

# Trends in the Study of the Organizational Socialization of Employees in the Employment Relationship: Theoretical Framework and Research Perspectives

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**To cite this article:**

Aboubakar Roukatou, Zamba Guidkaya. Trends in the Study of the Organizational Socialization of Employees in the Employment Relationship: Theoretical Framework and Research Perspectives. *Social Sciences*. Vol. 11, No. 4, 2022, pp. 208-219. doi: 10.11648/j.ss.20221104.13

**Received:** July 26, 2022; **Accepted:** August 12, 2022; **Published:** August 24, 2022

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**Abstract:** This article aims to better understand the concept of organizational socialization of employees, a concept that has been largely integrated in the majority of work in recent years relating to the attitudes and behaviors of individuals in the employment relationship. Emerging from the different debates between several fields of investigation including sociology, psychology and, in a related perspective, social psychology, organizational socialization is a fundamental concept that attempts to reconcile the company (its values, its structure) and the employee with its own characteristics, its personal identity. Indeed, organizational socialization theories seek more precisely to understand the behaviors by which individuals manage to link individual variables (the personal identity that distinguishes them from their organizational environment) and situational variables (the organizational identity to which they must conform to belong to a professional family). In this research, we identify four major trends in the literature on organizational socialization. A first approach includes organizational socialization as a sequential process within a role transition process. A second cognitive approach studies organizational socialization through a process of attribution of meaning. The third, so-called proactive approach, considers man as his own actor in his socialization with the organization. The last approach, called interactionist, studies the success of the individual's adjustment to the organization through a balance between the way that the individual responds to the reality of his or her organizational life and the context in which the company evolves. A contextual approach to alluding to the latter is also discussed. Finally, we propose a multi-criteria model for the study of organizational socialization to facilitate understanding of this concept and discuss future research perspectives.

**Keywords:** Socialization, Proactivity, Identity, Cognition, Learning, Meaning Assignment

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## 1. Introduction

The literature on human resources management has made several advances since the advent of the School of Human Relations with Elton Mayo as its founding father. The initial focus on the organization of work and the scientific construction of the company's performance has been called into question with the aim of integrating the human dimension of the employment relationship with more emphasis on the main idea of the integration and sustainable socialization of employees in employment. This has led not only to a review of the practical arrangements for retaining staff in employment,

but also to improvements in the theoretical aspects that make it possible to construct a genuine analysis of this concept around behavioral variables. However, what is the point of a conceptual mobilization around the concept of organizational socialization?

The first concern centered on organizational socialization emerged with the work of Van Maanen [1] This work laid the foundations for defining and understanding this key concept of strategic human resources management policy in the management of employee integration. While sociologists talk about occupational or occupational socialization (using only the learning dimension of the job), managers emphasize in

their approach to the employment relationship the notion of "organizational socialization". An employee/organization dialectic that is valid only insofar as it allows a better understanding of organizational variables and phenomena. The limit to this approach is the consideration of employees as individuals who simply respond positively or negatively to the stimuli they perceive within the company. A limit that highlights reflections centered on an approach aimed at individual contribution in the socialization process. This approach is unique to the work developed by Ashforth & al. [2] and Lacaze [3]. The central idea conveyed in this approach is focused on the notion of proactivity, of which the search for information by the recruited individual is the basic concern. Following this perception, several other approaches to organizational socialization have emerged, each with a specific contribution to the initial sequential model that defines steps in the socialization process in terms of role transition [4-10]. In the work of all these authors, the notion of organizational socialization and the various variables taken into account are not unanimous and therefore a summary study would be appropriate to combine in one construct these different research in the field of organizational behavior.

This research, which focuses its analyzes on the identification of factors and explanatory models of organizational socialization and its perception by human resources management theorists, a concept considered as strategic variable by business managers and by a set of works which have furnished the theory on the attitude and behavior of individuals in the face of a fact, offers an insight into the possible strategies for sustainable integration of newly recruited staff and makes it possible to understand the various tactics and practices of socialization and self-regulation of the behaviors expected by the company. After a presentation of the elements of understanding the notion of organizational socialization and the different areas to be learned to be socialized. Second, we present the different approaches that have informed the literature on this notion of organizational socialization by linking these different perceptions. Third, we highlight some theories that have accompanied the development of organizational socialization mainly in its dimension of organizational learning.

## **2. Concept of Organizational Socialization at Work**

The concept of socialization has been the subject of considerable interest in the literature on human resources management and social psychology since the late 1970s [11-15]. This renewed interest is justified by the increased desire to integrate psychosociological considerations into the daily management of the company and to reflect on what is important to learn and accept with a view to securing the employee's future within the company in question, on the one hand, and also with a view to avoiding empty recruitment which does not guarantee the employee a long-awaited professional family. In this section, we talk about

organizational socialization to better understand the definitional component and the different areas that are important to master.

### ***2.1. Definitive Study and Understanding of Organizational Socialization in the Literature***

In the literature on the organizational socialization of employees, and in particular Fisher's work [16], the study of the organizational socialization of employees is made by taking into account "what is learned and what is modified" over time and as the employee continues his career within the company. Other authors also point out that socialization within an organization must be akin to a continuous process of learning and gradually internalizing the norms, values and behaviors necessary to be integrated into an organization, to belong to a collective of workers and to be effective in its employment [17-19]. Two concepts are highlighted in the definition of organizational socialization: on the one hand, we have the notion of organizational learning and on the other hand, the notion of organizational internalization or organizational acceptance.

#### ***2.1.1. The Concept of Organizational Learning for Employees***

Köenig [20] defines organizational learning as a collective process of knowledge acquisition and development that, more or less profoundly, more or less sustainably, changes the management of the activities of the enterprise. The collective dimension of the organization can be activated on the one hand through the circulation and dissemination of new knowledge and, on the other hand, through the development of relationships between pre-existing skills. Recent work on organizational learning conducted by Boukar and Guidkaya [21] defines organizational learning as "the building of knowledge related to the activities that the employee carries out, the specificities of the organization in which he works and the values of that same organization". These definitions highlight a set of ideas and perspectives that provide a broader understanding of organizational learning.

#### ***2.1.2. The Concept of Organizational Socialization of Employees***

With respect to organizational socialization, one of the first people to propose a definition was Schein [22] on which the majority of the work on this design was based. According to the researcher, "socialization is the learning of the tricks of a job, indoctrination and training, the process by which an individual is taught what is important in an organization and in sub-units." In this sense of analysis, the role of the company in the organizational socialization of employees is very considerable, thus assuming the omnipotence of the company over employees. In addition to Schein's research, Feldman's [23] research points out that "organizational socialization is the process by which employees move from outsider status to participating and effective member status." According to him, the organizational socialization of employees is a process that is staggered over time, the sequencing of which is influenced

by the changes that the company experiences over time. In the work of Van Maanen and Schein, organizational socialization can be understood as "the process by which an individual is taught and by which that individual learns the strings of an organizational role. In a more general sense, socialization is the process by which an individual acquires the social knowledge and skills necessary to assume a role in an organization." This definition shows a more active role for the individual. This definition clearly highlights the efforts made by companies to integrate their employees and the efforts made by employees themselves to improve their level of knowledge of the organization's precepts. To clarify their understanding of organizational socialization, Van Maanen and Schein explain that organizational socialization occurs as the employee crosses a "frontier" of the enterprise.

However, it may retain the same role but feel a need for organizational re-socialization if organizational change occurs. In the work of Louis [24] organizational socialization can be defined as "the process by which an individual comes to appreciate the values, capacities, expected behaviors and social knowledge essential to assume a role and participate as a member of an organization." In this sense, the author considers that individual processes of organizational socialization only. It is this definition by Louis which opens the way particularly to work highlighting the central role of the employee in his process of organizational socialization, a field of research in which our research is part, since it analyzes the contribution of the individual himself in the evaluation of whether or not the expectations and obligations that feed the employment relationship are fulfilled.

Overall, we note that variables related to learning emphasize the concepts of "knowledge" or "knowing", while variables related to internalization are stated in terms of "understanding", "acceptance" or the verb "adhere".

### ***2.1.3. The Organizational Socialization of Employees, a Process of Social Learning***

The organizational socialization of employees built around social learning is attributed to Bandura [25]. In his theory of the individual in a social learning system, Bandura presents socialization as a process of identification. Indeed, social models allow individuals to learn appropriate behaviors faster and more efficiently than, say, trial and error. According to the author, a learning process takes place if similar behavior appears between a model individual and an individual in learning. Bandura recognizes that socialization is a life-long process that is complicated when the individual moves outside the confines of the family. The workplace has a great influence on people's development. The individual at work learns as he or she goes along what is admitted to work and what is to be proscribed. And so over time, he becomes a defendant agent for the organization. Similar to cartoons for children, organizational changes over time are an important source of social learning for adults in the workplace. In the approach proposed by the latter, socialization is above all a learning process. Individual learning processes need to be identified to understand the socialization mechanisms of individuals in a

given social context.

### ***2.1.4. The Organizational Socialization of Employees, a Process of Identity Transformation***

The debate on the formation of the personality of individuals in a social system seems to have taken a clear direction in recent years. While researchers in Freud's line believe that personality is mainly formed in childhood, recent developments support the idea that personality is formed throughout life and especially during experiments. The issue of identity is central to any structure that seeks to value its prescriptions and reputation. Sociologists, who approach socialization in the organization from an identity perspective Sainsaulieu [26], point to a double movement that leads to the integration of new recruits into an organization or a working group. On the one hand, the organization is considered to be a "furnace of identity production" where employees may develop a sense of belonging to a stable organizational culture [27]. However, by integrating individuals with various qualifications, companies are exposed to the evolution of these collective representations and, for their part, new recruits are actively involved in the identity process that takes place within the working groups. Here, we can clearly see the integration of individual identity with organizational identity.

It is very important, in fact, to take these two aspects of the question of the construction of the organizational identity of employees. As for the organization as "a furnace of identity production", the main interest is to be able to put in place a set of factors that do not fall under the striking power of the employees, but under the management policy of men that the organization advocates. For the employee who is linked to the identity of the company, it is a question of knowing what is in his mind (individual factors) to accept or reject what the organization conveys in terms of standards and values. Socializing an employee thus amounts, according to the prescriptions of the previous authors, to a control of his level of apprehension and acceptance of the organizational precepts with which he is confronted day to day in his working situations. This then refers to the control of the integration of the individual over time.

It should be noted that the work that has followed these definitions has not added much to the understanding of this concept since, in most cases, it is based on a use of these definitions in the literature adapted simply to the context studied. (areas of organizational socialization). The following lines will be devoted to this clarification.

## ***2.2. Areas of Organizational Socialization of Employees***

To speak of the domains of organizational socialization is to state all the elements that one must master or know to say that one is a socialized being in an organization. In his work, Louis points out several areas that it is necessary for an employee to have total control in order to be socialized. These are the organizational values, the required capabilities, the expected behaviors and the social knowledge necessary to act in the company.

Fisher notes the extreme fractionation of conceptions of organizational socialization. In order to provide an element of response to this limitation which, according to his perceptions, slows down the development of research, Fisher proposes a review of the integrative literature of organizational socialization, thus clarifying the content of this notion. This work puts forward a real research queue on the content which allows in particular a conceptual clarification of the organizational socialization. Fisher then identifies "what is learned and modified during socialization", i.e., four areas of learning and adjustments to the precepts of the enterprise characteristic of the organizational socialization process:

1. The field of learning and adjustment of the organization's precepts: This area concerns knowledge and acceptance of the organization's values, objectives and culture. Lacaze and Fabre note that in this area "the newcomer must learn the rules, hierarchical relationships, remuneration system and other characteristics of his organization".
2. The area of learning and adjustment in the working group area: This is primarily about learning and accepting social relationships, working group values, standards and culture that may be specific to the working group. According to Lacaze and Fabre, "The (employee) must get to know his/her colleagues, integrate into the working group, understand the reasons for the behavior of others and adopt appropriate behavior, [...] discover the power relations and political interests of each" in order to consider himself/herself as a socialized individual in the working group.
3. The field of learning and adjustment in the field of work performed which mainly concerns the methods, qualifications and skills required to act as an employee mastering the activities that feed his daily work. The employee must have a learning spirit so as not to be drowned by the difficulties which may from time to time intervene in the performance of his work.
4. The field of learning and adjustment relating to the individual himself: This area deals with the changes that the individual may have internally, in terms of motivation to work, self-esteem and, above all, personal identity at work. In this sense, Schein's words are of paramount importance in the study of the organizational socialization of employees today. According to him, "... in an organization, the individual learns about himself and establishes his "career anchors": he discovers his abilities, talents, motivations, needs, attitudes and values." It is primarily an identity-based approach to organizational socialization.

It should be noted that this so integral clarification of the content of the process of organizational socialization is a research project initially set up by Fisher, which has focused particularly on "what is learned and what changes during organizational socialization" and subsequently, Anakwe and Greenhaus intervene with their research to improve the construct proposed previously by Jones [28].

### 3. A Review of Different Approaches to Analyzing Organizational Socialization

The study of models of organizational socialization marks a very important point on the distinction between human resources management, a field of management sciences that studies the ways in which individuals act in an employment relationship and psychology or sociology (a discipline based on the study of personality and behavior in society in general). It was a managerial concern that animated the work of the first investigators on the notion of organizational socialization (Schein; Van Maanen; Van Maanen and Schein and many others) to propose elements for understanding and managing organizational entry and adaptation to corporate values and standards. Five models need to be clarified to better understand the organizational socialization of employees: first, the sequential model of organizational socialization originally proposed by Porter et al. and improved by the work of several other researchers, including those recently assigned to Dufour and Lacaze [29] which highlights a process of organizational socialization of employees by stages. Second, Louis's model of organizational socialization through the attribution of meaning highlights a process of organizational socialization controlled by the meaning that the individual accords to work. The third model is the proactive perspective of socialization, which sees the employee himself as an actor in his socialization. Next comes the interactionary model of organizational socialization, which reduces the entire social reality within the enterprise to interpersonal communications [30]. Finally, we present the contextual model of organizational socialization that highlights the integration of both psychosociological and organizational variables in explaining employees' attitudes to the employment relationship.

#### 3.1. The Sequential and Cognitive Approach to Organizational Socialization

The notion of organizational socialization has been approached mainly by two flagship approaches, one called sequential and the other called cognitive. Overall, the sequential approach is to highlight the role transition processes and outline the different steps that link learning and managing periods of change in positions within the company. This approach is unique to the work of Van Maanen and Schein and Fabre. The cognitive approach emphasizes its analysis on the theory of meaning attribution. This theory takes into account the meaning that the individual gives to work and its effect on adjustment in relation to employment. It is this sense of work that makes it possible to correct behaviors in order to make them compatible with lived realities. These two approaches are analyzed in the following developments.

##### 3.1.1. The Sequential Perspective of Organizational Socialization

Socialization refers to a process of organizational transition of an individual, i.e., a process that results from crossing organizational boundaries during an individual's career within

an organization. Van Maanen and Schein identify three organizational boundaries that can be crossed over the life course of an organization: 'the inclusive border, the crossing of which is analogous to the entry of a foreigner into a group, the hierarchical boundary... which separates the different hierarchical levels, and the functional or departmental boundary... which separates the departments, departments and functional groupings'. Thus, an individual may experience several organizational socializations during his career in an organization. This will be referred to as a sequential approach to the organizational socialization of employees. Work in this sequential approach to socialization has a common feature in identifying the evolution of an individual's organizational adjustment process over time, since, as Fabre points out, "time is an essential element to be taken into account in the study of socialization, because this phenomenon is above all a dynamic process.". On this basis, the sequential approach is concerned with the different sequences (possible arrangements) which follow one another or overlap and which characterize the socialization process. This sequential approach places the overall socialization of employees around three clearly delineated steps.

1. Step 1: Early socialization: This stage of organizational socialization begins even before an individual enters his or her new organization. The "early socialization" stage [31] or the "pre-entry" stage (Porter et al.) characterizes the period before the individual actually enters the enterprise or his new function. The main activities of the individual at this crucial moment of integration are the formation of expectations about work and enterprise, as well as the decision to accept or reject the work in question. However, the formation of expectations or expectations about the employment relationship is not exclusive to the individual in question, but also develops on the company side; both are based on a set of very specific information identified and stored by them. We can mention here the importance of the realism of the information communicated by the company (information on the goals and the atmosphere of the organization) during this stage, for the success of the integration. Realism limits the gap between an employee's expectations and the reality that they will face (Feldman and Van Maanen).
2. Step 2: The initial confrontation: Several terms are used to designate this stage of the organizational socialization of employees (notably "accommodation" by Feldman, "encounter" by (Porter et al.), "initial confrontation" by Graen [32]. Almost all of these authors consider this stage to be crucial in the process of organizational socialization, because the individual in question will experience a real shock of reality. This shock arises from both the gap between expectations and reality (in most cases, the information disseminated in the previous phase accentuates the positive aspects of the organization and minimizes the negative aspects (Van Maanen). It (the individual in question) enters into an unfamiliar organizational framework, where time and

space can become problematic. The information he receives is unfamiliar to him, sometimes he does not know what information is, or how to interpret and select the information. This phase of the process is marked by the relatively high stress experienced by the individual in question. It is during this stage that role conflicts and perceived role ambiguities are formed that can change the perceived work environment to the point of making it more problematic. This step is very crucial to triggering the next two.

3. Step 3: Adapting to the organization: The last stage of the organizational socialization process is characterized by the transition from outsider to insider status, by the resolution of conflicts and ambiguities related to defined tasks, by the affirmation of an identity that adapts to the standards of commitment, performance and loyalty of the organization. The individual becomes an insider when given autonomy, responsibilities, privileged information, inclusion in the informal network, or when encouraged to represent the organization and sought advice from other members of the organization. The main activities of individuals during the adaptation phase are therefore to control their work and adjust to the norms and values of the social group. The conflicts and ambiguities that developed during the earlier phase are here overcome.

In the same vein, the sequential approach of Dufour and Lacaze, stands out among the corpus of the sequential approach to organizational socialization that we have just given. Indeed, their work is not concerned with identifying the sequences of the process of adjustment of the individual to the organization, but with identifying those of the process of mutual adjustment of the individual and the organization, that is to say the sequences of the linking of the zones of identity of the individual and the zones of conformity of the organization. They thus show that "at the beginning of the integration phase, the non-negotiable area of the individual is large while that of the organization is narrow. Over time and as the individual becomes involved in the organization, the process reverses as the individual identifies what is negotiable and what is not and as the employer begins to trust them (Dufour and Lacaze). Thus, these two authors identify a "trial" phase in which individuals comply fully for fear of being fired, and then a phase in which they regain some of their freedom of action that they use to express their true identity. Their sequential model of organizational socialization as a mutual adjustment makes it possible to explain the failure of integration by the incompatibility between the negotiable zones of the individual in a work situation and of the organization.

### ***3.1.2. The Cognitive Perspective of Organizational Socialization***

According to the work of Louis, organizational socialization is first and foremost a process of attribution of meaning by which the individual at work tries to compare the situations experienced in the enterprise and the proposals at the beginning of the employment relationship. A sense of

agreement that then changes behavior to make the treatment received and perceived more appropriate to the expectations shaped at the beginning of the employment relationship. This distinguishes between changes that may occur in the employment relationship, the resulting contrasts with expected expectations, and the surprise that may affect the employee's organizational socialization process.

The change refers to the perception of a perfectly objective difference between the characteristics of the employee's former situation in the undertaking and the new working environment. In this sense, the perception of the effort to adapt to the new environment in relation to the old changes as the individual sees a maximum gap between what was considered routine and what is new and necessarily to know, to learn and to accept. This makes it difficult for employees to adapt, especially since they have to abandon their former role in the company. With regard to organizational surprise, it corresponds to the difference between the employee's prior expectations of the employment relationship and the actual experiences of the employment contract with the undertaking. This surprise (which can be positive or negative depending on whether the reality experienced is perceived as a disappointment or as surpassing personal expectations) is associated with behaviors depending on the characteristics of each employee. As for surprise, Louis explains that it is the cause of a cognitive transformation that gives new meaning to lived experiences and remodels the behavior of employees.

Lacaze [33], in his model of the cognitive process of meaning attribution, points out that: "the older members of the organization have enough history to explain an unexpected situation. In addition, they can compare their interpretation with that of their colleagues [i.e. they have access to local interpretive schemes]". On the other hand, the new employees do not have a sufficient background in the undertaking or in the post in question to have interpretative patterns that are capital and favorable to the recovery of behavior. In order to give meaning to their actions, they focus on experiences in other contexts that may lead to unexpected behavioral responses on their part.

### **3.2. The Proactive and Interactionary Approach to Organizational Socialization**

The second category of approach concerns the proactive approach and the so-called interactionist approach. In response to the question of how employees are better able to devise strategies to ensure their sustainable integration into a company. This perspective therefore involves information gathering methods both in relation to the company and in relation to the different values shared by all. The second approach, which is referred to as "interactionist", refers to the way individuals react to situations experienced in the employment relationship, on the one hand, and to the interaction between individuals that results in the construction of favorable social relationships through communication. These two approaches are central in that they address the role and participation of the individual himself in his own

socialization. These two approaches are detailed in the following lines.

#### **3.2.1. A Proactive Perspective on Organizational Socialization**

A specification is made here in order to clarify the principles in the light of the active behaviors by comparing them, in the current currents of research on organizational socialization correlative to the so-called proactive approach. The basic idea is based on a questioning of the theoretical considerations of a passive subject (who does not logically contribute to the evolution of the company) and a reactive subject (an individual who merely reacts to stimuli, to work situations of which he has not participated in their definition). The authors in the line of proactivity challenge a conception of the employment relationship according to which, the individuals in employment learn as they go along the attitudes and behaviors that are adequate to cover their organizational roles and point out in this sense that the individual in the workplace is, in his own right, responsible for his organizational socialization (Ostroff, [34-36]. The main idea is to bridge with the adaptive models that were dominant (Schein; Van Maanen and Schein; Ashforth et al.). It is an enriching perspective to propose a conception of work in relation to the contribution of the individual himself, an actor in his own organizational socialization, as a complement to the first studies in this line. Two considerations are made at this level both in terms of cognitive processes (the construction of meaning in relation to work and the organizational context) and in terms of relational processes (strategies for building interpersonal relationships at work).

On the cognitive processes side, it is noted that employees build meaning on the way work is done and also on the organizational context of work. More specifically, sensemaking processes will be discussed in reference to work in this field of social integration analysis [37, 38]. This work explains that individuals reduce their uncertainty and vulnerability to the effects of internal work organization through the process of assigning meaning and their sense of organizational effectiveness (Maitlis and Sonenshein [39, 40]. With regard to the relational aspect, the researchers refer to behaviors that help employees build images and shared identities in the workplace through the interpersonal relationships developed in the company. This is a regulatory effect between individuals of organizational events through the social interaction ticket. In this sense of analysis, it is clear that individuals are actively involved in defining working conditions that are perfectly in line with their skills and expectations.

In particular, Lacaze takes into account all the work related to the proactive behaviors of employees in the employment relationship and proposes a model of proactive integration or at least a model of employee integration which highlights and primarily the proactive role of the individual through individual integration strategies which are among others: experimentation (which positively influences the understanding of the organizational role and the mastery of the

technical aspects of the task in question), self-management (which positively influences the understanding of its role), activation to the mastery of the task and to the mastery of the relationship with the members (which are social skills very beneficial for the company) and the development of social relations (which is, according to the analyzes made by the author, the only proactive strategy that influences the level of social integration of employees within the company).

### **3.2.2. An Interactional Perspective of Organizational Socialization**

The interactionist approach to organizational socialization breaks with earlier work, including work on organizational socialization practices in general, work on the sequential evolution of organizational socialization, and partially work on the attribution of meaning in the organizational socialization process. Indeed, when the work assigns a passive role to the individual in the success of his organizational socialization, the work on the interactionist approach considers that it is necessary to take into account a reciprocal effect of the relations between the behavior of the employees within the company and the success of the socialization on the one hand and between the practices of the managers within the company and the organizational socialization of the employees on the other hand. The words of Jones, a leading author whose work gives rise to this interactionary trend, are illustrative of this orientation towards reciprocity and of this break in the literature: "Usually, two factors are considered to influence the success of the adjustment to the organization. The first is the way in which the new one responds to the reality of his organizational life and to the learning of his role and culture [...]. The second concerns the effect of the organizational socialization practices that the firm uses to define the organizational context acting on the behavior of recruits [...] [In this article] the socialization process is analyzed from an interactionist perspective where the recruit plays an active role (Jones). Interactionary work on organizational socialization simplifies the whole social reality to the correct communication between individuals in the employment relationship (Perrot).

On the other hand, several authors have focused on analyzing various sources of information, interpreting the information retained and all the information-seeking strategies developed by the recruits in order to gain knowledge of the expectations regarding the various activities assigned to the employee [41-43]. On the other hand, other works move away from the exclusive analysis of information transmission and study the strategies often used by employees in order to react as quickly as possible to the cumulative effects of management practices on their employees within the company. These authors point out that over time, employees change their learning according to the organizational situations experienced and according to the strategies previously deployed for similar situations, on the one hand, and on the other hand, thanks to the effects of interaction, employees adopt self-management strategies in most cases (Chartrand [44, 45].

## **4. Towards an Analysis of Explanatory Theories of Organizational Socialization**

The theories of organizational socialization highlight the requirements based on the concept of organizational learning (based mainly on the formulation of an organizational chart capable of ensuring the transmission of knowledge, centered on the autonomy granted to the employees in question, centered on trust and cooperation beyond the activities and tasks defined in the contractual framework). However, these theories rarely explore the meaning of these terms or the very nature of the processes of change they face, as they start directly from observing the realities of learning practices and the integration of employees into employment. They are divided between the proponents of learning as a "learning opportunity" (we will talk about on-the-job learning) and the proponents of learning as a "learning" configuration. This work is marked by the focus on the existence of an 'open and efficient' formal information system, the recognition of an informal information system and the involvement of the Directorate-General. In this section, we cite three theories of organizational socialization. First the theory of learning in loop, then the theory of learning of Cyert and March based on the organizational routine and finally the theory called behaviorist and cognitivist.

### **4.1. Chris Argyris and Donald Schön's Loop Learning Model**

Chris Argyris and Donald Schön are two authors who promote a consideration of the employment relationship by emphasizing the development of organizational learning skills: indeed, the researcher who surrounds himself/herself with a collaborative research-action program on organizational learning becomes an "actor-experimenter" in the same way as the actors themselves whom he/she meets in the context of their employment. For their part, practitioners speculate in terms of intentional causality, that is to say, the causal relationship between an actor's intention and the action he undertakes to realize it in the context of a learning concern. In order to clarify their ideas, these authors take into account to explain, they describe the representation at the basis of the action. In this sense, they highlight the concept of a loop, which they distinguish between what is meant by a single loop, a double loop and, finally, learning. These three aspects are further developed.

- 1) The simple loop: it is a part of organizational learning that involves a minor modification of existing rules by improving the logic of organizational practices without calling into question the representations that already existed. At the same time, it is linked to everything that tends to reinforce the considerations that are already learned behaviors. The individuals, trapped in the need for power and survival according to the work of Abraham Maslow, define very remarkable defense strategies in order to shorten their integration into the

enterprise. This is an initial stabilization loop and is fed by the theories of use of participants in direct matches to employment in the enterprise;

- 2) The double loop: This part of Chris Argyris and Donald Schön's theory of learning is concerned with models of reproductions of ways of doing based on previous simple loop learning. It is this dual-loop learning that will characterize the learning organization. It is an organization that takes into account criteria enabling employees to be supported by appropriate integration strategies. In order for learning or organizational socialization in the general framework to be duplicated and persist at all levels of the organization, it is necessary to put an end to self-regulation processes and to allow all employees to be active in their integration within the company. In order for this dual learning loop to take place, individual usage theories need to change over time;
- 3) The learning of learning, also called *deuteuro-learning* in the Anglo-Saxon language (or second-degree learning in the French language) is determined by the main idea that the company decides itself to make a diagnosis on learning strategies in a logic to detect shortcomings. This type of learning leads to a re-examination of the essential values of the company by trying to go beyond the usual blockages to redefine the meaning given to the action (cropping). This concept, taken from the authors of the Palo Alto school), but which is attributed here an organizational dimension, expresses the idea of increasing the organizational learning potential of the company by implementing sustainable socialization tactics of employees to the company.

This distinction between these different types of "loops" is not necessarily easy because it is blurred by the size and organizational complexity. Dual-loop learning is of varying importance to the organization as a whole, depending on the degree to which core values and standards are affected. The type of organizational learning will tend to vary depending on the level of aggregation (in relation to the different strata of individuals with different characteristics) at which it occurs and on the more or less close links which associate the units with each other at the same level or at different levels. The main interest of this perspective is to found a "real" theory of organizational learning that does not disconnect the logic of organizational learning in the strict sense of the term, that is, everything that revolves around information, knowledge and individuals, from the logic of the learning organization, that is, structural and procedural conditions that promote organizational learning and, to a certain extent, socialization in general.

#### **4.2. Cyert and March's Theory of Learning**

Cyert and March's theory of learning see the company as an institution with a collective memory that allows it to replicate the various activities and knowledge acquired. The company's evolutionary approach "aims to reveal the endogenous nature of processes of economic change in general and technological

innovation in particular". It is the routines that are at the center of this process. "The routines are defined as the firm-level equivalent of the "know-how" of individuals. These routines are themselves the result of a set of learnings that ultimately consolidate forms of responses that include broad areas of tacit knowledge." The strategic value of this analysis is to highlight the existence of a type of resources and skills that are difficult to identify and therefore inimitable, and that therefore give rise to decisive and lasting competitive advantages.

The accumulation of past knowledge and experience thus makes it possible to constitute tacit organizational knowledge which conditions the competitiveness of the company. Evolutionists thus distinguish between "static" routines that repeat past actions from "dynamic" routines that lead to learning and renewal of company routines. Only "dynamic" routines are factors for technological change. The company's strategy is determined by its history. Change cannot be imposed without taking into account the historical capacities developed within the organization. This approach highlights the contingency of learning. Learning depends on both the internal context and the conditions of the organization's environment. It results from the firm's confrontation with new problems. Solutions to these problems will enrich existing routines. The authors emphasize the need for consistency between strategic decisions and corporate competencies. Knowledge management is therefore a combination of organizational determinants and an analysis of the conditions of skills development in the organization in the light of specific contingencies stemming from the environment or the history of the organization. If, for Cyert and March [46], organizational learning is a strategy for developing organizational routines facilitating adjustment of employees, what about behaviorist and cognitivist approaches?

#### **4.3. Behaviorist and Cognitivist Theories**

Learning can be understood as adaptation and as a change in behavior, but it can also be understood as a cognitive change. This duality between induction-based learning (the notion of representation) and learning as a behavioral conditioning structure the work on organizational learning quite clearly. For example, Bourhis [47] proposes to distinguish organizational learning from the cognitive or behavioral dominant, thus separating the "classical" approach (an approach that distinguishes between cognitive and behavioral views) from the integrationist approach (an approach that relies on the complementarity of the two perspectives).

- 1) The behavioral approach to organizational learning: This approach to organizational learning is based on the work of behaviorist psychology, which posits, without denying its existence, that one cannot access the mental states of individuals. Psychology is not a science of consciousness. Learning is therefore approached from outside and understood as a reaction, a response to repeated stimuli. This means that the individual can act on the environment to obtain a stimulus of which he knows the consequence. If the detour through psychology proved necessary, it is because this type of analysis is found in



the behavioral theory of learning in the organization. At the individual level, the behaviorist approach treats learning as a modification of individuals' behaviors as a function of appropriate stimulus and response sequences. At the organizational level, the stimulus-response sequence is used to describe the relationships between the company and its environment but also to explain the internal functioning of the organization. Indeed, for Cyert and March, Levitt and March [48], March and Olsen [49], Nelson and Winter [50], the enterprise must be understood as an adaptive system whose behavior is based on a portfolio of existing procedures rather than on a logic of consequentiality or rational calculation seeking the optimal solution. This means that by knowing a portfolio of solutions that the organization perceives as achievable, it is possible to identify the problems that the organization faces. Therefore, the change in an organization is explained less by the problems it encounters than by the solutions it has at its disposal.

- 2) The cognitive approach to organizational learning: In psychology, the cognitivist current emphasizes the need to take into account the complexity of the subject of learning. While behaviorism studies how the environment determines behavior, cognitivism signals that human conduct is explained in terms of the content of mental states and representations. Newell and Simon studied the cognitive dimension of learning by modeling the human mind as an information processing system. So they conclude that to think is to process information to manipulate symbols. Mental states are thus compared to systems of signs organized in a language of mind whose rules must be known. From this perspective, the rules of propositional calculation are used to describe the arrangements of mental representations. It should be noted that the connective current [51, 52] oppose this approach and seek to break with a "psychologising" representation of cognitive functioning by making a symbolic approach prevail. Cognitive mechanisms are no longer approached from internal representations, knowledge, beliefs, or intentions, but function as a neural network, with the nodes of this network having no functional correspondents in terms of conduct. From the cognitivist perspective, organizational learning is generally understood as a change in the state of organizational knowledge, as a cognitive change [53] or as an operation of information processing and the acquisition of new knowledge.

The flow of work on organizational learning and the theories that have clarified the central elements on which work on this concept must be based sufficiently demonstrates the state of remarkable theoretical advances in the desire to highlight the human dimension in managerial concerns. As regards the so-called cognitivist and behaviorist approaches, the central idea is to highlight, on the one hand, the contribution of the company to the adjustment of employees' behaviors and, on the other hand, the effort made by the employee himself in his organizational learning process. With

regard to organizational socialization, it is a continuation of the learning process initiated, but this time, by the acceptance of all the values, standards and objectives of the enterprise in general. The first definition of this concept that has been used throughout the following work is Schein's definition of organizational socialization as the process by which a person learns and accepts the social norms, expectations and skills necessary to work in a particular position in an organization.

## 5. Conclusion

The issue of organizational socialization is now a major concern within organizations for the simple reason that it is a flagship element of staff retention and of the latter's social and economic performance. The purpose of this study was to highlight a purely theoretical study of the notion of organizational socialization of employees around its different explanatory approaches and the different theories developed in the literature. In fact, we have been able to identify in total five approaches to organizational socialization studied by Van Maanen and Schein, as well as Dufour and Lacaze, researchers who highlight the effect of time in the organizational socialization process (we will also speak of a sequential approach to socialization strategies), Louis and Lacaze who, for their part, study organizational socialization through a process of attribution of meaning in the employment relationship, an attribution of meaning which They are built from the first day of the employee's integration into the enterprise, Ashforth et al. and Lacaze which emphasize the concept of proactivity with the aim of understanding, according to Lacaze, the contribution of the individual in his own organizational socialization, Perrot, Riordan et al. and many other authors approach this notion of organizational socialization in the light of an interactionist approach by connecting the actor with the organizational system that he must learn and accept in order to better develop his performance within this structure. The latter approach to organizational socialization has been developed from a contextual perspective, a perspective in which it is events experienced by employees during role transitions and strategies developed by leaders with decision-making power that determine socialization (in the case of integration practices of new employees) on the one hand, and re-socialization (in the case of employees who experience significant events during their organizational career) on the other.

The main contributions we have made under this article can be explained in three dimensions. First, a theoretical analysis of the work carried out in the context of organizational socialization provided a clarification on a joint analysis of the socialization approaches used by both employees and decision-makers to better conduct the socialization of new employees and the re-socialization of older employees in situations of organizational change. Secondly, a compilation of the work has made it possible to justify the existence of several areas of organizational socialization with regard to its two dimensions, learning and internalization. Also, the approaches state that the variables of organizational socialization of employees must be considered on a double level between the strategies developed by the company and the strategies

implemented by the employees themselves. Thirdly, the contribution concerns a clarification of the work carried out so far with the aim of making known the state of the art around this notion of organizational socialization. In practice, this article has a minimal management contribution, since it simply allows managers to take into account the strategies developed by employees especially in terms of information search to ensure their integration and sustainable socialization at work.

The main limitation of this research is that it is only done on a purely theoretical level. We have blocked our fair analysis on the work and approaches that have grasped the notion of organizational socialization since its appearance in the language of researchers. However, future work can address organizational socialization by highlighting a separate study of work according to the two dimensions of this concept. Indeed, organizational socialization has as its basic idea that individuals working within a structure manage to understand the structure through a dual process. One called learning that accompanies the employee in teaching key values that define behaviors. The other one who acts in order to make the different values learned accepted and to act as an active member who can defend the structure wherever he is. It would therefore be important to make use of the learning strategies developed by companies in transition situations.

## Acknowledgements

We thank all those who contributed to the writing of this manuscript. We think of all those involved in the informal sector who agreed to answer all our questions in relation to this research promptly. Many thanks also to all the anonymous reviewers of this journal who have contributed to the improvement of the content of this work.

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