Chapter 53

Organizational Socialization and Workplace Diversity
The Case for Experiential Learning

Dini Massad Homsey
University of Central Oklahoma, USA

ABSTRACT

An organization teaches its members its culture through socialization. Sources of anticipatory socialization exceed just the organization. Many sources such as family, friends, media, communities, previous employment, and education play a role in the socialization process. Not only are people socialized into skills but also into ideals such as workplace diversity. Therefore, the teachings of such ideals need to occur before an individual enters an organization. Through socialization, members learn not only workplace skills but also ideals and concepts such as workplace diversity. Therefore, if anticipatory socialization begins before an individual enters an organization, then teaching of concepts like workplace diversity need to occur earlier as well. In order to merge theory with practice, institutions of higher education must incorporate the teaching of organizational values such as workplace diversity to adequately prepare graduates for entry into the workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Recent national events such as a fraternity chant at a Midwestern university and riots between citizens and police officers in several cities across the nation demonstrate the need for real communication about race, and more broadly, diversity. Humans are not born with the knowledge to communicate effectively about or to engage meaningfully with diversity, rather such knowledge and skills are taught. The teaching process of such skills and knowledge is called socialization. We are socialized into values, beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors, also known as culture. Organizations teach its members its culture through socialization. This chapter aims to discuss the learning of workplace diversity through socialization. Sources of anticipatory socialization exceed just the organization. In fact, many sources such as family, friends, media, communities, previous employment, and education play a role in the

socialization process. Not only are people socialized into skills but also into ideals such as workplace diversity. Therefore, the teachings of such ideals need to occur before an individual enters an organization. Structural diversity and racial climate of higher education have been shown to affect workplace diversity competencies (Jayakuma, 2008), but what about curriculum? Higher education seems to offer a practical place to teach workplace diversity through effective teaching methods. This chapter will discuss how workers are socialized into values, beliefs, attitudes, perspectives, and behaviors and how such socialization can effectively occur in higher education to adequately equip graduates with the proper knowledge and tools to engage with workplace diversity.

MAIN FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Organizational Culture and Organizational Socialization

Organizations teach their members their culture. This process of teaching culture is socializing members by encouraging them to take up certain sets of values (Keyton, 2011; Martin, 2002; Schein, 2004). Every collective of individuals develops ideas about what constitutes acceptable and unacceptable behaviors, attitudes, values, and understandings that are explicitly communicated, such as a handbook, and implicitly communicated, such as unwritten norms (Keyton, 2011). Together, these constructs are the components of culture.

Culture is invisible and taken for granted but sometimes can be heard through messages like "It's how things are done around here." Members, especially new, do not join an organization already equipped with the requisite knowledge to function effectively within an organization's social environment (Kramer, Callister, & Turban, 1995). They must be taught according to the organizational culture. "Organizational culture is the set(s) of artifacts, values, and assumptions that emerges from the interactions of organizational members" (Keyton, 2011, p. 28). According to Schein (2004), organizational culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integrations, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems" (p. 17). The vagaries of the term "correct" problematize its usage. For one community, "correct" is making the most gain for the least work. For another, it is making enough money to share with those in need. Therefore, finding the shared meaning of what is thought to be *correct* is vital to the process of sharing culture within a specific community. The common thread between both definitions is that shared meaning is taught through communication.

That teaching occurs through interaction and communication is termed socialization. Organizational socialization is "the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume an organizational role" (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979, p. 211). Members act and teach through communication. Teaching about work not only includes knowledge and skills, as the definition of organizational socialization would suggest, but also broader concepts like work diversity. The teaching of knowledge, skills, and ideals, combined known as culture, occurs through communication.

The relationship between communication and culture is essential in the sense that we cannot know or enact culture without communication (Geertz, 1973). A wink can be a mere twitching of the eye, a biological phenomenon shared by many different animals. What makes humans different is that a wink can be used to communicate in a variety of ways within the confines of a culture and a cultural under-

11 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage: www.igi-global.com/chapter/organizational-socialization-and-workplace-diversity/177619

Related Content

Women Leadership in the Digital Era
Bianca Weber-Lewerenzand Ingrid Vasiliu-Feltes (2021). *International Journal of Responsible Leadership and Ethical Decision-Making (pp. 23-49).*
www.irma-international.org/article/women-leadership-in-the-digital-era/304867

The Relevance of Management 3.0 in the Development of Dynamic Capabilities in SMEs
Fernando Almeida, Domingos Oliveiraand Joana Neves (2022). *Journal of Business Ecosystems (pp. 1-13).*
www.irma-international.org/article/the-relevance-of-management-30-in-the-development-of-dynamic-capabilities-in-smes/309125

Towards a Conceptual Framework and Research Agenda for Immigrant Entrepreneurs, Entrepreneurship, and Enterprises
Carson Duan (2023). *Journal of Business Ecosystems (pp. 1-24).*
www.irma-international.org/article/towards-a-conceptual-framework-and-research-agenda-for-immigrant-entrepreneurs-entrepreneurship-and-enterprises/322774

The Effective Use of Digital Technology by SMEs
Antonios Georgios Zairis (2021). *Research Anthology on Small Business Strategies for Success and Survival (pp. 548-559).*
www.irma-international.org/chapter/the-effective-use-of-digital-technology-by-smes/286106

Impact of Workplace Diversity on Employee Performance: A Case of Some Selected Private Universities in Ghana
Juliana Serwaa Andoh, Benjamin Ghansah, Joy Nana Okogun-Odompleyand Ben-Bright Benuwa (2019). *International Journal of R&D Innovation Strategy (pp. 31-43).*
www.irma-international.org/article/impact-of-workplace-diversity-on-employee-performance/250272