceived but with a lower percentage compared to the previous intended objectives.

A last intended objective set by ZF is efficiency through the use of networking. 83% of the newcomers perceive the resource networking however the opinions differ. 60% share the opinion that networking is important for the job. *"I think the main part is that you have to interact"* (Interview 3, p. 5). The remainder 40% finds networking a process that happens but is not seen as important or necessary. *"I thought more of it as a nice affect"*

(Interview 5, p. 5). Consequently, networking is perceived however the opinions about its usefulness differ.

The figure below illustrates the percentages from the newcomers' perception regarding the intended objectives. The percentage for orientation is located as second on the pyramid from bottom to top. The percentages seem to decline the higher the objectives are placed at the pyramid with the exception for efficiency. The newcomers' perception therefore does not confirm the pyramid structure. The exception for efficiency might illustrate that a second pyramid is present on top of the pyramid of orientation.

An explanation for the declining percentages is that the orientation phase involves relatively cheap and simple resources like impression and information. Information is a resource that every organization has enough off and providing an impression of its locations nearby is something that can be achieved easily. When going higher up the pyramid, there is some struggle present as the percentages lower. Teamwork requires a proper organization of groups and assignments. Teamwork therefore requires more effort and investment to be as effected as impression and information.
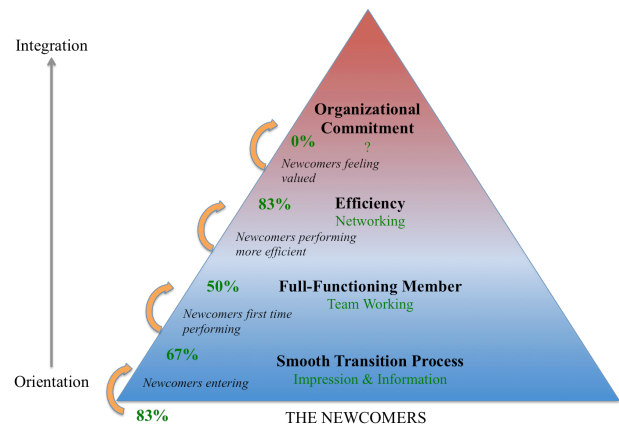

Figure 3. The percentages of intended objectives perceived by the newcomers

The percentages at the pyramid decreases as going up the pyramid till the objective of efficiency. Efficiency resulted in a relatively large percentage. Nevertheless, the impression I got is that the 83% of newcomers who have experienced networking includes contradiction opinions. 40% of the newcomers explained that they do not see the importance and added value that networking brings. I strongly believe that the intentions of networking ZF had in mind to develop efficiency are not perceived in the same way according to the newcomers.

All in all, it seems that the current onboarding program present at ZF is successful at orientating their newcomers but is having trouble to integrate their newcomers. It appears the ZF is having difficulty by identifying resources or tactics that can integrate their newcomers. Even though ZF seems to orientate their newcomers successfully, there is still room for improvement. The basis for an onboarding program is there but can be developed.

After the intended objectives have been identified by ZF, two out of the six newcomers where asked to order the intended objectives. The intended objectives are presented on blue cue cards where the newcomer was asked to rank them according to what they believe are the most important objectives. The most important objectives are placed on top where the less important objectives are placed further down as the arrow shows in figure 4. The white cue cards represent additional objectives created by the newcomer himself.

Person A explained step by step the objectives when she ranked the objectives starting with orientation. She explained that orientation is important to order the information in your head and is followed by information. Information is provided to develop a general understanding concerning the Materials Management department where teamwork could help to process the information. Person A explained efficiency regarding the efficiency of the workshops. "*If you want to keep the people motivated within a workshop you need to give them the feeling that we do it good, we do it fast, we do it efficient and we really provide an added value to you*" (Interview 5, p. 6). The least important objective is networking since it is something that happens anyways. "*You cannot avoid it*" (Interview 5, p. 6). The objective missing is an individual part that provides the newcomer with the challenge to apply to information gained and test his/her understanding.
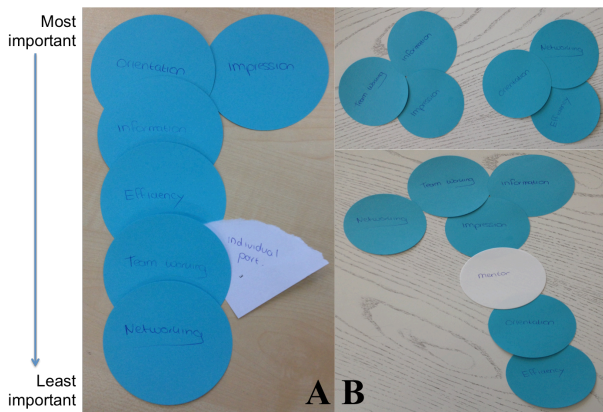

Figure 4. Two newcomers' perception regarding the importance of the intended objectives set by ZF

When person B was asked to rank the objectives, he created two groups. Group one, consisting of teamwork, information and impression, characterize the important objectives whereas the other group, consisting of orientation, networking and efficiency, characterizes objectives that are 'nice to have' but not important to him. I asked him what would he need to connect the two groups. His answer was "*I just need a boss or something*" (Interview 6, p. 8). Therefore, I offered him a cue card with mentor written on it. By connecting the two groups, he has moved networking higher up to the important objectives.

Person A decided to put orientation as most important and networking as least important. Interesting is that person B has followed an opposite structure where networking is found as important and orientation less important. Therefore it seems like that the person A is more concentrated on orientation whereas person B is more concentrated on integration. Moreover, Person B has both actual objectives as least important and the resources used to achieve the objectives as most important. Person A has the actual objective of orientation as most important and efficiency in middle where the resources are spread around the objectives.

As person B ranked the resource networking as important, in his interview he mentioned the following "*It is easier to work when you have the networking but I don't believe it is an extremely important topic*" (Interview 6, p. 7). This shows the perceived contradiction of the newcomers regarding networking. The impression I get is that there is a difference between how newcomers perceive an objective and how they value the objective. Newcomers can perceive objectives but when the objectives are not valued, are they the right objectives for the onboarding program?

I believe objectives need to be both perceived and valued for onboarding programs to be successful. In this case, person B seemed to have perceived the resource networking but does not seem to value it. ZF can increase their success rate by demonstrating the importance for networking to their newcomers. Demonstrating the importance develops an understanding for the relationship between networking and working efficient and therefore newcomers start valuing the opportunity they get to develop their network during the onboarding program.

A remark made by person A is that an individual part is missing where the newcomers are challenged to apply the new insights gained. This request can be related to the missing part of integration. Integration requires newcomers to apply the new insights gained. An individual part can provide an opportunity where newcomers receive a challenge and need to show what they can do. Such an individual moment can make the newcomers value their job and stimulate their commitment to the organization.

Lastly, as 67% state that they have perceived an orientation, 33% of them argue that the orientation was missing or not understood. I got the impression that orientation is closely related to individual preferences towards structuring information and thus orientating themselves within the organization. For example, one might require a structure of the organization on a handout whereas another might require the experience of different departments within an organization to be able to structure the organization. I therefore believe that the 33% have other expectations for being orientated within the organization. I believe ZF has provided orientation for their newcomers but can improve by providing orientation through different methods so that there is some type of orientation for each individual. For example, ZF can include both the handout and the experience of different departments to orientate their newcomers. This provides the opportunity that for each individual preference there is some type of orientation present.

6. DISCUSSION

This research started with a practical issue on how to develop the onboarding program at ZF. The end result developed a pyramid structure where the intended objectives are ordered in relation to orientation and integration. The theoretical model combines Maslow's hierarchy and the three scenarios from Solinger et al. (2013) to structure the intended objectives for onboarding programs.

I expected that orientation is the basis for onboarding and integration the end goal. The newcomers have perceived both dimensions but perceived orientation more (orientation 67% & teamwork 50%) than integration (efficiency 83% & integration 0%). Integration appears to be more difficult to be perceived. An explanation might be as integration requires newcomers to develop an organization identity (Solinger et al., 2013). Integration therefore requires more time and effort from both the organization and the newcomer. Orientation asks newcomers to perceive information and ongoing support whereas integration asks newcomers to use that to develop an organizational identity. Therefore, orientation seems to be more easily perceived as integration.

Person B has demonstrated the focus on integration whereas person A on orientation. Therefore it is not illustrated that the basis for onboarding is actually orientation and the end goal integration. However, person B is one of the exceptions who entered the organization of ZF at 2012. Therefore person B had three years time to orientate himself where person A entered in 2014 and had less than one year to orientate. It might be that the

dimensions orientation and integration are related to the time period the newcomers are present within the organization.

The case study showed that ZF identified resources as their intended objectives. That means that ZF is more concentrated on how their onboarding program proceeds instead of concentrating the onboarding program on achieving end goals set for their newcomers. The onboarding program scored high at the orientation phase but low on the integration phase. This might be because of the lack of direction for their program.

6.1 Theoretical Implications

This research illustrates that there is a relationship between intended objectives for onboarding programs as well as the dimensions of orientation and integration. Depending on how long the newcomers are within the organization, orientation can be taken as the basis for onboarding and integration as an end goal.

6.2 Practical Implications

The practical implications concern advice to improve the onboarding program at ZF. Firstly, it is encouraged to set a direction for their onboarding program and therefore define actual objectives as end goals that newcomers are expected to achieve after having participated at the onboarding program. ZF could discuss if the intended objectives found in the literature are the right ones for their onboarding program or may need to come up with additional objectives themselves.

Secondly, the procedure of the onboarding program including the resources used to achieve the objectives can be clarified to the newcomers to develop an understanding between the resources used and the objectives. Newcomers will understand why certain things are done within the program and values the opportunity provided to them. For example, newcomers who have just entered the organization may not understand the value of a network but will regret it when not taken the opportunity that was provided during the onboarding program.

The current onboarding program is strong at orientating newcomers and weak at integrating them. It is advisable to see the two dimensions of orientation and integration separately. ZF could use their two modules to separate the two dimensions where module A is used for orientating the newcomers and module B to integrate the newcomers. Once the foundation for orientating the newcomer is placed, the onboarding program can focus on the integration phase.

As the integration phase of ZF's onboarding program is weak, it is important to provide an opportunity for the newcomers to be integrated within the organization. Setting up an individual assignment can provide the opportunity where newcomers use their new insights learned to their benefits and present their end results. ZF can for example place the individual assignment between module A and B where each newcomer presents his/her results in module B.

6.3 Limitations

This research had conducted six in-depth interviews with newcomers to evaluate the perception of the newcomers within ZF. The six in-depth interviews provide more likely a first impression of the newcomers' perception. Moreover, this research is limited with its focus on the onboarding program present within the Materials Management department of ZF. Other departments of ZF may present different results regarding the onboarding programs applied there.

The in-depth interviews are performed in English. The English skills from the interviewees are satisfactory but a language barrier is present. Results therefore may have been misinterpreted because of the language barrier.

During the in-depth interviews with the newcomers, blue cue cards have been used to represent the intended objectives of ZF. The intended objectives are written with blue pen on the blue cue cards. In addition, the intended objectives are written down with one word without further explanation. Therefore, the intended objectives may not have been clearly presented to the newcomers.

This research provides a framework where the intended objectives of onboarding programs are ordered in relation to orientation and integration within a pyramid. I have defined the dimensions orientation and integration myself based on previous literature. However, there is literature available that defines the dimensions of orientation and integration in more detail. In addition, the coding as well as the structure of the pyramid has not been tested within this research.

6.4 Suggestions for Future Research

The pyramid is a starting point to organize intended objectives for onboarding programs around the dimensions of orientation and integration but this framework can be extended with future research. As the data showed an increase of perception at the integration phase, it might be possible that there is a second pyramid placed on top of the pyramid that represents orientation. Future research can investigate other structures to organize intended objectives.

The photo protocol showed a difference between importance regarding orientation and integration from the newcomer's perspective. An explanation is the time period a newcomer is present within the organization. Future research can investigate the relationship between orientation and integration as well as the time period that the newcomer is present within the organization.

A last remark I would like to make is that onboarding programs do not need to stand-alone. A possibility is considering the application of socialization tactics for onboarding programs. Socialization tactics have been applied in both the studies from Fagerholm et al. (2014) and Solinger et al. (2013) to stimulate organizational commitment and integration. Organizational commitment and integration are both found at the top of the pyramid. Socialization tactics therefore can be tested concerning its stimulation of intended objectives placed at the integration phase.

7. CONCLUSION

In this research I aimed to structure the intended objectives for onboarding programs in relation to orientating and integrating newcomers as well as to evaluate newcomers' perception of the onboarding program at ZF. The results show that the intended objectives of onboarding programs can be modeled on an orientation and integration continuum. Both the organization of ZF and the newcomers have shown the added value that onboarding programs offer. To conclude, do not let the newcomer stare at his/her laptop for hours but help the newcomer get onboard.

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9. APPENDIX

9.1 Data Collection: In-Depth Interviews

9.1.1 Sign-Up List

Datum/Uhrzeit	Name	Standort/Fachbereich/Division
06.05. – 13:00 Uhr	Natascha Preuss	DLN / SGND / C
06.05. – Im Anschluss an Werksführung		
07.05. – 08:00 Uhr	Andreas Pill	SBR / PTUA / P
07.05. – nach Seminarende	Diana Wieniewske	FN / Einkauf / SGNN

9.1.2 In-Depth Interview Results

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
1	Expectations	Organization enables me to grow
2	Expectations	Networking (people from abroad)
3	Expectations	No expectations
4	Expectations	No expectations
5	Expectations	Learn about processes
6	Expectations	No expectations
Interview #	**ZF's intended objectives**	**Responses newcomer**
1	Orientation	The basis and foundations were thought by onboarding
2	Orientation	Too much information
3	Orientation	Basic trainings

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
4	Orientation	Basic knowledge is there
5	Orientation	Structure in your brain, a lot of orientation
6	Orientation	Orientation comes with the others

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
1	Impression	Learning other tools
2	Impression	Getting to know more people from other locations, people from abroad
3	Impression	
4	Impression	Get to know people from other divisions
5	Impression	Connected to orientation
6	Impression	Understand what others do

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
1	Information	
2	Information	
3	Information	
4	Information	Strategic V.S. Operational
5	Information	Purchasing view missing
6	Information	Guidelines, 2 processes

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
1	Teamwork	
2	Teamwork	Work together pretty closely
3	Teamwork	
4	Teamwork	
5	Teamwork	Lots of topics involving teamwork, understand information better
6	Teamwork	Provides/creates information, happens by itself, not possible without

Interview #	ZF's intended objectives	Responses newcomer
1	Networking	
2	Networking	1st step = daily task, 2nd step = networking
3	Networking	Main part is interacting
4	Networking	Networking is done
5	Networking	Not important/necessary
6	Networking	Nice to have

9.2 In-Depth Interview Transcripts

9.2.1 Interview 1

WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (21) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of improving the introductory concept (einarbeitung) for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management (MM). Newcomers represent, in

this research, the new employees entering the department MM. This is also known as the onboarding process for newcomers. A definition for onboarding used in this study is the one from Serbin and Jensen (2013) who state *"The onboarding phase is all about communication and expectations, providing clear and thorough information about the job and the organization, while also providing education, tools, and support to help case managers be successful"*.

Currently, the MM department is divided into three teams namely the Supplier Development (Lieferanten Management), Purchasing (Einkauf Production), and Logistics (SCM). The current onboarding concepts consist of three parties namely the participants, the trainers, and the organization. This research is focused on the possible (miss) fits between the different perspectives regarding the onboarding concept. Therefore, all three parties are asked for an interview to discuss their perspective on the onboarding concept. For this reason, it is important to interview you to receive your perspective on the current onboarding program. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding concepts and topics in your field of specialty (Materials Management).

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding programs. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

		06.05.2015
Interviewee	Interviewer (witness)	Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age?   **27**

- What is your gender?   ☒ Female   ☐ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.
  M. A. – Business Development / Supply Chain Management

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF?   ☐ Yes   ☒ No

  - o   If yes, in which organization(s)?

  - o   If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?

- How long have you been working for ZF?   **6 months**

- In which division are you currently present?
  ☐ P   ☒ T   ☐ I ☐ ES   ☐ Services (MA)   ☐ Corporate **(C-division)**

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.

  SCP Dielingen (Purchasing)

- Have you changed departments within ZF?   ☐ Yes   ☒ No

  - o   If yes, how often?

  - o   If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

  - o   If yes, how many?   **1**

  - o   If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

  Starterkit Purchasing

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding programs present. Due to the joint ventures in China and the integration of the American organization TRW, ZF is extremely involved in cooperation with multiple newcomers. This also involves newcomers, entering the department of MM. As a consequence, there is a high importance for an effective onboarding program which can incorporate newcomers successfully. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). The different perspectives on onboarding might clarify possible (miss) fits influencing the successfulness of the onboarding concept.

The interview script:

1. How do you feel about your responsibility for personal development and growth within an organization?

2. What are the opportunities presented by ZF to continue growth for newcomers?

3. How is the communication between you and the organization regarding integrating you within he new department?

4. How was your first introduction with the onboarding program?

5. How was the procedure for the onboarding program that you have followed clarified to you?

6. How did you overcome the unclear aspects of the onboarding program, if any?

7. How was the timeline presented to you and used during the onboarding program?

8. What is the missing content regarding to your job experience? More information regarding your area of specialty or more information regarding the organization ZF?

9. Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding program and your job description?

10. How would you describe the information flow concerning your field of specialty within the onboarding program?

11. How were the teaching methods used during the onboarding program?

12. What is your opinion about the trainings that are currently being offered by ZF?

13. If you could wish for another training to be added to the onboarding program, what would it be?

14. What effect did the onboarding program have?

15. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (1):

Interviewer: So you understand what the onboarding program means in this research as the introduction has explained?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: It is everything that refers to the development of the newcomers entering an organization or a new department.

Responder: OK

Interviewer: Ok then we can continue now with the interview questions were the first thing I would like to know is what can you say about your responsibility concerning personal growth?

Responder: You cannot always depend on your boss that he plans for you to move ahead so you actively have to ask for something like 'I want to do a seminar' or 'I want to meet those people'. I think the responsibility should come from both ways. He has to push you but you also have to ask for it.

Interviewer: Ok, so you also expect a certain push from the organization.

Responder: What I expect is that when I ask for something that the organization also enable me. For example, if I ask to go to the starterkit program and I get a yes that I do not have to wait for another year to participate. What I am asking is that when he explains me something or offers me some way for development where I can then choose or select the ones I am interested in that he also helps me to get them.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me why you see it this way?

Responder: Well if you passively wait for things to happen to you, you may not like the outcome. But if you are too pushy in the beginning then that may be seen more negative.

Interviewer: You said that you might not like the outcome. What do you mean with that? What is your outcome in this perspective?

Responder: For such a big company like ZF I think it is important to get to know people from every SAP, every place, from the different commodities because the personal contact always helps you if you want to achieve something. And also, if you enter a company and have only studied, at the beginning you need a lot of training to understand how it is done in ZF.

Interviewer: OK so to fit-in in the organization?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok that is very clear. Coming back to your answer, you said something about the organization needs to provide some opportunity. What you do expect from the organization?

Responder: For example, my contract is with Schweinfurt but I have this position that I have different project and for the different projects I have to go to the different locations. When I was at Schweinfurt, the first three days of my employment, in November, they gave me like a brochure what I can do in Schweinfurt and who are your direct colleagues etc. There was also a group a newcomers where there was a newcomer meeting. I was then moved to Dielingen and I asked there if there is also a newcomer meeting and they answered no, we don't have anything like that.

Interviewer: The movement was not because of a change in job?

Responder: No, it is part of my job.

Interviewer: Could you maybe explain that a little further? How is this part from your job?

Responder: Well it is called the SPRING program and you are only in purchasing for non-production materials and depending on your purchasing project you go to the different locations for 3 – 6 months. My first assignment was in Dielingen for a purchasing project but next months I will move to another location. So I am always moving around within ZF and within my department. My job is clear but it is like an inside consultant kinda thing for purchasing.

Interviewer: Ok interesting, sounds nice. Moving on, can you say something about the communication between your organization, so ZF, and your job description including the onboarding program? Is the communication clear for you?

Responder: Well, it was a bit unclear because I got this onboarding papers including a list of people and within the first 6 months you got to talk to all those people. The list consists of the names and their corresponding jobs and I only received the description of go and make it happen. There were some things were I really did not understand why I would talk to this person who has nothing to do with my job for example. And also, although I am in Dielingen now, I had to talk to people in Scheinfurt. The list further included a plant visit, getting shots from the doctor etc. were some things were unclear for me why do I have to do this in Schweinfurt while I am right now in Dielingen. I might as well go to the people in Dielingen who are doing the same thing.

Interviewer: How did you handle the things that were unclear to you?

Responder: Well I said, do I really have to go down to Bavaria for this because it really takes a long time. It is almost a day trip for me.

Interviewer: To whom did you ask this?

Responder: I asked my boss in Dielingen and he talked to someone in Schweinfurt and he said it has to be done in Schweinfurt. So I had to come anyway. But first I was like why should I even talk to those people because it makes no sense since I have nothing to do with them. I did it anyways since they write it down and it is sent to HR where they put it into your personal folder or something. However, in the end I saw that is does make sense because you always learn or gain something from the people and now I can connect things. I think it is thought through but it is not communicated that well because another colleague who is in the same program had a totally different list of names and she started like 4 years prior to me. We do not understand why she has different people and for *less* people. Why did they add random people to me?

Interviewer: So if I understand it right you are saying that it was unclear at the moment but when you look back you say ok maybe I understand why they have done it.

Responder: Yes, but it is still unclear why there are different versions of this list of people.

Interviewer: Are there other things that are unclear to you?

Responder: No.

Interviewer: If you encounter such a moment where you have no idea what to do, what is your first reaction to this?

Responder: Well I always talk to my direct colleagues but they have different jobs and have different list so they couldn't really help me. At the end, I then asked my boss and he said just do so I just do it. I just simply ask around.

Interviewer: Continuing to the onboarding program itself, was the time frame clear to you? When it starts and when is the end?

Responder: Yes, it said please do this as soon as possible or as fast as you can. So I just started and then in the middle I stopped and did other things. Now I am out of the probezeit (trial period) and then they said you have to finish this list of people before the end of your trial period because we need it for our folder if you want to get the real contract. This made me really go down to Bavaria and do it within a week so I get it done.

Interviewer: So they leave the responsibility to you to finish as long as it is done within this timeframe?

Responder: Yeah.

Interviewer: You are always referring to this list of people you received but are there also other methods used to integrate you?

Responder: Yes like online tools.

Interviewer: Can you maybe name a few?

Responder: Yes, Bahnführungsein, SAP, ZF SAM, and general things about security.

Interviewer: Why do those pop-up into your mind right now?

Responder: Well sometimes I forget how to do certain things and then I still do the online tools trainings, I re-do them. The security training was funny, that is why I remember it. It was like a comic or a movie kind of thing. It was like a game were you had to click. Ones you have done them you print out the results and you hand it in to your HR.

Interviewer: Is that the proof that you have followed the trainings?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: What types of teaching methods are used with the online tools?

Responder: It was all web-based trainings.

Interviewer: What you do think about the use of the teaching methods?

Responder: You cannot do them in your first week since they take a long time. Some take hours and hours so it was a bit exhausting at the beginning so I only did one a day and then other things. However, they were good so I am still re-doing them. I think they were helpful but not as helpful that I know them by heart.

Interviewer: So if I understand it right, you like the opportunity that tools are always available to you when needed?

Responder: Yes exactly.

Interviewer: Interesting. Was there any content that you think were missing concerning your job?

Responder: Well, at the beginning they gave me a large folder with papers explaining all the rules and processes. I cannot really say if something was missing but at the beginning I was a little lost. I was reading for days and days.

Interviewer: Did you feel overloaded with information?

Responder: Yes. Well, they did say take your time, don't try to read it all in one day. But still at the beginning you want to know everything and you want to start as quickly as you can and get it done. However, then you realize that you cannot read it all in one week.

Interviewer: What do you think would be the right time for such an integration process? You are saying that in the first week it is almost impossible, you have too many other things to take care of.

Responder: Well in Dielingen, they kinda leave you alone with it. You sit down at your place with the folder and the online tools were everyone is different in handling it. We have a new colleague now who, in the first week, just sat there silently doing all the things so sometimes we checked-in on her to ask if she is ok or if she wants to talk or something.

Interviewer: So if I understand it correctly, a strong point is that they leave it up to you so you can plan the things the way you prefer?

Responder: Yeah.

Interviewer: So the process is different for each individual?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: If there would be a training that you could wish for, which one would it be?

Responder: Well for me, what would help me the most is, my boss said that we have 13 different commodities and he said get to know the people. He did not clarify how. So I just went to each of them and introduced myself to them and asked for meeting where they can explain to me what they are doing. Then I just put a 1-2 hours outlook meeting with everybody and within the first two weeks met everybody and talked to him or her. I just sat down next to them and watch them. That was the most helpful at the end.

Interviewer: What was the most helpful?

Responder: The face-to-face contact. They all said that nobody else did it this way to really sit down with them and take your time. Look over their shoulder for a few hours to see what do they really do on a normal day.

Interviewer: For how many hours did you follow them?

Responder: That is different. The talk was for one hour and then at the end I asked if I could just sit and watch. Then new questions pop-up. I wrote down everything and I have my folders who state who is who. That was very helpful for me.

Interviewer: Was this a whole day that you were sitting with this person?

Responder: That is an onboarding method that I made up myself. When I was a working student at Bayernstorf, they had this were everybody had to do it. All the working students had to sit down with their person for one day.

Interviewer: So you got this idea from another organization.

Responder: Yes. I first thought it was normal and did it at ZF. Then the people asked why do you do this nobody has done this before. It was helpful for me at Bayernstof and thus I did it here at ZF.

Interviewer: And were the people open to this type of integration? Did they have no problem with it?

Responder: Some people don't like to be watched for a whole day maybe but you realize this when you talk to them and then you just leave after a few hours. However, most were helpful or happy that someone is interested.

Interviewer: So would you advise to other newcomers?

Responder: When we have interns coming in, I just tell them to sit down with her. Sitting down next to someone, you learn the most of him or her.

Interviewer: There may also be students who come and don't take notes and then they can forget what they have seen. Is the taking note part very important or is it not necessary?

Responder: The taking note part for me was helpful at the beginning when you learn so many names that you don't remember all. Who is who and to which commodity do they belong. The most helpful part was having this personal topic with everybody so at the end I know all of the 13 commodity purchasers and I have talked to them personally, one-on-one, for a few hours. I am more able to call them up when I have a question because they know my face and I sat there with them.

Interviewer: Can you say something about the information flow between your current job and the onboarding program? With this I mean, your job probably develops over the years, do the new updates also reach you? How do you receive them?

Responder: For new tools, you always get those newsletters.

Interviewer: Ok are the newsletters a useful communication tool?

Responder: Well, I do read them.

Interviewer: Ok, and how often do they come?

Responder: Mmm, I do not know how often the MM newsletter comes. Maybe every 6 weeks or 2 months. But when something special comes up, the team assistant always write an email to everybody.

Interviewer: So the team assistance as the responsibility to point out the important updates?

Responder: Yes. And for seminars and webinars for the tools, the invitations or emails also come from the team assistance.

Interviewer: Can you describe who the team assistance is in your department?

Responder: Our team assistance in SCP in Dielingen, she sits in one room with us.

Interviewer: Does she have the responsibility to spread the incoming information around?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok, we are coming to the end now. One of my last question is how do you find the onboarding program information compared to your job description and actually performing your job? Does it match or is there a gap somewhere?

Responder: Well for one part of my job it is helpful. The things I learned here like Pure, ZF SAM and MyZF I knew already.

Interviewer: How comes you knew them before?

Responder: Because I had to do the online tools for the onboarding. However, the other part of my job, the strategic part and project driven, you cannot have an onboarding because it varies for each and every project. You cannot inform somebody before. It is more learning by doing. The basics and the foundations were thought by the onboarding program.

Interviewer: Were you satisfied with the onboarding program? Was there something missing or is there something that you would like to see differently next time?

Responder: No, when you do all the online tools then you are well prepared.

Interviewer: Is it not a repetition of what you have learned with the use of the online tools?

Responder: Yes, but in my onboarding program I only learned about the online tools regarding the purchasing of non-production materials and here you also learn about tools that I do not use because I am not in production materials. I will never use them probably.

Interviewer: Do you find it a waste of time?

Responder: No. The group is very diverse were for me there are some things repetition and others things are new. The ones that are new I might not need to use them but it is always good to know. Today it is very much about tools but it is more like an overview where it does not go very much in details. But therefore, there are webinars where the tool is further explained.

Interviewer: You had the webinars before you were finished with the onboarding program?

Responder: Yes because they have different dates for the webinars and then it works as first come and first serve.

Interviewer: Would it have been better if it was the other way around or does it not matter?

Responder: Actually, the PureC3 is so easy to use that my boss said to just go play with it. What I would like is that they have a newcomer meeting for all the locations and plants. Because if you enter an organization and you do not know anyone except your colleagues, your colleagues may be way older then you, then you are a bit lost since it is a little town and not a lot of young people or places to meet people. When I would come and not know anybody, I would feel a little lost and lonely.

Interviewer: Would you then have second thoughts about coming at all?

Responder: Well you would already be there and I think you would not quite working at ZF. For me it was not a problem because I know people there but I thought then you may get to know *more* people. When I asked for this program and they told me that they do not have it, I was a bit confused because normally they do have something like this. ZF also has it but only for students at ZF but not for new employees. Then I thought, why are students more important than new employees. However, there is an informal meeting that I got to know accidently which is called group for young purchasers at ZF living as Osnabruck. They go to the movies and out for drinks together. But this is not part of the onboarding but just someone made it up. It is also not communicated; I just got to know her by chance. But I think this should be part of the official onboarding program. Maybe it does not only need to be young purchasers but for all newcomers. When I was doing my internship at other organization, they always had.

Interviewer: But during your internship you were a student like students at ZF.

Responder: Yes correct, but they also had it for new employees entering the organization. At Bayernstorf they had groups for people who speak Spanish, for people who speak French etc. As an example, the people who speak French meet every Friday for lunch.

Interviewer: interesting. This was then the end of the interview. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Responder: No but maybe a question, so now you are designing, with the use of your results, a new process?

Interviewer: Well I am actually only analyzing to see if there is a possible miss-fit between the different groups who are involved. The three groups are I am analyzing are the participants, like you, the trainers and the ones who organize the onboarding program. Thus not only starterkit but the whole process.

Responder: Is starterkit an actual part of the onboarding program? Because some colleagues of mine went to the starterkit before me in March or something and they were already working at our department for 3-4 years. Therefore, I would say that the starterkit is not really part of the onboarding program.

Interviewer: That is the dilemma we have.

Responder: Good luck with it ☺

Interviewer: Thank you very much!

9.2.2 Interview 2
WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (21) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of improving the introductory concept (einarbeitung) for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management (MM). Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. This is also known as the onboarding process for newcomers. A definition for onboarding used in this study is the one from Serbin and Jensen (2013) who state "*The onboarding phase is all about communication and expectations, providing clear and thorough information about the job and the organization, while also providing education, tools, and support to help case managers be successful*".

Currently, the MM department is divided into three teams namely the Supplier Development (Lieferanten Management), Purchasing (Einkauf Production), and Logistics (SCM). The current onboarding concepts consist of three parties namely the participants, the trainers, and the organization. This research is focused on the possible (miss) fits between the different perspectives regarding the onboarding concept. Therefore, all three parties are

asked for an interview to discuss their perspective on the onboarding concept. For this reason, it is important to interview you to receive your perspective on the current onboarding program. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding concepts and topics in your field of specialty (Materials Management).

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding programs. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

07.05.2015

Interviewee	Interviewer (witness)	Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age? **28**

- What is your gender? □ Female ⊠ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.
  Industrial engineering (Mechanical engineering)

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF? □ Yes ⊠ No

  o If yes, in which organization(s)?

  o If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?

- How long have you been working for ZF? **1 year and 3 months**

- In which division are you currently present?
  ⊠ P □ T □ I □ ES □ Services (MA) □ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.

  Purchasing department (Project + Series)

- Have you changed departments within ZF? □ Yes ⊠ No

  o If yes, how often?

  o If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF? ⊠ Yes □ No

  o If yes, how many? **1**

  o If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

  Starterkit Purchasing

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding programs present. Due to the joint ventures in China and the integration of the American organization TRW, ZF is extremely involved in cooperation with multiple newcomers. This also involves newcomers, entering the department of MM. As a consequence, there is a high importance for an effective onboarding program which can incorporate newcomers successfully. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). The different perspectives on onboarding might clarify possible (miss) fits influencing the successfulness of the onboarding concept.

The interview script:

1. How do you feel about your responsibility for personal development and growth within an organization?

2. What are the opportunities presented by ZF to continue growth for newcomers?

3. How is the communication between you and the organization regarding integrating you within he new department?

4. How was your first introduction with the onboarding program?

5. How was the procedure for the onboarding program that you have followed clarified to you?

6. How did you overcome the unclear aspects of the onboarding program, if any?

7. How was the timeline presented to you and used during the onboarding program?

8. What is the missing content regarding to your job experience? More information regarding your area of specialty or more information regarding the organization ZF?

9. Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding program and your job description?

10. How would you describe the information flow concerning your field of specialty within the onboarding program?

11. How were the teaching methods used during the onboarding program?

12. What is your opinion about the trainings that are currently being offered by ZF?

13. If you could wish for another training to be added to the onboarding program, what would it be?

14. What effect did the onboarding program have?

15. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (2):

Interviewer: So you understand what the onboarding program means in this interview?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok, so it has everything to do related to the integration of newcomers, like you, within your department. The importance is to prevent feeling of lost for you as newcomers and to increase the level of productivity for the organization like ZF. This is why I am doing this research and therefore I would like to start with the first question and that is how do you feel about your responsibility concerning personal growth in an organization?

Responder: I think it is pretty important especially for people that come from their university and have their first job as ZF. They really need to get to know the company ZF, their work and their department. At the beginning it is really challenging and it is not always easy.

Interviewer: Why do you think it is so important for newcomers, especially for the ones coming from universities?

Responder: Because they do not know their tasks and their daily work and business. They do not know how to work with other people or the aim of the company or department.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me what the most important part was for you?

Responder: The first thing was to get the daily tasks done, get to know the tasks and how to do it. The next step, of course, is the networking, which is pretty important to get to know the people within your department but also in

the other departments like logistics department, quality department and research & development department. In the purchasing department you always have to communicate with the other departments.

Interviewer: Do you feel that ZF offers you the opportunity for developing yourself in their organization?

Responder: Yeah I think so.

Interviewer: Can you explain how does ZF provide you with this opportunity?

Responder: This event, for example, the starterkit for purchasing is a good thing to get to know more people from other locations like Passau, Schweinfurt, and Friedrichshafen. I think it would be more interesting if people join from abroad like Europe. Furthermore, in Saarbrücken they asked if we want to go to Grey Court in the US. If you really want to do this you can support Grey Court and I think it is important to have the opportunity to go abroad to have another challenge.

Interviewer: So if I understand you right, being sent abroad could be part of an onboarding program?

Responder: Yes it could. You have to have the experience first within your department or your location of ZF. Something like 1 or 2 years and afterwards it might be a good thing. It depends on the people who want to go abroad. I think the trainee's go abroad as well.

Interviewer: Ok, can you explain to me what opportunities has ZF given you to integrate yourself in your department except the starterkit? Are there also other things?

Responder: Well we work together pretty closely.

Interviewer: With your direct colleagues?

Responder: Yes. We have some topics that belong to the whole purchasing department but all of course because the other people buy other parts or different kinds of parts. We have some meetings with our department every 2 weeks were we discuss topics or problems which is good.

Interviewer: Is it then a planned meeting or spontaneously?

Responder: It is planned. My boss always books in outlook every 2 weeks a meeting.

Interviewer: It is a regularly meeting every two weeks, correct?

Responder: Yes correct.

Interviewer: Can you tell me how long this regularly meeting continues?

Responder: No I do not know. Right now my boss is in Grey Court for 3 months where right now we have another boss who will continues this process and moderates those meetings.

Interviewer: Ok is there something else you can say concerning the onboarding program? Is there something else involves in your department besides this regularly meeting and starterkit?

Responder: No I don't think there is really something else like a process or something. As I said, we have like different trainings, which are mostly mandatory, but it is not like structured that everything works together. It is not that I have to go to this training first and then use the tool. This is the way it goes right now.

Interviewer: Can you say something about how it is communicated to you? Is it clear to you which trainings you have to follow and when?

Responder: Yes, some trainings we are invited automatically like starterkit.

Interviewer: By whom?

Responder: By Rebecca, but I think there is like a database or something where all the trainings are linked to my name probably. The mandatory trainings just pop-up like an invitation for something. Sometimes I do not have the time because, we are just invited and you have to look in the calendar if it is even possible, where sometimes it is possible and other times not.

Interviewer: So the communication is mainly based on invitations if I understand it correctly?

Responder: Yes but there are also trainings where you can register yourself. But the important trainings like SAP and Axcellenc, SupplierOn, I did them in the beginning because I really need them in my daily work. That worked pretty quickly.

Interviewer: The trainings that are offered on the intranet, how are they communicated to you? How do you find them?

Responder: In MyZF there is something like an overview of all the trainings. Additionally, sometimes my boss recommend some trainings as well. However, they are not always mandatory

Interviewer: Ok so recommendations as well. Now moving on to the onboarding program itself, can you describe your first introduction towards the onboarding program? I know that you said there is not really a process but if you would explain your first introduction to the onboarding process, with what is currently available, how would you describe this?

Responder: I can describe my first days and weeks. How it went. I came there and one of my colleagues introduced to me to all the other colleagues as well as other purchasing departments. It was pretty interesting to get to know all the people. However, at the beginning it was too much information but I think it is normal at the

beginning. I had one person that I could talk you more because I changed some suppliers with him, he gave me some of his suppliers because he had too much work and therefore we worked together pretty closely. I could ask him a lot of questions.

Interviewer: Was the colleagues voluntarily offering him or was he assigned to you?

Responder: I think he was assigned to me and suppose to help me because he is going to retire next year.

Interviewer: So he is supposed to train you so that you can take him place?

Responder: Yes more or less. In Saarbrucken we always have two people where when one is on vacation then the other one should be in the office. Not on a trip or something. Another thing was, we had like a sheet consisting of 3 papers, which has to be fulfilled. Examples are doing the SAP registration or other tools as well as the introduction to all the people. I forgot the name of the sheet but it is like a starter sheet, which has to be signed in the end when everything has been done.

Interviewer: Can you tell me who provided you with this sheet? Was it from the HR department or from your department?

Responder: I think it was from the purchasing department. I think it was my boss or the boss from my boss. I think it is not a corporate thing but just from Saarbrucken.

Interviewer: Were you aware of the starter date to fill in the sheet and the end date?

Responder: I think there was not a period of time were we have to fulfill it but they said somewhere in the first weeks. However, there was not strict time or something.

Interviewer: What would happen if you did not fill out the sheet?

Responder: I am not sure. It was not that bad to fill it out. I think it made sense to do all those things because if I haven't done the registration I wouldn't be able to do the work.

Interviewer: If you encounter some parts that were unclear to you, at the moment, how did you handle that?

Responder: I think I talked a lot with my colleagues. As I said at the beginning I worked at the purchasing department before as an internship, which was different as it was another company as well. I think it is always different if you start at a new company. I had to ask a lot of questions at the beginning where I thought do I know the people. However, the people always said no, no you can ask me. This was the case with me at the beginning. You should always ask.

Interviewer: Can you name a few examples of moments that were unclear to you?

Responder: Well some tools like SAP and the transactions that I have never seen before. They had to show me the transaction as well. Other examples are some topics with the suppliers. I had to get to know the suppliers first. Before talking to the suppliers I first had to talk to my people.

Interviewer: Can you specify which topics concerning the suppliers were unclear to you?

Responder: Well sometimes the technical topic. I didn't know all the parts of course and sometimes the arrangements made in the past were not know to me. A purchaser should always know the decisions made in the past like negotiations or prices for example. Sometimes the history is documented but also sometimes not.

Interviewer: So you would talk to your direct colleagues to get the information, correct?

Responder: Yes, most of the time.

Interviewer: And what do you do in the other times as you say most of the times?

Responder: Then I have to talk to the suppliers directly.

Interviewer: Can you describe the communication?

Responder: It depends. For quick questions the telephone is the best. If it is like important information about prices or something, it is always good to have an email. So when I talk to them I have some prove. About prices you are always supposed to have an email. I think it make sense.

Interviewer: Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding programs, what you have learnt through this process, and with your current job and job description? Is there a match or do you believe there is some content missing, which represents a possible gap?

Responder: I am not sure, as I said there is no real process. Things I learnt, the questions I asked always fit to the task or the things I had to do. It always depends.

Interviewer: If you had a training you could wish for, which training would it be?

Responder: In the beginning there should be something like a training where you see all the different departments and talk to the people first who are responsible for your parts like in the logistic department and quality and so on. Maybe a more structured onboarding process would make sense.

Interviewer: Well, I am talking about the training offerings now, if you could add a specific training to the program which training would you add?

Responder: I am not sure; I think there is a training for everything. You can apply and register yourself for the trainings. The only thing that was a little weird is that I was not invited to the starterkit and I work at ZF from

January 2014. My colleague was originally invited but didn't have the time so she said you haven't followed the starterkit yet so you can do it instead of me. This could be a little earlier. Right now I know most of the tools and the structures. It was interesting anyways but yeah.

Interviewer: What time frame would you recommend to follow such an onboarding program?

Responder: Within the first 6 months maybe.

Interviewer: We are coming to the end now of this interview, what can you say about the teaching methods used during the introductory phase at ZF? Let's call it like this since you do not like the onboarding program or it does not really exist. Like the trainings you mentioned or the online tools. What can you say about the teaching methods used?

Responder: I think the trainings were mostly pretty good. I like the face-to-face because they were pretty good. Our trainers know a lot about the tools and the processes.

Interviewer: Can you explain why you like the face-to-face contact the most?

Responder: You can ask questions better than in webinars. We had mandatory webinars like COPRA and AIS and it wasn't really good because it was just theory and didn't really understand everything in the 20 min. We had the whole process in the training. With SDP we had a face-to-face with a case study like an example, which showed really how it works which was way better.

Interviewer: Ok, can you explain to me then if after a year you forget a detail from this training and you would like to recall it. If you had a face-to-face it would not be possible to recall it somewhere.

Responder: Yes it would because we sometimes they send us the sheets and you can look it up. Sometimes the sheets are not so good and you have to ask the people who did the training. Most of them work in the same area so you can just go there and talk to them or call them.

Interviewer: Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Responder: Well as I said before, I think it should be more structured. It should be more like a try-and-error like learning by doing. At the beginning I said learning by failing because you make so many mistakes. You know it better afterwards. You do mistakes at the beginning of course but it should be more structured.

Interviewer: What do you mean by more structured?

Responder: Well especially at the beginning where you have maybe an overview. The overview was missing, especially for me, at the beginning at least. You receive one piece and another piece and after a while the pieces come together. It was ok afterwards because I got to know everything I need but at the beginning it was sometimes confusing.

Interviewer: OK, that was the interview from my side. Thank you very much for your time.

Responder: Your welcome. Good luck with your thesis.

9.2.3 Interview 3
WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (21) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of improving the introductory concept (einarbeitung) for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management (MM). Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. This is also known as the onboarding process for newcomers. A definition for onboarding used in this study is the one from Serbin and Jensen (2013) who state "*The onboarding phase is all about communication and expectations, providing clear and thorough information about the job and the organization, while also providing education, tools, and support to help case managers be successful*".

Currently, the MM department is divided into three teams namely the Supplier Development (Lieferanten Management), Purchasing (Einkauf Production), and Logistics (SCM). The current onboarding concepts consist of three parties namely the participants, the trainers, and the organization. This research is focused on the possible (miss) fits between the different perspectives regarding the onboarding concept. Therefore, all three parties are asked for an interview to discuss their perspective on the onboarding concept. For this reason, it is important to interview you to receive your perspective on the current onboarding program. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding concepts and topics in your field of specialty (Materials Management).

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding programs. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

_____   _____   07.05.2015
Interviewee   Interviewer (witness)   _____
                                                                                    Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age?   **29**_____

- What is your gender?   ☒ Female   ☐ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.
  Wirtschaftsinformatic & E-Business

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF?   ☐ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, in which organization(s)?

  _____

  o   If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?

  _____

- How long have you been working for ZF?   **(1 year as intern) 2 years as employees**

- In which division are you currently present?
  ☐ P   ☐ T   ☐ I ☐ ES   ☐ Services (MA)   ☒ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.

  SGMM (ZF Lieferantenmanagement / Methoden & Prozesse)

- Have you changed departments within ZF?   ☐ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, how often?   _____

  o   If yes, from which department to where?

  _____

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

  o   If yes, how many?   **1**_____

  o   If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

  Starterkit Purchasing_____

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding programs present. Due to the joint ventures in China and the integration of the American organization TRW, ZF is extremely involved in cooperation with multiple newcomers. This also involves newcomers, entering the department of MM. As a consequence, there is a high importance for an effective onboarding program which can incorporate newcomers successfully. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). The different perspectives on onboarding might clarify possible (miss) fits influencing the successfulness of the onboarding concept.

The interview script:

1. How do you feel about your responsibility for personal development and growth within an organization?

2. What are the opportunities presented by ZF to continue growth for newcomers?

3. How is the communication between you and the organization regarding integrating you within he new department?

4. How was your first introduction with the onboarding program?

5. How was the procedure for the onboarding program that you have followed clarified to you?

6. How did you overcome the unclear aspects of the onboarding program, if any?

7. How was the timeline presented to you and used during the onboarding program?

8. What is the missing content regarding to your job experience? More information regarding your area of specialty or more information regarding the organization ZF?

9. Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding program and your job description?

10. How would you describe the information flow concerning your field of specialty within the onboarding program?

11. How were the teaching methods used during the onboarding program?

12. What is your opinion about the trainings that are currently being offered by ZF?

13. If you could wish for another training to be added to the onboarding program, what would it be?

14. What effect did the onboarding program have?

15. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (3):

Interviewer: So you understand what the onboarding program means in this research?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: It has everything to do with how the organization integrates you within the department you have entered. I am doing this research because the importance for onboarding is to prevent feeling of loss for newcomers and also to stimulate the productivity level for the organization. My first questions would be how do you feel about the responsibility concerning your side to develop yourself within an organization?

Responder: Okay, I think that the main part is that you have to interact with your colleagues and that means you have to know which colleagues is responsible for what so that you can collect the information from them because you are depending on them.

Interviewer: Do you mean with colleagues your direct colleagues?

Responder: Yes my direct colleagues. I got a sister in my department and she told me about the department before I started working there. Therefore, I had it much easier than others. I also knew the organization before because I did my bachelor there and I was intern. That means I was working there 1 year before I started at the supplier management. So I have been 3 years working there. The start is always hard because you don't know where to get the information from or you don't have a book where everything is written down. If you have a question please ask that person. Or if you feel disorientated please contact that person. My direct chef is very cool. He said if something is wrong or I have worries or something like that, I could go straight to him. He will take the time to

show me how things are working. He has always an open door for his employees but when you are new you are shy and you don't know if it is ok or not. He took the time and showed us the organization structure from our department and who is responsible for what. This is always the first thing you can in your first or second week. However, this is something he decided by himself to do it, I don't think this is written down somewhere that you need to do that. He always showed us where the fire alarm is and he goes through with us from floor to floor. He shows us our colleagues, for example this is production materials and we are non-production materials but he does this by himself. This is a kind a human who does that while others just throw you in the cold water where you are responsible for yourself and deal with it. But here it is different.

Interviewer: Could you then describe the opportunities provided by ZF to newcomers within your department?

Responder: In my department?

Interviewer: Yes, as you describe above, your chef guides you through the organization but are there also other things he does or ZF provides?

Responder: He guides me through and he tells me what is appropriate and inappropriate and how we should acts like please don't play with your cell phone this much or don't go on the internet for private but just for work. Mmm what else? Well, if we have problems we can go to him.

Interviewer: Would you say the responsibility is more within ZF or within you as the person?

Responder: I think it is with me because if I see it overall I think am lucky to be within this department because of my superior but I don't think this is wide spread this superior. Therefore, I think it is within your own hands.

Interviewer: And how would you describe the communication between the organization and you.

Responder: The organization as ZF?

Interviewer: Yes.

Responder: Well, depending on the example, mmm I need an example.

Interviewer: That is ok. Take your time.

Responder: Well if I want to know something about a process I know where I can find on the intranet.

Interviewer: Would you describe the communication to be digitally?

Responder: yes.

Interviewer: Ok can you describe the communication? Is it more with emails or more with the use of tools?

Responder: I think it is more with emails because if you have question you know that not everyone is always at their place so you cannot always call the person and therefore you write an email. Not every process or every tool or every information is available as web-based trainings. Therefore, it is just emails.

Interviewer: Are there also other methods used to communicate with each other?

Responder: There are web-conferences by video that is very often used and quite good. If you have to show something with a tool or something or explain something to someone and there is no webinar available or web-based trainings, you can write an email and your colleague can invite you for a web-conference where your colleague can share his desk top screen to you via video. This method is wide spread used and good, also used very often in meetings.

Interviewer: going into more details about the onboarding program now, what was your first contact with the onboarding program?

Responder: The onboarding program, which part?

Interviewer: Yes so when you entered the organization, what was your first introduction to a type of integration were you realized that is part of an onboarding program?

Responder: Ok that was the guidance that I got like that is our department and those are the rules of our department and those from ZF more or less.

Interviewer: Is it written down anywhere or was it only spoken communication?

Responder: It was only spoken communication but there is a check list for new employees which contains for example, you have to do the security training which is a web-based training and you have to complete it. That is a total of about 6 to 8 trainings I believe you should complete as a new intern, bachelor or employee. What was the content? I think it was including the organization structure and it should be shown to you by your superior or by yourself. The guidance he gave us like this is the coffee kitchen where you can meet with your colleagues and communicate with others since it is a coffee kitchen for the all plant. There are the wending machines.

Interviewer: Was it clear to you how it was presented?

Responder: Yes because I had it before and I already knew the colleagues. I had not really problems with it.

Interviewer: You had nothing that was unclear to you?

Responder: Well, my own topics were unclear to me when I started.

Interviewer: How did you handle with this unclearness? What did you do to get the information you were looking for to understand your topics?

Responder: I asked colleagues and I was informed by colleagues who did this topic before. I mostly did it by myself with the use of the Internet or searching like that. I just did anything and showed it to my team leader who is my superior. At the beginning you have more meetings like every third day and your superior take very much time to induct you into your topic but he doesn't know clearly what he wants form me then I don't know what I have to do. So I just make proposals like I can do it this way, this way, or this way and showed him and then he would say that way I like and just start with it.

Interviewer: If I understand it right, that was your own initiative correct?

Responder: Yes that was my own initiative.

Interviewer: Ok was it clear to you when the onboarding program started or when it was finished?

Responder: No. That was not clear to me.

Interviewer: So there was no time frame?

Responder: No. It was maybe one day, my first day.

Interviewer: Can you describe how does that make you feel?

Responder: A little bit sad. The first days are always the worst because you have this strange feeling. You are sitting there and you don't know what you have to do. I was lucky that I knew a few persons and I went to them and asked if they had some work for me which I could do till I know what my own work is. So I did everything for them and started step by step to clear my topics.

Interviewer: What would you have wished for to prevent this feeling of sadness?

Responder: Maybe better preparation when my first day starts that maybe a plan for the first week or something like that.

Interviewer: So when I understand you right, your main focus is on the first one two weeks?

Responder: Yes for me that would be ok. The first two till three weeks. I think that is the time you should take to integrate within the team and feel safe. That should be enough I think.

Interviewer: Ok good, thank you. Now that you have been working a little longer at your job can you say something about the relationship between what you have learned and with your daily tasks? Is there a match or a gap? Is there content missing?

Responder: No because when I started their I had a topic with 'reporting and my chef told me when you want to make reports ask this person who is responsible for trainings within this area and tools and you have to learn this. So I did this and learned it and could make reports like he wanted.

Interviewer: Ok so if you could wish for a training that is right now not being offered, what would it be? It could be anything.

Responder: Maybe expert trainings because the trainings are just the basics and I would like to have a detail training or just maybe frequently ask questions. So maybe a training just for me and not for 10 persons so I can ask my questions and solve my problems.

Interviewer: Ok, ZF currently has webinars, which go more in detail if I understand it correctly but there you are within a group between 10-15 people. So this is not what you mean right?

Responder: No, for example my sister is responsible for ZF SAM, which is supplier evaluation, and she gives webinars. So for example for Shanghai there were 20 people sitting in one room and she showed it via web-conference to everyone. But if you have specific questions you can write to her and she will organize a training just with you and with your questions. But this is not always like that.

Interviewer: So the contact one-to-one with the trainer is missing?

Responder: Yes exactly.

Interviewer: Ok that is what you would wish for. Understood. Can you say something about the information flow concerning your job and the onboarding process? With this I mean, your job it develops and new information comes in, how do you receive those new information? Do you receive them at all?

Responder: No. There are gaps. I receive the information by chance or superior tells me didn't you know that. No I didn't. Oeps I forgot to inform you by email. Or other times my colleagues tell me this is the new process you have to follow it. Once a month we have a meeting for SGM, for our department, where new will be spread there. But that are news for the whole department and not always interesting for me. That is a problem. There is also no protocol so when I am not there in the meeting I will not know the news and the information or for example I do not know what the other team is doing.

Interviewer: Ok no we are coming to the end of this interview; it is concerning the teaching methods used for example the web-based, the face-to-face and the web-conference, what is your opinion about the use of the teaching methods for the onboarding program?

Responder: I think it would be great if there is a web-based training, something like an overview for new employees. For example for Materials Management they would have their own web-based training and Human resource their own web-based training. Something like a very quick overview of the news and what you need to know would be fine for me for the first days. Then I would be informed by the superior about the rules of the

department. The web-based training would tell you the rules about the whole organization and your supervisor the rules from your department and what is expected from you. It has been for years now that I am working here but when I started I was very shy and didn't know where to get the information and what to do. I was first at the human resources, which is another department. My chef there was not like my current one and he told me nothing. I was sitting at my desk and just worked with myself. I did everything I think I could do to do my work better. I knew more or less what I had to do and took the information from the intranet and wrote everything down. But, as I said, in the SGM department with my current team leader it was much better. It is another human being. He is very personally.

Interviewer: Why do you go for the web-based training?

Responder: Because for the introduction, I think it is perfect. You can watch it 3 times or 4 times how you like it. It is quick and you have the overview, for some processes maybe and your superior can tell it in details or what is inappropriate in your department or what your superior is expecting. Everything department has its own process or something like that, own culture, own feeling. I think it is very important that he tells you that by himself. The hard facts should be told by a webinar.

Interviewer: Ok so a combination for you would be important?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have anything else to add to this interview that may help the improvement for an onboarding program?

Responder: When I started with my contract I received a map like welcome to ZF, thank you for choosing this company, and there was a copy of contract and a notebook, a pen, like information about retirement etc. Maybe a map for the Materials Management would be helpful.

Interviewer: So more specified on the field of specialty?

Responder: Yes exactly.

Interviewer: Ok good, thank you. That was the interview from my side. You have any comment for me how I can improve the interview?

Responder: No, it was good. Maybe a letter stating the onboarding program and its process might help. I never knew there was an onboarding program. The support is mostly needed within the first 6 months. I would say the first 3 weeks intensive care and then more lose. The intensive care should be within your department and then the rest of the 6 months from other departments and the organization.

Interviewer: Ok thank you very much. I wish you a nice afternoon.

Responder: Thank you, you too.

9.2.4 Interview 4
WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (21) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of improving the introductory concept (einarbeitung) for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management (MM). Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. This is also known as the onboarding process for newcomers. A definition for onboarding used in this study is the one from Serbin and Jensen (2013) who state "*The onboarding phase is all about communication and expectations, providing clear and thorough information about the job and the organization, while also providing education, tools, and support to help case managers be successful*".

Currently, the MM department is divided into three teams namely the Supplier Development (Lieferanten Management), Purchasing (Einkauf Production), and Logistics (SCM). The current onboarding concepts consist of three parties namely the participants, the trainers, and the organization. This research is focused on the possible (miss) fits between the different perspectives regarding the onboarding concept. Therefore, all three parties are asked for an interview to discuss their perspective on the onboarding concept. For this reason, it is important to interview you to receive your perspective on the current onboarding program. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding concepts and topics in your field of specialty (Materials Management).

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding programs. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

□ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

□ NO

Interviewee	Interviewer (witness)	19.05.2015
		Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age?   **24**

- What is your gender?   ☒ Female   □ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.
  Master of Arts in Logistics

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF?   □ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, in which organization(s)?

  o   If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?

- How long have you been working for ZF?   **Since 04.04.2014**

- In which division are you currently present?
  □ P   □ T   □ I □ ES   □ Services (MA)   ☒ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.

  Corporate Freight Management (SCF)

- Have you changed departments within ZF?   □ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, how often?

  o   If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF?   ☒ Yes   □ No

  o   If yes, how many?   **1**

  o   If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

  Starterkit Logistics

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding programs present. Due to the joint ventures in China and the integration of the American organization TRW, ZF is extremely involved in cooperation with multiple newcomers. This also involves newcomers, entering the department of MM. As a consequence, there is a high importance for an effective onboarding program which can incorporate newcomers successfully. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). The different perspectives on onboarding might clarify possible (miss) fits influencing the successfulness of the onboarding concept.

The interview script:

1. How do you feel about your responsibility for personal development and growth within an organization?

2. What are the opportunities presented by ZF to continue growth for newcomers?

3. How is the communication between you and the organization regarding integrating you within he new department?

4. How was your first introduction with the onboarding program?

5. How was the procedure for the onboarding program that you have followed clarified to you?

6. How did you overcome the unclear aspects of the onboarding program, if any?

7. How was the timeline presented to you and used during the onboarding program?

8. What is the missing content regarding to your job experience? More information regarding your area of specialty or more information regarding the organization ZF?

9. Can you say something about the resemblance between the onboarding program and your job description?

10. How would you describe the information flow concerning your field of specialty within the onboarding program?

11. How were the teaching methods used during the onboarding program?

12. What is your opinion about the trainings that are currently being offered by ZF?

13. If you could wish for another training to be added to the onboarding program, what would it be?

14. What effect did the onboarding program have?

15. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (4):

Interviewer: So you understand what the onboarding concept means in this research?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: And you understand why we are doing this research?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok good. Then I would like to start with the first question and that is what is your opinion about, what do you think when you enter an organization; what is your responsibility to integrate within your department or this organization?

Responder: ok so for me it was quite different because I already did my practical training in this department, the same department, and I also wrote my master thesis in the same department. For me, when I came here for my job, it was not new for me, so I did some training when I was in my practical time period like some students trainings to integrate with the students at ZF, to get to know people. When I started here fixed in this department at lot came from my team members so they tried to integrate me quite good. They tried to take me to projects and to team meetings. So for me it was, at the beginning, only to go to the meetings and to get as much information as possible.

Interviewer: What have you done to receive this from your team members? Were you behaving in a certain way?

Responder: In the first week, I tried to meet with each of my team member to get information like what projects are they currently working on. So they told me, within one or two hours, their content from their projects and also

how I can integrate in their project. So at the beginning I was integrated in all projects a bit before I got my own project.

Interviewer: Did you send them invitations via outlook or emails and booked a meeting for 1 or 2 hours?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: What is your opinion about this, do you think everyone should do this?

Responder: We also did it during the practical training in other departments in here, in the office. I think it is quite good idea because you get a bit more information than only when you meet in the cafeteria where you only say one or two sentences about your project you are working at. So you get the possibility to get more information. So I think it is a good idea to meet with all team members.

Interviewer: Is the initiative with the newcomers?

Responder: Yes it was.

Interviewer: What would you say about the opportunity that ZF provides for the newcomers?

Responder: That would a good idea.

Interviewer: Can you explain the current opportunities that are given?

Responder: I am not sure if there is anything. There is the starterkit. With the starterkit you can get the corporate department as a member in the division. I am not sure if you have a possibility given from ZF to integrate in your own small department. I am not sure.

Interviewer: Can you describe your first two weeks as a fixed employee within ZF?

Responder: Pffff, mmm the first two weeks. Well as I said, I tried to go to all team meetings from all team members so the first days were from only from meeting to meeting and get to know the project, so the content but also how project work is done here. I had one training with inventory management so it was more theoretical. The first two weeks were mostly meetings, meetings and meetings.

Interviewer: Who set up the meetings?

Responder: By my team members. There was no organized onboarding concept I think.

Interviewer: Why do you remember the training for inventory management?

Responder: It was the first training and it was not so good.

Interviewer: Can you explain why it was not so good?

Responder: It was very, very theoretical. I felt like I am in the university again. So for me it was OK because I came directly from the university but for people who are already working for 10 or 15 years, it was too theoretical.

Interviewer: How was the training given? Face-To-Face or web-based?

Responder: Both, there was a web training and then there was a face-to-face training about 2 days I think.

Interviewer: Was there no further information given to you concerning your job tasks or how to communicate?

Responder: Not that much.

Interviewer: When you entered as an intern, was there any extra information given to you?

Responder: Only that there is the MM academy so you can go on the intranet and search for some trainings. I think it all came from my side. There was less given from the organization.

Interviewer: What would you say about would be advisable from your side? How should this be split up, the responsibility between the newcomer and the organization?

Responder: Well there was one day for new employees but it didn't help so much. It was about ZF and its products; it was not about how to integrate in the organization. There is a day for new employees; perhaps the organization can use that day for more integrating the people not only talking about ZF and their products but also how to integrate in the organization. How to get to know new people and a bit more networking would be good.

Interviewer: Ok clear. Can you say something about the communication between you and the organization when you first entered?

Responder: What do you mean with the communication?

Interviewer: Is the communication more face-to-face or more digitally? Then I mean within your department, how did you communicate with your new colleagues but also how does the organization communicate with you?

Responder: Ok so at the beginning, so really the first days, we had like a small workshop. We were only 6 new employees on that day. We had 'Einführung Veranstaltung' (Introduction Event) on the first day were we got information about the organization, about time management, about parking, about all the organizational stuff etc. Afterwards, we got to our department, but the problem was that I already knew everything, I knew where to go, whom the people are, I knew my boss etc. There was not much new for me.

Interviewer: Those 6 new employees, were they from the whole organization or your department?

Responder: No, the whole organization.

Interviewer: You said that there was not really an onboarding process but how would do describe your first introduction to a type of onboarding?

Responder: Ok, I had a meeting with my boss in the second week were we tried to fixed my onboarding process, so what I should go through in the first half year. So we defined some trainings, we defined what I should do in the first half year, so my specific tasks. Also I had a mentor, I had one team member that tried to take my hand and go through it with me in my first year.

Interviewer: Can you explain how your boss performed this meeting where he clarified to you?

Responder: It was face-to-face and we made a list so it was written down and we both signed it. So after the half a year I should been gone with the process.

Interviewer: Where there consequences when this goal was not reached?

Responder: Well I reached all those tasks so I don't know what would have happened.

Interviewer: The consequences were not discussed during the meeting?

Responder: No.

Interviewer: Were there certain things that were not clear to you? Any tasks, structures, tools, methods etc.?

Responder: Inside my department, everything was clear. But at the beginning, I think ZF is a huge company, quite huge organization, it is hard to explain the organization to you. You have to feel it or live it because you can look at the structure and the organizational structure, the different divisions, but how they are really working together is not that clear at the beginning. I think it is hard to explain it to someone who has not been in the organization before. For new people, it is hard to find their place inside that huge organization.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me how you dealt with this unclearness?

Responder: I tried to find information for myself. I tried to find information from the intranet or I talked a lot with my team members but also to the divisions. We have a lot of projects with the different divisions so I had the possibility to talk to the people in the different divisions. How they feel within the organization. What their tasks are.

Interviewer: So now after 1 year here within ZF, how would you say you have lived the organizational structure?

Responder: I think it is much better now but I think it takes time to get to know all divisions. At the moment I am concentrating on two divisions because I am working a lot together with them. But in the future I hope to get more information about the other divisions. Theoretically I know a lot about them but not working together with them.

Interviewer: How do you manage that working together with two divisions?

Responder: Mmm, it is quite different. We are a huge company but within the divisions, everything is different. People are different, their working attitudes are different and I think you have to get into it. You have to get to know them. It is important to know what are their targets and how are they working.

Interviewer: How are you doing this 'getting to know them'?

Responder: I talk to them.

Interviewer: Is telephone enough?

Responder: No you need the face-to-face contact. Telephone is ok to exchange information sometimes like the team meetings. We have team meetings every week via telephone but it is better to meet them face-to-face.

Interviewer: And being placed there for one day at the other divisions is that too extreme?

Responder: No I think that is a good idea to get to know them.

Interviewer: And a whole week is that too extreme?

Responder: I think that is too much. Oe I forgot something. I have been at another division for one week, at the T division.

Interviewer: Can you explain how that experience was for you?

Responder: It was interesting because we are in a quite strategic department and it is hard to get a feeling of what the operating part is about. So I have been in an operative part for one week and it was good to get to know it. We are doing quite a lot of strategic stuff like project management, defining strategies and so on. They really have daily business so it has to work. So it was good to see this but 1 week was too much.

Interview: What is your opinion about the combination between the strategic part and also the daily process, having experienced both?

Responder: I think it is important to have seen also the operative part because doing some strategic stuff like making strategies, its effects them so you should know their daily business. So that was really a good thing I think. In the corporate department you should do this.

Interviewer: Can you tell which division it was?

Responder: It was division T.

Interviewer: So you did explain in the second week you met with your boss and you wrote a list with your tasks and everything was clear, could you explain to me how the timeframe was developed?

Responder: We set the onboarding process for half a year and we defined different dates for the activities. For example, he said that after half a year you should talk to the suppliers on your own and we fixed the dates and we had some meetings all two weeks to talk about your problems and about the projects stages. We used that meeting after half a year to check the status. So for example, after half a year have you talked to the suppliers on your own, yes or no. If yes, it was ok and I had to talk about it, and if not, I don't know because I finished it.

Interviewer: What was this timeframe based on? Why 6 months?

Responder: I don't know, I think it was his opinion.

Interviewer: Can you tell me your opinion about it? Was it too fast or was it perfect?

Responder: It was ok because I reached all the targets and I think for him, it was not that easy to define because I have been here for one year and I knew the organization theoretically and the people but 6 months was ok for me.

Interviewer: Would you say there was any content missing regarding this onboarding process?

Responder: I think that, but that is my opinion, in our team we are a lot working on our own. We have a boss but he is not looking over all activities we are doing. We can walk alone a lot. For me, in the beginning, I was a bit lost. I am working a lot on my own but for in the beginning it would have been better to be a bit more supervised. I was too free in my doing. Sometimes I would have liked his hand to tell me ok you are going in the good direction or a bit more feedback. I think feedback is the most important thing for the onboarding process.

Interviewer: What was the role from your mentor that you described before?

Responder: He did that. He knew my onboarding plan and he knew which activities to go through and he gave me the possibility to go through those activities. To speak to suppliers for example and he gave me feedback concerning those activities. Saying ok that was good and you can work a little more on that.

Interviewer: He was your mentor for the 6 months?

Responder: Yes he was but we are not still working on the same project so he is the project leader. So sometimes it still feels like he is my mentor but after half a year it was officially over.

Interviewer: Now that you have been working quite some time in this department, can you explain me the resemblance between your job, what you actually have to do, and what you have learnt at the beginning? Do they match?

Responder: It depends. So the inventory management training, I did it but I never worked with the inventory topic again so it was not that useful. The other things, yes they did match.

Interviewer: What you mean exactly with the other things?

Responder: Like for example the project management to see how projects are leaded so now I can do my own meetings and lead those projects or some topics of the projects. Or I got to know how to speak to a supplier. Today I am doing my own supplier onboarding. I think all the other activities I did match to my daily work.

Interviewer: And why the inventory management training not, just because you don't work with it or do you have the feeling it had not extra value to you?

Responder: It is only because I am not working with this topic anymore. At the beginning it was planned that I would do something with inventory management but then our organization got changed and the project changed. So it was not my topic anymore.

Interviewer: What can you say about the updates from your job, are they also presented in an onboarding process? For example, as you said, project change, do you receive this information? For example, you job develops, logistics develops, and those developments and the updates, do you still receive them?

Responder: About the organization, we receive emails or if something change. We had quite a huge change process during the last half-year and the communication there was not that good in my opinion. But the updates for the topics and my performance are still there. Once a year we have those evaluation moments were you get your grade for your work. You get points for your different topics for example what is your quality of your work and how fast are you. You get graded and for that grade you get more money. But I think that is ZF's specific process, which all bosses have to go through.

Interviewer: What about the smaller changes and updates?

Responder: No, not really.

Interviewer: Do you sometimes have the feeling your walk against the same wall three times before you realize the other way?

Responder: Depends yes. I think the communication within the organization can be better.

Interviewer: The organization as a whole?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: How would you say it could be improved?

Responder: I do not have a solution for that but what I see in the corporate function is that we have again those divisions and they are all working in their own division. So they are only looking at their division. We as the corporate division try to get information from all divisions and try to make those best practices and give it back to the divisions. But between those divisions there is no communication.

Interviewer: So if I understand you right the focus should lie on the communication between the divisions and between the corporate division and the divisions, correct?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Can you say something about the current teaching methods used that were applied during your onboarding process?

Responder: Learning by Doing! That's all because there was no specific training. As I said before I know that there is the starterkit, but during my practical training I helped with the starterkit, but as I started with my job I started as a trainer. So there was no specific training but I know what the people get as teaching method.

Interviewer: What would you say about that?

Responder: I think that the starterkit is a really, really good idea. It is good in different ways. You get to know a lot of people from different divisions. I think that is, what I said should be improved. Networking is done there but also to get to know the corporate function because a lot of divisions do not know the function of the corporate department. Also, they get the basic logistics knowledge. So in those three points it is quite good.

Interviewer: Ok, so when returning to the topic if any content is missing you could say that the corporate function is missing?

Responder: Well the knowledge for the corporate function is missing. The divisions do not really know what we are doing. So I think it should be communicated better to the divisions.

Interviewer: Then I am ending my interview almost and reaching my last question, which is, if you could wish for anything else, a training, a method or tool, to be added to give value to your onboarding process, what would it be? It could be anything.

Responder: For me, I only know it from the practical training, so there were a lot of people starting with you on the same day and you need those people all the time because you have those things like on Tuesday you go have lunch together, you have a bit of a community. Over the whole ZF in Friedrichshafen you have a small community. So you have this network but when I started here with my job there was nothing here for the network. So perhaps a small network between the people who are starting at the same day or same month for example to meet with each other and communicate. To have a small network over different departments. That would be a good idea.

Interviewer: Ok thank you for your time.

Responder: Yes you're welcome. I hope I gave you the answer you were looking for ☺

Interviewer: Thank you, have a nice working day.

9.2.5 Interview 5
WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (22) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of analyzing the onboarding program for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management. Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. Organizations can use onboarding programs to fulfill their objectives regarding newcomers entering the organization. The objectives for onboarding programs may vary per organization where the use of some practices makes certain objectives more explicit than others. As a consequence, organizations select their practices applied in their onboarding program carefully.

The onboarding program use is to integrate newcomers within the organization (Sollinger et al., 2013). The result from the acquisition of TRW and the joint ventures in China is that ZF is welcoming many new employees and therefore the importance for a well-functioning onboarding program to integrate ZF's new employees.

Currently, ZF has an onboarding program implemented in their Materials Management department for newcomers entering that department. The onboarding program has partly been tested with the use of feedback sheets but has currently not received a full evaluation. As a consequence, the management question is an evaluation of their current onboarding program. To start the evaluation, it is important to understand what you want to find out as the evaluation model from Kirkpatrick explains. For that reason, this research starts with analysing the intended objectives for the onboarding program and continues with evaluating if the intended objectives are also perceived by the newcomers. Therefore, I am interested in interviewing you to understand the intended/perceived objectives from ZF. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding objectives.

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding program. I

would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

		29.05.2015
Interviewee	Interviewer (witness)	Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age?   **23 Years**

- What is your gender?   ☒ Female   ☐ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.(Can also be written in German)
  Economics (BWL-Industrie) Betriebswirtschafblehre

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF including internships and working-students?
  ☒ Yes   ☐ No

  o   If yes, in which organization(s)?
      MTU (Rolls Royce); Renault Car

  o   If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?

- How long have you been working for ZF?   **Start 2011; Since 10.2014 in SGSE**

- In which division are you currently present?
  ☐ P   ☐ C   ☐ I   ☐ ES   ☐ Services (MA)   ☒ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.
  SGSE – Elektronic Supplier Communication

- Have you changed departments within ZF?   ☐ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, how often?

  o   If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF?   ☒ Yes   ☐ No

  o   If yes, how many?   **General introduction – self registration; Purchasing Starterkit**

  o   If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding program present. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). To evaluate the current onboarding program, it is important to know what to measure as Kirkpatrick describes in his evaluation model. Therefore, the starting point for this research is to have cleared the objectives for the onboarding program. For that reason this interview to analyze what the objectives are for the onboarding program within ZF.

The interview script:

1. Which expectations did you have for the onboarding program?

2. Why did you have those expectations for the onboarding program?

3. Why are those expectations important for you?

4. The objectives placed in front of you are the intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program. What is your first reaction when reading the intended objectives?

5. Please rank the objectives from 1 being the most important for you and 10 being the least important for you?

6. How has the onboarding program helped to achieve the intended objectives? For example, which tactics have been used during the onboarding program?

7. What is your opinion regarding the achievement of the intended objectives?

8. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (5):

Interviewer: So you understand why we do this research. I am checking what the objectives are from ZF, what the intended objectives are from ZF to their newcomers. I will check how the objectives are materialized during the trainings and how participants have perceived the objectives. Therefore, I am asking you to get a perspective of how participants perceive the objectives after having followed an onboarding program like starterkit. So my first question is, when you were invited to join the starterkit what were your first expectations for this training?

Responder: My first expectations are, what I though it was about is that we got to learn about the processes especially for the purchasing department. For example, how do I do an order or something like that? Maybe also something like negotiation training. Typical topics that I believe belong to the classical tasks of purchasing.

Interviewer: What is your opinion concerning networking with your colleagues, or meeting other people from other divisions?

Responder: Well I think it is always like that. If we have a workshop you get to know the other people as well. But I didn't expect that it was that important. I thought more of it as a nice affect but not as an intention of this.

Interviewer: Ok, can you explain to me why the purchasing processes and tools are so important for you?

Responder: In my personal tasks I have a lot of topics that belong to purchasing processes. For example, I am taking care of the electronic processes of document provision. That means provisions of drawings and standards. And for this reason, I should actually know how the purchasing department works. Same case for example for another tool for collaboration I take care of. There a lot of purchasers or people from ZF do their 'Bemusterung' (sampling). Can I write down the word?

Interviewer: Yes of course. I will have to look it up.

Responder: I have no idea what it is in English. It is just like to set up the drawings and the process of developing the requirements of ZF. Well these are typical processes that are actually done within the purchasing department and we support them with electronic processes. So for us it is quite important to know the processes of the purchasing department.

Interviewer: Ok, did you receive any specific training concerning those processes or were you expecting those specific trainings within the onboarding program?

Responder: Well I got some persons in local departments of ZF. They told me something but it was not like a training. It was just like help I need some information can you give me something? Of course, one expectation of mine was to get to know more purchasing processes in the starterkit. But of course, for me it was also quite sure that it would not be in that detailed hierarchy which I would like to have. This cannot be like that. I also understand that.

Interviewer: Ok I have two main expectations from you written down at the moment that are the processes and the tools that are applied within purchasing. Which one would you say is the most important for you?

Responder: Processes and tools?

Interviewer: yes so how the processes within purchasing, as I understand it. If I am wrong please correct me. And the tools you can apply or work with. Which one would you say is the most important expectation for you during the onboarding process?

Responder: process for myself.

Interviewer: Is there something else missing like another objective or would you say those are the main expectations for you?

Responder: I think those are the main expectations. However, since I am in ZF for 4 years now, I already knew a lot of tools. So for me maybe when I did not know the tools, tools might be more important for me. So maybe they would be on the same level.

Interviewer: Ok Interesting. Then I have some expectations from ZF that they had intended for the onboarding program and I will just put them in front of you. Can you tell me your first reaction concerning those intended objectives set by ZF? Are there some were you are very surprised to see or are they some that you had expected to see?

Responder: I think that this point of orientation is very important for new MM (Materials Management) members.

Interviewer: Do you have the feeling that all of the objectives in front of you were a little involved during the onboarding program?

Responder: Yeah. I think a lot of topics have been working around the objective of team working. In the morning I saw some colleagues saying 'oh my god, team working again'. But I also think it is a possibility to get the people wake up ☺. Make the people wake up. I think efficiency is also very important. If you want to keep the people motivated within a workshop you need to give them the feeling that we do it good, we do it fast, we do it efficient and we really provide an added value to you.

Interviewer: Ok interesting. Can you rank them from highest to lowest to which objectives were the most important to you?

Responder: Yes. What do you mean with impression?

Interviewer: Ok with impression ZF meant the communication between the different divisions so that you do not only get an impression of the purchasing department but also from the supplier management and how the different divisions. That is what they meant with impression.

Responder: Ok. I think that networking is an important point but the people actually do it during the breaks. So I think it is not really necessary to offer networking topics during the workshops and provide opportunities for networking because the people will do that. You cannot avoid it.

Interviewer: Ok that is an interesting point that you say. Can you explain why you put the objectives in this order? So you have put orientation first, then information, efficiency, team working and then impression and networking.

Responder: Ok I put orientation first because I think when you are new somewhere you first need a structure in your brain otherwise you will not be able to reminder all the information you get. Then the next point of course is information because you are there to learn more about the purchasing department or the materials management in general. Efficiency of course what I just explained. Team working however is important to make the information better. To make the people better remember the information they get. Maybe when they have fun they will work better. Impression, it belongs somehow to this point (orientation).

Interviewer: You think impression belongs to orientation?

Responder: Yes I think there is some connection.

Interviewer: You can also link them like that, that is fine. Ok then at last you have networking.

Responder: Yes networking is of course important for each single person but I think for the job for the first time it is better that they have a good orientation.

Interviewer: Ok interesting. Can you explain me if those objectives were achieved according to you?

Responder: In general yes. I got the possibility to have a lot of orientation for example this one handout, it is very helpful because you can look it up later you don't have to reminder everything or look up a PowerPoint later.

Interviewer: Ok this handout is concerning tools and systems.

Responder: Yes this is just one handout that I will keep because I can always look something up. In this case I think we got a lot of different information that is very good. In my point of view I would of liked it if there was more information concerning the classical purchasing processes. There was a lot of information for the materials management processes that is very good for the purchasing department of course. But for my point of view for the materials management would be interesting to learn more about them.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me what you mean with classical purchasing?

Responder: I just finished my studies last year and I was just like I want to support the materials management but I first need the information to be able to support them. I want to support them but I need information. For this reason, if I never had worked in purchasing department before I cant just guess what they are doing. I know of

course some tools and calculations of things and sourcing methods of my studies. I know this but how ZF works I do not know.

Interviewer: Ok interesting. Can you explain to be if efficiency has been achieved? How you learned to be more efficient?

Responder: I thought it was about the efficiency of the workshop. I think maybe yes in some reasons by looking up data I can be faster. Team working, yes it was nice. Nice ideas. Networking was of course also funny. To meet all those people. Yes the most networking I think was when we met in the bar afterwards.

Interviewer: Yes that is also part of the onboarding program. That is the reason why they do it for 3 days and thus having those two nights involved. Would you say now after you have following the onboarding program that you are completely satisfied? You know everything as a newcomer.

Responder: I think when you work in a company like ZF you will never be in a situation that you know everything.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me what is missing to most for you then?

Responder: I think, well I have to get back to this process topic; I would like to have more information about purchasers and the purchasing tasks. I had a look at the purchasing manual and from my point of view there is a lot of important information in there. Of course I know it know because I read through it but maybe it would be possible to add something from this manual to the onboarding program. Since I do know yet what comes in the next module of the program I do not know yet.

Interviewer: Yes that is true. Would you add another objective to this list?

Responder: Maybe working on your own. It can also be in teams but when you have to find a solution on your own you need to come up with a topic yourself. This was very good with this tools training because here you had to, you had a problem that is quite similar to reality and then you had to solve it. Then you had to think ok how do I bring this PowerPoint information in my brain to create this solution on paper now.

Interviewer: ok so actually an individual part. And where would you put in this list or would you put it together to an already existing objective?

Responder: Yes I think I would put it together with team working because it can also be both.

Interviewer: Ok so that was missing with you a little the individual part. There was too much team working involved.

Responder: It was ok.

Interviewer: Ok clear. Do you have anything else to add to this interview? Some wishes? We are coming to the end of this interview so if you have anything else you would like to add? This is your chance.

Responder: What for my point of view would be very interesting would be a purchasers from production materials as an example would present around 30min what his/her tasks are. At the beginning of the year we do this, this, and this. At the middle of the year we have those important point and maybe something from the daily business. Of course this is quite boring for the purchasers but for materials management people it could be interesting.

Interviewer: And why could this be interesting you think?

Responder: Because it could give the opportunity to provide a view into another department.

Interviewer: So this is a little like an impression you can get from the purchasing area then.

Responder: Yes you get an impression that is the right word.

Interviewer: That is maybe something that ZF has tried but not achieved fully yet.

Responder: I think in many case yes but could still be improved. For example, what I said there was one presentation NPM (non-production materials) and it was very good.

Interviewer: Ok thank you very much for your time.

Responder: Your very welcome.

9.2.6 Interview 6
WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (22) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of analyzing the onboarding program for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management. Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. Organizations can use onboarding programs to fulfill their objectives regarding newcomers entering the organization. The objectives for onboarding programs may vary per organization where the use of some practices makes certain objectives more explicit than others. As a consequence, organizations select their practices applied in their onboarding program carefully.

The onboarding program use is to integrate newcomers within the organization (Sollinger et al., 2013). The result from the acquisition of TRW and the joint ventures in China is that ZF is welcoming many new employees and therefore the importance for a well-functioning onboarding program to integrate ZF's new employees.

Currently, ZF has an onboarding program implemented in their Materials Management department for newcomers entering that department. The onboarding program has partly been tested with the use of feedback sheets but has currently not received a full evaluation. As a consequence, the management question is an evaluation of their current onboarding program. To start the evaluation, it is important to understand what you want to find out as the evaluation model from Kirkpatrick explains. For that reason, this research starts with analysing the intended objectives for the onboarding program and continues with evaluating if the intended objectives are also perceived by the newcomers. Therefore, I am interested in interviewing you to understand the intended/perceived objectives from ZF. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding objectives.

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding program. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

		02.06.2015
Interviewee	Interviewer (witness)	Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age?   **28 Years**

- What is your gender?   □ Female   ☒ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.(Can also be written in German)
  Informatikkaufmanagement

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF including internships and working-students?
                                    ☒ Yes   □ No

  o   If yes, in which organization(s)?
      Avira GmbH

  o   If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?
      All departments (IT, Marketing, Sales, etc.)

- How long have you been working for ZF?   **3 years**

- In which division are you currently present?
  □ P   □ C   □ I   □ ES   □ Services (MA)   ☒ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.
  Supply Chain Management – Electr. Communication

- Have you changed departments within ZF?   □ Yes   ☒ No

  o   If yes, how often?

  o   If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF?   ☒ Yes   □ No

  o   If yes, how many?   **Two (Starterkit & Internally)**

  o   If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding program present. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). To evaluate the current onboarding program, it is important to know what to measure as Kirkpatrick describes in his evaluation model. Therefore, the starting point for this research is to have cleared the objectives for the onboarding program. For that reason this interview to analyze what the objectives are for the onboarding program within ZF.

The interview script:

1. Which expectations did you have for the onboarding program?

2. Why did you have those expectations for the onboarding program?

3. Why are those expectations important for you?

4. The objectives placed in front of you are the intended objectives set by ZF for their onboarding program. What is your first reaction when reading the intended objectives?

5. Please rank the objectives from 1 being the most important for you and 10 being the least important for you?

6. How has the onboarding program helped to achieve the intended objectives? For example, which tactics have been used during the onboarding program?

7. What is your opinion regarding the achievement of the intended objectives?

8. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (6):

Interviewer: So you understand why we do this research. The onboarding concept in this research means everything that has to do with a newcomer who is entering and organization. How is he being integrated? How is he being dealt with?

Responder: Yes.

Interviewer: Ok so my first question is what were your expectations when entering ZF? What were your expectations for their onboarding program?

Responder: Ok this is a difficult question. I hope they get easier ☺. My expectations when I started here were just I visited my apprenticeship here and I needed a job so I just got into ZF, a nice thing happened to me. So I just started here. I went here to Mr. Joachim and he told me that there is an interesting job here to do and so I just started here with the whole job thing. I didn't have a real job before, just the apprenticeship so there were no real expectations from my to the company. I just went here and started working. For the onboarding process itself I learned all the things the others do so we had different process experts were I learned all the processes in small meetings and PowerPoint presentations. They showed me what they do and how things work and I think we still do this regularly, so ones a year, for everyone who is interested. They can join these meetings. Then for sure, someone told me what to do for my own job. So he just introduced me to the systems we have, to how we work, the processes and stuff like that. This would be the first onboarding thing I had.

Interviewer: Can you describe your first two weeks after having entered ZF?

Responder: My first two weeks, I can't even remember what I had for breakfast yesterday but I will try. Wait a second, so three years ago. So the weeks went by very fast because everything was new to me. It really started with, we have this small, and it is a mind chart I think with the cloud in the middle with a lot of stripes going everywhere.

Interviewer: A mind map.

Responder: Yes mind map, exactly. We went through all these things. It began with the installation of the computer. Someone really helped me with now you have to call the IT and now you have to do this. You need access to our share. I did not have to do this alone. Someone was just joining me with that and helping me with that. After that, I think it just started with the job itself. So someone showed me what to do and I just made smaller tasks at the beginning. For example, just send out those emails and write it down there, there, and there. This is what I did and when I finished I just said hey I am done and then the next step came up. So it was always kind of, there was someone who helped me with that. It was not like here is the job, do it. But at the beginning I was not alone and people showed me what to do. I just grew into it till I could do it myself.

Interviewer: Was this person assigned to you?

Responder: Not really, those were different persons. So in the beginning, it was our boss Joachim. He often helped the people but then when it goes to the supplier processes we have different experts so I ask this person, this person etc. It just depends on what topic it is.

Interviewer: Ok I understand. Who provided you with the mind map?

Responder: The mind map is always from Joachim. When we have a new employee, it often happens with our external colleagues here. They sometimes come and leave. We always have this mind map to be sure we think about everything.

Interviewer: When looking back, what was the most valuable guidance that was provided to you by your team?

Responder: Do you mean person or what exactly do you mean?

Interviewer: Concerning the onboarding process, it can be a person or a tool like the mind map. What would you say was the most valuable to you?

Responder: I think the most valuable was the team itself. So it is still the same, I changed my job a little. We have onboarding programs too but then for our suppliers so it is something else but sometimes I have to do things for this onboarding and I cant remember. It is really long time ago, so I can still ask everyone. The whole team itself, in the beginning it was very much Joachim himself to ask questions and he always had an answer. But later really the team itself is a valuable thing.

Interviewer: And why? Can you explain why it is so valuable to you?

Responder: It is difficult to say. To be new in a job means you always have a lot of questions. When starting there you also have to ask the questions otherwise you might do things, which are not really meant for this job. So before reading the many guidelines and documents that are lying around on our share and stuff like that, it is easier to just turn 90 degree to the left and ask a colleague can you tell me again how was it. So just for overall information. At the beginning it is quite a difficult job because you need to care about a lot of things. You need to take care of contract and which status and stuff like that. So if you missed something like that it is not very dangerous for other people lives but it is better if it works correct from the beginning on. So any question can always be spread within the team and there is always someone who can help.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me why you have chosen for this personal contact instead of for example handouts where you can refer back? Is there an important difference between this for you?

Responder: I think if you have the time for it and you want it then you should read guidelines and read handouts. Know what is on the papers and learn these things. Maybe take them home or something like that. Easier from my point of view is just to ask for a short moment. Maybe you interrupting someone but they can always tell you to go away. So for me it is just easier to ask again and again and after the third time asking I am sure I know it, or maybe after the second time already. It depends. It is easier than reading through a lot of guidelines or documents.

Interviewer: Are there guidelines provided to you or other materials?

Responder: Yes we have a lot of handling instructions that really show click here, click this, and click that. We have guidelines concerning the program we use and sonaros tool we use and stuff like that. But I notice that there are too that, when I started with the sonaros rollout, the new software, I sent out this guidelines to everyone who needed it. There were questions just coming back and at the beginning I was very annoyed because the answers were in the guideline. But it is the same with me, in the past; it is just easier to ask for a second then to read through a whole document to find what points you need.

Interviewer: Do you not find it inefficient for repeating the answers?

Responder: For repeating, when you really want it, it is I guess. I also think it is a matter of time because your tasks will not stand still I guess only because someone said here is a guideline now go read through it, 60 pages and learn them. I think a few screen shots, pictures, and images are very important where you can just have an overlook, flip through all the pages. Then it is ok, you know what is in there. When no one is there to ask you know where to find the information. But I really think it is easier to have personal contact to people, most of the time.

Interviewer: This is interesting. I got now a perceptive from your side how you have experienced the onboarding program. Can you explain to me now what you think ZF had intended as objective for the onboarding program? Can you maybe name a few that you believe could have been an objective?

Responder: Ok so the objective ZF has you want me to name them?

Interviewer: Yes exactly. For example during the starterkit training, did you have the feeling they were very focused on efficiency or more focused on other aspects you believe.

Responder: Mmh, that is a good question. I am not sure about that. So in our starterkit, which we had now a few weeks ago, I noticed that they had a good mood. It is hard to explain. They just were there, showed us what they have achieved last time and what they want to achieve in the future. Sometime they speak about TRW but not very often. It is more or less in the background so far. But really objectives that I saw overall, topic that they want me to know I am not sure about that. I never notice something, but most of the onboarding program was inside my team so I am not sure if there are any overall ZF topics.

Interviewer: What feeling did the team give you? Did you have a feeling they also had a plan beside it thinking those objective we try to achieve with it?

Responder: Not sure, when I started it was all much smaller I think. The team was not that big; the amount of tasks was not that big. I think it was just from month to month working. Just do you job and everything is fine. You need to do what you need to do, something like that. In the meantime it grew bigger and we have this ECON 2.0 stuff where the MMC tells us you need to onboard every process for every strategic supplier within a year. So there is more pressure for us and this could then be an overall topic for the whole ZF and with our energy. Not coming from the locations from the suppliers with their invoices or something like that but really starting to rollout stuff in a very detailed kind of size. But really an objective, I am not sure.

Interviewer: Ok let me help you with that then. ZF has giving me some objectives that they believed they have achieved with their onboarding program. Let me just put them on the table for you. Can you tell me your first reaction when reading them?

Responder: This is what I meant before ☺. What I meant before with starterkit is this impression thing. People told me what they have achieved and what not what I mentioned before. My team where I had the most of the onboarding they were not giving such overall tasks I think, not such objectives. The team working, it happened by itself. You can only work within the onboarding process team. You cannot work alone; you always need someone else to complete stuff, also other department. Efficiency is getting important now. It has always been there in the past but not that fast. Now it is getting more and more important. Then the other thing information, it is our guidelines; it is the information the team can give you. Orientation I cannot handle that subject, I do not know what you mean by that.

Interviewer: Well when referring to orientation, you have also mentioned before that the starterkit gave you a bit of an overview. That is actually what is meant by orientation.

Responder: Ah ok, so in the beginning you get to see what are the next few topics etc.

Interviewer: Yes also.

Responder: Ok I get it. So networking, I have heard it within the starterkit because everyone should sleep in the same hotel so that the networking is better then. I think they like it when people get drunk and talk to each other, something like that.

Interviewer: Ok interesting. Can you please rank the objectives now from highest being the most important and lowest being the least important, what for you is important?

Responder: Ok from these here?

Interviewer: Yes from those objectives.

Responder: It is good that you have them with you ☺.

Interviewer: Yes, I am prepared ☺.

Responder: That is very good. So what is important? I think the team working would be first as mentioned before. Without the team, or at least with our team, it is not possible to work without the others. Networking is a nice to have. I think you should know people but I guess someday it is getting to the point where if you need someone to have thing done you do not need to know him but you need to tell him why it is important. So networking is nice to have the colleagues and perform some small talks. It is easier to work when you have the networking but I don't believe it is an extremely important topic. It is nice, everyone should do it but it is not that important to me. Impression, it is a good one, I am not sure if I should place it under team working, let me see.

Interviewer: No worries, take your time.

Responder: yeah impression, it reminds me of starterkit where these people were showing us these presentations and they were just smiling telling us this is what we achieved and everything is so great! It is important to have people around you who show you this. Otherwise you would only hear things like this doesn't work and it is not fear, I don't like my job and stuff like that. So it is very important to have people around you who really show you that things can be achieved and that it is fun to do things like that. So impression is important for me too. The orientation, yeah it comes with the others I guess. Efficiency, yeah we need to do things everyday so if they are efficiency or not, there is always a next day. There comes a point where it is maybe hard not to work fast anymore because things will stop working and that is not good. But here efficiency within the central area, I mean who is really under pressure here. Are you ☺?

Interviewer: Deadlines, those are building pressure.

Responder: Yeah deadlines maybe. But when you do your job everything is fine it is not like we have to really sweat here and have burnouts and stuff like that. So efficiency is an important thing but we do our job not extremely slow and not extremely stupid. Just do the job and everything is fine. So it is not that important. The other point, information I would put it to the team working because with the team comes information. There is also other information but then it would be below the impression. Therefore, the most important one would be team working, impression and information for me.

Interviewer: Ok interesting, thank you. Can you explain to me what you meant with information can be divided somehow in two?

Responder: Yes, as mentioned before, it can be divided into clear information so it would be a guideline or someone who tells you go to this share, read this document. That is just information. The other thing with information would be, as I said, coming with the team. When you have a team and you need some information you

just need to turn around and ask your question and you get the information. So this would be the two sides from information. The information you need to take care from yourself, thing you need to read, need to learn or is there information just hanging around in the room where you just need to ask a question, sorry how was it again? Awh ok, thanks. So that you can go on with your job. So that would be the two sides from information.

Interviewer: It is interest to see that you put a gab in between the important objectives (Team working, information, impression) and the less important ones (Efficiency, orientation, networking). What would you need for them to be combined?

Responder: Do you have another one of those cards?

Interviewer: Yes I do. I have many please take.

Responder: But there is nothing written down on them.

Interviewer: Yes that is correct. Here you have a pen and you can create anything you like. So if I understand is right, the first group (Team working, information, impression) are objectives and the second group (efficiency, orientation, networking) are interesting topics?

Responder: Yes interesting and important but not as an overall objective. How to combine them? So we have the team working, we have the information coming with the team and we have people in the team who are just showing that everything can be great, impressive. The networking I would also say it is part of a team but I want to emphasize with the networking that it is outside your own departments. So when you are going back to the Netherlands, I know you and then I know these guys from Schweinfurt and then I know this one from America. So this is more or less networking for me. Not the few guys I work with in here because they are my daily colleagues. This is not networking I think. So if need to connect it, mmmmm. It is difficult, what do I need.

Interviewer: Or would you say there is no possibility to connect them?

Responder: For the efficiency and orientation, I think I just need a boss or something. Someone who tells me, could be because if I am not good enough in my job or not fast enough I need someone who tells me I am not efficient enough.

Interviewer: Would this (Mentor) help?

Responder: Yes something like that. If it is directly my boss or someone who is taking care of these objectives, the best if not someone from my job but the ones who takes cares of these objectives. So overall, we have this with Joachim sometimes when he shows us the numbers of this month and some overall topics that he has on his mind. The problem there is often that I have enough to do with my job that I am not even interested in these things. But with someone I can look up to, it could work yes, to connect the impressions with orientation and networking. The networking could be connected with meetings, phone calls as just an example.

Interviewer: Very interesting. Coming to the end of this interview, is there anything else you would like to add like an objective that is still missing?

Responder: I didn't even get these ones ☺ but let me think about it for a second.

Interviewer: Something you would like to wish for? This is your chance. You can also say it is complete when you believe nothing else is missing.

Responder: Yes let me think about that. Normally we have everything we need to work and when you do not know someone bring little cards with things on it, which is great!

Interviewer: It is concerning the onboarding process so what could of helped you to be as satisfied as you are now within your department but then faster for example. This is just an example. What could be added so that you have more success at your job? That the team working is better for example because you say it is so important.

Responder: Mmh, I think we do already what we can do. We could have maybe more networking, direct connects with not only working but also having a beer in the afternoon. Stuff like that. That would be great for working together. I think when I started there was Joachim as the boss and he was not in so much pressure as he is now, he had more time for his employees. Therefore I think I had all the things I needed because he was also looking at my efficiency and stuff like that. Always looking if I am doing things right and what can I learn next to get to the next level. I think this worked then with the team with all the information. I think had everything I needed for a fast introduction into the company and the processes I needed to work at it.

Interviewer: Ok great. Is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Responder: I like your cards! ☺

Interviewer: Thank you ☺ they are from ZF.

Responder: No I don't think so. So we talked about the onboarding process, when I started here it was very good. How it is now is difficult to say because I am already here and I already know what to do everyday. Not really anything else to add.

Interviewer: ok no problem. Thank you very much!

Responder: Your welcome! ☺

WELCOME

Dear participant,

Thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. I am Hellen Buter (22) and studying International Business Administration at the university Twente in the Netherlands. I am currently writing my bachelor thesis at ZF Friedrichshafen AG (ZF) with the interest of analyzing the onboarding program for newcomers entering the department of Materials Management. Newcomers represent, in this research, the new employees entering the department MM. Organizations can use onboarding programs to fulfill their objectives regarding newcomers entering the organization. The objectives for onboarding programs may vary per organization where the use of some practices makes certain objectives more explicit than others. As a consequence, organizations select their practices applied in their onboarding program carefully.

The onboarding program use is to integrate newcomers within the organization (Sollinger et al., 2013). The result from the acquisition of TRW and the joint ventures in China is that ZF is welcoming many new employees and therefore the importance for a well-functioning onboarding program to integrate ZF's new employees.

Currently, ZF has an onboarding program implemented in their Materials Management department for newcomers entering that department. The onboarding program has partly been tested with the use of feedback sheets but has currently not received a full evaluation. As a consequence, the management question is an evaluation of their current onboarding program. To start the evaluation, it is important to understand what you want to find out as the evaluation model from Kirkpatrick explains. For that reason, this research starts with analysing the intended objectives for the onboarding program and continues with evaluating if the intended objectives are also perceived by the newcomers. Therefore, I am interested in interviewing you to understand the intended/perceived objectives from ZF. Please note that the objective of this interview is concerning the onboarding objectives.

It will now be explained how this interview proceeds. The total interview will take about 20-40 minutes. I would like to record the interview to not miss any comments made by you. I will also take some notes but I will not be able to note everything down and therefore the recording. I start by asking you a few facts about yourself to get to know the participant better. We will continue with the interview questions related to current onboarding program. I would like to stress that your confidentiality is important to me and the contents of your responses will remain anonymous.

- Do you agree with this?

☒ YES

☐ NO

- Can we record this interview?

☒ YES

☐ NO

26.05.2014

_____   _____   _____
Interviewee   Interviewer (witness)   Date

DEMOGRAPHICS

Before we move on to the interview questions, I would like to get to know the participant better. Therefore, I ask you the following:

- What is your age? **27 Years**

- What is your gender? ☒ Female ☐ Male

- What have you studied? Please write down the full name of your study.(Can also be written in German)
  English Studies/American studies, Business administration

- Have you worked for another organization besides ZF including internships and working-students?
  ☒ Yes ☐ No

  o If yes, in which organization(s)?
  Primion AG; d.a.i. Tubingen

  o If yes, in which department(s) were you working within the other organization?
  Production; Training Management; Library; Event management

- How long have you been working for ZF? **15 Months**

- In which division are you currently present?
  ☐ P ☐ C ☐ I ☐ ES ☐ Services (MA) ☒ Corporate

- For which department are you currently working within ZF? Please fully write down the name.
  SGS Know How Management

- Have you changed departments within ZF? ☐ Yes ☒ No

  o If yes, how often?

  o If yes, from which department to where?

- Have you followed an onboarding program within ZF? ☐ Yes ☒ No

  o If yes, how many?

  o If yes, for which department(s) have you followed an onboarding program?

Interview

Many thanks. We will now focus on the interview questions related to the current onboarding program present. The importance for onboarding is that it can be a helpful tool as a first introduction to the newcomers within an organization. This provides the possibility to prevent feelings of lost and disconnected (Woolforde, 2012; Goldschmidt & Rust, 2011) and stimulate the overall productivity (Ross et al., 2014). To evaluate the current onboarding program, it is important to know what to measure as Kirkpatrick describes in his evaluation model. Therefore, the starting point for this research is to have cleared the objectives for the onboarding program. For that reason this interview to analyze what the objectives are for the onboarding program within ZF.

The interview script:

1. Why has ZF opened up this research for their current onboarding program?

2. What are the reasons for ZF to need to change or develop their current onboarding program?

3. What are the objectives for the onboarding program?

4. Please rank the objectives from most important too least important.

5. Why have those objectives for the onboarding program been chosen?

6. What is the importance for achieving those objectives for ZF?

7. How is the program used to achieve those objectives?

8. What tactics are applied to achieve the objectives?

9. What are the expectations towards the achievement of the objectives?

10. For which objective(s) do you see the most difficultly to achieve it?

11. Is there anything more you would like to add to this interview?

Documentation of interview (7):

Interviewer: So you understand why we do this research, it is about finding out the objectives for the onboarding program. Therefore, I would like to start with the first question namely, why has ZF opened up this research to analyze their current onboarding program?

Responder: To see the difference to what we offer and what the people expect. So we have these feedback sheets but if we do a whole research that is much more detailed I think. You get more feedback if you do it in person. Furthermore, we do a redesign and because of this, it is some really good information because we see what they still need, what is not offered yet and what should be included in the program. And when we have a look at this, we can incorporate this whole in our concept.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me why this redesign of the current program?

Responder: There are different points like the content changes over the years. I am not sure but I think the last update was 1.5 to 2 years ago. So there are new contents and new tools that are really needed. So from my point of view, we need more content, other content. There are contents that are not so important so we can leave them out and substitute them for other content with more important topics. So we have to look at the content and also concerning how we do it, the pedagogical part. I think there are also new techniques that we could try with the participants. They are already good I think but I also think that we could do maybe a little more. There are already good contents but as I told you, we have to have a look at it again for new ones or even the content we already have because everything always changes. So we already have contents, new contents, so that is one reason. The other reason is the concept how we are doing it right now is that we have a lot of trainers who do all of the different parts and we want to do it internationally so that is just one of the reason why we want to do this redesign. So we want to do it internationally we need, one point that is not concerning the concept, we need less trainers. Also, when we go internationally, we maybe need to change the content also concerning the regions a bit. We have to have a look at this. So that we need internationally a bit different concepts or we have to look at the concepts how it is right now, do we incorporate some international parts or overviews? Do they already know or do they know less? So we need to add some contents so that it is internationally also useful and they understand. So do we need to change the content more too international somehow? I think we should take into account those important parts and should not forget. So if we need to change something concerning this international viewpoint or not. I also think, from my point of view, concerning the seminar handouts we can do much more probably and it is just in the course of time that there is more material that we could just add. I also think a bit more hints and tip where to find what. Also giving them the materials like the Einkaufshandbuch (Purchasing manual) something like this. We also have to look at this. Just to come back to the content there are lots of topics that came up that are now important like also the compliance.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me why this international focus?

Responder: Well because ZF is getting more and more international, we are growing in the regions and it is very important to do something in the regions. Also to foster the international growth and to support the regions because we are the corporate department and we have to support them. It has to come from here (Materials Management department). Especially from here.

Interviewer: Would you say this evaluation is more of a need to change or is it more of a development of the onboarding program?

Responder: It is rather a development I would say. Mmm it is both, a change and a development. So we already have something and it has been good till now but we have to, the basic content won't change. We still have the topics like organizations, tools, and networking is still an important point so that will not change. It will not change completely and we do not want to change it completely. We say more let's have a look at the whole structure but it is not something completely new because it has already been there I would say.

Interviewer: Can you describe the moment where ZF realized this need for development for the onboarding program?

Responder: I think it has already been there, it has been a topic that arose within the last years. We had that starterkit and the need was there some years ago already and the starterkit for SCM has already been redesigned and it is already international and the starterkit purchasing has not been changed to an international one. There have been different reasons for this but now it is important that we say we really have to do this, we really have to go international.

Interviewer: Because ZF is growing in its regions, correct?

Responder: Yes, definitely.

Interviewer: OK, can you describe the objectives for the onboarding program? What are the aims and goals that ZF is trying to achieve with this program? Why is ZF providing this onboarding program?

Responder: So it is kinda for an efficient start so that you have an overview of ZF materials management. So it is just that you can start easily. That you have something, it is not like onboarding in the sense that someone explains what you have to do in details afterwards, your task or job specifically. It is just that you have an overview of how ZF organization works, what tools are there that you have this overview. Because in your job, there should be someone, but there is not someone who explains the whole frame to you or just case by case or he needs to take the time and, maybe he doesn't, he should know everything. You have this big frame, the strategic overview for Materials Management; you have the organization, which is also the information behind why we do this in general. It is like a big help I think at the very beginning. You also see, for example if you are from the purchasing, I don't know, the non-production materials, you also get an inside in the production materials purchasing and in the supplier development for example. So these are all departments that are very closely connected but it is always easier if you understand the processes behind also the other departments that are closely connected to yours so you just understand the other departments better. The work afterwards with these departments is also easier. For the others it is also easier when you understand the processes right.

Interviewer: So I have just made a short list of the objectives you have just explained. You said efficiency for the start, an overview like an orientation within the organization.

Responder: Orientation that is a good one yes.

Interviewer: Ok, please correct me when I am wrong. Providing information like an information flow, you said helping, supporting the newcomers. But supporting and helping the newcomers is not really clear yet for me.

Responder: Maybe it is not a point on its own, its support through the information and the overview. Help for self-help like contact partners. Something like this.

Interviewer: Ok, I understand. The last point you said was teamwork, working with the other divisions.

Responder: Yes, networking is a really important point.

Interviewer: When we have this list, could you please rank them from importance onwards were 1 is the most important and 10 the least important. How would you rank them? So we have efficiency, orientation, information, team-working and networking.

Responder: That is hard to say. I think the basic information is the most important point. Well I think it is hard to differentiate because to get the overview you need to get the information and then you have this efficient start. So it is all together, I think is the, well on the other, mmm this is very difficult. Well I think the main aim is the efficiency. You receive the efficiency through the information and through networking so information maybe second and then the networking.

Interviewer: Ok that is clear. Are there any objectives still missing you think when you see this list. What are the aims ZF is aiming for?

Responder: Well also to get an impression of the others locations. That is also a good point.

Interviewer: Something else that comes into your mind?

Responder: I think information is also two parts like information just information were it is also a bit practical when we have a look at the tools, how to get in there, and some further details. So it is also a bit of practice.

Interviewer: Ok can you then explain to me why ZF has chosen those objectives?

Responder: Ok because our aim is to give them the support for an efficiency start so I think there is no other, there are different trainings but they always focus just on one topic and here we try to get different topics so that they have an overview and not too much into details. It is really important for many people that you have a network. So networking, when you have a percentage, is very high. I think in this case, the importance of networking because there are different divisions and different locations and all of this comes together in this training. So people are always happy to have a network. The better the earlier you visit such a starterkit because then you get to know the people and know where to call and whom especially when you are from a small location your networking in many cases is not that big as if you are from a big location like Schweinfurt or Passau. So if you have these connections, I think it also helps because this efficient start is not only done through information but also through networking. It is just easier.

Interviewer: Why would you say that ZF is so focused on efficiency and networking?

Responder: So if we have a look at networking, well efficiency because of efficient work and networking, I think two perspectives were 1) companies in general recognize, or should recognize, how important this is, the networking. When people collaborate and exchange information, just that the information flow is better in general, its works better. It is easier and more transparency. On the other hand, ZF is a very, it fosters this information exchange. It is also a bit this ZF culture that we hear all about. So we also focus much on information exchange I would say.

Interviewer: Ok good, can you then explain me how the program is organized so that the objectives are achieved in the end?

Responder: Well we have concerning the starterkit, we have the information that are told, they also get the information afterwards like the handouts and the contact partners who they can contact which is also good for the network. We also have this active networking within the seminar so it is not only presentations. So it is also group work where they get to know each other, a kinda get to know part at the very beginning which is not always the case in such trainings in general and we have, for example, the team book where they stay into contact between the two modules. And we have two modules from A to B so they see each other again later. This also fosters this network. I have heard from the past that if they get to know each other, we have a frame program and an evening program so that they get to know each other a bit more not just within the seminar. I have heard that people, also years later, Ah you have been at starterkit. There is still this connection afterwards because they have spent so much time together.

Interviewer: Are there specific tools or tactics applied to stimulate this even more? You said the team book

Responder: For example the team book, the whole atmosphere. At the beginning we say if it is ok when we call them by their first name so the atmosphere is already kind of group orientated to develop this. I think that is between all of the speakers and presenters, this atmosphere. Also this evening program to try that everyone is connected. Always in our focus is that people are in an information exchange be it to talk or work together. Something like this.

Interviewer: Indeed you said that the culture of ZF is this exchange of information, how do you try to bring over this culture to newcomers who are entering the organization of ZF for the first time?

Responder: To give them the feeling of they are not alone, there are always people to help but they have to contact them. So there are people but you also have to use this. We try to offer this. I think that is the basic point. So use what is there.

Interviewer: How would you say the expectations from ZF are for the achievement of the objectives? So when are the objectives achieved from ZF point of view?

Responder: If it is fulfilled. The more people attend this seminar in their early stage, when they start working in their department. The earlier and the more people that is just the first step. And if it was reached, that is hard to measure. Of course we have the feedback sheets so they evaluate from different criteria's if it was helpful, if it was practical or too much theory or did it help you from the beginning. So we have a lot of different aspects in there. We have a look at this. So we have on the one hand the feedback sheets and on the other hand our own perspective what we should change. We try to bring this together.

Interviewer: What is currently the most difficult objective to achieve?

Responder: I think concerning information you have always in trainings what is the most important thing and what not. Well of course you can evaluate this but to get kinda of it in it and not too much and not too less, also too much information is not the intention of it because the networking and group-work you need time to learn, you need time for the information. You have to find a balance of how much information how to transfer this information and it is also group-work and networking. You have to get all of it in there and then we have to look at the time frame. You cannot choose 5 days, so it is also the questions how many days so we have to look at this again.

Interviewer: So if I understand it correctly, finding the balance is most difficult part.

Responder: Yes, I think so. In the starterkit purchasing we have also the case that the information includes also very different departments so that the trainers are not familiar with the content from the different trainings. So they have to be informed about all of the details and that is also a bit of a challenge.

Interviewer: We are coming to the end of this interviewer now, is there anything else you would like to add to this interview?

Responder: No, I will keep you on track ☺

Interviewer: Ok perfect. Thank you very much.

Responder: Thank you too.