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April 2011

Online at <http://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/33205/>
MPRA Paper No. 33205, posted 07. September 2011 / 00:50

The Lived Experience of an American Expatriate in Ghana: A Rhetorical Analysis of Facebook Postings to Understand a Cross-Cultural Behavior

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Abstract

Using rhetorical analyses of the Facebook updates and postings, the lived experience of an American Expatriate in Ghana is told through the lenses of a Ghanaian living in the United States. The study reviews the contemporary understanding and importance of expatriation to organizations and provides detailed description and analysis of different models with theoretical base from cognitive and social psychology and sociology including models developed by Fons Trompenaars, Geert Hofstede, Harry Triandis, and E.T. Hall to understand the thinking and behavior of this expatriate as revealed through postings on his Facebook page. The paper concludes by re-affirming the importance of pre-departure cultural sensitivity training and the significant role of HRD professionals even in non-typical HRD –related organizations.

Introduction

In starting this study, I acknowledged how tricky it can be to bring Facebook or any other popular literacy into academic discourse “without seeming to frame it as a lowbrow object of intellectual contempt” (Fife, 2010 p. 556) and being rejected by editors of disciplinary journals. Farmer (1998) has noted “the perception among students [and academe] that cultural critique is a privileged, elitist mode of inquiry, one that is largely indifferent to, if not contemptuous of, those it presumably seeks to enlighten or liberate” (p. 204). However, I believe that if in practice Human Resource Development professionals are using Facebook and other social networking sites as a powerful HRD tool in practice, then it is important that research is used to support the practice. According to an article published in July 21, 2010 edition of New York Times:

... a recent survey by Microsoft, 75 percent of U.S. recruiters and human-resource professionals report that their companies require them to do online research about candidates, and many use a range of sites when scrutinizing applicants — including search engines, social-networking sites, photo- and video-sharing sites, personal Web sites and blogs, Twitter and online-gaming sites. Seventy percent of U.S. recruiters report that they have rejected candidates because of information found online, like photos and discussion-board conversations and membership in controversial groups.

[Rossen 2010, New York Times]

This paper, however, is not about studying the effectiveness of using social networking sites for cross-cultural studies or as effective tools for HRD practitioners. It is about using a social networking site, in this case Facebook, to tell the story of an expatriate by a third person: A story, which otherwise, may not have been possible to tell, to understand the importance of pre-departure cultural sensitivity training.

The purpose of this study is therefore to conduct rhetorical analysis of Facebook status updates of an American expatriate in Ghana to understand his Cross-Cultural Behavior and relevance of pre-departure training. The study is done by reviewing the contemporary understanding of expatriation and uses different models with theoretical base from cognitive and social psychology and sociology including models developed by Fons Trompenaars; Geert Hofstede; Harry Triandis; and E.T. Hall to understand the thinking and behavior of this expatriate. The background of the expatriate is told and a rhetorical analysis of his Facebook postings is done. Conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made for the relevance of pre-departure training for expatriates.

Contemporary understanding of expatriation

An expatriation is when an employee is sent to live and work in a country other than the one in which the employee legally resides (Thomas & Inkson, 2009). It is essential that the difference between an expatriate and an immigrant is made clear. In most cases expatriates are not in their country by their own volition and have no intention on residing permanently in their host country. On the other hand, immigrants are usually in the new country of residence out of their own will and acquire permanent residence or citizenship there. The etymology of expatriate clearly explains who an expatriate is. It takes its origins from two Latin words: 'ex' meaning 'out of', and 'patria' meaning 'country'.

The expatriation literature is filled with the need to transfer resources to a foreign country as a main reason for expatriating home-country nationals to foreign partners (Briody & Chrisman, 1991). Substantial portion of the literature also deals with aspects of HRD relating to how employees are selected and trained, employee performance during the time abroad, and repatriation and settling of employees after expatriation (Black & Mendenhall, 1990; Deshpande & Viswesvaran, 1992; Kealey & Prothero, 1996; Tung, 1982). Cross-cultural studies and training are mostly part of all these stages with the underlying assumption that knowledge of the host culture will contribute to success. It is commonplace to find most of the literature on cultural influences on expatriate success emphasizing the importance of understanding the culture of the target country and how to get accustomed to the cultural practices, norms and behavior (Black, 1992; Fenwick et al, 1999; Gannon & Pillai, 2009; Katz & Seifer, 1996; Osman-Gani, 2000; Randolph & Sashkin, 2002; Selmer, 2001; Thomas & Inkson, 2009). These studies have contributed greatly to the understanding of success or failure of expatriation as a result of one's level of cultural intelligence. However, the process of expatriation is perceived as lacking in-

depth theoretical explanation or empirical support. It is important to understand that the relationship between expatriation and host country culture is grounded in theory, and that the nature of this relationship is embedded in HRD theory and practice.

Expatriation is a popular practice among Multi-National Corporations (MNCs) despite the associated cost (O'Boyle, 1989). The cost-benefit analyses of most expatriation in MNCs indicate that the benefits outweigh the cost. Some of the benefits of expatriation to employers include: Facilitation of the corporate-subsidary cross-cultural understanding to improve communications; provision of real-time needed skill to a subsidiary or branch; stop gap measure to meet staffing requirements; and, instrument to facilitate, enforce, protect, and control corporate interests in vital markets (Bird & Dunbar, 1991; Boyacigiller, 1991; Dowling, Schuler, & Welch, 1994; Rosenzweig, 1994).

The individual in the case under discussion in this paper is not an expatriate belonging to a multi-national but a religious organization. Although, he is an ordained priest and was sent to Ghana by a Christian religious organization he cannot be described as a missionary because he is not there to 'preach the gospel' he is there to administer projects of the religious organization in West Africa and serve as a liaison officer between the Church in U.S. and that of West Africa as an expatriate.

Cultural differences between Ghana and the United States using popular models

To help situate the paper in the proper context and also bring to fore the critical cultural determinants and differences between Ghana and the United States, different models with theoretical base from cognitive and social psychology and sociology including models developed by Fons Trompenaars, Geert Hofstede, Harry Triandis and E.T. Hall are used.

The Trompenaars framework

Trompenaars (1993) using social attitudes perspective categorized culture into seven “dilemmas” to elucidate societal differences. Each of these dilemmas as he called them is discussed in the context of United States and Ghana.

Universalism versus Particularism: Universalism is predicated on the belief that ideas and practices are applicable universally without modification. Particularism on the other hand describes how application of ideas and practices should be informed by situational factors and circumstances. The United States is of Universalist orientation and insists on the ubiquitous following of procedures and contracts. Ghana is of particularist cultural orientation and rules are mostly taken for granted, and places more emphasis on relationships and trust.

Communitarianism versus Individualism: The United States is an individualistic society and as such people make decisions and take responsibility and credit for their own success and failures. Ghana belongs to cultures with a communitarian orientation where the community is placed above the individual. Success is achieved collectively, decisions are taken by committees, and there are shared responsibilities.

Neutral versus Emotional (Affective): Neutral cultures believe in keeping one’s emotions in check in public dealings whereas emotional cultures allow the open expression of natural emotions. Both Ghana and the United States belong to the emotional (affective) culture. However, on a continuum the United States will be classified as more affective than Ghana.

Diffuse versus Specific: In specific cultures people tend to engage others only in specific areas of life (e.g., Business associates are not invited to family gatherings, or don’t know about

one's hobbies). In diffuse cultures, there is an overlap between multiple areas of people's activities. Both Ghana and the United States are diffuse cultures with Ghana even more diffused.

Achievement versus Ascription: The United States is an achievement-oriented culture whereas Ghana is ascription-oriented culture. In achievement-oriented cultures the status of individuals is a function of their performance while in ascription oriented cultures status is conferred on people based largely on who or what a person is. In the United States, accordance of status is based on the individual's personal achievements, whereas in Ghana factors such as age, gender, royalty, and family or social connections are often the key consideration in according status.

Sequential time versus synchronic time: The United states belong to Cultures with a sequential approach to time and usually will like to undertake task sequentially. Punctuality in appointments is a core value and Americans are strict adherents to schedules. Ghana belongs to cultures where approach to time is synchronous. Ghanaians prefer to multitask, than to do things in sequential manner, do not adhere strictly to scheduled appointments, and schedules are subordinated to relationships.

Control of Nature versus Harmony with Nature: People in control of nature cultures of which the United States belongs believe they are in control of the outcomes of their actions. People in Harmony with Nature cultures of which Ghana belongs to place less emphasis on their own actions and let things take their own course (Kale & De, 2008). Control of Nature cultures strive to control their environment whereas Harmony with Nature cultures believe that they are controlled by their environment and that they cannot do much about it (Kale & De, 2008).

The Hofstede’s Model of Cultural Dimensions

This is by far the most popular model when it comes to analyzing national cultures. Suffice to say that like every model it has drawbacks but it is one of the most, if not, the most cited when it comes to analyzing national cultures. It was developed out of a research study on cultural differences in 64 countries IBM was operating (Hofstede 1999). With further research, four independent dimensions of national culture differences were identified and validated, with a fifth dimension added later. These dimensions are discussed in the context of Ghana and the United States. The descriptions of the dimensions are drawn heavily from Hofstede (1999; 1983) and Geert Hofstede™ Cultural Dimensions website.

Power Distance Index (PDI): The PDI describes the degree to which the “less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally”. This is a classical bottom-up definition and representation of inequality (more versus less), and not top-down. What this means is that inequality in societal context is endorsed by both followers and leaders. As can be seen from Table 1, Ghana has a high PDI of 77 as compared to 40 of the United States. This means citizens of the United States have greater opportunity to rise in society, although compared to Austria for example which has a PDI of 11, the PDI of the U.S. is relatively high.

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Ghana	77	20	46	54	16
United States	40	91	62	46	29

Table 1: Hofstede's cultural Scale for Ghana and the United States

Individualism (IDV): This dimension is similar to the individualism/communitarianism dimension, discussed under Trompenaar’s framework. IDV is “on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups.” United States is a highly individualist society in which very loose ties exist between individuals: they

operate on the idiom, 'each one for oneself God for us all.' Ghana, on the other hand, is a very strong collectivist society, where "people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty." Triandis (1995, 2001) as cited in Lee and Choi (2005) suggested that individualism and collectivism may be horizontal where equality takes precedence or vertical where hierarchy takes precedence and that not everyone in individualistic cultures is an individualist, whereas everyone in collectivistic cultures is a collectivist. For the purposes of the current study this is not discussed in detail.

Masculinity (MAS): This is a range like all the other dimensions with femininity at the other end of the continuum. Hofstede described MAS as the distribution of roles between the genders with values of men ranging from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. As can be seen from Table 1, the United States is more masculine which means that her people will be more assertive than Ghanaians.

Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI): Hofstede described UAI as the level of a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity and the extent a society molds its people to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in novel, unknown, surprising, different situations from usual. Ghana is an uncertainty avoiding culture in relation to the United States which can be described as an uncertainty accepting culture in relation to Ghana. So Americans are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to and are more phlegmatic and contemplative, whereas Ghanaians are more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. I must however, add that the differences between the two countries in terms of UAI are not big.

Long-Term Orientation (LTO): At the opposite end of this cultural dimension continuum is short-term orientation. This cultural dimension deals with Virtue regardless of Truth. “Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'”. Both Ghana and the United States have very low score on LTO with Ghana being even lower.

Edward T. Hall’s model

Edward T Hall described three cultural factors for analyzing national cultures. These factors are Context, Time and Space (Hall, 1976).

Factor	High-context culture	Low-context culture
Overtness of messages	Many covert and implicit messages, with use of metaphor and reading between the lines.	Many overt and explicit messages which are simple and clear.
Locus of control and attribution for failure	Inner locus of control and personal acceptance for failure	Outer locus of control and blame of others for failure
Use of non-verbal communication	Much nonverbal communication	More focus on verbal communication than body language
Expression of reaction	Reserved, inward reactions	Visible, external, outward reaction
Cohesion and separation of groups	Strong distinction between in-group and out-group. Strong sense of family.	Flexible and open grouping patterns, changing as needed
People bonds	Strong people bonds with affiliation to family and community	Fragile bonds between people with little sense of loyalty.
Level of commitment to relationships	High commitment to long-term relationships. Relationship more important than task.	Low commitment to relationship. Task more important than relationships.
Flexibility of time	Time is open and flexible. Process is more important than product	Time is highly organized. Product is more important than process

Table 2: Differences between HCC and LCC © Straker, D. (2008)

Context as cultural factor: Hall described context as rudiments that help people to understand the rules and actions within a specific culture. Societies with many contextual elements are referred to as high-context culture; and low-context cultures are societies where

little is taken for granted and therefore less chance of misunderstanding by other people who are not familiar with the culture (Hall, 1959). Ghana is a high-context culture whereas United States is a low-context culture. Table 2 obtained from Straker, (2008) describes the differences between the two cultural factors.

Time as a cultural factor: Hall categorized cultures into monochronic and polychronic based on their perception and usage of time. Monochronic cultures which are usually LCC and members of that culture exhibit careful planning and scheduling whereas polychronic cultures are more interested inhuman interaction than time and material things, and get things done more in their own time. Ghana is a highly polychronic culture whereas United States is monochronic. Table 3 taken from Straker (2008) describes the differences between the two categories of time as cultural element described by Hall.

Factor	Monochronic action	Polychronic action
Actions	Do one thing at a time	Do many things at once
Focus	Concentrate on the job at hand	Are easily distracted
Attention to time	Think about when things must be achieved	Think about what will be achieved
Priority	Put the job first	Put relationships first
Respect for property	Seldom borrow or lend things	Borrow and lend things often and easily
Timeliness	Emphasize promptness	Base promptness on relationship factors

Table 3: Differences between monochronic and polychronic cultures © Straker, D. (2008)

Space as a cultural factor: E. T Hall developed the theory of ‘Proxemics’ which describes space and a person’s relationships within it (Hall, 1983). Two types of space requirements exist, high or low territoriality. High territoriality cultures have people who are more territorial with greater concern for space ownership and the United States belongs to that culture. Ghana on the other hand is a low-territoriality culture and its members have less ownership of space and boundaries are less important to them (Straker, 2008).

Who is Joe Heckerman?¹

Before I delve into the background of Joe Heckerman (JH), I will briefly say a little about myself to help place this paper in the proper context. I was born, educated to the graduate level, and worked for over 14 years in Ghana. I have also travelled extensively to several countries studying, visiting and participating in conferences. The countries I have visited are too numerous to mention here. For the past 4 years I have been studying and working in the United States. Being trained and visiting these different countries have given me extensive knowledge in different spheres and cultures. I have had the opportunity to meet diverse people through whom I have come to confront ideas and philosophies divergent from mine. My experiences, have apprised me of a past and a present, enabling me to undertake this study from a position of studied and lived understanding of cultural sensitivity.

Joe Heckerman is a white male born in the United States. He has a BS in Social Studies and an MA in Theology. He is an ordained minister of one of the protestant churches in North America. At 35 years he is not married. The main international experience of Joe Heckerman prior to his posting to Ghana 14 months ago was a one year stay in Ghana as a Peace Corp teaching in an elementary school in rural Ghana after completion of his first degree. I met Joe when I came to study in the U.S. and became very good friends. We shared several weekends together talking about his experiences in Ghana and the very fond memories he had about living in rural Ghana. I had a lot of admiration for him because within the very short time as a Peace Corp in Ghana he was able to learn and speak one of the main Ghanaian languages, a language I cannot speak or understand even as a Ghanaian, since I do not belong to that ethnic group.

Joe was posted to Ghana as a liaison between the Church in North America and that of West Africa. This is exactly seven years after returning from Ghana as a Peace Corp and having

¹ Joe Heckerman is not the real name of the individual under discussion here to protect his privacy

obtained a MA in Theology and ordained as a Priest. Although he is officially working in the offices of the Church in Ghana he is answerable to his superiors in North America.

Methodology for Rhetorical Analysis

Different frameworks exist to analyze the rhetorical choices of a writer but it is obviously difficult for status updates which are very short pieces. One of the methods is a simple five-part rhetorical framework (Wyatt, 2010). This framework is not definitive; it simplifies the analysis process. The rhetorical framework used in this study was obtained from Anon. (2010) using a similar framework like the five part framework but with an additional dimension making it a six-part framework designed specifically for rhetorical analysis of Facebook status updates. The textbox shown is the description of the framework as obtained from the source (Anon., 2010). In this study not all the rhetoric questions were answered. The rhetoric analysis chart created for this study contained only the broad dimensions of the six part framework.

From October 13, 2009 to December 1, 2010, Joe Heckerman posted 217 updates on his Facebook page related to Ghana. There were also several of his responses to comments on his status updates which were also very culturally sensitive that formed part of the analysis. In conducting the rhetorical analysis a spread sheet was created where all the updates were listed according to date. Updates which had no bearing on his stay in Ghana were not considered.

Facebook Status Updates: Rhetorical Analysis Questions

1. Purpose (intent)

a. What is the author's purpose for writing this piece?

i. **Expressive** – focus on writer

ii. **Informative** – focus on subject

iii. **Persuasive** – focus on audience

b. What does the writer want the reader to feel and/or do as a result of reading this piece?

2. Writer/Speaker

a. Characterize the **persona** created by the author.

i. What rhetorical choices has the author made to create this persona?

ii. How does this persona suit the author's purpose and audience?

b. What rhetorical devices does the writer use to create **voice** in the piece?

i. What is the **tone** of the piece? (Examine the diction used in the piece.)

ii. What **attitude** does the piece take on?

3. Audience

a. What **assumptions** has the author made about his or her audience?

b. How has this knowledge of audience influenced his or her attempts to create:

1. **Ethos** - credibility

2. **Logos** - logic

3. **Pathos** - emotions

c. How are these appeals to audience **appropriate** to the piece's purpose?

4. Treatment of Subject

a. How has the author **developed** his or her subject to suit his or her purpose and audience?

b. How has the subject been treated?

i. **Fairly**?

ii. **Fully**?

iii. **Effectively**?

5. Context

a. In what ways has the piece's context influenced the author's rhetorical choices?

b. How has the author tapped into historical, cultural, and other contexts to **best suit** his or her purpose and audience?

6. Genre

a. Identify the genre of the piece (what **form** does the piece take on?)

b. Given the author's purpose and the context surrounding the piece, why has the author **chosen this genre to express his or her ideas**?

c. How is the genre **suit**ed to the author's purpose and chosen audience?

Findings and Discussions

Joe Heckerman's Facebook Postings

My search in the academic literature on what one's Facebook status says about the person did not reveal much. However, it is a truism that the single line or two of various Facebook statuses or updates basically expresses who an individual is today, how the person lives, what's important in his/her life. Because of this, Facebook and other social networking sites have

become important tools in the hands of Human Resource Development professionals and this study is not the first to discuss an important HRD-related issue using a social networking site.

Joe Heckerman arrived in Ghana on October 13, 2009 and, as it is his practice, started updating his Facebook status, and at an even faster rate than he usually does. Within a month after his arrival in Ghana I started getting a lot of concerns being expressed by friends who are Ghanaians we share together on Facebook about some of Joe's Facebook updates which they found very inappropriate, offensive, and culturally insensitive. Using rhetorical analysis, this study tried to understand the reasons for Joe's Facebook updates in the context of an international HRD issue.

From the rhetorical analysis of JH's page each of the updates could be regarded as just an ordinary social information and was quite insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of JH's cultural awareness of Ghana. Table 4 shows part of the overall rhetorical analysis. What is shown is just a random selection of some of the updates from the main rhetorical analysis chart. Further work on this study will be to take each of the dimensions of either or all of the different cultural models described earlier in this paper and create more columns on the rhetorical analysis chart to give a better cultural assessment of Joe Heckerman's cultural intelligence. Another interesting further analysis from this kind of study will be to find the correlation between the rhetoric intensity and Bennett's (1993) 'Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity'. Bennett described six levels of progression in intercultural sensitivity which included:

- Denial – A situation where the individual is in a state of denial and does not recognize cultural differences.
- Defense – This is the second developmental stage where the person start to appreciate that differences exists, but sees them as negative
- Minimization – The individual involuntarily elevates own cultural values as superior
- Acceptance – This stage of intercultural sensitivity development is when the person begins to acknowledge that the same mundane behavior can have different connotations in the host culture
- Adaptation – this is when the person can see the behavior of others from their frame of reference and can exhibit behavioral change to suit the values and norms of the host culture
- Integration – This is the final stage of intercultural sensitivity development and the individual can shift frame of reference and also be able to handle any consequential identity issues.

This is a developmental model that explains people’s reactions to cultural differences; and using the rhetorical analyses it will be interesting to find out the rhetoric intensity as the person moves along the continuum. Although, as the entire rhetorical analyses showed, just one status update cannot be used as a frame of reference, however, an update like the one of April 26, 2010 can casually place JH at the minimization stage:

“One of the true strengths of American culture is that we are expected to treat others with dignity and respect, even if they are from a different social or economic class. And we say thank you, even if we're paying for, or think our position deserves, service. It really distinguishes us from most places in the world.”

This statement clearly indicates that JH was elevating his own cultural values as superior.

Date & Time	Facebook Status	Purpose	Persona & Voice	Audience	Treatment of Subject	Context	Genre
Oct 10, 2009	Leaving for Ghana on Monday. U.S., I'll see you again in 2012 (or I hope for vacation sometime before that.)	Informative	Friendly	American	Fully and effectively	normal	Technical
Oct 15, 2009	People are so nice, everywhere you go people are eager to help	Expressive	Friendly	All	Fairly	normal	Descriptive
Oct 19, 2009	Can I survive the next three years in this country? It is so depressing to wait for people at every function and come smiling at you. How can any country develop with this kind of attitude?	Expressive	Frustrated	All	Fairly	Situational	narrative
June 17, 2010	Why can't people take sarcasm here! Always getting into trouble just being sarcastic in a very nice way	Emotive	Frustrated	American	Fairly	Situational	persuasive
July 11, 2010	Hypocrisy at its core! Everybody wants to be seen as righteous in public, but behave differently in private	Expressive	Ironic	All	Fairly	Experience	Expository
Oct 20, 2009	It is hard to live in a country where you have to trample on the poor to get whatever you want. So frustrating	Emotive	Sarcastic	American	Poorly	historical	Persuasive
Sept 7 2010	I was told today I ask too many questions. And all I was asking was directions ... what town is that over there? I sometimes get frustrated by the apparent lack of curiosity here. And I sometimes find myself thinking it has some connecting to the under developed state of the place.	Expressive	Frustrated	American	Fully and effectively	Experience	Expository
Sept 24 2010	You have to give people a lot of credit for being able to do well within a system that doesn't facilitate, and perhaps even hinders, their flourishing. The question that rarely gets asked - and often you face criticism for asking - is why is the system set up this way and what can be done to change it for the better.	Questioning	Inquisitive	American	Fully	historical	Technical
April 26 2010	One of the true strengths of American culture is that we are expected to treat others with dignity and respect, even if they are from a different social or economic class. And we say thank you, even if we're paying for, or think our position deserves, service. It really distinguishes us from most places in the world.	Comparative	Egoistic	American	Fully	historical	Poetic
Oct 23, 2009	I am so very frustrated with this driver I hired. He never disagrees with whatever I say and answers yes to everything, but will refuse to do most of what I say	Emotive	Frustrated	American	Fully and effectively	Experience	Expository
Dec 22, 2009	This guy in my office is either delusional or had no shame! You just got to know me and you want me to borrow you some money.	Informative	Sarcastic	All	Fairly	Experience	Descriptive

Table 4: Random selection of part of rhetorical analysis of Facebook status updates of Joe Heckerman

The significance of the rhetorical analysis was to understand the ‘how’ and ‘why’ and not necessary the ‘what’ that he wrote. Analysis of JH’s statuses indicates that he is on ‘cultural cruise’ control and has a low level of cultural awareness of Ghana. The quotation above clearly indicates that he does not understand that Ghana is a very high context country and that saying thank you in most instances is implied. Space and time consideration will not allow for detailed discussions of several of this. However, from the rhetoric analysis in relation to the various cultural models discussed give a clear understanding of the behavior of Joe Heckerman as someone with very low cultural intelligence and culturally insensitive.

Conclusions and implications for HRD Practice

Using rhetoric analysis of Facebook statuses this study has been able to identify lack of cultural awareness of an American expatriate in Ghana. In sending their employee to Ghana as an expatriate, the organization did not find it necessary to offer any pre-departure training. The reasons for this may be conjectural but highly plausible: JH having stayed previously in Ghana for a year was assumed to be very aware and sensitive to Ghanaian culture. What the organization failed to recognize is that, he was being sent there for a very different role, in a different capacity and under a completely different circumstances and environment.

Secondly, the organization may have assumed that as a priest, he is trained to have people skills and understanding of cultural diversity. The failure here is that, cultural sensitivity is not inherent and that pre-departure training is very important for everyone. As a religious organization, it is possible that there is not a well defined HRD portfolio, as it is, what I describe, as a ‘non-typical HRD organization’.

On a personal level, JH also assumed that Ghanaian culture is homogenous. Having stayed in a rural area in Ghana for a year where he was living among people of the same heritage, language, and attitude and far from the hustle and swift life of the big cities, he assumed that Ghanaian culture is about all that he experienced during his earlier stay in Ghana.

The implication of this study for the practice of HRD is significant: Cross-cultural pre-departure training for all employees is very important and no assumptions should be made about an employee's cultural intelligence. Social Networking sites can be powerful tools for non-invasively tracking the 'private lives' of employees to help for better personnel development. This study on its own may also serve as training guide to future expatriates to Ghana.

Ethical Information

Due consideration has been given to ethical, legal, and social implications of this study. A waiver was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Minnesota and the informed consent of the subject was obtained.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to Prof. A. Ardichvili of the Department of Organizational Leadership Policy and Development, University of Minnesota for his initial critique of this paper. I want thank my wife, Ivy (Johnson-Kanda) Yawson for painstakingly compiling all of JH's Facebook status updates into an excel spreadsheet. I also wish to thank the anonymous reviewer of the blind manuscript for the insightful suggestions. Finally, to Christina Dobrovolny, of IRB, University of Minnesota, for her professional help in getting an IRB waiver for this study.

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