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Apprentice–trainer relationship and work group integration in the first months of an apprenticeship

Christof Nägele* and Markus P. Neuenschwander

*Correspondence:
christof.naegle@fhnw.ch
University of Applied
Sciences and Arts
Northwestern Switzerland,
School of Education,
Institute for Educational
Research and Development,
Center for Learning
and Socialization,
Obere Sternengasse 7,
4502 Solothurn, Switzerland

Abstract

Background: Social integration is an important outcome of organizational socialization. It helps adolescents after transition to their first job to adapt rapidly to the new work and organizational situation. Positive social integration, especially a positive apprentice–trainer relationship and work group integration, helps the apprentices not only to overcome the uncertainties linked to this transition, but also to gain access to the resources needed for successful socialization and learning in the organization. The social integration develops within the first months in the new organization. First, we study how two indicators of social integration, namely the apprentice–trainer relationship and work group integration, develop over time. Second, we investigate how an individual's reliability, the perceived person–occupation fit, and organizational resources predict the level and development of the social integration within the first months in the new job.

Methods: The study is based on a longitudinal sample of 199 students in transition to work; that is, from compulsory school to apprenticeship at the upper secondary level. To estimate intra-individual development across time in the apprentice–trainer relationship and work group integration, latent growth curve analysis was used.

Results and conclusions: Both indicators of social integration—the apprentice–trainer relationship and work group integration—decrease over time. Pre-entry factors (a person's reliability and person–occupation fit) predicted the level of social integration but not the development. No effect of the apprentices' person–occupation fit and reliability could be found for the apprentice–trainer relationship. A negative effect of the person–occupation fit on work group integration was found. Organizational resources only predicted the initial level of the apprentice–trainer relationship. An individual's reliability and a strong person–occupation fit as before organizational entry help apprentices to become better socially integrated afterwards. These findings are discussed with reference to theoretical and practical implications.

Keywords: Organizational entry, Social integration, School-to-work transition, Apprenticeship

Background

The transition to one's first job is associated with ambiguities, and newcomers often feel like “strangers in a strange land” (Saks and Gruman 2012). Apprentices can overcome

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