The Types of Primary Tasks Useful in the Organizational Socialization Process

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Abstract

This research examined the useful types of primary tasks in the organizational socialization process. Questionnaires were administered to 220 participants who ae permanents employees to obtain the data for this study. Repeated measurement was used to analyze the data. Respondents indicated finding all types of primary tasks useful but were most positive in their assessments of social integration task, followed by role mastery and role clarification, while acculturation are rated as moderately useful. The hypothesis was partially supported. Respondents reported significantly higher levels of social integration than role clarification and acculturation, also reported significantly higher levels of mastery role than clarification and acculturation role. No significant differences are observed with respect to social integration and role mastery, role clarification and acculturation.

Keywords: 1) Types of primary task 2) Organizational socialization process

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Introduction

One of the primary purpose of messages sent by the organization in the process of organizational socialization is to provide employees with primary tasks leading to role clarity. Employees frequently experience role ambiguity and role conflict. Employees can experience role ambiguity and/or role conflict as a result of 1) a lack of clarity and unanimity in others' expectations concerning employees' roles, 2) mixed feedback about their job performance, 3) not being able to negotiate informal agreement regarding others' influence in defining their roles, and 4) other's breaking or neglecting to fulfill contracts or negotiated function.

Role ambiguity and role conflict are likely to have a negative impact upon employees' performance ratings and organizational tenure. Cotton and Tuttle (1986, pp. 55-70) indicate that role ambiguity and role conflict are consistently negatively correlated with job satisfaction and, in particular, employees' satisfaction with task itself, satisfaction with supervisor, and commitment and involvement in their organization. Therefore, role ambiguity and role conflict can pose serious problems for organizational employees. However, the levels of role ambiguity and/or role conflict experienced by employees depend on their primary tasks sought useful behaviors.

In summary, as a result of entering an organization, employees are likely to seek primary tasks useful with a heightened sense of awareness or mindfulness. The primary tasks sought useful activities are also likely to be stimulated by the reception of role-related task from supervisor, co-worker, and others which might not provide sufficient clarity about employees' roles. In turn, the manner in which employees seek the primary task is likely to be shaped by their level of uncertainty about organizational events, the social costs inherent in primary tasks sought useful, differences among employees with respect to personality and past work experiences, and contextual factors associated with the organizational setting. It is anticipated that employees who are able to utilize a variety of primary tasks sought tactics to obtain role-related task will report lower levels of role ambiguity and/or conflict.

Therefore, the researcher would like to investigate the primary tasks sought useful behaviors during the organizational socialization process. This study will also provide the organizations with more information concerning the effectiveness of primary task.

Objective

The study attempts to examine the ways that employees respond to and use various types primary task during organizational socialization process.

Literature review

The Primary task: Definitions and concepts

Every organization has at any moment a primary task, which is defined as the task it has to perform if it is to survive; the definition of the primary task of the organization illuminates the hierarchy among the various activities existing simultaneously in it determining the dominant import conversation export process and consequently the important set of activities.

In addition, the concept opens the possibility of considering different organizational structures based on different definitions of the primary task, and of comparing them (Teboul, 1994, pp. 190–224). One of the conclusions derived from the analysis of the organization from this point of view is that various subsystems in the organization may define its primary task in different or even conflicting ways. A conflict might also be found between the primary task as it is defined by the organization itself and the primary task its environment imposes on it.

The concept of primary task is not a normative one. Open systems theory does not claim that every organization or system has to define its primary task, but it does claim that any unit, at any specific moment, has one task that can be look at as its primary one. Lawrence (1985, pp.231-241) developed the concept of primary task as a tool for the analysis of organizational socialization process and claimed that at any given moment the different employees of the organization fulfill different primary tasks. Some of them fulfill the normative primary task is the one that has been formally decided upon and declared, usually by the top of the organization. Others are active in pursuing the existential primary task is the one they believe they ought to attain, which is derived from their own interpretation of their roles in the specific set of activities they are placed in. Finally, there exits the phenomenological primary task is the one which can be deduced from the actual overall activity of the organization. Looking at the discrepancies, if they exist, between these three categories of the concept can offer us important insights about the organization and the relationships between its different components (Mignerey, Rubin, and Gorden, 1995, pp. 54–85).

The organization socialization process

The organization socialization process refers to process of making the employees get acquitted to the new environment of the organization. This reduces the anxiety and allows the employees to adjust themselves with the other existing employees in the organization. Socialization is the process of learning the behavior and attitudes necessary for assuming a role in an organization (Fisher, 1986, pp. 533-540; Schein, 1968, pp. 1-6; Van Maanen, 1976, pp.67-130; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, pp. 209-264). Research on socialization has tended to take one of three approaches. One approaches has been to focus on the stages through which newcomer's progress. Stage models provide valuable insight into the change that occur during organization, but they do not provide insight into how those changes occur. As such, stage models provide a limited view of the socialization process and give little consideration to the role that employees themselves play (Buchanan, 1974, pp. 533-546; Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Porter, et. Al, 1975, p. 115; Schein, 1978, p. 210; Van Maanen, 1976, pp.67-130; Wanous, 1980; p. 189).

A second approach to studying socialization has been to focus on various socialization tactics used by organizations (Berlew and Hall, 1966, pp. 207-223; Cogswels, 1968, pp. 417-440; Gomersall and Meyers, 1966, pp. 62-72; Van Maanen and Schein, 1979, pp. 209-264; Wheeler, 1966, pp. 47-68). This approach has made an important contribution by highlighting differences in socialization from

one context to the next. A limitation of this approach is that it portrays employees are merely reactive participants and implies that there is little variance within a given context. This is seen in Van Maanen and Schein (1979, p.216) use of the term "people processing" and Van Maanen (1978, p. 19) comparison of socialization to a "sculptor's mold", A process that yields predictable outcomes regardless of variation in raw material.

A third approach to studying socialization has focused on the cognitive processes by which employees make sense of and cope with their new environment (Fallcione and Wilson, 1988, pp. 151-169; Feldman and Brett, 1983, pp. 258-272; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251). Unlike other works on socialization, this approach focuses on employees themselves. Similar to other works, however, the cognitive processes approach still portrays employees as reactive, rather than proactive (i.e., responding to their environment, rather than acting on it).

The purpose of Socialization can be distinctive from firm to firm. However, there are certain fundamental purposes which are discussed below.

1. Employment Situation: The basic purpose of every organization would be to make the new employees industrious as soon as possible. Hence, detailed information relating to work is provided at the initial stage itself.

2. Rules and Policies: The workforce should have a good understanding of the constraints and policies of the organization for smooth and continuous operations. Therefore, all the jobs in the company have to be performed as per those rules and policies.

3. Compensation and benefits: Although this information is made clear during the recruitment process, an analysis of this is required during socialization process. The employees will have some interest in knowing the rewards offered by the company.

4. Corporate Culture: The organization culture affects the entire working pattern of any company. This includes everything, from the way they dress to the way they behave with the other employees. Hence, a glimpse of the culture should be given during Socialization.

5. Working as a team: During Socialization, the importance of working as a leader is emphasized to add value to the organization. This ability of leadership is assessed during the initial stages of selection and training.

6. Dealing with Change: Coping with change is a big challenge to the employees at all levels in the organization. The employees must have the ability to manage or deal with change for survival in their respective jobs. Socialization helps them in preparing for change by continuously developing and training their skills (Waldeck and Myers, 2008, pp. 322–367).

The Socialization process can be divided into three stages:

1. Pre-Arrival Stage: This stage recognizes that every individual employee comes with set of values and hope. For example, in some jobs like the managerial kind, the employee might need a substantial degree of socialization in training. During the selection process, most organizations inform their prospective candidates about the process of Socialization. Selection process

also helps the organization in determining the right person to fit the right job. The success here depends mostly on the degree of forecasting made by the selection team.

2. Encounter Stage: Here the employees bump into the real working conditions of the organization. For example, the expectations of the job, coworkers, immediate seniors and the business as a whole. Here, if the expectations confirm to be more or less correct, this stage reaffirms the employees of the perceptions generated in past. If the reality is different, socialization helps the employees in understanding to replace these. But socialization cannot totally resolve the differences in expectations.

3. Metamorphosis Stage: The employees, in this stage will work out solutions to meet any problems. Hence this stage is called the metamorphosis stage. At this stage the employees will have become comfortable with their jobs and the team members. New hires will feel that they have been accepted by their superiors and peers. Not only this, they would have by now understood the organization system as a whole. They will also know what is expected of them, how they are evaluated and how productive they are towards the goals of the organization (Bauer and Erdogan, 2012, pp. 97–112).

A new perspective: The employees as proactive

In marked contrast to much of the existing work, the socialization literature has recently begun to shift its focus and has begun to portray employees as proactive in adjusting to their new environment (Comer, 1991, pp. 64-89; Miller and Jablin, 1991, pp. 92-

120; Reichers, 1987, pp. 278-287). This shift is significant because it results in a more complete view of socialization. This view suggests that socialization is a process affected not only by organizational initiatives, but also by newcomer initiatives.

Research on adjustment and coping (Ashford and Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-39; White, 1974, pp.47-68), communication (Berger, 1979, pp. 122-144; Berger and Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112), and feedback seeking (Ashford, 1986, pp. 465-487) all suggest that a primary way in which employees are proactive during socialization is by seeking information. Information seeking enables employees to reduce uncertainty (Berger, 1979, pp. 122-144; Berger and Calabrese, 1975, pp. 99-112; Feldman and Brett, 1983, pp. 258-272; White, 1974, pp.47-68). In addition, information seeking enables employees to compensate for the frequent failure of supervisors and co-worker to provide sufficient, needed information (Graen, Orris, and Johnson, 1973, pp. 395-420; Jablin, 1985, pp. 615-654).

Socialization researchers (e.g., Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Feldman, 1981, pp. 309-318; Fisher, 1986, pp. 533-540; Katz, 1985, pp. 117-139; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251; Reichers, 1987, 278-287) suggest that there are four primary tasks that make up socialization process. These tasks are as follows: 1) role mastery, i.e. learning how to perform the components of one's job; 2) role clarification, developing an understanding of one's role in the organization; 3) acculturation, learning about and adjusting to the organization's cultures; and 4) social integration, developing relationships with co-workers.

1. Role mastery: One of the primary tasks facing organizational employees is learning how to perform their jobs (Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Feldman, 1981, pp. 309-318; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251; Reichers, 1987, pp. 278-287; Van Maanen, 1976, pp. 67-130). To accomplish this task, employees need to acquire necessary job skills and knowledge. It is proposed that the more employees seek technical information or information about how to perform their job tasks, the more effectively they will master their job. In addition, it is proposed that task mastery will be related to the frequency with which employees seek out performance feedback. Several researchers (Ashford and Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-39; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251) have noted that importance of performance feedback during socialization. Feedback enables employees to identify problems in their task performances and make adjustment if necessary.

2. Role clarification: A second task facing organizational employees is clarifying their role in the organization (Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Feldman, 1981, pp. 309-318; Johnson and Graen, 1973, pp. 72-87; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127, Katz, 1985, pp. 117-139; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251; Reichers, 1987, pp. 278-287; Schein, 1968, pp. 1-6). Accomplishment of this task requires information about the behaviors that others expect. Thus, it is predicted that the effectiveness with which employees clarify their role will be a positive function of the frequency with which they seek referent information, or information about job requirements and expected role behavior (Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Grean, 1976, pp.

1201-1245). It is also predicted that role clarify will be a positive function of the frequency with which employees seek performance feedback. Feedback conveys to employees the extent to which they are meeting role expectations. Feedback can be used to make adjustments when needed (Ashford and Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-39; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251).

3. Acculturation: A third task facing organization employees is gaining an understanding of their organization's culture (Fisher, 1986, pp. 533-540; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127, Katz, 1985, pp. 117-139; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251, Louis, 1990, p. 109.; Reichers, 1987, pp. 278-287; Schein, 1968, pp. 1-6; Schein, 1987, p. 210). To accomplish this, employees need information about the behaviors and attitudes that are expected and rewarded within the organization (Chatman, 1991, pp. 459-484; Louis, 1990, p. 109). Thus, it is predicted that the acculturation task will be facilitated by seeking normative, or information about the organization's norms and values. In addition, it is predicted that acculturation will be facilitated by seeking social feedback (Ashford, 1986, pp. 465-487). Or information about how one's social behavior is being perceived and evaluated by others. Such information provides useful insight into the organization's culture (Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127).

4. Social integration: A final task facing organizational employees is to become integrated into their work group (Feldman, 1976, pp. 433-452; Fisher, 1986, pp. 533-540; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251; Reichers, 1987, pp. 278-287; Schein, 1968, pp. 1-6; Van Maanen, 1975, pp. 207-228). Because social integration is largely a process

of developing relationship, the role of information has not generally been recognized. It is predicted that, similar to acculturation, social integration requires information about the socialization research is being absorbed (e.g., Hall, 1976, p. 198; Schein, 1978, p. 210; Van Maanen, 1977b, p. 220).

Research Hypothesis

The hypothesis predicted that employees will distinguish among the types of primary task received in terms of the usefulness of the task.

Research methodology

Sample

The sample size in this study was 220 from G* Power (Faul, et al., 2009, pp. 1149-1160), which obtained through purposive random sampling procedures. The researcher asked for assistance from Head of personnel Department of one of state enterprise and selected 220 employees who had worked no more than 24 months in distributing the questionnaire. This state enterprise is the only one that considered employees whose lengths of stay with the enterprise no more than 24 months as new hire. Questionnaires were administered to all of the permanent employees of to collect the data for this research.

Data Gathering Instrument

The questionnaire focused on the types of primary task sought that are useful to employees in mastering their job and becoming socialized in to the organization. There were 40 items in the section, covering four primary types of task: role mastery, role clarification, social integration, and acculturation. The scale ranges from 1 to 5, which on means "not very useful", 2 means "not useful", 3 means "moderately", 4 means "useful", 5 means "very useful." Mean score of "low level" range from 1-2, "moderate level" is defined as a score of 3, and "high level" range from 4 to 5. Jones (1986, 262-279) reports reliability coefficients ranging from .74 to .90 for these items. Discriminant validity is supported by the fact that within-scale correlations are almost always larger than the across-scale correlation.

Data collection

During the data collection process, the researcher asked for assistance from the secretary of the department who responsible for distributing the questionnaires to all 220 respondents. The researcher kept contact with the secretary throughout the process of distribution and collection the questionnaire in order to solve any problems that might arise.

Data analysis

The collected data was analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Science. In accordance with the nature of the analysis, a repeated measurement was performed. Repeated measures analysis can be calculated when each person is measured under each testing condition. This statistic can also be used to compare the responses of a single group on different aspects or subsacles of an instrument (Steven, 1996, pp. 200-220). The acceptable statistical significance level was set at the alpha $< .05$.

Results

The mean values (see Table No. 1) of each variable indicated that social integration

task is the most useful type of primary task ($\overline{X}$ = 4.3056), followed by role mastery task ($\overline{X}$ = 4.2524), role clarification ($\overline{X}$ = 4.1698), and acculturation task ($\overline{X}$ = 3.9087). Essentially, social task, role mastery task were evaluated by employees as highly useful, while role clarification task and acculturation task were related as moderately useful.

Table No. 1 Means for Types of Primary Task

	($\overline{X}$)	S.D.	N
Social Integration	4.3056	.6671	220
Role Mastery	4.2524	.5215	220
Role Clarification	4.1698	.6281	220
Acculturation	3.9087	.6314	220

Table No. 2 tests of Within-Subjects Repeated Contrasts for Types of Task

Source	Transformed Variable	df	F	Sig.	Observed Power[a]
TOF	TOF_1	1	1.932	.169	.287
	TOF_4	1	.354	.571	.090
	TOF_6	1	62.850	.000	1.000
	TOF_7	1	7.784	.002	.742
	TOF_8	1	8.253	.003	.751
	TOF_9	1	6.181	.005	.651
Error (TOF)	TOF_1	219			
	TOF_4	219			
	TOF_6	219			
	TOF_7	219			
	TOF_8	219			
	TOF_9	219			

[a]Computer using alpha = .05

Note: Transformed Variable Mean Difference of Usefulness between Primary Types of Tasks

     TOF_1 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social integration and Role mastery

     TOF_4 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Role clarification and Acculturation

     TOF_6 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Role mastery and Role clarification

     TOF_7 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Role mastery and Acculturation

     TOF_8 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social integration and Acculturation

     TOF_9 = Mean Difference of Usefulness between Social integration and Role clarification

Even though these mean suggest that employees find all types of task important, repeated contrasts revealed that employees do finds some forms of task to be significantly more useful than other forms of task. Role mastery task is perceived to be significantly more useful for employees than acculturation task ($F_{1,219}$ = 7.784, p < .05), and role clarification task ($F_{1,219}$ = 62.850, p < .05). Social integration and role mastery task ($F_{1,219}$ = 1.932, p > .05) were equally useful, while role clarification task and acculturation task ($F_{1,219}$ = .354, p > .05) were found to be equally useful. Repeated contrasts for employees assessments of the usefulness of social integration task versus acculturation task ($F_{1,219}$ = 8.253, p < .05), and social integration task versus role clarification ($F_{1,219}$ = 6.181, p < .05) (see Table No. 2).

Conclusion and Discussion

This study focused on the way that employees employ various types of primary task as those employees progress through the process of organizational socialization. The subjects in this study consisted of 220 employees from one of state enterprise, which data collection accomplished to the use of a written questionnaire. This study attempts to examine the ways that employees respond to and respond to and use various types primary task during organizational socialization process. Repeated measurement analysis were used to reveal that various types of task that employees acknowledge receiving.

The hypothesis was partially supported. Specially employees indicated finding all types of primary tasks useful but were most positive in their assessments of social integration task. Due to the collectivistic nature of our society, it seems reasonable to expect their own networks, especially when they enter to an organization.

Social integration task is useful in reducing uncertainty and anxiety during the process of organizational socialization. Employees want to know how to get along with other employees in the organization. A process during which a new member of a social structure assimilates its culture, organization and values. Social integration is defined as employee's need for interacting with others of like interests for social support, friendship, and intimacy. The employees also need to know how they are fitting in, the appropriateness of their social behavior, and how well they are getting along with co-worker. It is anticipated that social integration will necessitate task concerning the socialization research being internalized (e.g., Hall, 1976, p. 98; Schein, 1978; p. 210; Van Maanen, 1977b, p. 220). All of these needs are related to the possession of social integration task.

Role mastery task was also evaluated as useful task by employees. Employees want to know how to perform specific aspects of their job, how to perform their task efficiently and effectively, how to balance competing demands, how much authority they have, their responsibilities, the reward criteria, and their role related to organization's goals. Ashford and Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-39; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127; Louis, 1980, pp. 226-251 have noted that importance of performance feedback during socialization. Feedback enables employees to identify problems in their task performances and make adjustment

if necessary. Employees need feedback concerning the adequacy of their job skills and ability, how well they performing their jobs, how other evaluate that performance, and their potential advancement.

Role clarification task and acculturation task are the least useful when compare with other types of primary task in organizational socialization process. That is, at least for the employees in this study, the organizational history, organizational policies and procedures, and even the organizational structure are of less interest than other types of task. It is also predicted that role clarify will be a positive function of the frequency with which employees seek performance feedback. Feedback conveys to employees the extent to which they are meeting role expectations.

Feedback can be used to make adjustments when needed (Ashford and Taylor, 1990, pp. 1-39; Katz, 1980, pp. 81-127; Louis, 1980, 226-251). In addition, it is predicted that acculturation will be facilitated by seeking social feedback (Ashford, 1986, pp. 465-487). Or information about how one's social behavior is being perceived and evaluated by others. This finding might be due to employees being more concerned about their jobs and promotions rather than the history or objectives of the organization.

Suggestion for Future research

Recommendation for future research concerning the types of primary task useful from attention to different professions and industries.

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