

Abstract

Acculturation of the sample of expatriate senior managers - sojourners working in the Czech Republic was studied using structured longitudinal survey. Quantitative analysis of the survey data was supported by qualitative analysis. For comparison, the process of acculturation was also investigated in the sample of immigrant senior managers to Australia. Major aim of this research was, apart from gaining theoretical knowledge, an attempt to better understand the process of cultural adaptation of sojourners - senior managers responsible for the transfer of management know-how to companies in the Czech Republic in order to improve their competitive advantage.

The success of adaptation of sojourners - senior managers in the Czech Republic was studied using indicators of adaptation success (Reflective Effect Indicators-REI) including Goldberg's General Health Questionnaire (GHQ) and satisfaction scales. Research was longitudinal, the first interview was conducted about six months, and the second interview was conducted about eighteen months after arrival of investigated subjects into the new cultural environment.

The results indicate that acculturation of sojourners in the Czech Republic proceeded, as is the case in other cultures, according to the Hofstede's acculturation "U" curve. Acculturation was successful, which means that there was a statistically significant reduction in acculturation stress between first and second interview, measured by Goldberg's GHQ index. This study also supports results of Berry's research in Canada, which asserts, that sojourners generally experience higher acculturation stress than immigrants.

This study also tested hypotheses concerning the effect of some factors on respondent acculturation. The results were statistically significant: females - senior managers had more problems with acculturation in the Czech Republic than males, younger sojourners were more successful at acculturation than their older colleagues, sojourner who had social contacts with Czechs were more successful at acculturation, than those who did not and sojourners who did not have previous adaptation experience, were more successful at acculturation than those who did. Satisfaction with new cultural environment did not improve from the first, to the second interview.

The results of the qualitative research, including in-depth interviews, point to a number of factors which influence acculturation of sojourners in the Czech Republic. Most importantly they are: lack of knowledge of Czech language by sojourners, negative attitudes from the Czech side, cultural distance - particularly the Czech - German cultural divide and underestimation of potential adaptation problems prior to sojourn - in particular: underestimation of the influence of cultural/ ethnic identity, underestimation of problems with spouses/ partners in the new environment, underestimation of importance of the compatriot support, underestimation of importance of the social support from the Czech hosts, underestimation of communication problems with the Czechs and underestimation of the advantages associated with the knowledge of Czech language. Further, it was the sense of uncertainty about sojourner ability to predict Czech behavior and attitudes, worry about the Czech ability to see the 'big picture', lack of mutual respect between Czech co-workers, degree of xenophobia and sometimes problems with personal hygiene. Research also points to coping strategies in managing stressful situations, during adaptation: it was in particular: the study of Czech language, contact with Czechs through schools or other social institutions, discussions with independent third parties, explanation of sojourner own cultural preferences and monitoring Czech response and avoidance of conflict situations with Czechs.