

SOCIALIZATION OF NEW COLLEGE FACULTY:
MENTORING AND BEYOND

by

BRUCE M. SABIN

Introduction

Organizations only survive if they can successfully integrate new members, over time. History is full of lost organizations, unable to recruit and retain new members. The first political parties of the United States no longer exist, replaced by the Democratic and Republican parties. Numerous religions and ideologies have come and gone. The successful recruitment and integration of new members brings essential rejuvenation to organizations, just as the shedding of old cells and creation of new cells is necessary for the life of an organism.

For organizations to be successful at their task of integrating new members, deliberate effort must be exerted. Religious organizations actively evangelize for new members, and create rituals and steps for entry into the religious society. Political organizations are similarly evangelical in spreading their messages, registering voters and recruiting volunteers. The purpose of this paper is to discover how organizations of higher education can ensure their longevity by developing new professional entrants into full-fledged and active members of the community. How are new faculty members socialized into institutions of higher education?

What is Socialization?

In order to determine the path to socialization, it is important to first decide what socialization means. Some scholars have defined socialization as the “lifelong process

whereby an individual becomes a participating member of a group of professionals, whose norms and culture the individual internalizes” (Bogler & Kremer-Hayon, 1999) Similarly, Austin (2002) defined socialization as “a process through which an individual becomes part of a group, organization, or community.” Trowler and Knight (1999) add that socialization is an “accommodative process which takes place when new entrants to an organization engage with aspects of the cultural configurations they find there.” In other words, socialization requires individuals to change according to the norms, expectations, and needs of their new organizations.

Socialization, quite simply, is the process by which someone is transformed from being an outsider to an insider. In religion, socialization takes place partly through rituals, such as baptism, and education, such as catechism. In the military, socialization partially occurs during boot camp, where the traditions, disciplines and values of military life are indoctrinated into recruits. How do institutions of higher education bring new faculty members into the fold?

Bogler and Kremer-Hayon (1999) believe that socialization helps faculty feel personally invested into the department and institution in which they work. The process of socialization, according to Bogler and Kremer-Hayon, involves three steps: “exploration,” “giving up the previous role” and accommodating the new role. The exploration phase occurs in graduate school and during job searches, as potential faculty members decide what careers and institutions are right for each of them. As faculty transition into their new role, they must let go of their old role. Finally, the new faculty learn to fit within the new role. Cawyer and Friedrich (1998) point out, however, that accommodation is not absolute. There is a certain degree of negotiation that occurs

during socialization as the new faculty work out their role with their institutions. Because vibrant human institutions are always losing and gaining members, there is always some change occurring. When old members leave, they may take certain ideas and traditions with them. When new members join, they bring new ideas and traditions to their new departments and institutions.

Prior Socialization

Socialization in higher education begins prior to new faculty members joining certain institutions. Because faculty members must undergo specific training for entry into the profession, and that training is performed by people already in the profession, socialization begins during training, especially graduate school.

Austin (2002) believes that from the beginning of graduate school, students considering careers in academia ask themselves four questions. The most basic question is, “can I do this?” Second and third, students must continually resolve the questions, “do I want to be a graduate student” and “do I want to do this work?” Finally, if a student determines he or she is capable and willing, the student’s final question is, “do I belong here?” The student asks whether or not the field of academics is a good fit. According to Austin, most graduate students who plan on entering academic work are seeking personally fulfilling careers and are also open to the idea of working outside academia, at least for part of their careers. Graduate school serves as a time of self-discovery and career confirmation.

Students who answer those four questions affirmatively continue through the socialization process of graduate school. Those students continue to learn and develop

into academics. They begin to learn what is expected of faculty members, the various roles faculty fill, and how to work within their fields.

Unfortunately, many graduate students finish school feeling unprepared for the basics of their profession. Austin (2002) performed qualitative research of 79 doctoral students, at research universities, who planned to enter faculty careers. Through her research, she discovered that students left graduate school feeling unprepared for their roles in student advising and service. While their doctoral training prepared them for the specifics of research, they felt isolated and unprepared for writing research proposals. Further, students felt incompetent at one of the most basic tasks of faculty, teaching.

Austin made a list of suggestions she believes are essential for graduate education that truly prepares students for their careers. Students must be directed and given time to develop teaching effectiveness. Graduate students need to be guided through times of reflection, during which they can digest what they are learning about the profession. Perhaps group programs could be developed in conjunction with university counseling centers.

In his survey of 187 doctoral students, Golde (1997, November) found that whereas almost all doctoral students feel capable of conducting research, less than one-third feel competent in committee work or advising undergraduates. Golde and Austin both believe that students need help understanding and preparing for the variety of roles they will fill as faculty.

As a result of research into the deficiencies of graduate school preparation, some research universities have begun to revamp their doctoral programs. Universities, such as Brown and Emory, have collaborated with nearby colleges to introduce doctoral students

to the missions and environments of other school types (Gaff & Lambert, 1996). Many graduate students are conscious of their need for further development and want opportunities to grow. When Arizona State University created a program to prepare PhD students for the roles of the professorate, the dean funded 25 spaces, expecting less than 10 students to apply. Instead, the dean received 60 applications for this distinctive program (Gaff & Lambert, 1996).

After participating in the Professional Responsibilities of College Teachers project, Duke University has made some changes. The project, designed to help understand the needs of doctoral students, brought to light some deficiencies in Duke's programs. Duke University is reevaluating the entire doctoral experience to see whether traditional programs actually meet the needs of the students and their future careers. At Duke, history and psychology students who participated in the project actually pressured their departments to institute programs to teach discipline-specific pedagogical methods and allow ABD students to teach senior seminars. Those opportunities were not available prior to the project. Many faculty actually rejected any interests PhD students showed in developing teaching competency, and not merely research competency. Interdisciplinary study options are another example of how the programs have changed in recent years to address the interests of students and changing needs of the employment market (DeNeef, 1993).

The experiences of Duke and other schools, have led to major implications. The researchers conducting the Preparing Future Faculty program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities came to several conclusions. Graduate programs should allow students to develop teaching competencies, and experience in campus

service. Students should learn how universities operate at an administrative level. Mentoring should be part of the graduate school experience. Graduate students preparing for the professorate should be exposed to the varying types of educational institutions that exist, such as liberal arts and community colleges, as well as comprehensive and research universities. Finally, graduate students should become acquainted with the use of educational technology, educational and developmental psychology, and participative learning strategies (Gaff & Lambert, 1996).

The Need for Continued Socialization in the Profession

Socialization does not end with graduate school. The confirmation of a doctoral degree, along with being hired by a college or university, does not, by itself, make one a participating member of the scholarly community. The present retirement boom in higher education, which will continue for several more years, makes efficient and effective integration of new faculty especially important. The professional community, including individual institutions, cannot afford to lose bright new faculty because of poor socialization. Effective hiring and socialization practices are essential for the continued strength of higher educational institutions (Trowler & Knight, 1999; Austin, 2002). It has been shown that quality socialization increases faculty retention (Johnson, 2001).

Because many new faculty members left graduate school without fully understanding faculty roles and responsibilities, the hiring institutions must help new faculty continue to develop. In addition, each institution has a unique culture to which new faculty must acclimate. Various institutions have devised unique ways to assist in the acclimation. All new faculty members at Southeast Missouri State University spend one

week in workshops to develop teaching effectiveness. New faculty at the University of Oklahoma can choose to participate in a one semester orientation program. Participants meet weekly for lunch and a 75 minute workshop. New faculty orientation at the University of Texas at Austin even includes an orientation to life in Texas. Temple University has developed a mentoring program, which pairs new faculty with emeritus faculty known for excellent teaching (Sorcinelli, 1994).

The new life of faculty brings many challenges. There is conflict between the desire to do important research, that can take significant time, and the desire to get a satisfactory number of publications quickly. A faculty member stated, “They want me to get published in journals that have low acceptance rates, so that says to me, play it safe.” Commenting about his desire to be a better teacher and the availability of the center for teaching at his university, another professor commented, “After tenure, I’ll probably go there. I don’t have time now.” Competition for tenure made some new faculty feel forced to give up vacation time with families, spend long nights at their offices, and otherwise over-commit themselves (Tierney, 1997). Such stresses can result in loss of faculty productivity, reduced commitment to the organizational mission, increased faculty turnover, and other negative consequences. Proper socialization may alleviate some of those problems by helping new faculty come to terms with competing interests, and disillusionment. Getting to know the institution, its people, and the individual’s role should help resolve tensions, or at least make them bearable.

Bogler and Kremer-Hayon (1999) found disillusionment to be a significant problem among new faculty. “I am torn between the need to publish...and the need to be a good teacher.... You have to decide where to invest your energy,” one faculty member

said. New faculty also reported believing that administrators held unrealistic expectations for new faculty members' research productivity. According to Bogler and Kremer-Hayon, part of socialization is helping new faculty give up idealistic images of scholar-teachers in favor of a pragmatic emphasis on research.

In addition to the standard assimilation faculty have undergone for decades, the roles of faculty are changing. According to Austin (2002), new faculty members are expected to have a more diverse range of skills than older generations. Many institutions are creating online courses. However, graduate students may not be prepared for this expectation. Having just come out of graduate school, many new faculty also might not be used to dealing with unmotivated students. New faculty are often at a loss for ways to deal with disruptive or nonparticipative students (Sorcinelli, 1994). New faculty are in need of socialization, so they can learn what the expectations are, and how to meet those expectations.

Unfortunately, because many schools do not make a concerted effort to socialize new faculty, the tensions of new faculty actually increase during the pre-tenure years. Whereas one-third of first year faculty considered their jobs "very stressful," nearly three-quarters of fifth year professors thought so (Sorcinelli, 1994). According to Sorcinelli, factors affecting faculty stress include heavy research expectations, poor or undeveloped relationships with colleagues, lack of communication from supervisors, and problems balancing their professional and personal lives.

Mentoring Relationships for New Faculty

Socialization programs must have goals and outcomes which the programs attempt to meet. It is important that institutional leaders developing programs understand the needs of new faculty. What issues cause new faculty to struggle? What unique characteristics does the new faculty member's school have that it is important for faculty be know about? Sorcinelli found that many new faculty would like to participate in mentoring relationships. Cawyer, Simonds and Davis (2002) found that interest in mentoring relationships actually increases between the first and third years of a new faculty member's appointment.

In their study of mentoring programs, Boyle and Boice (1998) learned that the most common topics discussed in mentoring meetings were research and publishing, followed by teaching. Tenure and office/campus politics were frequently discussed. Obviously, these issues are of concern to new faculty. Understanding the tenure process is especially troublesome for many new faculty.

Describing his confusion over the tenure process, one faculty member lamented, "I have twenty articles in refereed journals, but people keep telling me I need a book. The dean wants a book" (Tierney, 1997). One new faculty member complained about simple difficulties in adjusting. "No one could tell me how to put material on reserve at the library for my class" (Cawyer, Simonds & Davis, 2002). Unfortunately, Austin found that administrators often expect new faculty to "hit the ground running" with little support from anyone else in the institution. New faculty often report that the expectations administrators have for them are "vague, ambiguous, changing, or unrealistic." As a result, new faculty often feel isolated, uninspired, and unsupported. Graduate school,

according to many new faculty, did not prepare them for everyday professional requirements, such as student advising, working on thesis committees, sponsoring student clubs, or balancing the conflicting pressures of research and teaching (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998; Gaff & Lambert, 1996). While in graduate school, students have a peer social network to help them negotiate their new roles (Austin, 2002). Cawyer & Friedrich (1998) stated, “graduate teaching assistants tend to be socialized as a group.” “The crucible of graduate school tends to create bonds among the group.” Conversely, new faculty are usually isolated in their newness.

Mentors can help newcomers learn organizational culture and expectations (Cawyer, Simonds & Davis, 2002). However, mentoring relationships must be well-developed for them to serve their purposes well. Because mentoring programs have been popular at some institutions, a considerable amount has been learned about good mentoring.

Because the purpose of mentoring is strong socialization, the first step to developing a mentoring program is to understand what constitutes good socialization. Trowler and Knight (1999) summarized the socialization processes.

Good socialization processes will use:

- 1) collective socialization methods, bringing together all new entrants
- 2) “formal” systems, including “sequential events,” for socialization
- 3) designated mentors to act as the official spokesperson for the organization, thereby eliminating “noise” from other sources

Good socialization processes will teach:

- 1) the formal structure of the organization

- 2) the role of the particular individual university in the higher education world
- 3) institutional values

How many of those points can be met with mentoring? Positive mentoring relationships can provide a means of meeting many of those socialization outcomes.

Because of the personal nature of mentoring, the mentor and the new faculty member must be able to build a relationship of trust. In addition, the entire program must be promoted in a positive fashion. In their study of mentoring, Boyle and Boice (1998) determined that women and minorities, for fear of being labeled as in need of help, are often reluctant to take advantage of development programs, including mentoring. Also, there is concern among those being mentored by superiors that self-disclosure could be harmful in the future. If a new faculty member were to reveal feelings of inadequacy, for example, to a senior faculty member, would that senior faculty member use that knowledge against the new faculty member during tenure review? To alleviate this, it is sometimes best to pair mentors with new faculty who are in other departments, or who the mentors will not have power over. Another challenge in creating faculty development programs is keeping faculty from viewing the lessons as “remedial” work.

Boyle and Boice (1998) discovered several factors that led to quality mentoring relationships. The best mentors had “three to five years of experience on campus” and were generally happy with their departments and schools. Successful mentors were those with the interpersonal skills to foster personal relationships with new faculty. Also, mentoring relationships that were officially established through an organizational program worked better than relationships that occurred without intervention.

Surprisingly, it did not appear to be important that the mentor and new faculty member

actually be matched according to personalities. An important note is that in organizations that encourage innovation, it is important that the new faculty member not be someone who may be seen as a future successor to the mentor. If the mentor views the new faculty member as a successor, the mentor may place extra effort into indoctrinating the newcomer into the mentor's mindset, thereby ensuring a continuation of the mentor's ways (Boyer, 1990).

Mentoring relationships should operate with regularly scheduled meetings (Austin, 2002). Nearly one-third of mentoring relationships seemed to run out of important topics to discuss within a few months of being paired. Relationships that persevered past the early stage on running out of topics, usually persevered by using small talk. Those relationships ended up being the most successful and rewarding. (Boyle & Boice 1998).

Cawyer, Simonds and Davis (2002) found certain factors important for mentoring. It is important that a mentor affirm the role and potential contribution of the new faculty member. New members' credentials can be promoted, as well as their apparent fit into the organizations. There can be multiple mentors, both official and unofficial, filling unique and individual roles. There could be professional mentors, "social mentors," and a "convenient mentor," who is usually available for "day-to-day questions." One obstacle for official mentor relationships is for the parties to find time when they are both available to meet. Since faculty members have varied class times, office hours, and routines, meeting can sometimes be problematic. One new member stated, "My mentor and I have competing schedules. We seem to have trouble getting together." An obstacle for mentoring relationships can be something as simple as the proximity of their offices.

Of course, mentoring occurs in both formal and informal settings. Some information is passed on informally during brief meetings with senior faculty. One faculty member claimed to receive important information “at lunch or when [other faculty] saw me in the hall.” Another faculty member reported gaining valuable information “in passing,” during conversations about other topics (Johnson, 2001). Even though mentoring can be achieved informally and spontaneously, there are significant benefits for institutions that have formal programs.

There is a psychological let-down between the time of being hired and the date of arrival at work (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998). In addition, loneliness is a common factor for both new and senior faculty (Bogler & Kremer-Hayon, 1999). Mentoring may help avoid some of the psychological pitfalls that often accompany academic work.

There are certain fragments of information that are essential for faculty to grasp. It is essential for new faculty to understand and appreciate in what order of importance their institutions place the roles of teaching, research, and service (Johnson & Harvey, 2002). “Faculty success” requires understanding the “missions, student bodies, and faculty roles” their institutions expect (Tice and Gaff, 1998). Plus, because of the complexity of academic careers, there is information that simply cannot be relayed in brief periods of time. Faculty feel that their job interviews neglected issues related to learning about the local community and the tenure review process. New faculty feel that little information is provided on university and department resources, “such as equipment and travel funds,” available to faculty (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998). Other faculty may have difficulty adjusting because of previous socializations. Education faculty with K-12 teaching experience reported difficulty internalizing the importance of publishing (Bogler

& Kremer-Hayon, 1999). Johnson (2002) found that mentoring helped faculty discover “who’s who on campus.” One new faculty member said that a mentor could “introduce you to people that you should meet.”

Mentoring programs also have the potential for significant benefits to the institution. At the end of the mentoring program, the mentors actually reported more gains from the relationships than did the newcomers. In graduate school mentoring relationships, student retention increases when faculty include students as research partners (Boyle & Boice, 1998). Could faculty retention increase if senior faculty would include junior faculty in research? If so, mentoring could increase faculty retention and productivity at the same time. Mentoring works because it relies on the fact that humans are inherently social creatures. Socialization systems must appreciate the human need for relationships (Trowler & Knight, 1999).

Other Methods of Socialization

New faculty members experience a variety of stresses, especially related to obtaining continued appointments and eventual tenure. Sorcinelli (1994) found that fear of performing poorly at teaching made new faculty exceedingly cautious in their teaching. She suggested that new professors should be given two years to adjust, during which time their teaching is not evaluated.

In studying new faculty at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Johnson and Harvey (2002) found that faculty are facilitated by “clear institutional values and expectations.” At one HBCU, a faculty member was even told how many publications were expected for tenure. “Somewhere between six and nine, a minimum of

at least six,” the faculty member said. HBCU faculty handbooks helped new faculty understand the tenure process. Johnson and Harvey examined the faculty handbooks of four HBCUs, and each explained the tenure review process, including what performances were to be evaluated. Most HBCU faculty reported they felt comfortable with their understanding of the tenure process. New HBCU faculty also reported that regular, periodic meetings with department chairs or other administrators were important contributors to their success. These meetings allowed the administrators to perform early evaluations of the faculty and provide feedback about what was going well and what needed improvement. In another study by Johnson (2002), she found that faculty appreciated learning early about institutional expectations for performance. Additionally, faculty at HBCUs were successful at supporting each other. Regrettably, faculty at urban campuses were less able to build strong social relationships because many faculty members lived long distances from campus.

To facilitate socialization and increase comfort for all members of the organization, administrators should promote an “open-door” policy to new faculty. Further, administrators should create social functions where new and senior faculty can mingle. New faculty also appreciate being invited to events and get-togethers by other faculty. However, it is important for new faculty to make sure they take personal responsibility for developing relationships with others (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998).

Conclusion

Socialization for potential and new college faculty is essential to the growth and strength of higher education. During these times when the government, the public,

parents, and students all expect more from their higher education institutions, colleges and universities must be especially vigilant at effective use of resources. The human resource of faculty cannot be neglected.

Mentoring, both during graduate school, and in the pre-tenure years of the profession, may be an excellent method of developing faculty. Considerable research has been completed, providing knowledge for higher education administrators seeking more efficient and effective socialization. However, it is also clear that mentoring is not a simple panacea that will solve every problem.

Graduate education, especially PhD programs, must be intentionally designed to foster and develop skills and knowledge necessary for the professorate. As a research degree, the PhD must maintain its focus on building research competencies. However, because the PhD is the credential that leads to employment as faculty, there must also be conscious effort to produce PhDs capable of the work the professorate requires. Professorate preparation programs, as minors or tracks within PhD programs, may be an excellent pathway. Research universities that have implemented such programs appear to be having success (Cawyer & Friedrich, 1998).

When new PhDs and EdDs enter the professorate, they must also be willing to take personal responsibility for their development. Whether or not their institutions offer formalized mentoring programs, new faculty should seek out mentoring relationships. New faculty should work to develop relationships with key faculty and administrators.

It will be through the collective efforts of graduate schools, employers, and individuals that proper socialization occurs. Imagine a day when new faculty emerge from graduate schools experienced in research, teaching, and service leadership. Imagine

new faculty entering institutions to find waiting friends and mentors, actively seeking ways to help their new colleagues. Imagine new professors reaching out to those with more experience, looking to build upon the learning curve centuries of higher education has provided. A day such as that imagined would be a wonderful day, and it does not have to be that far away.

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