DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 421 428   SO 029 076

AUTHOR   Okoli, Emeka J.
TITLE   Taking Care of Business: A Manual for Doing Business across
                National and Cultural Boundaries. Fulbright-Hays Summer
                Seminars Abroad, 1997 (India).
SPONS AGENCY   United States Educational Foundation in India.
PUB DATE   1997-00-00
NOTE   14p.; For other curriculum project reports by 1997 seminar
                participants, see SO 029 067-086.
PUB TYPE   Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Asian Studies; *Business; *Cross Cultural Studies; *Cultural
                Awareness; Culture; Ethnic Groups; Foreign Countries; Higher
                Education; *Indians; Modern History; Multicultural
                Education; Non Western Civilization
IDENTIFIERS   *India

ABSTRACT
                This paper contains information written from the perspective
of a U.S. executive traveling overseas for the first time. The ideas
presented are to help ease the fear of the experience. Sections include: (1)
from outside looking in; (2) encounter stage and transition shock; and (3)
taking care of business in a foreign environment. The seminar participant
notes his interest is both personal and professional. He is an African from
Nigeria where, like India, many ethnic groups exist and many languages and
dialects are spoken. Also, he desires to explore the similarities and
differences between Indian, American, and Nigerian cultures in the areas of
diversity management. Recommendations for future travelers in foreign
countries are made. Contains a list of 20 references. (EH)

Taking Care of Business:
A Manual for Doing Business
Across National and Cultural Boundaries.

Fulbright-Hays Summer Seminars Abroad, 1997
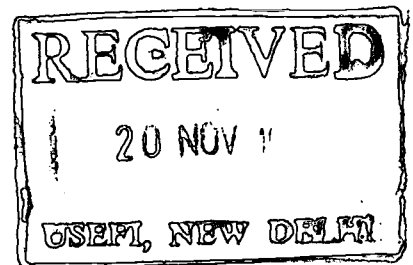## (India)

by

Emeka J. Okoli

Curriculum Projects Developed by 1997
Seminar Participants

Submitted to
Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), USDE

by United States Educational Foundation in India

2

TAKING CARE OF BUSINESS
A Manual For Doing Business
Across National And Cultural Boundaries

An independent project report for
Fulbright-Hays Seminar Abroad Program in India

submitted by

Emeka J. Okoli, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor,
Department of Mass Communications & Journalism
Norfolk State University
Norfolk, Virginia.

Fall 1997

3

Introduction:

Increasing globalization of organizations and businesses has created a compelling need for Intercultural training and awareness for managers. The end of the cold war, rapid social, political and cultural changes in Europe, and the need to provide answers to perceived economic challenges from Asia have exerted enormous pressure upon organizations in the West to change and adapt. Since the late 1960s, an impressive body of research centers on the cultural differences between Asian and American companies. Research in international organizations and Intercultural studies have attributed the present upsurge of interest in Intercultural aspects of business to dramatic developments over the past five decades in the field of telecommunication coupled with technological advances made in the transportation industry. Many researchers have described globalization as a dramatic new trend in international business and they have noted that thirty-one of the world's fifty largest industrial corporations maintain their headquarters outside the U.S. These investigators have concluded that, in order to contend successfully in the world market, companies with global ambition must develop an international orientation.

My approach to this project will be from the perspective of an American executive traveling overseas for the first time. It is true that the 'lab' segment of this project was made possible by the fellowship from Fulbright/USEFI Program, I am of the opinion that the general pieces of information presented here will benefit future Fulbright grantees or, in fact, any person who may be considering cross cultural experience. The

ideas presented, it is hoped, will help ease the fear of the experience. The document is in four parts:

1.   From outside looking in: In the first part of this section, I share my preparation, fears, and expectations before and during the journey to India for the Fulbright program. The second part will be dedicated to application or titbits for others who may want to do the same.

2.   Encounter Stage and Transition Shock: In this section, I take up the discussion from my arrival at Indira Ghandi International Airport in New Delhi; my first impression of India and the Indian peoples; and the impact of such experience on me. I close out this section with titbits on coping with differences.

3.   Taking Care of Business in a Foreign Environment: This final section deals with getting the job done in a multicultural environment.

From outside looking in:

For more than two decades my interest in India and the Indian people has gone from a mere passing curiosity to that of amazement. I had always wondered about the dynamics that make such a diverse society so different from all the other societies in both the developed and developing worlds. To my mind, India is a nation that has a community of nations within its borders. I have heard some analysts refer to India as a sub-continent. Others, on the other hand, regard it as a country. With a population of over 960 million India is the dream of anybody with an interest in the study of multicultural dynamics and unity in diversity.

Indians speak Hindi, Telugu, Bengali, Gujarati, English, and a host of other languages. This, in itself, has the potential of being problematic unless managed properly. My interest in the Indian society stems from a desire to become more aware of the subtle dynamic within the culture that has knit so diverse a group together. This interest is both professional and personal. It is personal because I am an African from Nigeria. Nigeria, like India, is made up of many ethnic groups that speak nearly 250 languages and dialects. The impact of this dynamic on the Nigerian society , especially in the area of inter-ethnic relations, is a subject that I intend to explore further with a view to providing a better management of diversity in sub-Saharan Africa. At the professional level, I desire to explore the similarities and differences (if any) between the Indian, American, and Nigerian cultures in the area of diversity management. As a member of the Multicultural Alliance of Virginia, I have had the special privilege of working with people groups from: African, African-American, American-Indians , Chinese, French, Greek, Hispanic, Indian, Jewish, Laotian, Russian, and Vietnamese communities. My contact with members of the MAVA seems to have further deepened my interest in cross-cultural studies. However, of all the countries that are listed as members of the Alliance India stands out as the most complex. I needed to personally experience India in order to:

1. Develop a broad and basic understanding of contemporary Indian society

2. Develop a better understanding of the subtle dynamics at work in the environment thus making it easier for me to educate my students and others as to the realities that make India so unique

3.   Develop a heightened feeling of empathy with the efforts of both the leaders and people of India as together they make the necessary adjustments that, hopefully, will better position India as a major player in world affairs of the 21st. century.

To enhance my understanding of the need for increased Intercultural understanding, I registered for and obtained a doctoral degree in Organizational and Intercultural Communication from Howard University in Washington, D. C. I also had practical experience in this area. As a foreign student in England, I coordinated the cross-cultural training of Nigerian students in England and Ireland (1977-1979). All this prepared me for the unique opportunity offered by the 1997 Fulbright-Hayes Seminar Abroad program in India. I left John F. Kennedy Airport in New York unsure of what life in India will be like. I thought of the near-negative portrayal of India as the land where millions of people live in poverty and deprivation. The media in the West consistently push this image with the result that many Americans are detterd from any meaningful interaction with Indians on the sub-continent. From my experience with the role of the Western media in Nigeria (and, in fact, in Africa), I have reason to believe that the reality that is India will be very much different from this negative portrayal in the media. The thought that I have been given the unique opportunity to personally examine media portrayal of this "third world" country filled me with excitement. At least, I have the opportunity to match the expectations created by the media with the reality that I will soon experience for myself.

The brief stopover at the Heathrow airport in London filled me with a feeling of nostalgia. As already indicated, this journey actually started

one cold January morning in 1976 when I first arrived Heathrow airport as one of the many overseas students in England. It was here that I first encountered culture shock and all the other dynamics that go with international travel. The difference is that this time around - 21 years later - I feel better prepared for the experience. Nonetheless, I remembered the loneliness, depression and the confusion that attended my first few months in England. I also remembered the beautiful September day in 1978 when Gladys and I got married and, finally, I remember winning the first place in a major essay competition organized by the United Kingdom Council on Overseas Students Affairs (UKCOSA) for all international students in United Kingdom. The topic of this essay was "Expectations and Reality: The Overseas Student Experience". It fits snugly into my current state of mind as I wonder about the reality that will soon be in focus as our plane touches down in New Delhi.

Titbits for the outsider looking in:

- Reaching out across cultures
  - You need to know about:
    - Culture: what is it?
    - Culture shock
    - Nonverbals
    - Attitude to time
    - Cultural distance etc.

- Know your host country (Kohls, Robert L. [1979]. Survival Kit for Overseas Living. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press. pp. 42 - 45).

- Before you go:
  - Background information on the host country (sources of information: Libraries, Embassies, and people who have been to the host country)
    - The host government: its relationship with your own country; the political climate (stable/unstable)

-The weather
-The laws of the land: similarities with those of one's
country
-The issue of language: how similar to one's language
-The people: similarities or differences between
people in your country and those in the host
country; what are their attitude towards people
from your country; are there any cultural issues,
like taboos, that one needs to know about; what
kinds of foods do they eat; will I be able to eat
them; what kinds of clothing are appropriate: what
about interpersonal factors: verbal and nonverbal
cues (Dodd pp. 222-317)
-The contacts: do you have any person in the host
environment to meet me on arrival? If not can I
develop such a friend while in transit?

Before you leave:
- Do call the airline to ensure that your luggage complies
with established weight
- Do check to ensure that your travel and medical
documents are complete and ready for your journey
- Do call the airline to confirm your flight and seat
- Do ask for specific information about the host airport:
customs regulations, immigration, any extra
documentation that may be required, airport and other
taxes

At the airport:
- Do arrive at least 2 hours early.
- Be sure your baggage is tagged and checked in
properly
- Be sure you have your travel documents on your person
- Carry-ons must fit specifications established by your
carrier

Note: Assuming you do not have any contacts waiting for you at the host
airport, it is possible to develop such a friend while in transit?

The outsider-insider transition: The beginning of my Indian experience

Encounter Stage and Transition Shock

The encounter or "breaking-in" period of cultural assimilation was often a traumatic one for the newcomer. During this stage, the expectations of the newcomer are tested against the reality of their new cultural experience. Differences between anticipation and experience (including unmet expectations) become apparent and contribute to transition or reality shock. Transition shock is a state of loss and disorientation precipitated by a change in one's familiar environment which requires adjustment. Hughes described the experiences of newcomers as "reality shock" (Louis, 1980). Louis has written:

> "Reality shock" is the phrase that Hughes (1958) used to characterize what newcomers often experience in entering unfamiliar organizational (or cultural) settings. Time and space become problematic at the moment of entry. At that particular time, all surroundings, that is, the entire organizationally- (or culturally-) based physical and social world are changed. There is no gradual exposure and no real way to confront the situation a little at a time. Rather the newcomer's senses are inundated with many unfamiliar cues. It may not be clear to the newcomer just what constitutes a cue, let alone what the cues refer to, which cues require response, or how to select responses to them. Time and space remain problematic until, the newcomer is able to construct maps of time and space specific to the new setting."

While the above refers directly to newcomers to the organization, it is interesting that such inter-organizational transfers have the same effect on the transferee as cross-cultural entry on those who, like me, are

entering a new cultural setting. It is at this stage of the entry experience that many newcomers to a culture decide whether to continue the acculturation process or quit (Dodd, 1991, p. 307). Dodd suggested that people at this "everything is awful" stage of entry respond to the psychological stress in one of four ways:

1. <u>Fight</u>: The tendency to look down on the culture of the host country and act ethnocentrically.

2. <u>Flight</u>: The urge to leave for home shortly after arriving the host culture.

3. <u>Filter</u>: The tendency to deny reality. They can either deny any differences between their home culture and the host culture; glorify their culture by extolling only the good things; or they "go native."

4. <u>Flex</u>: The decision to understand and adapt to the foreign ways of the host culture.

In my Indian experience, after what seemed an endless flight, we touched down at the Indira Gandhi International Airport in New Delhi. My first impression of India was that of identification. As a Nigerian who is used to the Muritala International Airport in Lagos, Nigeria, it was like I just returned home! I identified with all the sensory stimuli around me - the heat, the people, the blaring of horns from cars, the design of cars and houses in Delhi. All these added to excite me more about the Fulbright program. My stated objective for participating in this program was to do a study of diversity management in India with a view to comparing my findings with what obtains in the United States and Nigeria. It is necessary to pay special tribute to Dr. Lavakare, the Executive Director, and the staff at The United States Educational Foundation in India (USEFI) for a job very well done. Our within-India program was structured in such a way as to

give each participant opportunities to get emersed into the Indian culture. The carefully structured academic phases of the program provided intellectual tools needed by the participants for the examination, analysis and finally, synthesis of the entire experience. Indian intellectuals, government officials were brought in to interact with us. By the end of this phase which lasted only ten days, most members of the team were ready (at least, so we thought) for the site visits. Four weeks of site visits took the team from New Delhi through Agra, Jaipur, Aurungabad, Mumbai (Bombay), Cochin, Kumarakom, Chennai (Madras), Calcutta, Varanasi, and finally back to New Delhi! By this time, most members of the team had gone into sensory overload. We needed debriefing and help to make sense of the obvious conflicting dynamics within this environment. On my part, I was simply overwhelmed by the very complex nature of India. I was, in particular, struck by the diverse nature of this society. India is variously described as "a rich country of inhabited by poor people", "an old country with a new heart", and "a buffet table with selections for all tastes". Everywhere one looks in India, one senses the presence of a very subtle dynamic within the land and, perhaps, in the hearts of the Indian - rich or poor, Brahmin or outcast - that engenders unity in an overwhelmingly diverse environment that is India. Since detailed discussion on my findings is beyond the scope of this paper, I have chosen to examine, to the best of my knowledge, what I perceive to be the Indian style for management of diversity.

<u>Titbits for the traveler:</u>

> <u>After you arrive at the host airport:</u>
> - Do remember that things can be radically different from what you are used to
> - Do keep an open mind
> - Do ask for information (at the worse, use pre-departure information)

<u>Taking Care of Business in a Foreign Environment</u>
(Adler pp. 3-141)

- Building and leading a multicultural team
  Team building
  Unity in diversity / Law of synergism
  The law of inclusion and exclusion (us and them)
  Conflict resolution in multicultural teams

<u>Sources of essential information</u>

- Health information for international travel
  Information from Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA 30333 (770-639 2574)
  (Available from U. S. Govt. Printing Office, Wash., DC 20402 [$5] (202-512 0000)
- Custom Hints (Know Before You Go)
  U. S. Customs publication #512 (from U. S. Custom Service) (804-441 6546)
- from Bureau of Consular Affairs, U. S. State Dept.
  (202-647 1488)
  Your Trip Abroad
  A Safe Trip Abroad
  When Disaster Strikes Abroad
  Tips for Americans Residing Abroad (publication #9745)
  Travel Tips for Older Americans
- Visa Requirements of Foreign Governments
- from Bureau of Consular Affairs, U. S. State Dept.
- Travel Tips to Americans going to: (various countries)
- Travel Warnings from the State Dept.

References and further reading

Adler, N. (1991). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior.*
    Boston: PWS-Kent

Blair, F. E (1991). *Countries of the world.* Vols. I & II. Detroit: Gale
    Research Inc.

Brack, B. L. (1987). *The Return Home: A re-entry reader.* An unpublished
    manuscript.

Brislin, R., & Penderson, P. (1976). Cross-cultural orientation programs.
    New York: Gardner.

Cohen, M. A. (1987). *The Teenager's Guide to Study, Travel, and Adventure
    Abroad.* New York: St. Martin's Press.

Dodd, C. H. (1989). *Dynamics of Intercultural Communication.* Dubuque,
    IA: Wm. C. Brown

Dowling, P. J. & Schuler, R. S. (1990). *International Dimensions of Human
    Resource Management.* Boston: PWS-Kent

Elmer, D.. (1993). *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building relationships for
    effective ministry.* Downers Grove, IL.: Inter Versity Press

Friends of Turkey. *Practical Help for Persons Going Overseas.* Grand
    Junction, Co: Friends of Turkey.

Harris, P. H. & Moran, R. T. (1996). *Managing Cultural Differences.*
    Houston: Gulf

Jansen, G. (1989). *Women Overseas: A Christian perspective on cross-
    cultural adaptation.* Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

Khols, L. R. (1979). *Survival Kit for Overseas Living.* Yarmouth, Maine:
    Intercultural Press.

Kolanad, G. (1994). *Culture Shock: India.* Portland, Oregon: Times

Ladd, J. (1990). *Subject: India - A Semester Abroad.* Yarmouth:
    Intercultural Press

Louis, M. R. (1980). Surprise and sensemaking: What newcomers
    experience in entering unfamiliar organizational setting. *Administrative
    Science Quarterly,* 25, 226-251

Norton, J. H. (1997). *India and South Asia.* Guilford: Dushkin/McGraw-Hill

Paige, M. R. ((1986). *Cross-Cultural Orientation: New conceptualizations
    and applications.* New York: University Press of America.

Simons, G. F., Vazquez, C., & Harris, P. R. (1993). *Transcultural Leadership.*
    Houston: Gulf

Thomas, R. R. (1991). *Beyond Race and Gender.* New York: American
    Management Association.

_____ (1996). *Redefining Diversity.* New York: American
    Management Association.