THE CULTURE SHOCK IN AN INTERCULTURAL SOCIETY

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Abstract- The culture shock in an intercultural society sometimes, when we meet a different culture, there is something that we can call anxiety and it emerges within us, something that changes our feelings, our attitudes. This can be a tendency to feel different and somehow worried about your new changes, and in these conditions, our response to the new culture becomes overwhelming. From this point of view, this can return you to your native culture earlier than expected. The article debates the physical and psychological symptoms of transition in a new culture, what we can call the culture shock, a culture contact, a very important part of acculturation, where we have to learn the survival skills, and where we change our attitudes in order to adapt and to have a better life or to be in a good membership. The content of the article The culture shock in an intercultural society focuses on the process of how we can adapt earlier to the new culture, how we can easier accept the culture shock and how we can deal with the stages of culture shock. In a world where everything is continuously changing, where people are being forced for different reasons to leave their country, their culture, or their families to find something better in another part of the world, to have a better life, we deal consciously or unconsciously with a culture shock which transfers you stress and anxiety. And in this culture shock, there is no better or worst experience, it just happens to everyone and it occurs in different ways. The article The culture shock in an intercultural society refers to a very special transition period and peoples feelings after entering a new culture.

The content of the article The culture shock in an intercultural society conducts us in the following topics:

- Stages of culture shock:
  1. Eager expectation stage
  2. When everything turns to be a very beautiful stage
  3. The stage of awful life
  4. The intercultural contact
  5. The perfect stage
- The process of adaptation:
  1. The nature feeling of cultural adaptation
  2. Communication and Adaptation in an intercultural society
  3. The intercultural reentry and the developing skills in Intercultural communication and culture stress.

As an emotional rollercoaster, the culture shock goes up and down with you, even if you are the most open-minded and cultural sensitive.

Keywords- Culture shock, Stages of culture shock, Intercultural contact, Communication and Adaptation, Acculturation in an intercultural society

I. INTRODUCTION

There comes a time in our life, when we have to undertake a journey, for study, for work, for traveling or for something else. And this journey can be for a short period of time or sometimes it is for years or for life. In doing so we discover a new world, a new culture, attitudes, habits, feelings that change us and especially our way of life. These statements typify people’s feelings which fall rather predictably into a pattern we call culture shock (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 201)

Culture shock refers to the special transition period and the accompanying feelings after entering a new culture and it is similar with stress and anxiety, but the concept particularly fits the unique feelings a person experiences during the first weeks to over a year after entering a new culture. There is no right or wrong experiencing culture shock – it happens to almost everyone, though it occurs in varying degrees. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 201)

The culture shock can block the intercultural communication and sometimes can create personal problems. A number of writers that have studied the causes and symptoms of culture shock, have outlined the stages where people enter and leave this transition period.

A. Stages of culture shock:

1. Eager expectation stage:
   1.1 When you decide that it is time to enter a new culture;
   1.2 In this stage you may feel excited and wary, you may be enjoying the new language and yet remain concerned about using it properly;
   1.3 According to Dodd, Carley H., you can anticipate how new people will respond to you and how they might reject you;
   1.4 Your vision of the future is full of optimism.

2. When everything turns to be a very beautiful stage:
   2.1 When you arrive in the new culture, you feel excited that you took the decision to come. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 2013)
   2.2 Everything is perfect: the food, the location, the people you meet, the new things;
   2.3 The “honeymoon” stage makes you feel as you would have discovered an utopia culture;
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2.4 This stage can last from a few weeks to six months and it is soon lost to a period of depression.

3. The stage of awful life:
The stage when everything seems to be a very beautiful, has gone and now everything is awful. There comes that period when you start to feel restless, disappointed, anxious, you are meeting more people who do not speak your language and you believe that your foreign language did not improve very much and you feel that you were wrong coming in that strange country. The host country seems indifferent. The period of culture shock is marked by a loss of social cues and a time of inconvenience that you had not experienced earlier. People may feel depression, loneliness, may have different attitudes and perceptions about the new culture and their life. This stage is not an obligatory for everybody. Some people may experience this stage, others not. People who cope with the frustration belong to the next four “F” ways:

a) Fight – they may also reject the nationals of that country, thinking that the people in that culture have inferior ways – in short, they look down on the culture of the host country and act ethnocentrically.

b) Flight – other people from this stage of culture shock remove themselves from the culture. They might avoid speaking or trying to learn the new language and they avoid contact with the host nationals. During this, they might develop depression problems, nervousness or they might experience homesickness.

c) Filter – people may experience three ways of filtering behavior which refers to a denial of reality. These people can deny any differences between themselves and people in the host culture or between their hometowns and their city in the new culture. The second way in which these people filter is by glorifying their home country. And the third reaction of this filtering is to “remain native” - sometimes people totally reject their old culture and enthusiastically adopt the host nation’s culture.

d) Flex – the visitors try new things and reflect in events, trying to sort out the frustrations and understand them. They begin to look at life in the new culture and reflect why the people act in a certain way. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 205)

4. The intercultural contact and the perfect stage:

4.1 After a few months in the new intercultural contact, people may discover the positive and the negative in different balanced manners. They learn about the new culture and the feelings and attitudes that they had before, now have improved. Now, the intercultural contact develops better than a few months ago and the problems that they had before have disappeared.

4.2 The intercultural contact can produce attitude change and produces acceptance of the new culture’s ideas, people and environment;

4.3 If people change their opinion about the new culture and accept that everybody is different, and that there is no bad or good things, only different situations, other manners of life, then the intercultural contact at stage can produce interesting experiences in life and new opportunities appear.

B. The process of adaptation:

1. The nature feeling of cultural adaptation

Culture contact can also produce attitude change, and intercultural contact generally leads to attitude change toward individuals from the contact culture. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 207). However this “contact hypotheses” works in different ways, depending on the following conditions:

- if one member has a negative stereotype of the other, positive attitudes do not necessarily result.
- equality of status is important for positive attitudes to result.
- previous contact reduces significant change in current contact.
- the contact must be rewarding for positive attitudes to emerge. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p.207)

2. Communication and Adaptation in an intercultural society:

The process of acculturation often involves adaption to the host culture, and for this reason we deal with several variables which have been examined in an attempt to identify the communication and participation activities of individuals arriving to live permanently in a new culture:

- ethnic identification – when a minority person or immigrant seeks identification with familiar people, customs, language.
- friendships – although ethnic identification remains higher than identification with persons in cultural groups other than minority, studies indicate that, as time passes, intercultural friendships develop.
- cultural involvement – the longer a person lives in a new culture, the more that person tends to become more culturally involved.

The acculturation is a process that might not occur in the same manner for everyone because there are people who are motivated to acculturate while others are not. It is observed that for adult immigrants it is harder to adapt to a new culture, while for their children, the immediate culture contact it is easier and the total integration depends upon several factors. It is known that small children comprehend and understand easier a foreign language then adults. The culture shock is sometimes almost unobserved for children, but for adults, there always will be problems caused by culture shock.
3. The intercultural reentry and the developing skills in Intercultural communication and culture stress. Austin (1987) said that the minority of people returning to their home country face stress in reentry and that in some cases the need for counseling is obvious. This is more applicable for immigrant’s children whom after a few years of living in a foreign culture come back home, and begin having real problems of reaccommodation, readaptation to a language that they do not know or they have forgotten. The cycle of reentry stress is similar to the cycle of entry stress experienced upon first arrival in a new culture. From this reason they need psychological counseling. At the first sight, the home culture looks negative. According to Austin (1987) a reason for reentry depression is that the person facing reentry may experience a value change. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 210). Speaking about a reverse culture shock, or cultural reentry, we can say that as an emotional rollercoaster, the culture shock goes up and down with you, even if you are the most open minded and cultural sensitive. Adapting to new cultures involves first working through culture shock and following suggestions should assist a person not only trough culture shock but also in long term adaptation.

Examples of suggestions:
- do not become over reactionary.
- meet new people.
- try new things.
- give yourself periods of rest and thought.
- work on your self concept.
- write and observe body language.
- learn the verbal language. (Dodd, Carley H., 1987, p. 212)

CONCLUSIONS

The article highlights the importance of ethnic identity during the early acculturation years for immigrants and how important it is to make friends from the host culture and to become a member of a social group. The ethnic heritage should not be a barrier in communication, it should be a bridge which establishes the connection with foreign cultures, different attitudes, feelings and values. Personally I have discovered that staying inside, is not a solution when you are in a new culture, and communication with other people is the perfect way of avoiding a culture shock.

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