



Exploring Aspects of 4Cs in Onboarding Process of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs)

A qualitative study

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ABSTRACT

This literature studies 4Cs of Onboarding framework and its important techniques in a successful onboarding program in higher education institutions that helps to go beyond paperwork and logistics. The 4Cs framework – Compliance, Clarification, Connection, and Culture – guides universities in welcoming new employees and setting them up in the new environment.

- Compliance: ensures new hires understand academic regulations, campus policies, and safety protocols, fostering a safe and orderly environment.
- Clarification: provides employees with clear expectations, course requirements, organizational vision and mission and available support services, aiding academic success and navigation of challenges.
- Connection: builds a sense of belonging through orientation programs, peer mentoring, and staff activities, encouraging engagement and integration into the office community.
- Culture: immerses employees in the university's values, mission, and traditions through cultural events and service-learning opportunities, fostering shared purpose and social responsibility.

Implementing the 4Cs framework leads to improved academic performance, retention, and efficient student services. It equips institutions with valuable tools to support their diverse employee population and create a positive learning experience.

KEYWORDS

Onboarding, Higher Education, Four Cs, Compliance, Clarification, Culture, Connection, Employees, New Hires.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the 4Cs of Onboarding Framework in Higher Education

The origin of the 4Cs of Onboarding Framework is often attributed to Dr. Talya Bauer, a leading expert in employee onboarding and organizational development. Dr. Bauer's research and consulting work highlighted the critical role of four key factors in successful onboarding:

- Compliance: ensuring new employees understand and comply with legal and organizational regulations.
- Clarification: providing clear understanding of roles, responsibilities, expectations, and performance goals.
- Connection: fostering relationships with colleagues, mentors, and managers.
- Culture: immersing employees in the organization's values, mission, and vision.

Dr. Bauer initially published her work on the 4Cs in the early 2010s based on academic research and observations of successful onboarding practices. Over time, the framework gained widespread recognition and adoption by organizations across various industries, including higher education.

1.2 Evolution of the Framework:

While Dr. Bauer laid the foundation, the 4Cs framework has undergone some evolution. Some sources attribute the framework to the SHRM Foundation (Society for Human Resource Management), which published research supporting the importance of these four elements. Additionally, several variations of the framework have emerged, including:

- 5Cs: Adding "Clarity" to address specific training needs and knowledge gaps.
- 6Cs: Incorporating "Commitment" to emphasize employee engagement and long-term retention.

However, the core principles of the 4Cs remain relevant and continue to provide a valuable framework for designing and implementing effective onboarding programs.

1.3 4Cs as an important aspects of Onboarding process in Higher Education

As universities and colleges strive to create a welcoming and supportive environment for their diverse employees, the need for a comprehensive and effective onboarding program becomes increasingly crucial. The 4Cs of Onboarding Framework – Compliance, Clarification, Connection, and Culture – offers a valuable roadmap for institutions to guide their new hires through a smooth and successful transition into academic life.

- Compliance focuses on ensuring that new hires understand and comply with all necessary academic regulations, campus policies, and safety protocols. This includes digital onboarding process, remuneration, medical and other benefits, code of conduct, adherence to the rules and regulations of the institutions, safety measures and institutional responsibilities. By providing clear and accessible information about these important aspects, universities can foster a safe and orderly environment where new employees can focus on their duties.
- Clarification aims to ensure that new employees have a clear understanding of their academic expectations, course deliverables and support services available to them. This involves providing detailed course syllabi, academic advising resources, and information about tutoring patterns for students, effective student services, disability support services, and mental health counseling. By clarifying expectations to the new staff and providing readily available support, universities can achieve their academic goals and success in accomplishment of the challenges of higher education.
- Connection focuses on fostering a sense of belonging and community among new hires. This can be achieved through orientation programs, peer mentoring initiatives, residential life activities, and employee recreational clubs and fun activities. By connecting new hires with peers, superiors, and parallel office staff, universities can create a supportive network that encourages new hires to engage in their academic pursuits and feel integrated into the campus community.
- Culture aims to immerse new employees in the university's unique values, mission, and traditions. This can be achieved through cultural events, guest speaker presentations, service-learning opportunities, and celebrations of diverse backgrounds and perspectives. By exposing employees to the university's culture, institutions can instill a sense of shared purpose and belonging, promoting academic engagement, and fostering social responsibility among their staff.
- The 4Cs of Onboarding Framework provides a holistic approach to create a positive and impactful onboarding experience for new employees. By addressing employee needs and expectations across these four key areas, universities and colleges can ensure that their employees are well-prepared to thrive academically, connect with their community, and embrace the unique culture of their institution.

2. NEED FOR AND IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Studying the 4Cs of Onboarding framework can be particularly valuable in the context of higher education for several reasons:

2.1. Unique Needs of Higher Education Institutions:

- Compared to traditional workplaces, universities and colleges have a diverse employee population with varied backgrounds, experiences, and learning styles.
- The 4Cs framework helps institutions tailor their onboarding programs to address these unique needs, ensuring all employees feel welcome, supported, and prepared for academic success.
- By focusing on Compliance, universities can ensure new hires understand academic regulations, campus policies, and safety protocols.
- Clarification helps employees understand academic expectations, course requirements, and support services available to them.
- Connection fosters a sense of belonging through orientation programs, peer mentoring initiatives, and clubs/organizations.
- Culture immerses employees in the university's values of diversity, inclusion, and academic excellence.

2.2. Improved Academic Performance and Retention:

- Effective onboarding programs have been shown to lead to higher academic performance and retention rates among employees.
- When staff feel supported and connected to their university community, they are more likely to engage in their roles, persist through challenges, and ultimately overcome challenges.
- The 4Cs framework helps universities create a supportive environment that fosters academic success and employee well-being.
- Studying the 4Cs framework allows universities to benchmark their onboarding programs against other institutions and identify areas for improvement.
- By collecting feedback after the onboarding process from new hires, universities can refine their programs to ensure they are meeting the evolving needs of their employees.
- Regular evaluation and updates ensure that the onboarding process remains effective and relevant in a competitive educational landscape.

2.3. Enhanced Staff Engagement and Satisfaction:

- A positive onboarding experience sets the tone for the entire academic journey.
- By addressing student needs and expectations early on, universities can foster a sense of engagement and satisfaction that lasts throughout their academic career.
- This can lead to increased student involvement in campus activities, positive feedback, and stronger alumni relationships.
- The 4Cs framework can be used to develop onboarding programs that help employees develop essential skills such as communication, collaboration, and critical thinking.

In conclusion, studying and implementing the 4Cs of Onboarding framework can equip universities and colleges with valuable tools to support their employees in higher education, leading to acquiring experienced and improved academic personnels.

3. REVIEW OF LITERATURES

Pratiwi, P. Y., at al. (2018) stated that startups in Yogyakarta are implementing onboarding processes, but room for improvement remains. While all six startups covered the five key aspects of onboarding, their overall effectiveness fell short, averaging below 80%. Documentation, particularly developer-oriented materials, proved the weakest area with an average score of just 67%. This suggests that strengthening

onboarding, especially documentation, could significantly benefit startups by reducing employee dissatisfaction and potential turnover. The study revealed that while onboarding practices across five areas average above 80% (good criteria), documentation falls short with an average of 67%. Developer-oriented documentation and learning materials scored even lower, with some startups dipping below 60% (enough criteria). This suggests that most startups haven't nailed documentation, highlighting a key area for improvement when designing new onboarding models for future startups. These findings can serve as valuable benchmarks for crafting more structured onboarding experiences. This study recommends further research to identify best practices for startup onboarding, particularly in documentation, to explore the impact of effective onboarding on employee satisfaction and retention in the startup context and to develop targeted onboarding models tailored to the unique needs of software engineering startups. By addressing these gaps, startups can leverage a well-designed onboarding process as a competitive advantage, fostering a more engaged and productive workforce. The conclusion emphasizes the key findings and actionable takeaways for future research, and focusing that strong HR and loyal employees are crucial for startup success. New hires need a smooth onboarding process (introduction, training) to adapt to the startup culture and contribute quickly. Poor onboarding leads to dissatisfaction, high turnover, and lower productivity. This study analyzes startup onboarding performance to build a better model for future startups [1].

The article by **Gomes Rickardo, et al. (2023)** explores the importance of a structured onboarding program in helping new hires adapt to a company's culture. The study, by analyzing research and using a structured approach, finds that a good onboarding process strengthens cultural assimilation. This research examines the link between structured onboarding and successful integration into an organization's culture. Drawing on existing literature, it analyzes the impact of the onboarding process on cultural understanding and behavior. By focusing on the relationship between onboarding, HR practices, and organizational culture, the study concludes that a well-designed onboarding program plays a crucial role in helping new employees adopt the company's values and norms. This article investigates the connection between structured onboarding and cultural assimilation through a bibliographic review of existing research. The analysis reveals that a robust onboarding process, aligned with the company's culture, contributes significantly to employees' cultural understanding and acceptance. The article reveals that onboarding is a crucial first impression for new hires, shaping their perception of company culture and its alignment with their expectations. It plays a key role in employee integration and engagement, fostering a sense of belonging and understanding of shared values. This research explores the relationship between a structured onboarding process and the effective transmission of organizational culture, ultimately influencing business success as dynamic business environments demand constant adaptation. Company practices, including onboarding and culture, need regular review and alignment. Understanding and integrating new hires effectively is crucial. Each company defines its relevant culture, adding value and shaping organizational objectives. Clear communication of cultural concepts is key. Onboarding done right not only integrates but also engages new employees, accelerating cultural assimilation. Organizational culture is a powerful guiding force. It shapes behavior and strategy but requires clear definition for effective implementation. More research is needed on the onboarding-culture link. With innovative methods and planning, organizations can leverage culture to adapt and thrive [2].

The article by **Obrenovic, B., et. al. (2020)**, emphasis that In knowledge-intensive workplaces, individuals play a crucial role in sharing hidden expertise (tacit knowledge) to create value and gain success. This study explores the connection between personality traits, willingness to share, and actual knowledge sharing behavior. A survey of 288 employees finds that altruism directly boosts tacit knowledge sharing, suggesting a unique relationship with this specific type of knowledge. Willingness to share is a key factor, both directly influencing behavior and mediating the influence of altruism. Subjective norms (feeling pressured to share) can also indirectly impact knowledge sharing through willingness. The study highlights the importance of personality traits that build social capital (like altruism) for encouraging tacit knowledge sharing. This knowledge can be used to develop leadership styles, hiring practices, and initiatives to improve knowledge flow within organizations. These findings offer practical tools for organizations, suggesting ways to encourage knowledge flow through promoting altruism, fostering a willingness-to-share culture, and shaping positive social norms. This concise version captures the essence of the original text, focusing on the key contributions and practical implications for managing knowledge within organizations [3].

According to **Gabrielova, K., et. al (2021)**, Millennials are taking on managerial roles as Gen Z joins the workforce. This article explores potential clashes and strategies to bridge the gap between these generations, focusing on their work values and leadership styles. With the workplace evolving and Gen Z entering the scene, millennials are stepping up as managers. This article delves into the potential for friction and ways to foster harmony between these two generations. It examines their work-related traits through the lens of generational theory, leadership models, and value frameworks. This article analyzes potential intergenerational conflict and proposes strategies to boost morale and productivity, drawing on theories of generational differences, leadership, and work values. As the workplace welcomes Gen Z, millennials are transitioning into leadership roles. This article seeks to understand how these generations can collaborate effectively, exploring their work-related characteristics and building bridges through generational theory, leadership models, and a framework of work values. Gen Z's arrival shakes up the workplace and there is a need to talk to the Gen Z employees. This article helps millennial managers understand their new charges, with tips on navigating potential conflict areas like leadership, motivation, teamwork, and social interactions. The arrival of Generation Z brings a distinct shift to the workforce. To bridge the gap, this article analyzes the work values and potential conflict points between Gen Z and millennial managers. It identifies four key areas – leadership, motivation, teamwork, and social interactions – where friction might arise due to generational differences. The article offers practical recommendations for millennial managers, emphasizing the importance of open communication and understanding Gen Z's unique needs. However, it acknowledges that ultimately, the key to managing Gen Z effectively lies in genuine dialogue and a willingness to adapt. While acknowledging some shared work values and preferences, generational differences could lead to friction. The article proposes communication and adapting management styles based on Gen Z's needs as key strategies for effective leadership. However, it concludes that the ultimate responsibility for successful management lies with the employees themselves [4].

According to **Anwar, N., Mahmood, et. al (2020)**, instead of focusing solely on technology, researchers are now looking at employee behavior to improve universities' sluggish environmental performance. This study, based on the AMO theory (The AMO theory suggests that there are three independent work system components that shape employee characteristics and contribute to the success of the organization. According to the theory, organizational interests are best served by a system that attends to the employees ability, motivation, and opportunity (AMO)), examines how "green" HR practices (training, motivation, and involvement) can influence environmentally friendly behavior (OCBE - Organization Citizenship Behavior towards Environment) among academic staff, and in turn, boost campus environmental performance (e.g., reduced waste). To understand 'Green Human Resources Management (GHRM)', we can define it as a set of policies, practices, and systems that stimulate the green behavior of a company's employees in order to create an environmentally sensitive, resource-

efficient, and socially responsible organization. This study is noteworthy because it emphasizes the crucial role of staff behavior in greening universities, highlighting the effectiveness of green HR practices in driving positive change. Universities are acknowledging the need to integrate human behavior into their environmental initiatives for better outcomes. Despite limited research on effective behavioral interventions, this study explores Green HRM practices as a promising approach to promote environmental citizenship behavior (OCBE) among academic staff. Highlighting universities' role as knowledge leaders beyond mere awareness, the study emphasizes their responsibility to actively encourage sustainable behavior within their own communities. It showcases Green HRM as a framework offering ability-building, motivation-enhancing, and opportunity-providing practices that can positively influence staff's environmental actions. The positive findings on Green HRM and OCBE's impact on environmental performance offer valuable insights for policymakers to consider when designing interventions that nudge academic staff towards more sustainable behaviors [5]

According to **Weaver, G. R., et. al (2001)**, while many corporations boast formal ethics and compliance programs, HR's limited involvement hinders their effectiveness. This oversight is concerning because ethics efforts frequently involve sensitive fairness issues, which activate employee "fairness heuristics" crucial for program success. Drawing on organizational fairness and ethics research, it is argued that extensive HR involvement in ethics programs enhances perceived fairness and ultimately shapes program outcomes like employee commitment. Corporations widely adopted formal ethics programs and even dedicated offices in the 90s. Despite this trend, the human resources (HR) function often remains sidelined in these initiatives. This is concerning because employee perceptions of fairness, which HR heavily influences, significantly impact the success of ethics programs. While ethics encompass more than just fairness, neglecting it can sabotage broader efforts to promote ethical behavior. Therefore, leveraging HR's expertise in managing fairness is crucial for successful ethics management within organizations. While HR's central role in managing fairness makes them crucial for successful ethics programs, they shouldn't go it alone. Fairness concerns embedded in ethics initiatives necessitate collaboration with other departments (legal, audit, leadership) and top management buy-in for true success. HR's expertise in promoting perceived fairness through program development and integration with organizational processes like performance systems and training empowers them to be key collaborators, not solo drivers, in fostering ethical behavior across the organization [6]

The study by **Kalfa, S., et. al (2017)**, delves into the complex world of academia through the lens of Bourdieu's "game" metaphor. It examines how academics at a restructured Australian university grapple with changes like performance appraisals. The findings reveal a fascinating dance between ambition, compliance, and disillusionment. Driven by the allure of career advancement, most academics become willing players in the game, diligently following the new rules (like performance reviews) to accumulate resources like publications and grants. This compliance, however, comes at a cost. The competitive nature of the game pits colleagues against each other, eroding the collegiality that once defined academic life. Furthermore, the study uncovers subtle forms of resistance – not outright rebellion, but quiet forms of "neutralized resistance" such as negligence or resignation. This muted opposition highlights the power dynamics at play, where academics, despite ideological objections, often find themselves unable to challenge the system effectively. The study concludes with a call for new avenues of resistance. Traditional channels like committees and unions seem inadequate in this "gamified" environment. New structures and strategies are needed to give voice to dissent and counter the growing dominance of managerialism in higher education. In essence, this research paints a nuanced picture of academics caught in a complex web of power, ambition, and disillusionment. It offers valuable insights into the impact of managerialism on academic cultures and underscores the need for new approaches to navigate the ever-changing landscape of higher education [7].

The study done by **Gil-Garcia, J. R., et. al (2019)**, showcases academics in the managerial maze and navigating power and progress as Clearly defined Roles and Responsibilities (CRR) boost both individual organizations and collaborations between them. In Cross Boundary Information Sharing (CBIS), across the organization, clear CRR also fosters trust, participation, and security. Yet, the factors behind strong CRR in government CBIS are poorly understood. Beyond technology, building effective interagency information sharing (CBIS) hinges on crystal-clear roles and responsibilities. This study dives deeper, analyzing how factors like shared plans, communication skills, and diverse organizational cultures impact clarity in real-world scenarios. By shedding light on these dynamics, we empower government leaders to navigate complex challenges through seamless cross-organizational collaboration, ultimately improving policy, public services, and citizen outcomes. While prior research identified clarity as crucial, this study delves into three key enablers: communication tools, diverse perspectives, and effective communication – emphasizing their critical role in successful CBIS. It also stresses the importance of acknowledging the unique cultures of participating organizations. Further research beyond criminal justice and public health can further solidify the foundation for successful interagency collaboration [8].

Strohmeier, S. (2020) article studies the decoding of "digital HR and clearing the buzzword fog". The HR landscape is abuzz with jargon like "digitalization," "disruption," and "transformation," often used interchangeably and to little effect. This article cuts through the fog by laying down precise definitions for each term, providing a bedrock for future research in the dynamic field of digital HR. Strohmeier argues that "digital HR" isn't simply another tech gimmick; it's a fundamental shift from how we traditionally utilize technology in managing people. The article's terminology and typology serve as a powerful tool to categorize and analyze various facets of digital HR. This clarity benefits both researchers and practitioners, paving the way for better understanding and actionable insights. The article aims to be a dictionary and classification system for digital HR concepts. Just like we wouldn't confuse a dictionary with a thesaurus, this system doesn't reinvent the wheel, but rather refines existing ideas. It emphasizes the strategic integration of technology ("digital HR strategy") and connects HR digitalization to the broader organizational context. Ultimately, this work positions "digital HR" as the next chapter in our approach to technology in HR, opening doors for more targeted research and impactful practices in this rapidly evolving field [9].

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Building successful startups hinges on nailing first impressions, and that starts with effective Onboarding. While startups recognize its importance, their current practices, especially developer documentation, leave much to be desired. Investing in robust onboarding, particularly by improving developer resources, can dramatically reduce employee churn and enhance overall productivity. Future research must illuminate best practices for startup onboarding, focusing on documentation, and quantify its impact on employee satisfaction and retention, paving the way for thriving startups fueled by engaged and empowered teams.

The first step into a new company can make or break an employee's experience. A well-designed onboarding program acts as a cultural bridge, smoothly integrating new hires into the company's values and norms. This fosters a sense of belonging and boosts engagement. Yet, simply having an onboarding program isn't enough. Clear communication of the company's cultural DNA, from its core values to daily practices, is vital for successful assimilation. To solidify this link, we need more research. Exploring innovative onboarding methods and ensuring alignment with the overall organizational culture can unlock the full potential of this critical phase, nurturing employees who thrive within the company's unique ecosystem.

Unleashing the hidden gems of knowledge within your organization starts with tapping into the power of altruism—sharing knowledge with colleagues/teammates. Studies show that individuals driven by a genuine desire to help readily share their valuable tacit knowledge, highlighting the importance of fostering strong social capital. Leaders play a crucial role in nurturing this environment by cultivating a culture of open sharing and shaping positive social norms that encourage knowledge exchange. By embracing these insights, organizations can craft targeted initiatives and leadership styles that break down siloes and unlock the full potential of their collective wisdom.

Bridging the generation gap in the workplace demands more than just handshakes and name tags. The arrival of Gen Z presents a fresh wave of talent with distinct preferences for leadership, motivation, and teamwork, potentially clashing with the styles of their millennial managers. To foster harmony and unlock collaborative potential, open communication is paramount. Millennial managers must adapt their leadership styles to resonate with Gen Z's needs, prioritizing transparency, purpose-driven goals, and flexible work structures. Ultimately, the key to managing Gen Z lies in embracing genuine dialogue, acknowledging differences, and demonstrating a willingness to learn and adapt. This conscious effort can transform intergenerational friction into a powerful synergy, driving innovation and propelling workplaces forward.

Green campuses flourish where green hearts bloom. By focusing on employee ability, motivation, and opportunity, Green HR practices can cultivate environmentally conscious behavior among university staff. This transformative approach not only leads to reduced waste and energy consumption on campus, but also underscores the crucial role universities play in championing sustainability within their communities. Policymakers should take note: investing in Green HR interventions can gently nudge academic staff towards more sustainable choices, paving the way for a greener future, one eco-friendly action at a time.

Building a company of integrity hinges on a strong ethical foundation, and at the heart of this lies HR. While many corporations boast ethics programs, they often neglect HR's invaluable expertise in fairness, leading to limited effectiveness. Studies reveal that extensive HR involvement in ethics initiatives is a game-changer, boosting employee perceptions of fairness and crucial program outcomes like commitment. HR's unique understanding of fairness dynamics should position them as key collaborators, not bystanders, in designing and integrating ethics programs. By leveraging their skills to ensure fair implementation and address concerns, HR can become the silent guardians of ethical conduct, fostering a culture of integrity that permeates every corner of the organization.

Within the ivory towers of restructured universities, a curious game unfolds, where academics walk a tightrope between ambition, compliance, and disillusionment. The allure of career advancement compels them to play by the rules, meeting performance metrics that often clash with the cherished traditions of collegiality. This forced dance breeds subtle forms of resistance – not fiery rebellion, but quiet acts of negligence or resignation. Yet, these muted whispers highlight the power dynamics at play, where academics, despite their misgivings, find themselves trapped within the grip of managerialism. To reclaim their agency and restore the soul of academia, new avenues of resistance must be forged. Traditional channels, like committees and unions, seem powerless in this gamified landscape. It's time for bold reimagining, for innovative structures and strategies that empower academics to raise their voices, challenge the status quo, and reclaim the true purpose of their pursuit – the unfettered pursuit of knowledge and the exchange of ideas in a vibrant community of minds.

In the intricate dance of government collaboration, where information waltzes across agency borders, clearly defined roles and responsibilities (CRR) hold the key to a harmonious performance. Without this clarity, the music stumbles, hindering the vital flow of data that fuels effective public services. Communication tools are like well-oiled instruments, diverse perspectives enrich the melody, and clear communication acts as the conductor, ensuring each agency plays its part in perfect unison. Yet, the score remains incomplete. Further research, venturing beyond specific sectors, is needed to solidify the foundation of seamless interagency collaboration. Only then can the government orchestra truly flourish, delivering a symphony of efficient services to the citizens who depend on its harmonious tune.

In the bustling HR landscape, where buzzwords flit like fireflies, clarity shines as a beacon. Precise definitions of terms like "digitalization," "disruption," and "transformation" are the keys to unlocking clear communication and research within this dynamic field. The term "digital HR" isn't just about sprinkling tech dust on dusty processes; it's a fundamental shift in how we leverage technology to empower people management. A well-defined vocabulary and typology for digital HR concepts acts as a Rosetta Stone, enabling researchers and practitioners alike to decipher the nuances of this evolving domain. With this shared language, we can unlock a deeper understanding and generate actionable insights, paving the way for a future where technology and humanity dance in perfect harmony within the HR ecosystem.

5. RESEARCH GAPS

While existing research highlights crucial areas like effective onboarding, cultural integration, and green practices, gaps remain in quantifying their impact and developing actionable strategies. Future research should focus on measuring outcomes, designing innovative methods, and understanding underlying mechanisms to bridge these gaps and unlock the full potential of these promising approaches.

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