
Certificate of Research in Business Administration

An evaluation, and reconceptualization of the onboarding process of new Generation Z managers, and its impact on their affective commitment

Student : Ann Moreels

Supervisor : Prof. Peter Stokes



English Online DBA n° 3

Ann.moreels@mlmanagementservices.com

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Agenda

- Introduction
 - Brief introduction of myself
 - Introduction of the topic
- Initial problem(s)
- Research question
- Literature review
- Research method(ology)
- Expected results and recommendations
- Project plan
- Conclusion
- Thank you
- Your feedback

Introduction of myself

Ann Moreels, master in
Business Psychology (1990)

Living and working in Belgium

Senior HR Consultant
(M&L Management Services)

Visiting professor at KU Leuven
(Belgium) (since 20 years)

Very much interested in e.g. :

- Onboarding of newcomers
- Leadership & (team) management
- Organisational development (change management)
- Generations at work
- Business process re-engineering

Broad network

Love to read, to write, to learn
and develop myself and to work
hard

Introduction of the topic (1)

- Focus on the **onboarding** of newcomers :
 - Onboarding refers to : The full scope of activities involved in bringing new employees into the company—from administrative setup (e.g., handling paperwork and logistics) to helping them integrate into the company culture and align their personal values with the organization (p. 11 of CRBA report).
 - Interesting :
 - Cesário and Chambel (2019) state that : "no component of human capital management has been more overlooked by companies than the process of welcoming newly recruited employees —the **onboarding phase**" (p. 1465).
 - I also strongly believe **that a professional onboarding strategy and well-thought-out onboarding practices are essential** for integrating newcomers, making them feel welcome, and ensuring their swift performance within their role or job, team, and within the organization's culture (Bauer, 2010).

- Focus on **Generation Z** new hires :
 - Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to : Individuals born between +/- 1997 and +/- 2012; Gen Z currently makes up 30% to 32% of the world's population and accounts for 27% of the workforce by 2025 (Qureos.com, 2024; World Economic Forum – Swaminathan, 2022).
 - Interesting :
 - The war for talent relates to changing generational attitudes toward work (Tulgan, 2016; Twenge, 2017). As younger generations, particularly Generation Z, become the dominant force in the workforce, companies must re-evaluate and **adapt their strategies to meet the unique demands and expectations of these employees**, also in the onboarding process.

Introduction of the topic (2)

- Focus on Generation Z **managers** :

- Generation Z *managers* refer to : These individuals who are responsible for achieving specific objectives and, for planning, organizing, and / or optimizing various resources. They are involved in decision-making, operational management (both their own and, potentially, that of others), and aligning their actions with the objectives of themselves, their team(s), and / or their organization. Various scholars have identified differences in the responsibilities and skills required when stepping into managerial positions.

- Interesting :

- According to McKinsey & Company (Mind the Gap, 25/2/2025) “in 2025, **one in ten managers** will be **Gen Zers**.”

- Focus on the impact of the onboarding process of newcomers (Gen Z managers) on their **affective commitment** :

- Affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991) refers to : The emotional connection an employee feels toward their organization. This connection is marked by the employee's strong belief in and support for the organization's goals, a willingness to work hard for the organization, and a strong desire to remain a part of it (p. 5 of CRBA report).

- Interesting :

- Various existing research (e.g. Mazzei, Ravazzani, Butera, Conti, and Fisichella (2023)) substantiates the significant **impact of the onboarding process on affective commitment**.

What is the problem ?

- In professional settings, Generation Z is often characterized by traits such as being "difficult", "lacking loyalty to jobs or companies", "highly demanding", "self-centred", and "having a perceived lack of importance for work" (e.g. Katz, 2024; Lee, 2023; Seemiller and Grace, 2019; Twenge, 2007, 2017).
- In fact, when an employee leaves, it can cost from one-half to two times that worker's annual salary to replace them (e.g. Gallup.com).
- Due to the war for talent, it is very often not easy to find the 'right' person for the 'right' job / function. In their 2016 article "Attracting and retaining the right talent," McKinsey discusses how the demand for skilled workers often surpasses the supply, making it difficult for organizations to find suitable candidates for specific roles.
- Understanding the expectations of Generation Z members becomes highly important, as Gen Z expect organisations to adapt to their expectations and needs, also in the onboarding process.
- HRM professionals show a significant interest in this topic, as they are eager to understand how to strengthen the affective commitment of Generation Z managers, starting from their initial onboarding process.

Research question

My research question :

To what extent does the onboarding process of Generation Z managers influence their affective commitment ?

This study is highly relevant from both a HRM and scientific perspective :

- It explores how the onboarding process influences the affective commitment of Generation Z managers and offers valuable insights and recommendations for HRM professionals and future research.
- This study aims to evaluate and refine onboarding approaches, ultimately increasing awareness and preparing organizations for future generational shifts in the continuously evolving workplace.

Literature review



This literature review addresses the various components of my research question by examining theories and views related to the following topics :

Onboarding
Generation Z new hires and managers
Organizational commitment, with a specific focus on affective commitment.



In exploring the literature on these subjects, the analysis will be grounded in the broad perspective of Human Resource Management, with a particular focus on the socialization theory and affective commitment theory.



The generational cohort theory will serve as our framework for examining Generation Z new hires.

Focus on Onboarding (1)

- Various scholars (e.g. Chillakuri (2020), Jeske and Olson (2021)) underline the importance of the onboarding of new hires : “it is a crucial transition phase for employees as they navigate the challenges of entering new work environments, becoming part of teams, and assuming new job responsibilities.”
- Examination of the literature shows several interconnected concepts :
 - **Induction** : e.g. any arrangement made to familiarize the new employee with the organization including safety rules, general conditions of employment, and the specific work of the team (e.g. Skeats, 1996)
 - **Socialisation** : foundation of lots of research is laid by Van Maanen and Schein (1979); they focus on “the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role.” Organizational socialisation encompasses all the learning and adaptation that a newcomer undergoes to transition from being an outsider to a fully functional and contributing insider within the organization (Bauer et al., 2007; Cooper-Thomas and Anderson, 2006; Feldman, 1976 and 1981; Schein, 1988; Van Maanen, 1978; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979).
- The term ‘onboarding’ encompasses the full spectrum of activities involved in integrating new employees into an organization.
- Various onboarding models e.g. the six socialisation tactics (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979), Klein and Heuser (2008) developed twelve content areas of socialisation, 4 (5) C’s model of Bauer (2010), etc.

Focus on Onboarding (2)

- Jeske and Olson (2021) have observed a notable shift in onboarding processes, approaches and models moving from traditional, compliance-focused onboarding towards more holistic approaches (Jeske and Olson, 2021; Ruppel and Peacock, 2019).
 - Holistic onboarding extends beyond meeting the organization's needs by recognizing how a new employee's strengths and talents can significantly influence the company. Holistic onboarding
 - **empowers the employee to contribute** to the creation of unique services, solutions, or products within the organization.
 - emphasizes **the collaboration between new employees and various organizational stakeholders**, including supervisors, team members, senior management, human resources professionals, and mentors or buddies, as highlighted by Jeske and Olson (2021).
 - Therefore, Jeske and Olson (2021) advocate for a clear re-examination and redesign of conventional onboarding strategies related to the mode of onboarding delivery (e.g. digital, in-person), accommodating the diverse backgrounds of new hires, and crafting more personalized onboarding experiences.
- *This study will analyse the various views, opinions and expectations of new Generation Z managers regarding their onboarding process.*

Focus on Generation Z managers (1)

- In 1928, Karl Mannheim originally introduced the concept of generational cohort theory : the value systems of individuals are largely shaped in the first decade of life by family, friends, communities, and significant events within the general era of their birth. Consequently, this framework is instrumental in understanding the motivational needs and various work styles of individuals born in similar eras.
- These views have been critiqued by several scholars (e.g., Costanza et al., 2012; Lyons & Kuron, 2014; Rudolph et al. 2021) referring to e.g. an oversimplification – more a life stage than age cohort. Several recent studies support the existence of generational differences (Dries, Pepermans, & De Kerpel, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2008; Twenge, 2000, 2010). These works argue that each cohort is distinct in various domains including expectations, experiences, values, education, lifestyle, and ethics (e.g. Grow and Yang, 2018; Willams and Page, 2011).
- Research on the defining characteristics of Generation Z is emerging, as highlighted by Dwivedula, Singh and Azaran (2019) e.g. on their technological adeptness, learning styles, impact of social media, etc.

Focus on Generation Z managers (2)

- This study focuses on Generation Z managers, specifically Gen Z newcomers stepping into managerial roles (as previously defined).
 - As McKinsey states : in 2025, 1/10 managers will be Gen Z.
 - Given the diverse range of responsibilities and competencies required in a managerial role, our research — focused on the onboarding processes for Generation Z managers — is highly relevant and innovative, providing valuable insights from both scientific and HRM perspectives.
- *This study will focus on Generation Z new hires, and more specifically on Gen Z managers (= managing people, various projects (incl. research), sectors, divisions, key clients, significant dossiers and assignments).*

Focus on Affective Commitment

- John Meyer and Natalie Allen (1991) developed their “Three Component Model of Commitment”: an individual's commitment to their organization is a complex psychological state encompassing three distinct yet interrelated components.
 - The first element of Meyer and Allen's commitment model is ‘**affective commitment**’. This term refers to the emotional bond an employee feels towards their organization. It's about how much they identify with and are involved in their company.
 - The second element is ‘**continuance commitment**’. Here, the commitment is based on the employee's understanding of the costs that come with leaving the organization.
 - The third component is ‘**normative commitment**’. This aspect is about an employee feeling a sense of duty to stay with their organization.
- Mercurio (2015) argues that research should prioritize affective commitment, as it represents the 'core essence' of organizational commitment. Consequently, this study will emphasize this element as the central aspect of organizational commitment.
- Effective onboarding programs significantly affect new employees' affective commitment (e.g. Caldwell et al., 2012; O’Reilly & Caldwell, 1981, Vance, 2006).
- ➔ *This study focuses on the extent to which the onboarding processes of Generation Z new hires, and more specifically Gen Z managers, impact their affective commitment.*

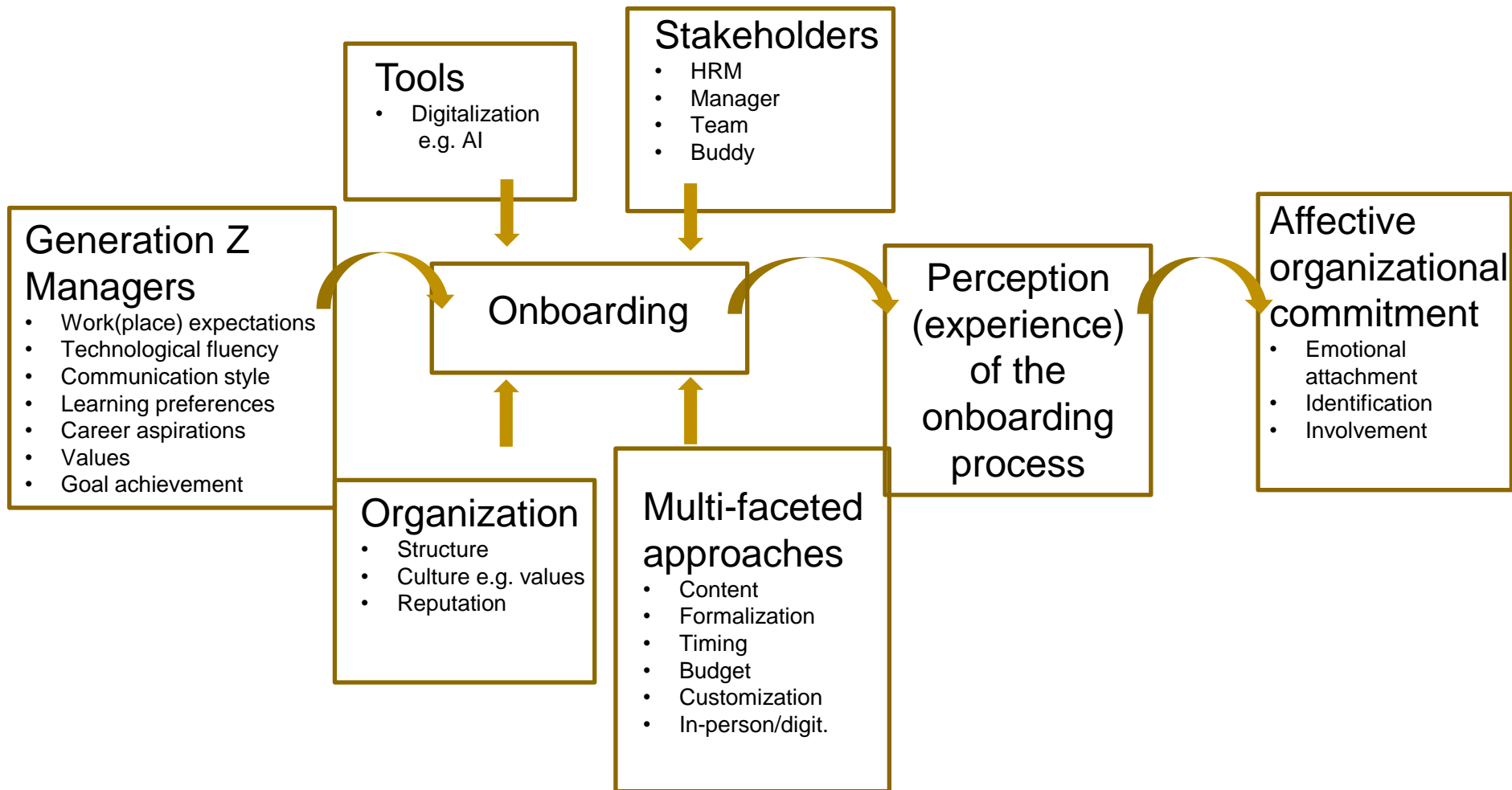
Research model and methodology (1)

- Research model : see slide 16
- Qualitative research (exploration of the phenomena in an in-depth way)
- Inductive approach (aiming to generate new insights and perspectives on how these new Gen managers perceive their onboarding process)
- Interpretivist research (exploring the subjective experiences of new Gen Z managers)
- Five research aims :
 1. To define and identify the specific elements of the onboarding process experienced by new Gen Z managers.
 2. To explore the perceptions of new Gen Z managers on their onboarding process (onboarding experience).
 3. To discuss the level of affective commitment of these new Generation Z managers.
 4. To determine the factors within the onboarding process that contribute to or hinder affective commitment.
 5. To deduce the needs and expectations of Gen Z managers concerning the onboarding process which foster positive affective commitment.
- Each research aim has several objectives, and the data collection strategies are aligned with these objectives (and research aims).

Research model and methodology (2)

- Data collection methods used in this study are :
 - In-depth interviews (with the new Gen Z managers)
 - Observations (e.g. of team meetings, HR onboarding days, meetings with the buddy)
 - Document analysis (e.g. welcome guides, HR feedback reports, HR onboarding presentations, checklists, etc.)
- Triangulation of methods
- Data analysis : interview transcripts + analysis of the observations + analysis of all document, all involving a systematic process of identifying, analyzing, and reporting recurring patterns or themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Stokes & Wall, 2014).
- Very important : data management + ethical approval, with participants providing informed consent.

Research model and methodology (3)



Expected results and recommendations

1. Insights into Generation Z's preferences and expectations : this research will e.g. explore their perceptions of the various phases of onboarding, the use of specific (technological / digital) tools (e.g., AI-related tools), communication strategies, the involvement of different stakeholders, and the customization of the onboarding experience to their specific roles.
2. Understanding the impact on affective commitment : this study is expected to reveal that when the onboarding process is well-aligned with the expectations and values of Generation Z, it can lead to higher levels of affective commitment.
3. Identification of challenges in current onboarding processes : the study aims to identify common challenges that Generation Z managers face during the onboarding process.
4. Development of best practices for onboarding Generation Z Managers : based on the findings, this research is expected to outline best practices for onboarding that are particularly effective for Generation Z managers.
5. Broader organizational outcomes : a range of positive outcomes, such as improved job performance and better alignment with team and company culture.

Project plan

		2025												2026								
		Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept
CRBA presentation	Preparing the CRBA presentation + addressing feedback and making corrections	█	█	█																		
	Interview preparation	█	█	█																		
Interviews	Conducting first interviews			█																		
	Continuing interviews + observations				█	█	█	█	█	█												
Data analysis	Analysis of the data + first 'results'							█	█	█												
	Analysing all data + drafting the first part of the results										█	█	█									
Thesis development	Writing the introduction + literature part of my thesis			█	█	█	█	█	█	█												
	Writing the results part + conclusions + managerial recommendations												█	█	█	█						
	Finishing the first draft of my thesis																	█				
	Making final corrections and updates																		█	█		
	Finalising the thesis																			█	█	
Thesis presentation	Submitting the thesis																				█	
	Preparing for the official presentation of my thesis																					█

Conclusion

- This study presents an opportunity to evaluate and rethink the onboarding process for Generation Z managers and its impact on their affective commitment. Consequently, it provides a foundation for reconsidering and potentially redesigning traditional onboarding practices to better align with the unique needs and expectations of this emerging generation of managers.
- I look forward to conducting the interviews, observations, and document analysis, as well as analyzing the results.
- I hope to contribute meaningful insights through this exciting research, both to the academic literature and to the improvement of onboarding practices.

Thank you !

Thank you for time and attention.
I look forward to exploring your feedback !

Ann Moreels

