# Czech University of Agriculture

Faculty of Economics and Management

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## SYNOPSIS

**CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN BUSINESS, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT**

# CULTURE SHOCK OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS


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In today's world of integration and globalisation it is very important to be able to act and think in the frame of cross-cultural communication in general. Communication on the cross- cultural level can be studied in all different fields such as business, administration and management as you can find in the title of the thesis. According to this wide range of cross-cultural coverage, I have decided to concentrate on the phenomena of "Culture Shock" of international students.

The main aim of this thesis is affirming or disproving my hypothesis, that university environment is a special kind of community, which has similar characteristics in all cultures and that is why the process of culture shock of host students is not exactly the same as the classical type of culture shock in general. Secondly there is described the fact, how does the Czech University of Agriculture cope with the problem of culture shock of incoming students and whether special programs or trainings for new international students are offered. According to the research the thesis brings some new solutions, how the stay of international students and the impacts of culture shock can be improved.

The first part of this thesis is more theoretical. It deals with the background research on the topic of culture shock. After defining the cross-cultural communication and its model, basic features and symptoms of culture shock are explained. More in detail are characterised the acculturation curve and stages of the whole culture shock procedure. The last section of the background includes a chapter about factors, which can lead to successful intercultural adjustments and also a brief overview about possibilities of learning intercultural communication.

More specific is the second part, which includes the psychological research among different international students at the Czech University of Agriculture in Prague. After the explanation of features of culture shock, particular stages of acculturation were studied, and observed on the sample. A narrative interview was used as a main method of the research. The results from the interview corresponded successfully with the general theory of culture shock. The first phase of the process - Euphoria, was experienced by majority in the first three weeks, as in the sample were mostly students coming to CUA for one semester.

In the second stage negative aspects of culture shock arrive. What kind of these aspects were and how did they influence the sojourn of the students at CUA is explained in the discussion of results as a part of a last chapter. They faced different kind of difficulties concerning language, food, time, service and other issues. Some of the assumptions were supported by the students´ stories during the interviews. The general assumption was that the university environment is a special kind of community, which has similar characteristics in all cultures and that, is why the process of culture shock of host students is not exactly the same as the classical type of culture shock in general. After the research it is obvious, that there exists several stories and opinions of exchange students, which are supporting the general assumption.

Furthermore, also the narratives encouraged some other hypotheses such as: those students who have more contact with the local people (for example through some kind of international community), are able to better understand the new culture that they find themselves in, and therefore are able to better cope with their new experiences; the exchange students are all in the same situation and therefore have, to a certain extent, the same experiences and understand the problems that another student might have with adapting him-/herself, so contact with other exchange students is a positive factor in the process of acculturation; those who still have a lot of contact with friends and family back home will probably experience more culture shock, because they have more problems to detach themselves from their home country and the life that they had there; those students who feel rejected by the Czech culture are expected to have more problems with getting adjusted to the new environment; students who do not have enough abilities to communicate with either the Czech people (because of insufficient knowledge of both the English and the Czech language) or the other exchange students, will probably have more problems, they benefit less from the advantages of intensive contact with those two groups; those who need to share their room do not have a lot of privacy, and those with just one roommate might miss some company - in both cases, culture shock experiences can be greater. There is also a high tendency that the more distant the culture, the more difficult is the process of adjustment for the student.

As additional method a questionnaire consisting of four parts was used. These four parts include Personal data, Housing situation in Prague, Social contact and University environment.

All of the assumptions should have been confirmed or disproved by using a correlation analysis among variables from the questionnaire. Nevertheless, as the return rate of questionnaires was very low, it was not possible to analyse these correlations, because they were not statistically significant. All this is caused by the small size of the sample. However, the questionnaire offers good information about the student's personal, social and academic life, and the correlation can be a subject of further research with a bigger sample.

Another additional tool was conducted. Research about problems faced by international students. This method investigates what are the 10 most commonly experienced problems by international students of living and learning abroad.

Finally several recommendations and advice were suggested, how to make a life of an international student at CUA in Prague easier, while facing culture shock. Some of the main suggestions are: Implementation of a Buddy (Tutoring) system at CUA in Prague, organisation of more programmes for international students, better orientation system - such things as signs in English, menu in the university canteen in English, a guidebook for international students, which is readable and enough in amount of copies, so that everybody can get one etc.

I think that all ideas coming from students can be a good challenge for the university. In my opinion, most of the students, who came to study to CUA in Prague in 2003/4, have managed their problems as well as pleasures, and finally they admit their positive attitude to Czech culture and the country itself. This was also a very positive experience for me to meet so many different cultures and to interact with most of the international students at CUA.

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