

New Don Assimilation into Organizational Culture: A Case Study of Nursing Faculty from Two Institutions of Higher Learning in Kenya

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ABSTRACT

Whereas expert clinical nurses were needed to fill nurse educator vacancies, academia had fairly different requirements, expectations and responsibilities as compared to clinical practice. The transition from the industry to academia could come as a shock to some. The assimilation of new faculty into organizational culture often left long lasting impressions.

Aim: The study explores the nuanced dynamics the new faculty goes through before settling

Objectives: (a) To examine the respondent's lived experiences within their nursing programs as novice nursing faculty. (b) To capture the respondent's lived experiences as new nursing faculty in relation the 'Assimilation Theory and Organizational Culture'.

Methods: This is a cross sectional descriptive qualitative study that utilizes theory as a guide while looking at how the new nursing faculties got assimilated into their workplace in two institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

Results: Shown that it was challenging for those transitioning from nursing practice to nursing academia. New nursing faculties were expected to understand and adapt to the work environment in the university as soon as possible. Anyhowly, they were expected to 'hit the ground running'. Experiences varied from: 'disillusionment', 'culture shock' through to 'loss of identity' to 'what did I get myself into?' among others.

Conclusion & recommendation: New faculty needed help in order to make positive social change, but the reality from this study was that a good number of faculties had a less than smooth transition.

Keywords: Organizational culture, Nursing faculty, Nursing orientation, Nursing assimilation, Novice nursing faculty, Culture shock, Transition theory, Assimilation theory

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1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The rising demand for graduate nurses locally and internationally has fueled increased demand for nursing faculty whose role is to create the next generation of registered and advance practice nurses. These faculty to-be are usually sourced from the clinical area. They are thus expected to transition into faculty. There was need for a deliberate tool where possible that would ease the process (Haynes-Lewis & Pearson, 2014).

Changing from clinical to academic life and balancing both can cause role strain. According to Transition Theory (Melesis, 2010) role transition involves: the need to attain new knowledge, changes in social status and interactions with others among others.

On the other hand, Theory of Organizational Assimilation explains how individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization (Jablin, 2001). When the process is planned it means potential employees have the opportunity to do active research of a company or through formal training.

The study hopes to make a contribution to an emerging issue in higher education namely, new faculty assimilation to organization culture by explaining the nuanced dynamics the employee goes through, quite often unassisted. In previous

study by Brown (2015) participants stated that their previous experience and training did not prepare them to become nurse educators, thus making them feel unprepared to face a new organization culture.

Culture is a set of predominant characteristics and attitudes that identifies a society. Culture being a society's way of life must perpetuate the individual's way of life. The individual should fit into the larger society and the society should take him in with comfort and ease (Okubo, 2018).

Organization culture according to Jones (2004) is "the set of shared values and norms that controls organizational members' interactions with each other and with people outside the organization".

Organizational culture becomes significant in that there is a connection between culture and efficiency or productivity of an organization. In a university setting it is especially important to understand the interactions between faculty members and between faculty and students (Mohammadi, Yeganeh & Rad, 2010). There also existed subcultures especially among students as was supported by Jueckstock & Gallineau (2009), they characterized this subculture as mainly strategic, probably hatched to beat the

system. That is why learner-centred new faculty orientation matters (Whitney et al., 2016).

The first contact of the new faculty is the human resources department. Ideally orientation and assimilation ought to be an extension of the hiring process but not two separate activities (Development, 2016). However, this was based on the organization's policy, mission, vision and core values etc.

This current study employs a logical theory based on the Assimilation Theory and Organizational Culture done by Jablin (2001) to explain how individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization.

To put these into context begins by sharing excerpts from a self-study of one of the authors (SMK) below:

1.1 My story

A good place to begin thinking about the assimilation into organization culture is to start with my story – 'my survival diary' that reflected on my experience(s) entering a new job as a nursing faculty. These will recall what went well and stood out for me, my supervisor, co-workers or the organization. What did not go well or what did not happen that I would have wished my supervisor, co-workers or organization would have done. I can remember having a group of nursing students for the first time. My teaching experiences, was characterized by encountering obstacles, trial and error situations, and mistakes. I often sensed a lack of support from colleagues. Looking back I realize how as a novice educator I focussed on surviving each encounter in classroom management, using technological devices, and implementing different pedagogical styles. My bad experiences as a novice educator included being allocated to teach courses outside my comfort zone where content was unfamiliar or additional 'mandatory' part-time courses. I was not able to take my annual leave for 3 consecutive years due to service need. The better times included being able to make a difference and mentoring students on the clinical aspects of each course I taught.

1.2 Problem Statement

New faculties were expected to understand and adapt to the work environment in the university as soon as possible. Indeed, they are expected to 'hit the ground running'. The departments are eager to deploy the new lecturer immediately. However, organizations which assimilate employees into organizational culture through a planned deliberate process performed better.

Aim of the study: The study explored the nuanced dynamics the employee went through as they settled down as new nursing faculty.

The objectives of the study were:

- To examine the respondent's lived experiences within their nursing programs as new nursing faculty.
- To capture the respondent's lived experiences as new nursing faculty in relation the Assimilation Theory and Organizational Culture.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Orientation of New Faculty

One of popular definition of organization culture by Lundy and Cowling (1996) is "the way we do things around here". According to Jones (2004), organizational culture is "the set of shared values and norms that controls organizational

members' interactions with each other and with people outside the organization.

Organization culture provides a language for understanding how and why organizations develop: Values (core beliefs, rites and rituals); Artifacts (observable evidence of culture-physical, dress, form of address); Assumptions (view-points, thoughts, feelings reinforced over and over again) (Dainton&Zelly, 2015). Whether or not the type of culture enables optimal fulfilment of faculty' goals differentiate one institution of higher learning from the other (Antic and Ceric, 2008). Each organization has its own core values that shape its culture (Marcus & Shoham, 2014).

A university's organizational culture is the set of shared values and norms that controls university members' interactions with each other and with people outside the university. In university settings important interactions are between member of faculty and between faculty and students (Antic & Ceric, 2008) and of course between students themselves.

Antic & Ceric (2008) added that: a strong university culture is characterized by shared values, strong norms of behaviour and willingness of faculty to obey these norms. Whereas a weak culture is characterized by: disagreement about main values, absence of norms, and violation of written and unwritten norms of behaviour with emergence of subcultures at the university.

2.2 Organization Culture

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norms of behaviour with emergence of subcultures at the university.

2.3 Assimilation

Integration or assimilation refers to the new members' socializing processes, creating the boundaries of the organization, the feeling of identity and commitment of its members.

Whereas, the assimilated person still retains their individual identities, hopes, dreams, interests, loves, and goals, they also can function more successfully with others towards specific common goals (Jablin, 2001). Members are able to work together to a common goal in the face of adversity and competition (Dainton&Zelly, 2015). The new faculty takes the assimilation as a learning experience - as a personal transformation even though at times their habitus (tastes, desires and preconceived opinions) may not match the organizational culture.

2.4 The Theory of Organizational Assimilation

The *Assimilation Theory and Organizational Culture* also referred in some texts as *The Theory of Organizational Assimilation* was done by Jablin F.M. in the year 2001 explains how individuals become integrated into the culture of an organization (Jablin, 2001). It was further exemplified by Dainton and Zelly(2015) and Porter-O'Grady & Malloch, (2015). Organizational socialization otherwise known as onboarding is a critical part of assimilation.

When the process is planned it means potential employees have the opportunity to do active research of a company or through formal training. More often assimilation is unplanned.



[Courtesy of Myers, K (2013):Encyclopaedia of Management Theory]

The new comer goes through stages of assimilation before he becomes a full member of an organization goes through. The following 4 stages are as follows: *vocational anticipatory; socialization; encounter and, metamorphosis* (Jablin, 2001).

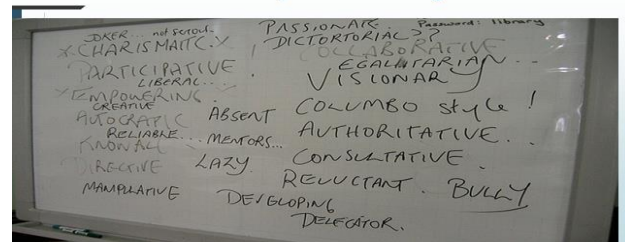
-Vocational anticipatory developing a set of expectations and beliefs about the nature of work and work settings. There

could have been distorted, biased or just plain wrong information about the nature of work in the university (Jablin, 2001 in Dainton and Zelly 2015). There are expectations and beliefs about work we bring with us as we begin to assimilate into an organization (Dainton&Zelly, 2015; Kariuki, 2015). Whether or not we felt competent in the new role was another thing.

-Socialization: Learning about particular vocation, position, and organization through interactions with others.

-Encounter: Making sense of the organizational culture e.g. the newcomer uncertain of the new boss who might turn out to be positive or negative. The way the newcomer was seeing a way of adapting own needs by taking advantage of the work environment (NLN, 2006; Development, 2016).

The newcomer uncertain of the new boss who might turn out to be positive or negative...



[Courtesy of iLead Network, College of Nursing University of Colorado-Denver]

-Metamorphosis: Transitioning from outsider to insider. This way the newcomer internalises values and behaviours in order to fulfil organizational expectations. Also has to make 'less than pleasant' adjustments, as well as some sacrifices here and there.

3. METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study. It utilizes the Theory of Organization Assimilation by Fredrick M. Jablin (Jablin, 2001) as a guide while looking at how the new nursing faculties got assimilated into their workplace in two institutions of higher learning in Kenya.

Site: The study was conducted in two institutions of higher education in Kenya.

Study Design: Cross section descriptive study.

Study Population: Individuals who had newly joined the institutions on appointment into teaching positions in the last 3 years (2015-2018).

Eligibility: A nursing faculty staff who had joined the two institutions within the last three years.

Sampling Method: Purposive sampling was used to recruit a total of seven new nursing faculty members within the undergraduate BSc Nursing program.

Data Collection: Qualitative data was collected which included a review of a 2011 self-study report, desktop review of literature and key informant interviews. Interviews with the new staff were conducted using semi-structured open ended question through in-depth interviews in person or over the telephone. Recording was requested and granted in all cases. Covert information was shared separately. Interview length varied between a minimum of 25 minutes and a maximum of 40 minutes.

In the named institution 'A' accessed 1 lecturer, 2 tutorial fellows. Institution 'B' accessed 2 lecturers and 2 tutorial fellows.

Ethical Issues: The respondents were informed in-advance the purpose of the study and they also had right to withdraw from the study. Ethical Issues: Data collected from the client was treated with very high confidentiality.

Data Analysis:

Qualitative data was analyzed - interviews were transcribed verbatim, coded and analyzed to identify themes guided by The Theory of Organizational Assimilation.

4. RESULTS

The chapter describes the coded and analyzed results which were in categories and themes as guided by The Theory of Organizational Assimilation (Jablin, 2001) namely: Vocational anticipatory, Socialization; Encounter and finally Metamorphosis.

4.1 Role of the Researcher

These stages were clearly highlighted using a story as was told to me by a new workmate 'newbie' who had joined the university after transitioning from nursing practice to nursing education. My role was that of welcoming him into the university as fellow faculty as well as officemate also representing colleague(s). Such an approach was supported by Schoening (2013).

Vocational anticipatory: developing a set of expectations and beliefs and about the nature of work and work settings (Jablin, 2001):

I belief it is going to be a more favourable position than the previous one... I had this notion that the pay was high, the notion of titles: being called a lecturer, a don, having my name on the door [**Lecturer from institution 'A'**].

I was concerned about getting office space, personal space, who would be my office mate, security of personal effects [**Tutorial Fellow from institution 'B'**].

Socialization: deals with how the newcomer learns about particular vocation, position, and organization through interacting with others:

The first time we applied me & John (a former classmate), I got a regret letter, and he got the job. I continued to learn about this place from John who now worked here. Then another advert came in March last year [**Tutorial Fellow from institution 'B'**].

Initial exposure was through an expert who came from the university and did some consultations for us, I learnt a lot from/through him [**Tutorial Fellow from institution 'A'**].

Encounter: Making sense of the organizational culture by coming face to face with it:

During the interview I met one or two people who I had met; one was my former MSN teacher. They called me in a few days that I was successful; in 2

weeks I picked the appointment letter' [**Lecturer from Institution 'B'**].

I was shown around by one of the Heads of Department, I met some students I knew who came from my place, one of them assured me I would get a house to stay, confirming so, "that is my business" [**added Lecturer from Institution 'B'**].

The newcomer may be uncertain of the new boss who might turn out to be positive or negative... There is some sizing each other up, expectations, misconceptions, paradoxes of the newcomer and colleague:

I met the Dean, the time-tabling coordinator and 2 support staff. I met the Head of the Department I was going to work, we discussed for 15 minutes.

We struck rapport with the Dean immediately. He was an alumni or my former university. He said that he was among the 1st BSNs in Kenya. He appreciated my past experience as shifts-scheduler, in-charge of nurses' continuous education for my hospital. We have been talking since then on one-on-one, on phone mostly'. He introduced me to some activities, some collaborations. I was invited to one getaway meeting to discuss consortium issues on a weekend [**Lecturer from Institution 'A'**].

My goal is to finish my PhD, publish, supervise some MSN students (it's very prestigious to get such an opportunity) as I believe higher education worked as a pure meritocracy and grants all individuals the opportunity to succeed [**Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'A'**].

Sizing each other up: expectations, paradoxes of the newcomer and colleague ...



[Courtesy of iLead Network, College of Nursing University of Colorado-Denver]

This way the newcomer was seeing a way of adapting own needs by taking advantage of the work environment.

Interesting I was not issued with a job description or terms & conditions of service. I got this impression: ...that lecturers had a lot of time for themselves, as long as you've taught nobody would follow you, that sometimes students failed to show up in class. Here I am expected to clock in and out at the gate. Absurd! [**Lecturer from Institution 'B'**].

The reality was different that sometimes technology failed and you could not teach. But no big deal, students understood and requested for hand-outs [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'A'].

There were 'shocks' the newcomer might encounter, some as a result of environmental variability related to university students' socialization. He may get disappointed:

You have to push, follow-up so many things instead of teaching [added a Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'A', feeling indignant].

Students were keener on their social life in campus.

The only fast-paced time was during exams. Why? (After probing further) ...exam was a common enemy to the student as well as the teacher. Some students DO cheat [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B'].

The herculean tasks of acclimatization included defusing myths and misconceptions:

Here I was, I assumed (as everyone else did) that even as the new faculty I was, I already knew how to teach, actually I had not taught before so here I was as an untrained teacher [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B'].

I neither admired setting, even less marking exams. Teaching was fine. But how could one teach and not examine? No one seems willing to show me how to set exams, but one claimed they had a bank of questions where they just scoop from, Waoh! ...I wonder when I will get a bank of my own. May be once I get to full Professor I could ask someone-else to set and mark exams, then all I will do is - teach [Lecturer from Institution 'A'].

Following the rules of the game could mean abandoning important parts of one's values. This could go from the usual to extremes like 'only testing what was taught - to teaching the exam' when time was constrained as happened during crush semesters [shared a Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B' and Lecturer from institution 'A'].

Metamorphosis: Transitioning from outsider to insider. This is the way the newcomer internalises values and behaviours in order to fulfill organizational expectations. Also has to make 'less than pleasant' adjustments, some sacrifices here and there:

I was expected to look at noticeboards all the time, previously I was more used to memos that came through the Nurse Manager, who was myself (emphasis). We were a whole campus staff of less than 60 staff yet I had been in-charge of 54 nurses. Here I was no longer the boss...there were more educated people than myself. I too was determined grow, that was why I had transitioned from nursing practice to academia [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B'].

4.2 Organization Culture

Namely: cultural artifacts and behaviours in the form(s) of address; differences in address by hierarchical level or marital status for ladies-

The best time for me happened during matriculation. Often some new staff was recognized and might receive a citation! People here loved titles: Prof, Dr., Mrs., Mr., Architect etc. Every other woman is addressed as Mrs. One lady whose surname used her father's name (and not her husband's) was very cross when someone addressed her as Mrs... Acting hilariously [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B' added], 'one particular one was addressed as Prof (Madam) DVC, Head of State Commendations'.

I saw that in this place they liked creating emergencies out of nowhere. Everything is a crisis even when it's not, even something small. Unnecessary meetings - every small thing - call for meeting(s) [Lecture from Institution 'B'].

Hung-ups:

Having worked in the hospital myself, I knew what an emergency is - almost everything else I believe is poor planning - in my view. I say, poor planning on someone else's part ought not to become an emergency on my part [Lecturer from Institution 'B'].

I often put my former hospital's dustcoat on, full with logo. After all I saw people admired it, it represented value, and it had taste! The university never issued me with one. *Tell you what?* At times I feel like going back to the Ministry of Health [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'A'].

The institutional mission on innovation ...was not espoused. Few people were willing to be creative or innovative, mistakes were often punished... [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B'].

There is a point about 'culture shock' that came out here. Then, comparing expectations with reality of the new place and disillusionment as the (new employee) reluctantly let's go of old values and behaviours:

Leadership was based on paper qualifications though not necessarily so, there was what I would call misplacements of persons not matching with role; a microbiologist heading a school of business, or Librarian in charge of Central services' Waoh! [Tutorial Fellow from Institution 'B']. He added. '...there was a tendency to create ambiguous departments like central services which could usurp any role'.

The newcomer could see inconsistencies and missing areas.

5. DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employees do not come to organizations to do their own things. If they are not assimilated properly they might sometimes perform counter the organization's mission and goals. It became apparent here that the newcomer would have to adjust to maintain positive stability (homeostasis) as much as possible without appearing to be disruptive.

Whereas expert clinical nurses were needed to fill nurse educator vacancies, academia had a fairly different requirements, expectations and responsibilities as compared to clinical practice. Thus it was challenging for those transitioning from practice to academia. They needed help in order to make this positive social change, but the reality here was that a good number of faculties had a less than smooth transition (Hoffman, 2019).

It became apparent through this presentation that *Assimilation Theory and Organizational Culture* was a good example of looking into new nursing faculties' entry into the two institutions of higher learning. It is important that an organization communicates a better understanding of the organization to those inside and outside it (Hemphill, 2016).

The findings from this study showed variations from the new nursing faculties' experiences ranging from: 'culture shock' through loss of identity 'what did I get myself into' - to - 'I know I made the right decision' -to- 'feeling alone', 'out of place', and 'it was like they 'did not belong in higher education' as they learn how to "fit in" in the academic environment, and hope they will somehow succeed. Hoffman (2019) referred to it as 'a state of constant change as a perpetual novice'. Such findings were also supported in Dainton and Zelly (2015).

It was therefore important for leaders of institutions of higher learning to consider new faculty as individuals adjusting to a new environment. Be aware of the stages of new faculty assimilation into organization culture and strive to establish a supportive relationship early. An online orientation program designed for new employees was found to have some value, and was even preferred especially among younger employees (Shih & Mills, 2013). More so, if it could be customized to job-related responsibilities of nursing faculty: teaching, scholarship, supervision and service (NLN, 2006; Brown, 2015; Schoening, 2013).

Brown (2015) recommended that nursing programs should offer an introduction into the courses taught, provide a shadow experience, and assign a mentor/contact person for new faculty members. In addition to socialization, self-reflection, self-evaluation, observation were found to be beneficial to successful transition of new faculty.

The following are recommended solutions to ease new nursing faculty assimilation to organization culture. It also offers a counter-argument why the solutions might not work. But by all standards the process of settling down new faculty into their teaching positions should be well planned and deliberately executed (see Table 1 and a schema on the smooth transition below).

Implications exist for administration of institutions of higher learning to invest in developing nurse faculty right from clinical nurse educators and ease their transition to the role. We must be cognizant of this one fact: that many new faculty enter the education profession with no prior teaching experience. This was emphasized in a report to [aacnnursing](#) edited by Wilson Abby in *3 Ways to Keep Those in a Nurse Educator Role Happy & Healthy*

To help them get started and be successful some resources are needed. An ideal transition should involve the new don being issued with a copy of the enforced collective bargaining agreement (CBA) that has been negotiated, signed and filed in court. The CBA spells out the rights and privileges (financial and non-financial) of the employee. Other necessary documents include the full curriculum, master rotation of the programs under the faculty, copies of letters of program accreditations, student class lists, student progression reports and academic calendar etc.

Figure of the smooth transition



Source:

<https://www.aacnnursing.org/our-initiatives/education-practice/faculty-tool-kits/transitioning-from-clinical-nursing-to-nursing-faculty>

Table 1: Solutions and why they might or not work

	Solutions	Why it might not work
1	Planned induction and orientation of new employees. Some very prepared institutions even had a state-of-the-art program purposely meant for this.	An open and plain-walk through is inadequate whereas creating a utopia to the new employee's mental picture is wrong.
2	Colleagues and management to reward excellence and not	Need for sustaining status quo by colleagues

	to expect perfection of the 'newbie'	and management reduces creativity
3	Having realistic expectations of the new workplace by onboarding employee	Disillusionment common among new employees
4	Having a newsletter eases the settling in	Newsletter usually only highlights the positives in the organization
5	Sizing up the newbie by colleagues and vice versa	Incivility (even misconstrued one) might be common in one form or the other
6	Issuing new faculty with a job description 'JD'	In as much as JD is binding document, expectations might be ambiguous or unrealistic. It might not have taken into account some of the terms of service

(Source: the researchers)

5.1 Limitations of the study

The study focuses on two specific institutions in Kenya. While the insights are valuable, the authors acknowledge the limitations regarding the generalizability of the findings to other contexts.

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