

Community Service and Initiation Rites as Means of Educational Acculturation in John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo

Roland John Cyril F. Emague^{1*}, Moniq M. Muyargas²

¹ College of Maritime Education, John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo, Inc., Iloilo City, Philippines

² College of Arts and Sciences, University of the Philippines-Visayas, Miag-ao, Iloilo, Philippines

*Corresponding Author: rolandjohncyrl.emague@jblfmu.edu.ph

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Abstract: *This research is an exploratory qualitative study examining the process of educational acculturation in John B. Lacson Foundation Maritime University-Molo. It described the; 1.) nature of the community service and initiation rites as means of acculturation, 2.) the meanings and values derived from the various rituals and practices, as well as 3.) the comparison of the perceptions and learnings of new students and graduating marine students towards the practice. This study in a form of a narrative inquiry approach collected the data through key-informant interviews with the organizers of the school's annual practice and focus-group discussions (FGD) composed of new and graduating marine students of JBLFMU-Molo. Using Krueger's Systematic Analysis Process, the results revealed that the school's community service and initiation rites are conducted to reflect the goals of the school and serves as an avenue of inculcating the school culture to the students. It was also revealed that the various rituals and practices included in the said annual school event reflect certain meanings and values that are highly essential in molding the students to become competent seafarers. Furthermore, it exhibited the school's core and other values, which are considered important in attaining the goals of the university. In view of their learnings, both new and graduating students revealed comparable responses. However, the profoundness of their learnings and realizations varies in a way that most of the new students simply relate their learnings to their studies unlike most of the graduating students whose learnings are implied to their future work on board. The result also proved that the school's community service and initiation rites vividly act as a process of educational acculturation by which the school culture is successfully transmitted to the students by learning and imbibing it following the pattern and concept of the derived acculturation model.*

Keywords: educational acculturation, rites of passage, initiation rites

1. Introduction

Every society possesses a certain culture that provides distinctive characteristics and identity learned by an individual through the process of enculturation and acculturation. As a part of the society, an individual is obliged to follow the mainstream culture to establish an identity as well as social acceptance. Similarly, the school also possesses a certain culture that defines its nature. Students who entered a particular school must adapt or adjust with these cultural practices to gain acceptance and belongingness. Certain rite of passage is followed in forms of various rituals and practices to transmit its culture to the students through the process of acculturation. This rite of passage is an educational acculturation, which highlights the

academic institution's identity that differs from the rest of other academic institutions. In becoming part of the school, an individual must learn not only the academic aspect of the school but most importantly its culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Acculturation Process

The literature and related studies that were reviewed, focused on the process of acculturation and how it affects various aspects of human way of life. Essentially, acculturation is the cultural interconnection between an immigrating person and the new host country that the person is settling or merging with. To Abuso, Garcia, Labayan and Baretto (1997), acculturation occurs when an individual or a group which is aware of the existence of another culture adopts that culture. Immersion and interaction facilitate the process of acculturation which means living in the community, trying to understand the people, absorbing and imbibing every detail of their daily activities and routines as well as events that the people value, and so on. Acculturation as a process heavily affects various aspects of human way of life such as customs, traditions, beliefs, mores, language, and values as justified by the research conducted by Kim (1976) dealing with the acculturation process of randomly selected Korean immigrants in Chicago. Moreover, acculturation process is not only observed in a certain community, but it is also present in academic institutions that act as microcosm of a society. Confirming with this idea, an ethnographic research conducted by Loriga (2004) describes the acculturation process undergone by medical students in which they learn to organize their perceptions, concepts, and behavior according to the world views and expectations of the medical society.

2.2 Educational Acculturation

Education is often perceived as a tool in cultural transmission in which accumulated knowledge, ways and traditions are transmitted systematically (Abuso, Baretto, Garcia & Labayan, 1997). Education could be utilized to conserve or destroy culture. It is not concerned only with acquiring knowledge or understanding behavior, but it facilitates the acculturation process as well. Sociologists view education as an avenue for introducing social reforms and changes to meet the needs of the society. In various academic institutions, students coming from different cultural backgrounds have difficulties in adjusting with their new environment because they were not yet knowledgeable about the culture present in the school where they are in. The study conducted by Berick (2010) supports this idea in which it shows interesting results regarding an international student's culture and their relative success at university in which the impact of learning in a foreign culture was affirmed. Similar result was derived from the research conducted by Choi (2006) about the intercultural experience of Korean students studying in Australian universities.

2.3 Rites of Passage

As part of acculturation process, various ritual and practices are instigated or implemented to individuals for an effective absorption or learning of the dominant host culture. These rituals and practices are always the main features of rites of passage. Rites of passage are ceremonies that mark a person's progress from one role, phase of life, or social status to another. The change is defined by a transitional period which includes specific rituals, removal of the individual from his or her former status, suspension from normal social contact, and readmission into society in the newly acquired status. Rites of passage occur in all societies even within academic institutions which often involve symbolism and reaffirm the values of a society. Based on the writings of Bartle (2007), a rite of passage is done to recognize that a person has passed from one social status to another. It is something which provides social recognition or

acknowledgement from the members of the community, that an individual changed in social status. According to Earp and Staton (2009) rites of passage experienced upon entering college is part of a recurrent socialization that takes place in academic settings. From the standpoint of colleges and universities as well as students, successful student socialization is vital. It is important, therefore, to understand the students' perspective about their own socialization. It is justified by the studies conducted by Winslow (1999) about the initiation rites in a Canadian Airborne Regiment, and Pershing (2006) about the prevalence of hazing rituals and other rites of initiation in predominantly male organizations, including the military.

2.4 Conceptual Framework

This research is anchored on Gordon's unidimensional assimilation model (as cited in Bourhis, Moise, Perreault, and Senecal, 1997) that describes the cultural changes undergone by immigrants. Across the lifespan, immigrants are portrayed moving along a continuum, with at one pole maintenance of the immigrant culture and at the other adoption of the host culture, usually at the cost of losing the heritage culture. The midpoint on this continuum is biculturalism, in which immigrants retain some features of their heritage culture while adopting key elements of the host culture. Biculturalism is a transitory phase, as the model assumes that successful assimilation inevitably involves a shift from maintenance of the immigrant culture to full adoption of the host culture. According to Castro, 2003 (as cited in Flores, 2010), linear or unidimensional model of acculturation is a process in which immigrating people are absorbed into the dominant culture by changing their values, attitudes, and behaviors to fit more with the dominant culture than their own group of reference. Assimilation is seen as the goal for the linear model of acculturation.

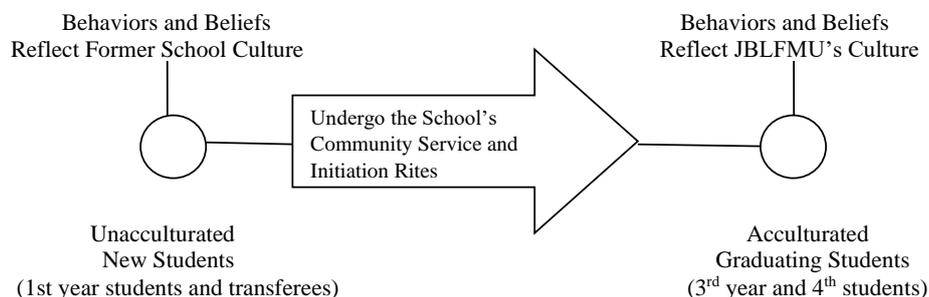


Figure 1: Modification of Gordon's Acculturation Model

3. Methodology

This research utilized an exploratory qualitative method in a form of a narrative inquiry approach. In collecting the data, key-informant interviews (KII) were conducted with the organizers of the said event and two groups of focus group discussions (FGD) composed of new and graduating Marine Engineering students. The respondents were chosen using the purposive-opportunistic sampling technique. An interview schedule, voice recorder and documenters were utilized in conducting the interviews. Triangulation of the data gathered was applied for comparing, contrasting, and clarifying information from different sets of respondents. The data collected for this study were analyzed using Krueger's Systematic Analysis Process by which the emerging themes and categories were woven into narratives.

4. Results and Conclusion

The community service and initiation rites are composed of various rituals and practices as a way of transmitting the school culture to the students. These rituals and practices reflect the kind of work that the students will experience in the near future which is in line with the Maritime profession. It generally fostered camaraderie and unity, sense of belongingness, as well as an avenue of introducing and instilling the school culture to the students. It was also a means of accepting and welcoming the new students who were admitted in the said Maritime institution. In addition, it is considered as an initial step for the new students to be called as “true-blooded Lacsonians”.

In view of the various meanings, perceptions and learnings pertaining to the different rituals and practices included in the school’s community service and initiation rites, a succeeding summary table provides a gist of it.

Ritual/Practice	Meanings and Values	Perceptions
Community service in prescribed outfit	Love for nature, self-confidence, overcome shyness, equality	<i>Before:</i> New Students: Negative, punishments, revenge, non-sense, source of enjoyment and excitement Graduating Students: Mostly positive perceptions, adopting the school culture, imposing discipline, way of welcoming, bonds and camaraderie, to be a true blooded Lacsonian. <i>After:</i> New & Graduating Students Happy, satisfied and fulfilled, attained their goals of surviving the initiation and were called as true-blooded Lacsonians, reborn for another role accepted in the institution.
Mass	Remembering God, spiritual blessings, guidance, godliness	
Initiation Proper	Persistence, perseverance, determination, faith, positivity, discipline, resiliency	
<i>a. Warm-up exercises</i>	Preparedness	
<i>b. Duck walk</i>	Patience, perseverance	
<i>c. Painted on their faces</i>	Start of journey, blessing from seniors	
<i>d. Crawling on powdered charcoal and mud with crude</i>	Maritime profession, filthy and dirty work, no easy start, disgrace, and stain one’s dignity, hardworking, determination	
<i>e. Creeping under the chairs, tires and a low spreading net</i>	Handle and adjust with problems,	
<i>f. Climbing the spider’s web</i>	No easy way to achieve success, be careful and cautious, courage.	
<i>g. Crossing on bamboo in inverse position</i>	Never lose hope, never give up, determination, strength, persistence.	
<i>h. Mud pool</i>	Life in the institution, proper timing, patience.	
<i>i. face dipped in flour, then stand on the elevated platform and shout “I survived!”</i>	End of the obstacles, survived the initiation proper.	

Black Party	Socialization and bonding, camaraderie
Wearing of uniform and imposition of paraphernalia	Confirmation of new identity, loyalty

Based on the results of the study, it was concluded that this annual school practice is considered a tradition, a way of welcoming the new students and instilling in them the school culture. It was also believed to foster camaraderie and belongingness and the first step to take for the students to be called as “true-blooded Lacsonians”. Its rituals reflect the school’s core values of perseverance, loyalty, discipline, godliness, equality, and other values which are essential in attaining the entire goals of the university. In terms of the students’ perception, most of the new students gave some negative perceptions towards the school’s annual practice and realized the real purpose of it after they have completed the obstacle course. Same is true with the graduating students who truly understood the main purpose of the community service and initiation rites after they endure the school’s annual practice. In view of their learnings, both new students and graduating group revealed comparable responses. However, the profoundness of their learnings and realizations varies in a way that most of the new students have simply related their learning to their studies while the graduating group had related their learning to their future work as seafarers. It was found out that the graduating group is more acculturated than the new students who are still in the process of being fully acculturated. Largely, the results of this study proved that the school’s community service and initiation rites vividly act as a process of educational acculturation because it follows the concept and pattern of the applied model of acculturation.

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