



Leonardo da Vinci Transfer of Innovation Project

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Teaching Notes

Laura at Panevėžys Juozas Balčikonis Gymnasium

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Teaching notes were written by Raimonda Alonderienė and Margarita Pilkienė from ISM University of Management and Economics, Lithuania.

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Laura at Panevėžys Juozas Balčikonis Gymnasium Teaching Note¹

Synopsis

Protagonist of a case – young teacher, Laura V., getting position as English language teacher in the same gymnasium she has graduated herself – J. Balčikonis gymnasium at Panevėžys city. It was her dream to become a teacher, and new job at prestigious school, famous for its long standing tradition and strong culture was promising a lot. Case refers to first half year of Laura's experience. She was happy with handling the subject she taught, but faced challenges to come to good terms with old generation teachers and active students. Case describes the ways she overcame this with the help of a mentor and the leadership style of school's director.

Teaching objectives

1. to understand the importance of socialization (orientation) in establishing person-job and person-organization fit;
2. to examine socialization (orientation) as an outcome and as a process, formal and non-formal types of it;
3. to understand the difference in behaviour change tactics: behaviour modification and socialization.

Use

The target audience: the case is appropriate for undergraduate, post graduate and executive-level courses related to Human Resource management, Organizational Psychology, Organizational Behaviour, School Management and Leadership and General Management, or in the courses, where it is needed to illustrate how one of HR activities – successful adaptation of new employee is performed. As the context of the case is in a public school, it is supposed that the case would be helpful in educational leadership courses, too. The concepts of adaptation, person-organization fit; organization culture, mentoring and the role of direct supervisor and leadership.

Sequencing: the case may be used in the middle of HR management / Organization behavior course, after the strategic human resource management topics, HR planning, as a

¹ This teaching note was written by Raimonda Alonderiene and Margarita Pilkiene, lecturers of ISM University of Management and Economics. It is intended to serve as an aid to instructor in the classroom use of the case Laura at Panevėžys Juozas Balčikonis Gymnasium. The views expressed in this note are for pedagogical purposes only.

part of securing labour for organization activity. It may be used after job analysis, acquiring/recruiting, selecting, assessing topics – as a final topic of recruitment process. It could also be used in the middle of HR management course, or later stages, where the sub-systems of remuneration and talent development issues are addressed. The case can be used as a standalone vehicle for the “Socialization” topic. It is important that students are acquainted with a concept of organization culture

Time: this case could be used within 90 minutes or two 90 minutes blocks, depending on how deep the instructor would be willing to address the issues. The scenario of 90 min. is provided below. In case of two blocks of 90 min., with post-graduate students the additional issue may be raised in a broader sense as “soft” strategies of organizational control: HRM control and cultural control. Regarding HRM control, the dilemma about the use of selection methods to ensure the new recruits “fit” the profile of attitudes, behavior and capabilities, desired by specific organization, as well as specially designed training and development projects to reinforce the desired profile; assessment procedures and reward systems, used to encourage conformity. Ethical issues may be discussed in that context, too.

Inspired by the case, cultural control may also be discussed, as for development of employee’s personal identification with organization/management goals (as was the relationship of old director and the new one); strong emphasis on the collective and mutually supportive character of the organization (as analogy with “family”); degree of formal control / autonomy in the organization.

Analysis

Aim 1. To understand the importance of socialization (orientation) in establishing person-organization fit 2

The process of a newly recruited employee being introduced and getting acquainted is called adaptation (in many instances called legal trial period, before the main job contract is signed, but not necessarily adaptation has legal arrangements). Adaptation (orientation) is both a process and an outcome, and may be explored in both these approaches. Furthermore, adaptation has two forms – technical informative, when functions, role, work place and conditions are introduced, and socialization.

Socialization (organizational) – the process through which an employee’s pattern of behaviour, values, attitudes and motives is influenced to conform to that of organization. It is understood as a set of processes (tactics), which enable employees to learn about their firm’s culture and pass on their knowledge and understanding to others. While socialization seldom brings about a radical change in people’s values, it can help them to become more aware of any differences between their own values and those of organization, and to develop ways of coping with differences.

² Person-job fit and technical analysis of the job is not explored in this case

Person-organization fit is broadly defined as compatibility between people and organizations. The roots of P-O fit goes back to Schneiders (1987) ASA concept (Attraction-Selection-Attrition). According the Schneider, individuals do not randomly choose places to work, but actively seek out jobs and organizations that have certain attraction to them. Ultimately, individuals will be selected to be a part of that organization and by remaining in it (if there is a good fit), reinforce further the attractiveness this way, or leave if they are not good fit.

There are a few important dimensions to be in congruence, or “fit” for successful socialization:

- Individual and organization values
- Individual and management/peers goals to be achieved
- Individual preferences, needs and organization’s systems and structures (including those of rewards)
- Characteristics of personality and organizational culture.

Assignment questions

Questions to be discussed with a class, may include:

- Remember your first day in a job. How would you describe your feelings / experiences? How different was it compared with Vaida’s experience.
- What were the most important things for Vaida, when taking job at JBG?
- What were the values of JBG? Do you notice a difference in declared and lived-on values?
- What were the goals Vaida wanted to achieve in her first half-year of teaching? How did they match with management ones? Were material reward in the range of Vaida’s, as new teacher’s, expectations?
- How would you describe the culture of organization? Of any organisation, or JBG?

VOTING: How would you vote, overall, is there a person-organization fit? Yes or no? What were the consequences?

Sharing the memories about individual experiences of first days at a new job performs a warming-up function and sets up dynamic climate for further discussion. Note may be made that the emotional impact of first days at any new job is huge, and organizations should consider that fact. Everyone should be able to relate to the question and to say something about their first day. Further, the teacher may ask students to say what were the best / worst experiences to prompt comparisons and move the discussion further.

Discussion about important things to Vaida is an overture on opening a case of person-organization fit. Students may notice, that she is a person with a dream, vision (to be a teacher, work with pupils), she loved the subject – English language, and she was confident in a schools’ management and culture, because she had graduated that school herself. Economic motives were not of paramount importance to Vaida, but the reference could be

made about the upcoming trend to increase the salaries in public sector (based on data given in addendums 4, 5 and 6) and level of unemployment of young women, which was in the range of 28-30%.

School values may be discussed through analysis of case data (as referred to democratic leadership style of director, respect to both pupils and teachers, pupils' parliament's pride in the school, loyalty of employees, as many teachers work there all their careers, respect to history and the ones who have made an impact (school museum and previous directors role), as well as Addendum No.2. It is important to recognise, that there always are occasions, facts of different behaviour and some generation-based (be it young pupils or old teacher) and individual values-based approaches, which may show a stand up of group-values against all school values.

Case discussion should illuminate Vaida as facing challenges from both old teachers and your students, and moments of hesitation, despite of keeping her dream. Based on these hesitant moments, voting may be organized, sharpening the importance of personality-organization fit. As the class decides that in general Vaida should stay, (here the piloting results may be embedded later on) a further topic emerges – how this “fit” is carried on from the first days, thus the concept of socialization is introduced.

Aim 2. To examine socialization as an outcome and as a process, with formal and non-formal types of it

Adaptation is understood both as an outcome, and as a process.

A. Adaptation as an outcome. The most important outcomes of successful adaptations are:

1. Newly recruited employees may feel confused, afraid, worried, or nervous when starting a new job. Socialization tactics, like introduction with behaviour norms, code of behaviour, even dressing, defining relationships with colleagues (e.g. forms of cooperation) and managers (e.g. availability), arrange the events, which facilitate the adaptation (like „Day of new recruits“; „Baptizing“ (krikštynos“), etc.)
2. New workplace is followed by a new boss, new co-worker, new atmosphere, new culture of organization, and overall level of expectations, organization expands towards new employees. Many studies point to the importance of employers defining their expectations of new employees with respect to their performance, role in the organization, sources of information, and relations to supervision. The adjustment of the level of mutual expectations is a basis of psychological contract. In situations where this outcome is not reached, early employee turnover takes place.
3. The successful adaptation increases the level of job satisfaction.
4. The commitment is higher if psychological contact is made and the new employee feels like a part of the organization.

Assignment questions:

- What are advantages of a successfully adapted employee?
- What kind of adaptation process have you encountered in your workplace?

As the previous topic was discussed in whole group, the general advantages of successful adaptation and in Vaida's situation may be elaborated in small groups and presented to the class. The general findings, based on empirical research are:

1. Effective new employee orientation programmes view orientation as an on-going process, not just a one-day programme.
2. Because orientation is an on-going process, information is given to the new employee closest to the time it is needed.
3. The benefits of orientation are clear and visible to both the new employee and the organisation.
5. Successful orientation programmes shared their "corporate culture" (philosophy, how to get along, how business is done, etc.).
6. If the employee's first day is truly welcoming it helps the employee feel useful and is more productive.
7. The supervisor's role in NEO is clear and well executed with the human resources department's or function's assistance. Supervisors and the HR department share responsibility for the successful orientation of the new employee.
8. Orientation objectives in successful organizations are measurable and focus on specific knowledge, skill acquisition and influencing attitudes. Adult learning concepts are known and used to guide orientation.
9. The NEO process is evaluated by participants, supervisors and the human resources department or function from bottom-line results.
10. Successful NEO programmes provide information to the employee's family.(in case such tradition exist)

B. Adaptation as a process.

There are at least three critical times to support adaptation: first weeks of appointment for information; first semester for assistance; support, feedback for development of competence and three month before the end-year for stability and certainty.

Assignment questions:

- What would you consider as the most critical periods of an adaptation process? What would you seek in the first place? In the second? What would be your concerns, you'd suppose, after three month?
- What kind of relation would you expect from your direct supervisor and peers?
- What is the role of feedback? Would you look for formal or non-formal feedback?
- How was Vaida feeling at each of these time-periods? Did she receive the support she needed?

Formal and non-formal methods of socialization.

The socialization as an activity or a programme may be carried on either formally, in informally. Formal approach, often applied in large organizations, would mean certain procedures within HR management system, which include the certain time-frame; goals to

be achieved, sequence of actions, place and person, directly involved in socialization (it may be wither direct supervisor or peer, or assigned coach, mentor).

In small organizations it is most often a non-procedural decision of the manager to decide g who and how the orientation of newcomers will take place.

Aim 3. To understand the difference in behaviour change tactics: behaviour modification and socialization

On behavioral level these two methods get a form of formal - behavior modification and nonformal - socialization, where the initiative and active approach is more on the new comers side, tactics ?

Behaviour modification needs careful planning to identify specific behavioural goals, and procedures for reinforcing the behaviours that will achieve those goals. The method/tactics can be effective when behaviour and reinforcement is clearly identified and linked, for example, “wear your seat belt and we’ll give you cash”, “seek the pupil satisfaction, and we will reward you”, “demonstrate commitment and we will promote you”.³

Assignment questions:

- What was the form of feedback that director Dambrauskas chose to provide to Vaida, when he invited her for a conversation regarding students’ claims?
- What form of feedback would you choose in that situation? Why?
- Contrast behaviour modification and socialization, as explored earlier, considering that both approaches to behaviour change need feedback

(Buchanan, Huczynski)

Behavior modification	Socialization
Planned procedure	Naturally occurring, even if also planned
Stimulus determines response	Individual needs to determine response
Externally generated reinforcements	Internally generated reinforcements
Focuses on observable behaviour	Focuses on unobservable internal states
Focus on tangible rewards and punishments	Focus on intangible reward and punishments, like social inclusion, self-esteem
Clear links between desired behaviour and consequences	Intangible links between desired behaviour and consequences
Compliance required by external agent	Conformity encouraged by social grouping

Additional readings

³ Radical behavior modifications are manipulative, may ignore internal needs and intrinsic rewards, and can be a threat to individual dignity and autonomy.

- Bakanauskiene I. (2008). Personalo valdymas. Kaunas, VDU
- Buchanan, D.A. and Huczynski. A.A. (2010). Organizational behaviour. Harlow: Financial Times Prentice Hall.
- Fisher, C.D., Schoenfeldt, L.F., Shaw, J.B. (2006). Human resource management. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co.

What happened next:

After the conversation with the Principal, Laura took some action. When she tried asking the class directly, everybody was awkwardly silent and could not indicate any substantive reason for their discontent. Therefore Laura decided to ask anonymously. She passed around pieces of paper for the pupils to fill in with their ideas on how to improve. Despite some funny suggestions (e.g. skip teaching grammar, it is not interesting) Laura got valuable ideas that she has started using in the class. Some of the improvements included more live in-class discussions, presentations with slides.

Through all the process of petition and improvements the Principal Dambrauskas was very much supportive. It was his idea not to make this incident public leaving him, Laura and the class the only ones who knew about it.

Now Laura keeps on improving. She has got better contact with the new pupils as well as the school graduates she keeps connection with. The more experienced colleagues who emphasize ethical behaviour, respect students, their efforts and time play as a model for Laura. However she wants to remain herself: with her own ideals, principles and beliefs, willingness to improve, constant sound self-criticism, better job planning, student evaluations, deeper subject knowledge.

Laura is preparing for the assessment of her job to be granted for higher position. However she is sure she will be able to match her professional ambitions with personal family plans.