

“Culture shock in Child raising- Role of Cultural sensitivity Training”

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Abstract: *Two Indian couples were taken into custody by Norway police under the case of Child abuse or Mishandling of children in 2012. The Indian parent is an expatriate who was sent by a company to take up a job abroad which looked very prestigious and also luring in terms of salary. But to their surprise the Indian way of child rising has led to deep trouble to the concern parents when they have admitted their children in Norway for primary education. These cases have attracted much concern from Indian public and led to retrospection from corporate about the need for micro level cultural sensitivity training for their employees, who are sent for international assignments, which is done by companies normally as a formality. One couple from Kolkata and one couple from Andhra Pradesh of India have fallen foul to Norway's parenting laws.*

The Norwegian Child Welfare Act applies to all children in Norway, regardless of the child's nationality, citizenship or cultural background," said Gunnar Toresen, Head of Child Welfare Services from Stavanger, Norway. Norway's child protective Service is a powerful body which is charged with protecting the rights of the children living in difficult family situations. The cultural differences between an Asian culture and a Nordic culture is making it difficult to the Indian government as these incidents are viewed as an issue between a private citizen and the local law of the country.

Even though the Indian diplomats had to put in serious effort to support their citizens still one sector argues that the Indian parents should grow up to the international parenting standards and it is the responsibility of the corporate to create awareness among the expats.

The question stands in front of the prospective expats who wish to relocate their families when they are on a long term assignment as to how to cope up with local laws of different cultured countries. It is not so simple to make the companies responsible but the share of creating awareness falls on the expats and on the host governments too.

Key Words: *Expatriates, International parenting standards, Cultural sensitivity training.*

Case: Culture provides an implicit framework within which people learn to behave, interpret and analyze others' behavior as well. Cultural setting in each country lets it citizens understand their own identities and dominant values in their society. Culture is learned by individuals at three levels: Family, Educational and religious institutions and Societal and national levels. When culture showcases the family patterns it also talks about the relationships, duties of parents and also gender specifications. Family consists of parents who show profound concern about their children as they perceive them as the best of their lives and also want to pass on the best to the future generations.

Child raising is done by parents in different countries mostly influenced by the religion followed and also the norms related to gender discriminations or equality existing in that society.

India is a country where gender bias still exists in terms of marriage market and well being of the children. The parental participation in child raising is equally shared in most of the developed and industrially advanced countries, this is not the same case in some of the countries in Asian continent.

Behavior of parents towards the children is looked at as facilitating and gentle towards their children in most of the Western cultures and it is perceived as more of a disciplinary role in Asian cultures. The parents do not praise their children upon their achievements and children making an eye contact with elders is “disobeying the elders” in some countries. With all the variations in the area of child raising there is no wonder that the countries often get into trouble defining the behavior of individuals residing in their country as expatriates (employees from other countries)

The two cases of parents from India in Norway have brought into lime light the differences in social norms in the area of child rising. In both the cases the parents were accused by the local judicial bodies as ill – treating or “child-abuse” of their own children for their behavior. Both cases stand as examples of parents’ efforts to rectify the behavior of their own children - where in one case the child had bed wetting problem and was threatened by the father and the other child is hand fed by the mother and was not provided with a separate bed to sleep and sleeping in the parents bed. In Indian cultural context punishing the children when they don’t listen to the words of elders is not considered as a threat to the mental development of the child. Feeding with hand is also part of the culture and many families do not really provide a separate bedroom for their children till they attain puberty.

The parents were arrested by the police and this attracted large amount of attention from international media and also objections from Indian government. There were protests in India about the charges that were filed on the Indian parents and relatives were made to travel and brought back the children who were kept under the custody of Norway’s Child Welfare Agency. The Indian lawyers felt that the children at a very young age were denied from meeting their parents who are the source of love, care and well being of the children. The Norway Police charged the parents with “gross or repeated maltreatment of the children”. The children in the two families were separated from their parents for months duration which is strongly highlighted by the relatives as “emotional disconnect” between the children and the parents for no fault of theirs but due to “cultural differences”.

They argued that the children should be allowed to grow up with their parents in their “own ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural milieu”

The Child Welfare Service has a responsibility to intervene if measures at the home are not sufficient to meet a child's needs. Examples are when there is every probability that the child's health or development may be seriously harmed because the parents are incapable of taking adequate responsibility for their child. The Norwegian Child Welfare Act applies to all children in Norway, regardless of the child’s nationality, citizenship or cultural background. Another agency called Norway’s child Protective Service is a powerful body which assumes responsibility of protecting the rights of the children living in their country.

The couples were charged with “gross and repeated maltreatment of their child/children by threats, violence or other wrong, under section 219” according to Kurt Lir, Head of the Prosecution, Oslo Police Department. According to an UN report in 2005, Norway is criticized for taking too many children in Public care. Almost 12,500 children in Norway were taken into care of Child Welfare Agency where it represents a gross number for a small country like Norway.

To avoid such cultural conflicts between the countries the companies which appoint their citizens to foreign assignments should be careful in providing enough and authenticated information about the cultural setting that exists and also socio- legal issues. For Example Canada government has defined six indicators of child well being very clearly which is expected to be followed by all the citizens and also immigrants in the country. Most of the countries in their immigration policies define all these conditions but consider the ethnic cultural practices within the four walls of the house unless until an extreme behavior is reported. Now the responsibility of the companies who employ their nationals for foreign assignments based on the duration of projects should be able to redefine their cultural sensitivity training from time to time. Most of the trainings talk about the accounting system, financial planning, managing spouse’s career, Human resource policies, compensation and local taxation policies followed in concern countries. Otherwise the pathetic condition of the children of the two Indian couples keeps throwing challenges to the countries and also to humanity.

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- [12.] **Teaching notes:**
- [13.] **Target Audience:** Expatriates who are taking up foreign assignments/jobs and Students of MBA Program
- [14.] **Learning objectives:**
- [15.] To understand the variations in cultural dimensions which affect the life style of expats
- [16.] To learn the legal issues involved in different social settings of host countries
- [17.] To manage relocation of the family without any controversy to both home and host countries
- [18.] To create data base for cross cultural training in future
- [19.] Questions:
- [20.] Suggest the cultural dimension frame work which can be used to identify the cultural differences?
- [21.] Design a cultural sensitivity training Program for a multinational company for its expatriates?