

Socialization Related Learning among New Staff in Malaysian Secondary Schools

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Abstract: Organizational culture is closely related to the socialization process that occurs in organizations. The purpose of this study is to investigate the socialization related learning process among new staff in secondary schools in Peninsular Malaysia. Respondents consist of new school staff categorized as graduate teachers, non-graduate teachers and support staff. The questionnaire was used to investigate the level of learning related to the socialization process among school staff. Four major elements of the socialization related learning are discussed. They include job knowledge, acculturation towards the job and organization, establishing relationship and socialization related learning satisfaction. The finding of this study shows that the level of each element of socialization related learning among the staff was moderate, mean score between 3.3 - 4.01. The one-way ANOVA and t-test that were used to investigate the difference among the four elements in terms of job categories, past experiences, current experience, gender, type of schools and location shows significant differences for most of the elements. The study concluded that the level of socialization related learning among new staff is satisfactory. The study implicated that the level needs to be improved especially for staff from the non-graduate and supporting group which recorded a mean lower mean.

Key words: Organizational Culture • Socialization • Orientation • Acculturation • Socialization Related Learning

INTRODUCTION

A major concern of every organization is how well its employees fit into it because a great deal of time, money and effort are invested in preparing employees for their job (Taormina, 2009). The success and excellence of an organization depends largely on the ability of the organization's leader in leading the staff to achieving the organization's goals. It would not be possible for the leader to create such an excellence organization if the organization does not have a healthy and positive culture. According to Korte (2011) an important episode in workplace is the socialization organizational culture is

closely related to the socialization process that occurs in organizations. A competent professional who enters new organization still needs training and socialization (Alves & Vital, 2010). An healthy and conducive environment in organization gives a very high impact on employees commitment towards their job (Omar Abdull Kareem & Khuan Wai Bing, 2005). According to Ashforth et. al (2007) institutionalized socialization creates workplace satisfaction and organizational commitment.

Dessler (2007) refers the socialization process of staff in an organization as the ongoing process of instilling in all employees the prevailing attitudes, standards, values and patterns of behavior that are expected by

the organization and its department. According to Cooper-Thomas (2006), organizational socialization is the process through which a new organizational employee adapts from outsider to integrated and effective insider.

In the school context, the socialization should involve all the teachers and staff especially new staff. Professional culture, as distinct entity in each school, influences new teacher's roles and contributions to school and curricular initiatives (Cherubini, 2009). Process of socialization which includes schools culture has direct influence on new teachers (Tomlinson, 2004). When the new staff has been exposed to a positive socialization process, they would be able to appreciate the school's vision and mission. Each category of staff has their own roles to play in achieving the school's vision, mission and objectives.

To ensure effective socialization process, it is imperative that each new staff in the organization undergoes socialization related learning. In the school context, socialization related learning refers to the mostly informal learning associated with the organizational socialization process where information about an organization's culture, norms and procedures are transmitted, Copeland and Wiswell (1994). The socialization of new staff in the organization involves learning. Although the pre-service received or past experiences are helpful and useful in any schools or organization, each school or organization has its own uniqueness and could be different in many aspects. Hence, new staff that joins any organization should be given the opportunity to experience the socialization related learning process in their own organizational context (Shien, 1996).

The level of socialization related learning can be measured through the four major elements in its process. They include job knowledge, acculturation towards the job and organization, establishing relationship and socialization related learning satisfaction (Morton, 1993 and Reio, 1997).

For new teachers, a lot of job knowledge has been acquired during their pre-service training. However, certain aspects of the job can only be acquired when they start serving in a school. As for support staff who has no job experience at all, the organization is the place where they obtain the knowledge regarding the job. This is because the pre-service training provided for them is the barest minimum or in certain cases, they were not even given any job exposure before starting the job.

Establishing relationship is another important element in the socialization process. The ability to build

relationships helps the new staff to acquire information and exchange experiences with other staff especially senior staff or the management. A close relationship among staff can help establish strong teams that can achieve organizational goals. Establishing relationships does not just include personal relationships but also on the professional aspect which include both, collegiality and congeniality. Such relationship and collaboration is very important to the staff in the school to enable them to share their experiences, ideas and creativity, which will enhance teaching and learning. According to Robinson and Carrington (2002), "Because teaching is a lonely profession, professional development activities must include opportunities for teachers to discuss with colleagues the success and difficulty in the application of new strategies and to learn about the underlying concepts by discussion. This collaboration would then contribute to the development of a positive culture and creating better learning opportunities."

Acculturation towards the job and organization also plays an important role in new staff's socialization process. Without acculturation, new staff might not be able to associate themselves as committed members of the organization. Non-committed members would only work to gain salary or just to fulfill the requirements and the staff quota. They would only be present in school or in an organization as ordinary jobbers carrying out a routine. Such staff would not be able to develop the organization nor be a threat to weakening the committed and dedicated staff's job spirit.

The socialization process that new staff experiences should not be pressing or stressful. The charisma and leadership of the principal as well as the cooperation of the senior staff should be able to help the new staff to explore and learn the socialization process naturally but systematically. High socialization related learning satisfaction would definitely give good results to the organization and to the teachers as well.

This study can identify the level of socialization related learning among new staff in schools. The level of each element can be seen separately. The findings can help school leaders and administrators to identify and determine the elements needed to be given attention and plan strategies for their improvement. Analysis on the relationship of socialization related learning with the respondents' background could help determine the category of staff which needs attention and assistance. In turn, it will encourage a positive and effective socialization process.

The objectives of the study are: to investigate the level of socialization related learning among new staff; and to examine the relationship of each element of socialization related learning with the background of the respondents and types and categories of schools.

Methodology: A quantitative survey method was used. The questionnaire “Work Adaptation Questionnaire” generated by Morton (1993) and was adapted by Reio (1997) was used to investigate the level of learning related to the socialization process among school staff. The questionnaire consists of 22 items that has been categorized into four major elements. They include job knowledge, acculturation towards the job and organization, establishing relationship and socialization related learning satisfaction. The value of alpha obtained for reliability is between 0.81 -0.93 and an overall alpha value of 0.87.

The population of this study consists of all new staff (who has served between six months to two years) in schools in Peninsular Malaysia. About 120 schools were selected using stratified random sampling. The sample selected represents an area of four zones: north, south, east and west and consists of schools in the daily school category, full boarding school, urban and rural area school. The questionnaire was distributed to all the new staff (respondents) in all the selected schools. About 1,200 sets of questionnaire were distributed but only 591 set was returned.

The data collected through the questionnaire was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS). Several methods were used to answer the research questions. Frequency and percentages were used to analyze the personal demography of the respondent as well as the demography related to job. Mean scores were used to determine the socialization related learning level among staff. One way ANOVA and t-test were used to determine the relationship of each element of the socialization related learning with the background of the respondents’ location and types of schools. The significance level used for analysis in the study is <.05.

Finding and Discussion

Respondent’s Background: The respondents’ background is shown in Table 1 below.

The Level of Socialization Related Learning among New Staff: The 22 items measuring socialization related learning used in this study had indicated the respondents’ level of job knowledge, the level of

Table 1: Respondents’ Personal Demography

Age		Gender	
20-24	192 (35%)	Male	180
25-29	391	(30.5%)	
(66.2%)		Female	411
>30	8 (1.45)	(69.55%)	
Job Category		Qualification	
Graduate Teacher	383	First Degree	383
(64.8%)		(64.8%)	
Non-grad. Teacher	160	Diploma	160
(72.1%)		(72.1%)	
Support Staff	48	SPM (School. Cert)	48
(8.15)		(8.1%)	
Work Duration		Past Experience	
Less than a year	72	With Experience	116
(12.2%)		(19.6%)	
1-2 years	519	Without Experience	475
(87.8%)		(80.4%)	

Table 3: Socialization Related Learning

Elements of Socialization Related Learning	Mean
Job Knowledge	3.34
Acculturation Towards the Job and Organization	3.58
Establishing Relationship	4.01
Socialization Related Learning Satisfaction	3.76

Table 4: One Way ANOVA: Job Category – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

Job Category – JK	Job Category – AC
Graduate	Graduate
27.5(383)	18.8
Non-graduate	(383)
26.8(160)	
Support Staff	Non-graduate
21.0 (48)	16.2
F=249.5 p=0.000*	(160)
	Support Staff
	(48)
	F= 124.6, p=0.000*
Job Category – ER	Job Category – SLS
Graduate	Graduate
19.2 (383)	15.2
Non-graduate	(383)
23.0 (160)	
Support Staff	Non-graduate
16.6 (48)	15.0
F=362.6, p=0.000*	(160)
Support Staff 13.3 (48)	
F=34.8, p=0.000*	

acculturation towards the job and organization, ability in establishing relationship and also the socialization related learning satisfaction. Data analysis is shown in Table 3.

Table 3 indicated that the level of job knowledge and acculturation towards the job and organization are lower than the rest of the Socialization Related Learning elements. This showed that new staff required guidance for their new jobs. The acculturation element is usually the most difficult to be appreciated by new staff and takes a longer time for them to be adjusted to it. Understanding the organization vision and the mission can assist in enhancing this aspect. Therefore, the leader and

the administrator's role are of utmost importance in spurring new staff towards understanding the vision, mission and appreciating them. Establishing relationships has the highest score among the three elements. Despite this, with a means core of 4.01 on a five-point scale is still considered not desirable enough. This indicated that this element still has to be improved. The last element socialization related learning satisfaction has a 3.76 mean score. The mean for this element is still not very high and this indicated room for improvement in the socialization process of new staff.

The Relationship of Job Category with the Level of Socialization Related Learning: Table 4 below indicated that the difference in the level of socialization related learning with relations to Job Category.

The findings in Table 4 indicated that there was significant difference between job categories with each of the elements in socialization related learning. For the first three elements of job knowledge, acculturation and socialization learning satisfaction, the graduate category showed the highest score. This is followed by the score of non-graduate and support staff. This finding showed that staff in the higher category has achieved a high level of the learning related to the socialization process especially in acculturation towards job and organization. This group has also achieved a higher level in socialization related learning satisfaction as compared to the other two categories especially the support staff. However, the element of establishing relationships had registered quite a different situation. The non-graduate teachers indicated a higher score as compared to the graduate teachers. This phenomenon is different from the other three elements. From this finding, it can be concluded that not all high job category can build relationships as compared with the lower staff groups.

The Relationship of past Experience with the Level of Socialization Related Learning: Table 5 below showed the difference in the level of socialization related learning with relations to past experience. The results in Table 5 indicated that there was significant difference between past experiences of the new staff and each of the elements in socialization related learning. The results also indicated that new staff who had past experience in the previous place of work were more engaged in learning related to socialization in the new place of work as compared to the staff who had no experience at all.

Table 5: t-Test: Past Experience – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

Past Experience – JK		Past Experience – AC	
With Experience (116)	27.5	With Experience (116)	18.2
Without Experience (475)	26.5	Without Experience (475)	16.4
t = 3.613, p=0.000*		t = -8.335, p=0.000*	
Past Experience – ER		Past Experience – SLS	
With Experience (116)	21.3	With Experience (116)	15.1
Without Experience (475)	19.7	Without Experience (475)	14.4
t=5.981, p=0.000*		t=-4.312, p=0.000*	

Table 6: t-Test: Current Experience – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

Current Experience – JK		Current Experience - AC	
Less Than (72)	1 27.0	Less Than 1 Year (72)	17.5
1-2 Years (519)	26.7	1-2 Years (519)	17.9
t=0.760, p=0.448		t=-1.767, p=0.078	
Current Experience – ER		Current Experience - SLS	
Less Than 1 Year (72)	18.0	Less Than 1 Year (72)	14.0
1-2 Years (519)	20.34	1-2 Years (519)	15.2
t=-7.526, p=0.000*		t=-4.312, p=0.000*	

The Relationship of Current Experience with the Elements of Socialization Related Learning: Table 6 below showed the difference in the level of socialization related learning with relations to current experience.

The findings in Table 6 indicated that there existed no significant difference between staff who had served less than a year and staff who had one to two years of experience for the elements of job knowledge and acculturation. This indicated that for these two elements, new staff needs a longer time to acquire them. Hence it is reasonable that school leaders and administrators should give more attention and a longer duration to acquiring these two elements. The conditions for the element of establishing relationships and satisfaction related to the socialization process indicated differently. There is significant difference between staff who had served less than a year and staff who had one to two years of experience. This indicated that the elements of establishing relationships and satisfaction related to the socialization process could be achieved faster as compared with the elements of job knowledge and acculturation.

Table 7: t-Test: Types of Schools – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

School Type – JK		School Type – AC	
Daily School (548)	26.3	Daily School (548)	17.4
Full Boarding (43)	32.3	Full Boarding (43)	23.9
t = -18.663, p=0.000*		t = -28.447, p=0.000*	
School Type - ER		School Type – SLS	
Daily School (548)	19.7	Daily School (548)	14.7
Full Boarding School (43)	23.5	Full Boarding (43)	19.0
t = 10.017, p=0.000*		t = -23.020, p=0.000*	

Table 8: t-Test: School Location – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

School Location – JK		School Location – AC	
Urban (283)	26.9	Urban (283)	18.6
Rural (308)	26.6	Rural (308)	17.25
t = 1.703, p= 0.089		t = 8.120, p=0.000*	
School Location – ER		School Location – SLS	
Ur (283)	20.6	Urban (283)	15.4
Rural (308)	19.5	Rural (308)	14.7
t = 4.986, p= 0.000*		t = 5.053, p= 0.000*	

Table 9: t-Test: Gender – Elements of Socialization Related Learning

Gender – JK		Gender – AC	
Male (180)	27.1	Male (180)	17.2
Female (411)	26.6	Female (411)	18.2
T = 2.188, p= 0.029		t = -4.933, p=0.000*	
Gender – ER		Gender – SLS	
Male (180)	21.6	Male (180)	15.9
Female (411)	19.6	Female (411)	15.1
t = 6.332, p= 0.000*		t = -1.451, p= 0.000*	

The Relationship of Types of Schools with the Elements of Socialization Related Learning: Table 7 below showed the difference in the level of socialization related learning with relations to types of schools.

The findings in Table 7 indicated that there is significant difference between staff in daily schools and

full boarding schools for all the elements of socialization related learning. This finding is quite unique as it is common knowledge that conditions in full boarding schools are much better than conditions in daily schools. The better conditions include physical layout and facilities, background of the students, number of teachers and the small ratio of teacher to students. Even the better leadership is assigned to these full boarding schools. Hence, it is reasonable to conclude that the experiences of full boarding schools should also be utilized in daily schools.

The Relationship of School Location with the Elements of Socialization Related Learning:

Table 8 indicated that there is significant difference between new staff in urban schools and rural schools for the elements of acculturation, establishing relationships and satisfaction related to the socialization process. However, there is no significant difference between these two groups for the element of job knowledge. This indicated that job knowledge does not differ whether it is in the urban or rural area as the job is of the same nature. For the other three elements, the findings indicated that urban schools are preferred to rural schools and this indicated that certain aspects of the elements in the urban schools can be utilized. The aspect of physical location might be difficult to be changed but the aspect of organizational culture could be emulated and practiced by schools in the rural areas.

The Relationship of Gender with the Elements of Socialization Related Learning:

Table 9 below showed the difference in the level of socialization related learning with relations to gender.

The findings in Table 9 indicated that there is significant difference between male and female staff for all the elements of socialization related learning except acculturation. Male staff seemed to have registered a high level in all three elements of the socialization process. However, in the element of acculturation towards job and organization, the female staff recorded a higher level. This indicated that female staff could adapt faster to the new and different work and organizational culture. This is a unique feature in Malaysian school as female teachers tend to be fervent followers to instruction. They also tend to be influenced by the new work and organization culture in an easier manner as they had been socialized from young to take on many roles and responsibilities without challenging authority.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicated that the level of socialization related learning among new staff is satisfactory. All four elements recorded mean scores of 3.34 to 4.01 on a five-point scale. However, the level needs to be improved especially for staff from the non-graduate and supporting group which recorded a mean score below 4.0. Past experience gained by new staff in the previous school acts as a milestone and facilitates the socialization process in the new school. The types of schools and location of the school also play an important role in influencing the socialization related learning process. From the perspective of elements in the socialization related learning, it was found that job knowledge and acculturation are at the lower level. The study implicated that job knowledge and acculturation toward organization are the two elements ought to be given more attention by the principal and school members.

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