

### Chapter Highlights

What is Socialization? Orientation Vs. Socialization, The Organizational Culture Vs. Socialization, Learning the "Do's" and "Don'ts", Assumptions About Socialization, Socialization Process, Considerations in Developing a Socialization Program, Individual or Collective? Fixed or Variable Time Period? Serial or Disjunctive? Investiture or Divestiture? Why Socialization? Benefits of Socialization, Questions to Answer, Indicate True or False.

## 8.1 What is Socialization?

Socialization is a process of adaptation. In the context of organization, it refers to all passages undergone by employees. For instance, when one begins a new job, accepts a lateral transfer, or gets a promotion, one is required to make adjustments. S/he must adapt to a new environment—different job responsibilities, a new boss, different groups of co-workers, and probably a different set of standards for what constitutes effective performance. While we understand that this socialization will go on throughout our careers—within an organization as well as between organizations—the most profound adjustment will occur when we make the move into an organization—the move from being an outsider to being an insider.

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## 8.2 Orientation Vs. Socialization

A new employee's initial orientation on the job and the socialization process are not the same. As a matter of fact, orientation is only a small part of the overall socialization of a new organizational member.

Usually orientation covers the activities involved in introducing a new employee to the organization and to his or her work environment. It expands upon the information received during the recruitment and selection stages and helps to reduce the initial anxiety we all feel when we first begin a new job. Thus an orientation program should familiarize the new member with the organization's mission, history, procedures, and rules; communicate relevant personnel policies such as hours of work, pay procedures, and fringe benefits; review the specific duties and responsibilities of the new member's job; provide a tour of the organization's physical facilities; and introduce the employee to his or her superior and co-workers.

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Who is responsible for orienting the new employee? This can be done either by the new employee's supervisor or the HR manager.

In many small organizations, orientation may also mean the new member reports to his/her supervisor who will introduce him/her to those persons with whom s/he will be closely working. This may then be followed by showing him/her where the toilet is, how to make his/her way to the cafeteria, and how to find the computer lab. Then, the new employee is shown his/her desk and left to meet colleagues.

### 8.3 The Organizational Culture Vs. Socialization

*Every organization has its own unique culture.*

Every organization has its own unique culture. This culture includes established, rules and regulations; customs and traditions followed for how members should relate to peers, subordinates, superiors, and outsiders; and other traditions that clarify to members what is appropriate behavior within the organization and what is not.

In order to better understand the concept of unique organizational cultures, we should look at the concepts of roles, values, and norms.

*Set of behaviours expected of employees may be termed as their role.*

**Roles :** Every job requires the incumbent to behave in certain specified ways. These behaviors are more or less expected of persons who are identified with certain jobs. We call the set of such behaviors a role. For example, supervisor in the work place behaves in a particular way with his workers; while he acts differently with his children at home.

*Values are basic convictions about what is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or not.*

**Values :** Employees do not play out their role in a vacuum. Their role is significantly influenced by the values and norms held by members of their work group. Values are basic convictions about what is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or not. Every individual has a value system, rarely explicit, which represents a prioritizing or ranking of values in terms of their relative importance. For example, if the senior teachers of a university honour the values like ensuring sincerity in teaching and fairness in students' evaluation, the junior colleagues will also follow them.

*Norms are standards of acceptable behaviour of a work group.*

**Norms :** The new employee's work group will have its own standards of acceptable behaviour. These norms tell members what they ought or ought not to do under certain circumstances. For example, defending a co-worker against attacks from the superior or avoiding a co-worker who is dishonest.

*Importantly the parameters of the role—whether one is a lawyer, teacher, accountant or sales clerk—change in response to the values and norms in the environment where one performs that role.*

Importantly the parameters of the role—whether one is a lawyer, teacher, accountant or sales clerk—change in response to the values and norms in the environment where one performs that role. This explains, for instance, why the lawyers wear suits, ties and gowns while the engineers or doctors do not. One may be wondering how these concepts relate to the socialization process. The answer is that individuals, in their work roles, may accept all, some, or none of the organization's standards. Individuals who readily accept all of them become conformists. Their socialization, when complete, results in the infamous "yes man."



At the other extreme is the rebel who rejects all the organization's standards. Such persons are usually quickly labeled as "misfits," since their actions seem to displease the authority. They rarely last long. In between, there are people who accept some standards, but not others. As long as these individuals accept at least the pivotal norms of the organization, there is no problem if they reject some of the nonpivotal ones. Pivotal norms are those deemed essential by the organization. Refraining from criticising the authority in public, for example, is often considered a pivotal norm. Relevant norms, by contrast, are deemed desirable but not absolutely essential for success in the organization. For example, attending office well dressed may be a relevant norm for business executives.

One objective of the socialization process may be to ensure that rebellious types are either changed or expelled. If managers want people who are totally loyal to the organization and who will fight to maintain its traditions and customs, they will probably utilize different methods of socialization than if they seek highly creative, individualistic employees who accept only the pivotal standards and reject the rest.

#### 8.4 Learning the "Do's" and "Don'ts"

Management's desire to get every employee to accept all of the organization's standards is hardly achievable since it may create a conforming and apathetic organizational environment. But, however, the pivotal norms must be conveyed and accepted. Without this acceptance, new employees will lack commitment and loyalty to the interests of the organization and will pose a threat to management and experienced members. Also they will never be accepted as full-fledged members of the organization. New members should be taught to see the organizational world as do their senior colleagues if the traditions of the organization are to survive. Successful socialization will mean having personnel who "fit in" by knowing the "do's and don'ts" of a "good employee."

#### 8.5 Assumptions About Socialization

We want to make explicit four assumptions about socialization as under.

(i) **Socialization influences performance** : Work performance of an employee depends to a considerable degree on knowing what s/he should or should not do. Understanding the right way to do a job indicates proper socialization. Furthermore, the appraisal of performance includes how well s/he fits into the organization. These qualities differ between

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jobs and organisations. For instance, on some jobs you will be evaluated higher if you are aggressive and outwardly indicate that you are ambitious. On another job, or on the same job in another organisation, such an approach may be evaluated negatively. Proper socialization, therefore, becomes a significant factor in influencing both the actual job performance of an employee and how it is perceived by others.

*Properly socialized employees will feel committed towards the organization and remain with it through thick and thin.*

The stability of the organization is also increased through socialization. Properly socialized employees will feel committed towards the organization and remain with it through thick and thin.

**(ii) New employees suffer from anxiety :** It is not unusual that a new member feels a lack of identification if not with the work itself, certainly with a new co-worker, a new work location the new boss , and probably a new set of rules and regulations. A feeling of isolation and loneliness are not unusual responses.

*New employees need special attention to put them at ease.*

This anxiety state has at least two implications. First, new employees need special attention to put them at ease. Second, the existence of tension can be positive in that it often acts to motivate individuals to learn the values and norms of their newly assumed role as quickly as possible.

**(iii) Socialization does not occur in a vacuum :** Socialization will be influenced by clues given by superiors, colleagues, subordinates, stockholders, customers, and other people with whom new members come in contact. It is most likely that the new members will be vulnerable to those attitudes and behaviors that they pick up from associates.

**(iv) People adjust in similar ways :** The way in which individuals adjust to new situations is remarkably similar, even though the content and type of adjustments may vary. As a matter of fact there is no instant adjustment. Every new member goes through a settling-in period.

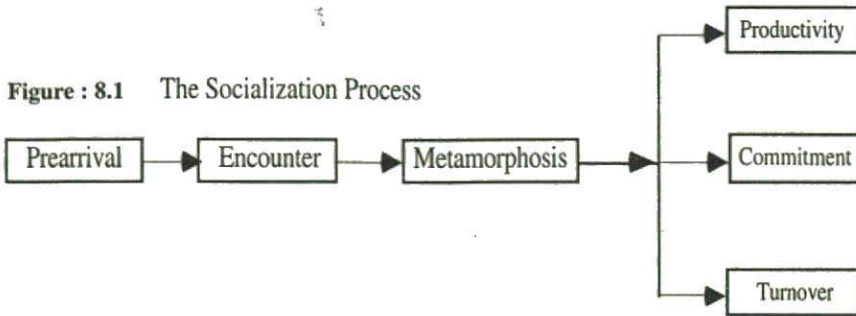
## 8.6 Socialization Process

Socialization can be understood as a process consisting of three stages: prearrival, encounter, and metamorphosis. The process impacts on the new employee's efficiency, commitment to the organization's objectives, and her or his decision to stay with the organization.

**(i) The prearrival stage :** This stage explicitly recognizes that new members will have undergone a considerable degree of prior socialization in school and in job. One major purpose of a business school, for example, is to socialize business students to what business is like, what outcomes to expect in a business career, and instill the kind of attitudes



Figure : 8.1 The Socialization Process



that professors believe will lead to successful assimilation in a firm. But prearrival socialization goes beyond the specific job. The selection process is, therefore, used in most organizations to inform prospective employees about the organization as a whole.

**(ii) The encounter stage :** This stage starts when the new employee enters into the job. In encounter stage the individuals confront the possible dichotomy between their expectations about their job, and reality. Where expectations and reality differ, the employees must undergo socialization that will detach them from their previous assumptions and replace those with the organization's pivotal standards.

**The metamorphosis stage :** Finally, the new employee must work out any problem discovered during the encounter stage. This may mean going through changes—hence we call this the metamorphosis stage. Metamorphosis stage is complete when new members have become comfortable with the organization and their job. They have internalized the norms of the organization and their work groups; they understand and accept these norms. The new members feel accepted by their peers as trusted and valued individuals. They are self-confident that they have the competence to complete their job successfully. They know what is expected of them and what constitutes a job "well done." Successful metamorphosis should have a positive impact on the new employees' productivity and their commitment to the organization, and reduce their propensity to leave the organization.

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*Metamorphosis stage is complete when new members have become comfortable with the organization and their job.*

## 8.7 Considerations in Developing a Socialization Program

Human resource managers must make decisions about how they want to socialize their new employees. The following discussion can be viewed as an assessment of the various alternatives managers should consider in designing the appropriate socialization program for their unit or organization.

### 1. Formal or Informal?

New employees may be put directly into their jobs, with no effort made to differentiate them from those who have been doing the job for a considerable length of time. Such cases represent examples of informal socialization—it takes place on the job and the new members get little or no special attention. In contrast, socialization can be formal.

The more formal a socialization program, the more likely it is that management has participated in its design and execution and, hence, the more likely that the recruit will experience the learning that management desires.

Whether a formal or an informal program is preferable will depend on management's goals. The more formal the program, the greater the likelihood that the recruit will acquire a known set of standards. As a matter of fact new employees begin with a relatively formal socialization to learn the pivotal standards of the organization. Then they begin the informal socialization process on the job, where they learn the norms of their work group.

### 2. Individual or Collective?

The individual approach is likely to develop far less homogeneous views than collective socialization. As with the informal structure, individual socializing is more likely to preserve individual differences and perspectives. But socializing each person individually is expensive and time-consuming. It also fails to allow the new entrants to share their anxieties with others who are in similar circumstances.

Processing new members in collective groups allows the recruits to form alliances with others who can empathize with their adjustment problems. The recruits have people with whom they can interact and share what they are learning. The group shares problems and usually develops similar solutions. Therefore collective socialization tends to form a common perspective on the organization among group members.

In practice, most large organizations find individual socialization impractical. They tend to rely on group socialization techniques. While small organizations, which have fewer new entrants to socialize, frequently use the individual approach, large organizations have moved to a collective approach because of its ease, efficiency, and predictability.

### 3. Fixed or Variable Time Period?

A fixed schedule reduces uncertainty for the new members, since transition is standardized. New members know, for instance, that they are in a nine-month apprenticeship program. Each step of transition is clear. Successful completion of certain standardized steps means that they will be accepted to full-fledged membership. Variable schedules, in contrast, give no advanced notice of their transition time table.

*Informal socialization takes place on the job with no special attention to new recruits.*

*The individual approach is likely to develop far less homogeneous views than collective socialization.*

*Processing new members in collective groups allows the recruits to form alliances with others*



#### 4. Serial or Disjunctive?

In serial socialization experienced member acts as a tutor and model for the new employee. When recruits do not have predecessors available to guide them or to model their behavior upon, we have disjunctive socialization.

Serial socialization maintains traditions and customs. Consistent use of this strategy will ensure a minimum amount of change within the organization over time. It also allows new members a look into the future by seeing in their more experienced colleague an image of themselves later in their career.

A special case of serial socialization has gained a great deal of attention recently. It is becoming increasingly evident that employees who aspire to reach the top echelons of management in an organization should acquire a mentor or sponsor. The road to the top in an organization requires gaining the favor of the dominant in-group which sets standards and priorities.

#### 5. Investiture or Divestiture?

Our final consideration concerns whether our goal is to confirm or dismantle the incoming identity of the new member. Investiture rites ratify the usefulness of the characteristics that the person brings to the new job. This describes most high-level appointments in the organization. These individuals are selected on the basis of what they can bring to the job. The organization does not want to change these recruits, so entry is made as smooth and trouble free as possible. If this is the goal, socialization efforts concentrate on reinforcing that "we like you just the way you are." This is frequently done by widely disseminating information on the new member's accomplishments. Recruits may be given a large degree of freedom to select their office furnishings and subordinates and to make other decisions that will reflect on their performance.

Far more often is the desire to strip away certain entering characteristics of a recruit. The selection process identified the candidate as a potential high performer; now it is necessary to make those minor modifications to improve the fit between the candidate and the organization. This fine-tuning may take the shape of requiring the recruits to sever old friendships; accepting a different way of looking at their job, peers, or the organization's purpose; doing a number of demeaning jobs to prove their commitment; or even undergoing harassment and hazing by more-experienced personnel to verify that they fully accept their role in the organization.

*In serial socialization experienced member acts as a tutor and model for the new employee.*

*Investiture rites ratify the usefulness of the characteristics that the person brings to the new job.*

*Fine-tuning a potential high performer is essential*

*If an organization is to instill a new set of values, it first must shake up and possibly destroy those that are already in place.*

One example of divestiture socialization may be that the first-year college students are frequently given extremely heavy workloads to shock them into the world of higher education. Similar divestiture practices occur for those entering military basic training, professional football, police academies, to name the more obvious. Such tactics are built on the premise that if the organization is to instill a new set of values or norms, it first must shake up and possibly destroy those that are already in place.

If the goal of management is to produce similar employees, a divestiture approach is likely to be used. It will achieve similar results with each recruit, and the process itself will promote a strong fellowship among those who have followed the same path to membership.

### **8.8 Why Socialization / Benefits of Socialization**

Socialization is essential in order to make new employees adapt to their work environment and stay with the organization they have started with. The specific reasons /benefits of socialization are :

- ❑ Socialization provides initial orientation of new employee on the job. It familiarizes the new members with the organization's culture, history, rules and regulations, etc.
- ❑ Socialization helps new employees to play their roles efficiently and effectively towards the achievement of the organizational objectives.
- ❑ Through a process of socialization the organization can ensure that the rebellious type employees are either changed or expelled.
- ❑ Socialization helps ensuring stability of the organization by creating commitment among the employees concerned.
- ❑ Proper interpersonal relationship among employees can be ensured through socialization and this is recognized as one of the accepted parameters of success in management.
- ❑ As a result of socialization employee turnover is expected to come down to a level where the HR manager can claim success in the performance of his maintenance function in the organization.



**QUESTIONS TO ANSWER**

1. (a) What is socialization?  
(b) Find the relationship between "orientation and socialization", "organization culture and socialization."
  2. (a) Discuss the four assumptions about socialization.  
(b) Critically discuss the socialization process with the help of a diagram.
  3. (a) Define socialization. Is there any difference between orientation and socialization?  
(b) Discuss the consideration in developing a socialization program.
  4. (a) How organization culture is related to socialization?  
(b) Elaborate the assumptions about socialization.
- Indicate True or False.**
- a. Socialization helps adaptation of the employee to the job.
  - b. Orientation is a part of socialization.
  - c. Values are basic convictions about what is right or wrong, good or bad.
  - d. Norms tell members what they ought or ought not to do.
  - e. Socialized employees become non-committed.
  - f. The first step of the socialization process is the metamorphosis stage.
  - g. Productivity is the only outcome of the socialization process.
  - h. Individual socialization is likely to develop for more homogeneous views than collective socialization.
  - i. Collective socialization tends to form a heterogeneous group.
  - j. In serial socialization an experienced member may act as a model for the new employee.
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