Managing cultural shock due to globalization- Issues challenges and opportunities

Kanchan Bhatia,
Sagar Institute of Research and Technology,
Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh, India.
Email: drkanchanbhatia@gmail.com

Abstract

Culture shock exactly means the impact you may feel when you enter a culture very different from one to which you are accustomed. Culture shock is defined as the feeling of disorientation, insecurity, and anxiety one may feel in unfamiliar surroundings. Values, behaviors, and social customs we routinely take for granted may no longer serve us in our new environment. The symptoms of cultural shock are Isolation and Frustration, Sleeping a lot, Nervousness, Homesickness, Crying, absenteeism and lack of motivation. Due to these factors employee are no longer productive in any organization. International moving adds even more pressure than a national or regional move. It is common among immigrants and foreign students. No matter how well you are prepared there are many things in a culture that you cannot find in books. This is not simply about meeting new and unexpected things, but also failing to meet what you would never have believed would be missing from any culture. Differences in nonverbal communication and unwritten rules play a large part. Culture shock is a state of impaired ability to function due to 3 things - i. The absence of familiar or comforting characteristics of one's own culture, ii. The presence of seemingly irrational, inscrutable, offensive, or even hostile aspects of the target culture and iii. Lack of ability, linguistic or otherwise, to gain cultural understanding rapidly enough to adapt to these changes. If one has been living in another country for a long time - noted the obvious differences, felt comfortable, then begun to realize there are other more fundamental, but subtle differences - finally they will learn that folks have different ways of solving the same challenges. Thus the problem of cultural shock is a major issue which can’t be ignored. This paper is an attempt to investigate various cultural shock factors of an expatriate in USA and steps taken by department to overcome this so that employees can easily adjust to the changing situations. The method used for the study was semi structured Questionnaire with convenience Sampling. The outcome of the paper clearly indicates that there are certain major factors which causes cultural shock and methods of managing this is also suggested by Researcher.

Key words: Globalization, Cultural shock, Cultural shock factors, Expatriates
1. Introduction

As a result of Globalization the movement of an individual for foreign assignment becomes very common. People are moving more easily and frequently for traveling, studying, working and so forth. According to Chen et al., (2011) people are increasingly working in a diverse cultural environment where both organizations and individuals are facing the challenges of cultural diversity in a global world. Hofstede (1980), defines culture as the “collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group form another”.

Culture shock according to Kohl’s is defined as “The term used for the pronounced reactions to the psychological disorientation that is experienced a varying degrees when spending an extended period of time in a new environment”. One of the biggest challenge that an expatriate faces when entered into host country is lack of prior information about the culture of that country due to which feeling of dissatisfaction and discontentment occurs and thus comes the term called cultural shock. It may also result because of a person’s ethnocentric attitude. Ethnocentrism is a belief in the superiority of ones own ethnic group or culture. It leads to following Symptoms like Insomnia, feeling of depression, feeling powerless, stomachache, allergies, sadness, exploited or abused, feeling of being lost, lack of confidence, Insecurity, obsession like overeating, overdrinking, unnecessary fear etc.

1.1 Stages of Cultural shock

1.1.1 Honeymoon Stage

In this stage everything seems to be very wonderful. All the individuals enjoy very small things like going to restaurant or taking bus etc.

1.1.2 Disillusionment Stage

This is the stage which actually starts with gradual cultural shock. In this some difficulties are observed in daily routine like disliking people’s attitude, food, customs, feeling of discontentment, anger etc. This is the transition period of adopting from old to new culture

1.1.3 Enlightenment

Also known as understanding stage where new feeling of pleasure and sense of humor may be experienced. It seems like there is some direction and the individual is more familiar to the environment.

1.1.4 Integration

This stage comes when person stays in a country for a longer time period. This brings a feeling of strong sense of belongingness
1.1.5 Reentry Stage

Also known as reverse culture shock phase: This is the final stage when an individual returns to his home country. Now there is a feeling that things will be no longer same in his own country.

2. Literature Review

As a kind of emotional response to stress, culture shock is also examined with regard to individual psychology. Researchers define culture shock as the psychological disorientation experienced by an individual who suddenly enters radically different cultural environments to live and work (Oberg, 1960; Eschbach et al, 2001). Culture shock is seen as uncertainty that causes people to suffer anxiety, depression and isolation (Winkelman, 1994). Culture shock is defined as the uncertainty that a person feels when facing an unknown culture (Taff, 1977; Chen et al., 2011). Moreover, it is a common psychological response to an unfamiliar culture which in extreme cases may be characterized by depressed or paranoid behavior (Hunter & Whitten, 1976). Cultural problems arise from differences in behavior, thinking, assumptions, and values between U.S. people and those from other countries and cultures with whom they associate. These cultural differences often produce misunderstandings and lead to ineffectiveness in face-to-face communication (Tuleja, 2005). Gannon stated that “there are may good and obvious reasons for studying cross-cultural differences, including conservative estimate that somewhere between 25% and 50% of our basic values stem from culture” (2004) The experience of culture shock has been accepted as completely normal and even desirable, as it is seen as part of the successful process of adaptation for the employee. In Latin America work related stress is acknowledged as one of the big epidemics of modern working life; some specific cross sectional data show symptoms of High Blood Pressure and cardiovascular disease in Mexico, Brazil and Colombia (WHO, 2012).

3. Research Methodology

Research can be termed as a voyage of discovery, movement from unknown to known. It’s an art of scientific thinking, moreover it’s a systematic approach to define a problem and reach to a problem solving state. An effective research has following components –

3.1 Research Design

Design is the structure of any scientific work. It gives direction and approach to research. Here we would be conducting a Qualitative research

3.2 Data Collection

Data has been collected through primary and secondary sources. Citizens of India living in USA were selected for Participation in the study. The respondents were selected from wide variety of demographic and organisational background to reflect the true multinational workforce
structure. The Research methodology of this paper is based on the semi structured interview with the Indians residing in USA. During the initial interview they were asked about awareness of cultural shock. Once they started participating in the interview process they were asked to recall the incidents of culture shock and share their experiences relate to that. The interview was conducted for 60 respondents and sampling technique used was convenience sampling.

4. Objectives of Research

- To study the factors responsible for cultural shock
- To analyze measures adopted by HR to cope with cultural shock effects
- To study consequences of cultural shock on an expatriate

4.1 Data Analysis and Interpretation

Respondents of the Research are mainly Indians who are affected by the cultural shock of the Host country. After collecting data and assessing the accuracy and reliability of the 70 respondents, we have prepared the tabular presentation of the factors of cultural shock with their percentage. There were 10 major factors responsible for cultural shock. They are mainly Communication, Food, Team work, Emotional Intelligence, Dress, individualism/collectivism, Power Distance Time orientation, Perception, weather. The percentage wise distribution is as under-

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<th>S.No</th>
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<th>No of Respondents</th>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Food,</td>
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<td>Team work</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Emotional Intelligence</td>
<td>13</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Dress</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>individualism/collectivism</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Power Distance</td>
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While comparing all these factors we observe that English being the common language for Indians and Americans there was a very negligible percentage of cultural shock. Same is with Food also as there are large number of Indian food eateries available in America. The major
cultural shock factor was lack of Team work among members as the focus of American is on autocratic approach and not Participative. Similarly factor of individualism is also the issue as India follow collectivism. Weather affect was negligible as persons adjusted easily with that. The factor of Emotional intelligence was also a crucial factor as EQ quotients was less in Americans. They don’t much care about the feeling and emotions of their employees. To great extent as the people of America are very professional and the stability between Emotions and Practical app. The perception level also differs as Indian people, believe that everything goes by God’s will. They make short term plans. However, Americans always like to plan things ahead. They think they can/should control and dominate nature and the world around them. Americans are more goal-oriented, where as Indian people are more people oriented. They make their goals around people of the family. They even change their goals sometimes if they do not suit the needs of their family or family members. On the other hand, Americans are always ready to do anything to get the job done or achieve their goal

5. Conclusion

This research study reinforce the title of the research that cultural shock is a crucial matter to be focused as it effects expatriates in many terms. The study also reveals that cultural shock leads to many uncertainties thereby causing anxiety, depression, anger, isolation and many other diseases like insomnia and nervousness. Such factor should not be ignored at both Host country and Home country level. The findings of the study also demonstrate that Team work and Individualism are the major factors of cultural shock followed by Emotional Intelligence and Perception. Dress language and weather doesn’t play much role in creating dissatisfaction. However power distance and Time orientation can be managed according to time.

6. Suggestions

It is found that both the organizational and individual employees assigned for foreign assignments are responsible for cultural shock. Therefore it is the duty of both to adapt with the situational changes, the multinational organization should provide a cross culture training program related to the host country at the time of Orientation. This Program will comprise of entire details of the HR policies and Procedures and Organizational climate of the Parent country, also some experts will be called from parent country nations to share their cultural information rather then waiting for the employees to reach the Parent nation and attend the Orientation. A vestibule method of Training should be introduced which duplicate the original work environment of the Parent nation and employee will will work in a real life situation. After implementing all the steps at the Host country the next step of Training will be done at Parent Country nation Also
recruitment and selection can be used as an effective mechanism to gauge the cultural Quotient (CQ) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) of the Potential executive as supported by Gabel et al, (2005) study. Emotional intelligence plays a very important role in managing one owns emotions and understanding culture of others. Therefore expatriate can develop their EQ by training and Orientation Programs. Also the Hofstede’s model of Cross cultural differences is applies to study the nature of Parent country nations and on the basis of that survey a guidelines is to be introduced.

References
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