CHAPTER THREE
Shifts in the Culture

A: Main Teaching Points (by textbook section)

In general, this chapter examines the notion of cultural shift, and the conditions under which this occurs.

In this chapter, the term "shift" is preferred to "change" when referring to movement in the culture. This is to avoid confusion; "change" is reserved here to denote changes in the economic, technological, social, and other environments which, under some conditions, may cause movement in deep-rooted cultural values.

Problems of identifying and assessing cultural shifts are of major importance to business people everywhere. The manager hopes to distinguish significant shifts from short-lived trends, and to respond appropriately.

3.1 Introduction

The case gives an example of a culture group destroyed by external intervention. At the opposite extreme, a culture can fossilize when no external influences are permitted – for instance, in parts of the Soviet Union before 1989, in Japan before the Meiji Restoration, North Korea now. In practice, most cultures find strategies to adapt in response to environmental pressures.

3.2 Recognizing significant shifts in the culture

This section first examines reasons why the manager needs to attend to changes in the business environment and to shifts in the culture. A functional model shows the relationship between the environment and cultural shift, and its effect on the organization. The section deals with the impact of continual shift and change on managerial roles. Finally, three factors causing shift are introduced. A major influence, globalization, is dealt with at length in chapter 11.

3.3   How economic factors influence shift

This section shows the problems of distinguishing significant cultural shift in a complex society. Japanese case material is used. It takes the form of a debate, arguing whether manifestations of shift have long-term importance. No final answers can be given for such a short time-scale.

Three topics introduced here are discussed later in the chapter: female employment, the impact of outside intervention, the importance of labor markets.

Subsection 3.3.2 explains slowness to shift in terms of the fact that culture is learned in childhood. At an age when the individual is too young to rationally reject these values, the learning is deep. This acts as a powerful brake on shift – unless childrearing methods change. Students may need to be reminded of Hofstede's definition of culture applied throughout the book (section 1.3.2). The fact that Japanese married women have traditionally regarded rearing their children and teaching them the culture as their major function means fundamental shift is unlikely, given that childrearing methods have not changed significantly.

Thus, it is argued that significant shift (in any culture) is always likely to be slow – slower than appearances might suggest. Students do not have to accept this view at face value; but they should be encouraged to think about it. Encourage them to express their own points of view, and to make comparisons with their own societies (see section C: Class Discussion Questions).

Ask students to consider the cases of countries that have experienced major economic booms in a short period of time (e.g. Saudi Arabia, Japan, Thailand, Norway, etc.). How far have these changes forced a shift in the culture? Why? Why not? Also consider examples of countries that have experienced economic slumps in a short period of time (e.g. the USA in the 1930s, Thailand, South Korea). Are the cultures likely to have reverted to their pre-boom conditions? Why? Why not?

3.4   How new technology causes shift

The influence of technological change on culture is a theme pursued throughout the book. Different countries may share a technology, but this does not mean that it is applied the same way by these different cultures, or has the same effect on all. Illustrate this point by a simple example of a technology used for different purposes by different groups in one culture; for example, a cell phone.

3.5   How foreign intervention causes shift

This section focuses on the foreign influence at the level of the nation state, but the same general point can be made about multinational companies. How does a multi-national company influence the values of members in its local subsidiary? This topic is developed in chapter 14.

The important point is that a foreign presence is, in itself, insufficient to cause shift. Other factors must be in place for this presence to have a decisive influence.

B: Implications for the Management Student

(This section modifies the material on p. 73 of the textbook.)

Under some conditions, environmental changes may affect behavior, and eventually lead to shifts in cultural values.

1. Identify significant economic and other events that have occurred within your culture during the previous few years (for instance, intervention by some other country, economic recession or boom, technological innovation, educational innovation).
    a. How have these affected people's behavior (if at all)?
    b. How have these affected your relationships with (i) other persons in your business school, (ii) teachers and fellow students?
2. Do you expect these behavioral changes (if any) to cause a shift in the work values of your country? If you answer *yes*:
    a. What shift do you expect?
    b. Do you expect it to be superficial or long term?
    c. Should your business school plan a deliberate response and, if you answer *yes*, what response should be made?
3. Identify significant economic and other events that have occurred during the previous few years within *some other culture* that you know well.
    a. How have these affected the behavior of members of *the other culture* (if at all)?
    b. Do you expect these behavioral changes (if any) to cause a long-term shift in the culture of *the other country*?

C: Class Discussion Questions

1. Refer to the discussion of SHINJINRUI in section 3.3.2. Are there similarities to your culture? Does your culture have a new generation of young employees whose attitudes to work differ markedly from those of their elders? Is it true that young adults are always more radical than their elders? Why? Why not?
2. Give examples of apparent shift in your culture. How far do you rate these as superficial? How far as substantial? How can your organization respond to them?
3. Give examples of how the activities of foreign-owned multinational subsidiaries have influenced your own culture. How far is this influence in the interests of your local culture?

D: Answers to the Exercise

This exercise deals with the effect of economic change on culture. If uncertain as to how to proceed, students might start by identifying and exploring the significant factors in Daranese society and culture. These include: poverty; relatively small population (and a small capital); traditional social structures, with large power distances; the education system; the labor market.

The government might choose to protect the culture by limiting development in manufacturing and service industries, and licensing out extraction. Saudi Arabia provides an example. At the other extreme, the government might decide to exploit the bonanza as fully as possible, encouraging the development of manufacturing industries and the growth of an urban middle class. If this development is centered on the capital, large-scale migration to the capital is most likely.

The traditions of education and craft facilitate the development of skilled labor. The tradition of female employment means that women can be recruited into the labor force, as in many Southeast Asian countries today.

E: Additional Exercise Material

Read this case. Then review Hofstede's rankings for Malaysian culture and answer the questions below.

CASE

Anwar was Malay, and a Malaysian national. After marrying, he decided to take up a post in a small Australian finance company based in Singapore. His immediate boss, Harvey, the CEO, was an Australian. His colleagues included two Singaporean Chinese (Jerry and Gun-wu), a Sikh domiciled in Hong Kong, a Briton and an American. Anwar did not feel particularly at home in the company. Nevertheless, he worked hard because he realized that he was learning valuable research skills.

One day, his young wife Halima visited her parents' house in Kuala Lumpur. She returned with news from her brother-in law. "Do you know that Jamal has just started his own investment company? His father is supporting him and capital is not a problem. Well, he told me that he's looking for a first-class chap to manage a new research department, and you're the first choice. There are three problems. He can't offer you a job until after Ramadan. You must have some experience in multinational insurance. And he can't pay you much – yet. These are early days."

The promised salary was considerably less than Anwar was paid at present. Nevertheless, he made a quick decision to join, and began acquiring the new skills he needed. His new focus surprised Harvey. "Why are we getting so deep into insurance financing?" Anwar mumbled a non-committal answer. Soon after he gave in his notice and moved his family back to Kuala Lumpur.

He rapidly adjusted to working for Jamal. His expertise was valued and he became increasingly confident. One day, back in Singapore for a meeting, he invited Jerry and Gun-wu for lunch. "Why don't you move to us?" he suggested. "It's much more secure than working for Harvey. Yes, Harvey's a good guy but we all know that he can't take a big decision without consulting headquarters, and Sydney could close down the office tomorrow. But if you work for us, you'll be secure. I'll make sure that you're well treated and you'll belong to the family. You'll have a job for life."

Jerry and Gun-wu could not disguise their interest. They promised to consider the offer carefully. A short time later, they made the move.

QUESTION

1. How does this case illustrate cultural shift? How does it illustrate cultural continuity?

DECISION

2. How should Harvey respond to these exits from the company?

F: Test Bank

1. Cultures:
    a. Develop only in response to rapid change
    b. Develop only in response to stability and cultural rigidity
    c. Need both stability and change in order to develop
    d. Do not easily adapt to strains and stresses.
(Answer, c: p. 57)

2. Functionalists:
    a. Such as Dahrendorf, perceived all social systems to be in continual conflict
    b. Such as Parsons, perceived all social systems to be in continual conflict
    c. Such as Merton, described change as an adjustment process
    d. Such as Marx, described change as an adjustment process.
(Answer, c: p. 57)

3. The manager needs to understand cultural shift:
    a. Because he/she deals directly with abstractions of shift in value systems
    b. Because he/she needs to distinguish between shifts that impact his/her business and trends that have no impact
    c. Only when selling insurance
    d. Because this inevitably affects the labor market.
(Answer, b: pp. 58–9)

4. Culture shifts:
    a. Slowly, because people do not easily forget the values they learn in childhood
    b. Slowly, because most people are too lazy to learn a new culture

    c. Quickly when members forget their childhood
    d. Slowly in Japan, quickly in all other cultures.
(Answer, a: p. 61)

5. The acquisition of wealth:
    a. Always leads to economic development
    b. Does not necessarily lead to economic development
    c. Has led to economic development in Nigeria
    d. Never leads to economic development.
(Answer, b: p. 61)

6. "The Prime Minister's Commission on Japan's Goals in the Twenty-first Century" planned how Japan can:
    a. Develop a culture of increased individual responsibility
    b. Strengthen collectivist family values
    c. Improve the conditions of production line workers
    d. Disenfranchise production line workers.
(Answer, a: p. 66)

7. Japanese culture:
    a. Is shifting, and so are the cultures of other developed countries
    b. Is not shifting
    c. Is shifting, whereas the cultures of other developed countries are not
    d. Is not shifting as fast as the cultures of other developed countries.
(Answer, a: p. 66)

8. Technological development causes a shift in the culture when:
    a. It is feared
    b. It is welcomed
    c. It causes people to change how they live and work
    d. Oil revenues are increased.
(Answer, c: p. 67)

9. Technological development has:
    a. Three main stages – the acquisition of existing technology, its adaptation, the creation of new technology
    b. Two main stages – the acquisition of existing technology and the creation of new technology
    c. Three main stages – participation in a joint venture project, the adaptation of venture technology, independent business development
    d. Four stages for companies that do not form joint ventures.
(Answer, a: p. 67)

10. The movement of allied Western troops to Saudi Arabia during the 1990–91 Gulf crisis:
    a. Led to the westernization of Saudi culture
    b. Had no effect on Saudi culture

    c. May have caused a return to greater conservativism in Saudi culture
    d. Led to the Saudification of Western cultures.
(Answer, c: pp. 69–71)

11. Commander Perry's intervention in Japan in 1853:
    a. Triggered a change for which support already existed
    b. Triggered a change for which no support had previously existed
    c. Had no effect
    d. Led to the Japanization of American culture.
(Answer, a: p. 71)

12. When headquarters abroad proposes changes in a local subsidiary:
    a. These are more likely to be accepted when influential local managers support them
    b. These are unlikely to be accepted, under any conditions
    c. These are only accepted when headquarters managers have no regular contacts with the subsidiary
    d. These are only accepted if first implemented successfully in headquarters.
(Answer, d: p. 72)