

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study aims to find out how well the students are able to adjust themselves in a foreign culture and academic environment. Nipa Nithayayon (นิภา นิชายาน, 2520) explained that the motivation that has an influence on earning a living can be divided into two types: external motivation and internal motivation. The external motivation is created from the environment and society while the internal motivation is originated from inner mind and experiences. According to Coulter and Morrow (1978), how to level the one's adaptive behavior cannot take an interest only on academic knowledge. Thus, it is very necessary to link the study to proper concepts:

- 1) Definition of Adjustment
- 2) Adjustment and Self-Direction
- 3) The Self-Concept
- 4) Cultural Dimension
- 5) The reason to join with other.
- 6) Relevant Research

2.1 DEFINITION OF ADJUSTMENT

The Longman Contemporary Dictionary explained the meaning of *Adjustment*; to be, a change that someone makes to the way they behave or think. According to Erikson's statement on individual development (1968) which was cited in Poduska (1980) "The ability to accommodate oneself to changing circumstances is a mark of maturity," and can be the best understandable interpretation of "adjustment" (p. 16) However, adjustment not only implies the attainment of a more favorable relationship with one's environment, but also refers to the capacity to select suitable and effective ways to meet the demands of the environment while maintaining a healthy attitude towards the circumstances. It can be concluded that adjustment results from learning and experience.

Waraporn Trakunsarit (วราภรณ์ ตระกูลสฤษดิ์, 2543) explained that adjustment comes from two main causes: to survive and to be happy. To survive means to adjust to changing circumstances while to be happy refers to understanding current situations,

problems and trying to admit and to solve them. Moreover, adjustment can be categorized into several aspects: biological adjustment and psychological adjustment.

There are some arguments concerning the importance of heredity and environment or nature-nurture conflict. People who believed in biological adjustment or nature will support inherited instinct. Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) stated that a *life instinct* (Eros or Libido) is initiated since each human being is born and self-destructive or aggressive behavior can be motivated by a *death instinct* (Thanatos). Jung (1959) as cited in Poduska (1980) believed that the individual derives a *collective unconscious* which was composed of universal thought forms shared with all members of the human race.

On the contrary, those who believed in psychological adjustment or nurture will agree with environmental influence. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) who was cited in Poduska (1980) proposed that the individual's brain, at birth, contains no knowledge, but all knowledge is obtained through experiences. John Locke (1632-1704) which was cited in Poduska (1980) in *Understanding Psychology and Dimensions of Adjustment* noted that "experience supplies our standing with all material of thinking" (p.17). This thought initiates a new psychological approach, behaviorism, which emphasizes the scientific study of behavior. It is believed that human behavior can be modified by the environment.

From those several aspects, it can be concluded that people who support inherited instinct (nature aspect) proposed that the ability to resist stress adapt to change is genetically determined. On the other hand, those who agree with environmental influence believed that successful adjustment is resulted from learning and experience.

2.2 ADJUSTMENT AND SELF-DIRECTION

Another definition of adjustment is that adjustment is a combination between the self and the environment. How to adjust oneself in a particular situation or environment requires skills, which are from knowledge, experience and practice. Therefore, a skill is the ability to do something well. According to Watson (1993), "Skill differs from ability in that skills are learned and are improved with practice [...]"

Skills are based in knowledge [...] and developed through practice. It would be said that adjustment is better known as a skill than a condition.” (p. 9)

When people are able to control their behavior, it means that they realize the skills of Self-Direction. The concept of *Self-Direction* means to recognize the changes you want and be able to actualize your own values. However, the problems in adjustment may come from several points of view:

The first idea is a lack of willpower. The word *willpower* means something that you set up in your mind in order to achieve your goal. Willpower will encourage you to work harder and overcome obstacles. However, willpower works in certain situations, but not others. For example, you can do certain things well but others you do badly.

Another idea is related to inner problems and outer symptoms. This idea is also known as medical model of adjustment. It is believed that outer symptoms stem from inner problems. For example, if there is something wrong inside you like a fever, the doctor will see its symptom. The doctor will cure inner problems, the fever, the outer symptom will disappear.

2.3 SELF-CONCEPT

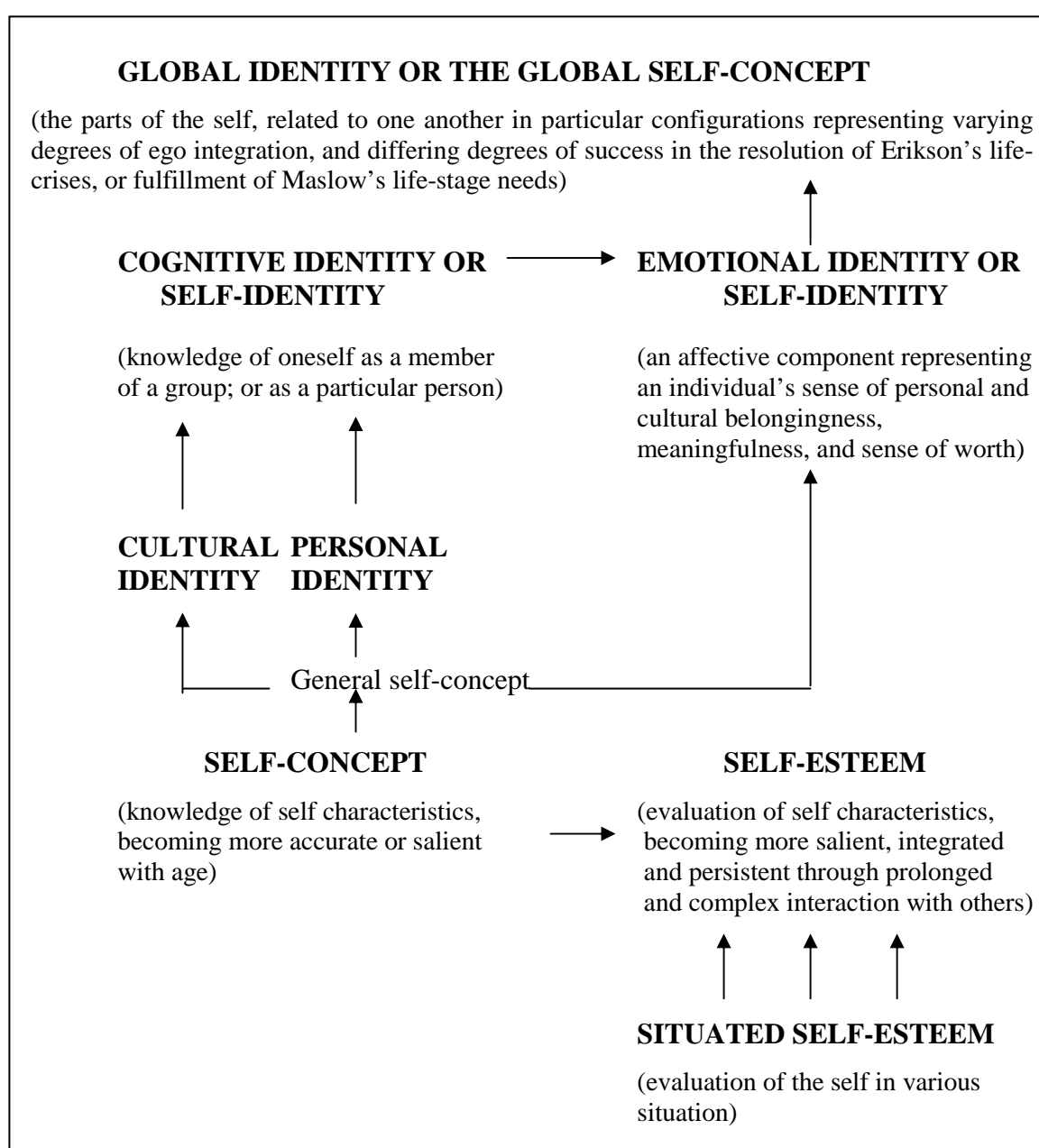
Fromm (1956) as cited in Purkey (1988) defined the word ‘self-concept’ as ‘life being aware of itself’ (p. 2). A self-concept is a notion or a belief based on judgment. The self-concept does not come from the instinct, but it is developed through experiences. Moreover, self-concept implies that the self as a doer, which differs from the self as an object.

The term “ego” is derived from the Latin word for “I” and is often used in reference to a person’s conscious conception of his or her identity. Poduska (1980) mentioned that one’s interpretation of the responses, reactions, and evaluations of others as he or she has grown up is the best definition of personal conception of ego.

This concept also allows the person to reflect on past events, analyze current situations, and shape future experience. The self-concept is the important factor that makes people change their roles, values, attitudes and behaviors. Verma and Bagley (1985) said that both knowledge of self characteristics and emotional appraisal of self characteristics are implied by self-concept.

Another concept that is closely related to self-concept is self-esteem. However, self-esteem is often dependent on the situation in which the individual finds himself. Verma and Bagley (1985) also added that each individual has a unique identity, configuration of knowledge about self. The older an individual gets, the more persistent a particular style of self-evaluation will be. Figure 2 shows the relationship of identity and aspects of the self.

Figure 2. Relationships of identity and aspect of the self



Source: Verma, G.K., & Bagley, C. "Self-concept, Achievement and Multicultural Education" (p. 56)

According to Poduska, 1980, *self-appraisal* including an evaluation of the qualities and accomplishments of others in comparison to his or her own characteristics can be counted as a child's self-esteem such as the comparison of physical appearance, intellectual endowments, talents, and even sexual prowess. Moreover, Daniel and Horowitz (1976) as cited in Poduska (1980) suggested that the use of *self-configuration* which the individual proclaimed that he or she is a great person even if no one else does, or *self-depreciation* where the individual insists that he or she is worthless are also the process of *self-esteem*. It is important to know that the ego concepts are based on the self-perception, which is strongly influenced by the perception of others.

In addition, the well-adjusted adult self concept is based on *self-acceptance*, *self-reliance* and *self-improvement*. Due to maturity, individuals know how others perceive them is out of their control; therefore, they are more involved with maintaining their *self-respect*. They are also more concerned with *self-competence* meaning that they know how well they can do something. The well-adjusted individual tends to improve personal performance than merely to surpass someone else's.

2.4 CULTURAL DIMENSION

To achieve more understanding about similarities and differences in communication across cultures, it is important to study how cultures differ. Although there are several different conceptualizations of how cultures differ, the concept of Cultural Dimension by Geert Hofstede (1991) will be the best model to explain about this subject. Hofstede & Bond (1984) who were cited in Gudykunst (1994) differentiated communication styles based on cultural dimension theory as follows:

Power Distance Index (PDI)

Power and inequality are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others. It suggests that people who live in a society whose level of inequality is high, will obey the superior easily and avoid expressing their ideas and emotion.

Individualism (IDV) -Collectivism

When people need to move to a new environment where culture, values and language etc. are different, it is necessary to understand the cross-cultural differences. In individualistic cultures, people who belong to a group are likely to look after themselves and their family only, whereas in collectivistic cultures people who belong to a group are supposed to take care of people that belong to the group in exchange for loyalty.

Low-High Context Culture

Low context cultures seem to use a direct style of speech for communication, whereas High context cultures tend to use an indirect style of speech. Low context communication mostly appears in individualistic cultures. On the contrary, high context communication is used in collectivistic cultures.

Low-High Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI)

People in high uncertainty avoidance cultures cannot tolerate unsecured and ambiguous situations, so they tend to express emotion more than people in low uncertainty avoidance. However, people in low uncertainty avoidance cultures have lower stress than people in high uncertainty avoidance cultures. This is because people in low uncertainty avoidance dislike the structure associated with hierarchy and are more willing to take risks and be flexible. Therefore, we may find low-uncertainty avoidance culture in countries like Sweden, Denmark, Norway, The United States and the Netherlands

Masculinity (MAS) -Femininity

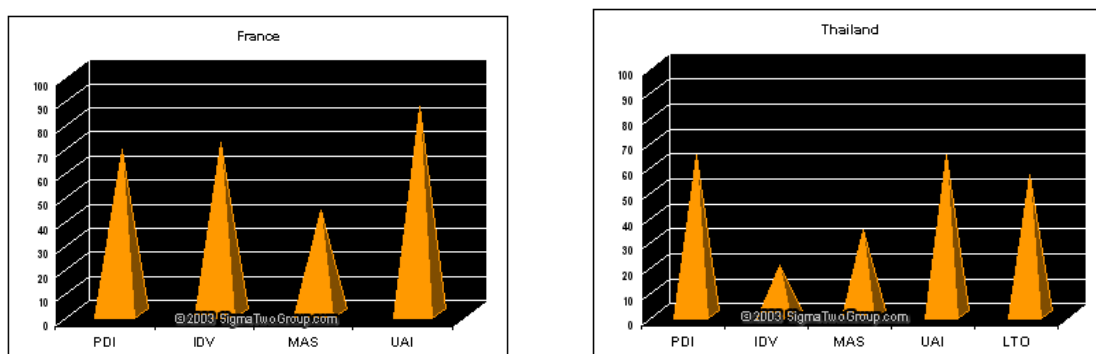
Members of highly masculine cultures place value on things such as power and assertiveness. Performance, ambition, independence and differentiated sex roles are the subjects that masculine cultures focus on while sex role, quality of life, service, and interdependence are the subjects that femininity cultures emphasize.

Long-Term Orientation (LTO)

It can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thriftiness and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's face (Hofstede, 1991).

Figure 3 shows the comparison of France's culture and Thailand's. Thailand's lowest Dimension is Individualism (IDV) at 20. A low score, as Thailand has, indicates the society is Collectivist as compared to France whose society is Individualist. This is manifest in a close long-term commitment to the member 'group', in terms of family, extended family, or extended relationships. Loyalty in a collectivist culture is paramount, and over-rides most other societal rules and regulations. The society fosters strong relationships where everyone takes responsibility for fellow members of their group.

Figure 3. The comparison of cultural differences between France's and Thailand's



2.5 JOINING WITH OTHERS

It is common knowledge that human is a social animal. We were born in a family; we have an education in school; we also work in groups as well. So there are two reasons to understand living in group. The first one is to find out the factors which affect human behavior. The second one is to improve the way to behave better in groups (Worchel & Goethals, 1985). The reasons that people join groups are:

A Sense of Belonging

Worchel & Goethals mentioned that a basic need to affiliate with others is the one reason that people join groups.

Desire for Information

People joining groups are able to get and exchange information.

Receiving Rewards

It can not be denied that people join groups because they want to receive some rewards. However, rewards can come as tangible rewards like money, or social rewards like recognition and security.

Desire to Achieve

Another factor that people join groups is to receive accomplishment. Moreover, joining groups seems to be indirect in some cases like students joining a medical club because they may think that they will be accepted by a medical school (Worchel & Goethals, 1985).

2.6 RELEVANT RESEARCH

The recent study of Chirkov and his colleagues reveals that the motivation for moving abroad to get an education is a powerful predictor of international students' adjustment (Chirkov et al., 2007).

According to the study on "Cross-cultural and Education Adaptation of Asian Students in New Zealand" conducted by Berno & Ward (2002), it revealed that the larger discrepancies between expectations and experiences were associated with psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Besides, the factors associated with successful adaptation come from expectations, language proficiency and social support.

Another interesting study on "A cross-cultural study of trait self-enhancement, explanatory variables, and adjustment" conducted by Church & Katigbak et al. reported that a better understanding of personality processes across cultures will result from an integration of trait and cultural psychology perspectives.

In this chapter, the definition of adjustment, the concepts of self-direction, self-concept, cultural dimension and the reasons to join with others are discussed. It is necessary for all students who are studying in new environments to know, understand, and prepare to adjust appropriately with new situations they encountered. Self-preparation will also help to decrease the disappointments that occur because of unexpected situations. Therefore, they can live happily in a new culture, with new people, or even in new environments.