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Cultural Diversity Management: Heading Towards Sustainable Education in Public Sector Universities of Pakistan

Seema Khalid
Commecs Institute of Business & Emerging Sciences

Abstract

This paper aims to cultivate a cross-cultural concept and build upon Cultural Competence (CC) that may play an important role in reconciling the discrepancy and dissonance between sub-cultures and the resulting disruption examining the behavioral pattern of faculty and staff in different cultural settings. It investigates how the contemporary set of values temperates the effects of customs on interpersonal work relationships and performance, within and across cultures. Heading with a methodological approach, it takes into account the perspectives of faculty members with different service periods as they are the major stakeholders. The present paper concludes that cultural competence is a tool that introduces a new version of management with expansive thinking patterns motivating faculty members to touch new heights of performance. Relevant information is gathered from three public sector universities of Pakistan using a purposive sampling technique through a questionnaire while the sample size includes 112 responses. SPSS was used for the analysis and instrument reliability was tested through Cronbach Alpha. The correlational Regression Model affirmed the notion that Cultural Competence has a positive and significant relationship with the performance of teachers. The research concludes that CC can help in the diversity management of faculty performance on the grounds of its social and economic benefits.

Keywords: Cultural Diversity management, Transcultural relationship, Cross-cultural Lens, Cultural Competence.

تلخیص

اس مقالے کا مقصد ایک ثقافتی تصور کو فروغ دینا، ثقافتی قابلیت پر استوار کرنا ہے جو ذیلی ثقافتوں کے درمیان تضاد اور اختلاف کو دور کرنے میں اہم کردار ادا کر سکتا ہے اور مختلف ثقافتی ترتیبات میں فیکلٹی اور عملے کے طرز عمل کے نتیجے میں پیدا ہونے والی رکاوٹ کی جانچ پڑتال کے لیے۔ یہ اس بات کی تحقیق کرتا ہے کہ اقتدار کا عصری مجموعہ ثقافت کے اندر اور ثقافت کے درمیان باہمی تعلقات اور کارکردگی پر مروجہ اثرات کو کس طرح معتدل کرتا ہے۔ ایک طریقہ کار کے ساتھ آگے بڑھتے ہوئے، یہ مختلف سروس کی مدت کے ساتھ فیکلٹی ممبران کے نقطہ نظر کو مد نظر رکھتا ہے کیونکہ وہ بڑے

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اسٹیک ہولڈرز ہیں۔ موجودہ مقالے میں یہ نتیجہ اخذ کیا گیا ہے کہ ثقافتی قابلیت ایک ایسا عالمہ ہے جو انتظامیہ کے ایک نئے ورژن کو متعارف کراتا ہے جس کے ذریعے فیکلٹی ممبران کو کارکردگی کی نئی بلندیوں کو چھونے کی تحریک ملتی ہے۔ نمونے کے سائز میں ۱۱۲ جوابات شامل ہیں۔ تجزیہ کے لیے (SPSS) کا استعمال کیا گیا اور کرونباچ الفا کے ذریعے آلے کی جانچ کی گئی ہے۔ کوریشنل رگریشن ماڈل نے اس تصور کی تصدیق کی کہ ثقافتی قابلیت کا اساتذہ کی کارکردگی سے مثبت اور اہم تعلق ہے۔ تحقیق نے یہ نتیجہ اخذ کیا کہ ثقافتی قابلیت اپنے سماجی اور اقتصادی فوائد کی بنیاد پر فیکلٹی کی کارکردگی کے تنوع کے انتظام میں مدد کر سکتا ہے۔

کلیدی الفاظ: ثقافتی تنوع کا نظم و نسق، ثقافتی رشتہ، کراس کلچرل لیسنس، ثقافتی قابلیت۔

Introduction

Pakistan is facing daunting challenges of frail economic trajectory, worsening socio-economic status, and unstable political base all are not gearing into an appreciable development path. Education-undoubtedly- is the most recognized parameter to deal with such terrible conditions. A sound educational system is for sure to help intellectual growth that in turn nurtures economic growth. Tracy and Sappington (1993) write that with a sound education base even the new employees easily enter into the desirable performance cycle and contribute to growth, Daniel (2009) found there is a positive relationship between employee's productivity and their education level, good education certainly leads to good and positive performance. Kobi Peleg et al. 2021advocate that dynamic and effective leadership can change the performance status of team members even in these turbulent times. The present study capitalizes on the Cultural competence that - if developed effectively helps cultural management in universities, i.e. heading beyond the cultural differences and producing a dynamic result in the form of more productive citizens (Rizwan et al.2016, Summaya and Faiza (2015, Richa Gupta 2013, Erasmus 2007). Glaeser et al., (1995) reported that employees with solid education are always found promising in terms of their performance. Educational leadership blended with effective cultural management may lead to sustainable youth of a country forming the most useful social fabric thus changing even the long-term economic status of a country (UNDP Report 2018). Cultural competence is something that is yet to be developed in universities and hence still waiting to reap the fruits of effective handling of students from diverse cultures. Public sector universities of Pakistan need to develop transcultural relationships for the economic boost (Kigali, 2006). Next is to develop an

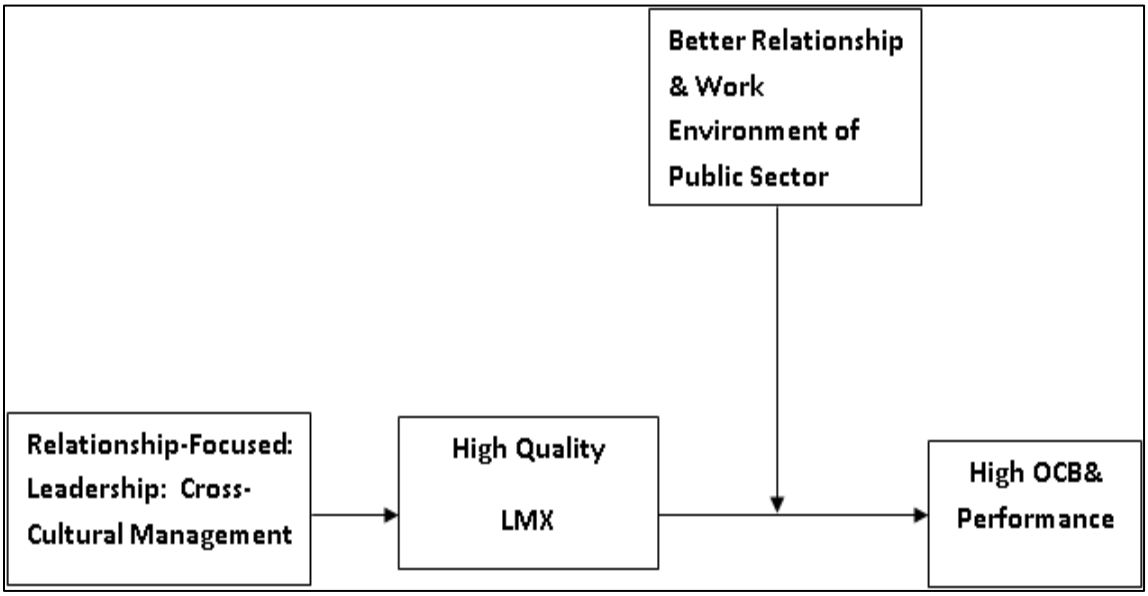
operational strategy thus developing cultural competence i.e., acquiring cultural knowledge to deliver culturally sensitive and congruent care (AyaShaban (2016).

Augmented Effect Need in Public Sector Universities: Private sector universities are highly paid and hence can develop a sound performance strategy focus which is largely missing in the Public sector. The actual dilemma is that a large number of students' population can't afford to go to private universities owing to the high educational expenses and for this, they join public sector universities. This all demands a serious approach to recognizing the needs of students specifically in a cross-cultural setting, facilitating them with sound education ultimately making them as productive and promising citizens of Pakistan.

The continuous compromising stance of the political leaders towards education development has had a huge and unimaginable negative impact on the quality of education in Pakistan. The disruption caused by COVID-19 is undoubtedly swifter and more immediate than either the SARS outbreak of 2003 or the global financial crisis of 2007–08! All this requires an intelligent direction of our leaders and Cultural Competence may catalyze achieving these objectives.

Showing with a more intensified and integrated approach even the educational leaders are expected to develop a cross-cultural lens, tap the opportunity to facilitate and greet the students who are from diverse cultural backgrounds to offer dynamic academic management (Bond, 2003; Smith 2003). All the big intellects and think tanks of the globe are already on a flight for strategic initiatives to capitalize on the human capital and attract in turn foreign capital. Pakistanis have yet to discover land diversity management at large and the education sector is not an exception (Ayub & Jehn, 2014, Homan, Greer, &Jehn, 2008; van Knippenberg & Haslam, 2003, Sadri & Tran, 2002.

The study aims to apply the Cultural diversity management model to the three Higher Educational Set-ups of Sindh. This estimation is shown in **Figure: 1**: **Source: Author's estimation**



The present study proposes shown in the above picture- that developing the cross-cultural lens would develop high-quality leader-member relationships among the faculty members that in turn improve the work environment ultimately leading to high performance.

Scope of the Research

To address all the above-stated challenges in the higher education sector of Pakistan, the educational management is expected to take an intelligent direction and skillful execution of a new educational paradigm, and Cultural Competence (CC) is expected to serve as a catalyst to achieve the high-quality performance and education in Pakistan.

Rationale of the Research:

Pakistan presents a frightening socio-economic trajectory thus calling for some unprecedented and dynamic leadership styles addressing all the challenging performance areas highlighting the education sector which couldn't attain the SDGs 2020 as reported by the UNDP report 2020. University is generally a cosmopolitan unit that greets students from every corner of the country hence demanding a system that accommodates them all and also facilitates them for better learning and growth. In pursuit of excellence, cross-cultural management must develop and nurture a conducive environment to facilitate students coming from different backgrounds. Cultural competence (CC) can be used as a tool to foster social cohesion in universities and bridge the cultural divide.

Research Questions

The research questions of this study are:
(i) How does the cultural competence of faculty impact on Students' performance in the universities of Sindh?
(ii) Does the attitude of teachers have a positive impact on cultural competence?

Objective of the Study

The present study goes with the overriding objective of observing the far-reaching impact of different factors on the cultural competence of faculty members upon the academic performance of students. The next objective is to validate that the factors of orientation and training are significant in developing the cultural competence of teachers.

Significance of the Study

The significance is very obvious owing to the novelty of the idea of applying the cross-cultural notion in the higher education sector of Pakistan. The main importance of the present research is that we will try to assess how cultural competence helps elevate the performance of students in the Universities of Sindh. In addition, the research 'results marked the cultural variables as strong antecedents of performance, therefore, Public sector Universities must embark on a journey of forming a better collaboration of team members who belong to different cultures to result in the blossom of quality output.

Limitation of the Study

The research was confined only to three universities and only three cities in Pakistan. The study was conducted to verify the importance and need for developing cultural competence among the faculty members.

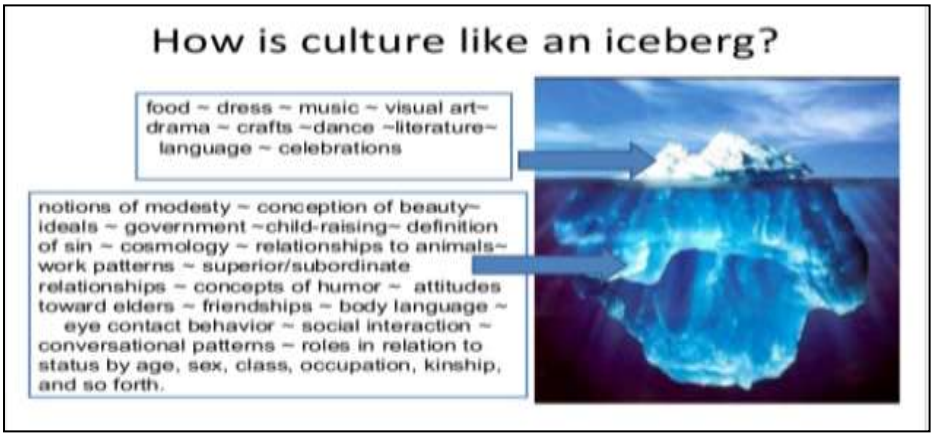
Review of Literature

Cultural Diversity Management

Diversity is today's most touted topic which is gaining wide acceptance over the globe hence making diversity management extremely vital for success. The success stories of several leaders are reported in the previous research where leaders with an effort to manage the cultural differences marked the business land with great examples (Peterson and Hunt, 1997, p.209). Diversity management paves the way for better and visible in-role and extra-role behavior and performance (Chen, Tsui, Farh, 2002). Unproductivity in Public Sector Universities was also reported by some previous researchers who put the argument that

weak bonding of team members results in low motivation and low performance due to less cohesiveness and cooperation (Pelled et al., 1999).

Cultural Variations as an ICEBURG!
Figure 2: Culture as an ICEBURG



Source: HBR 2020

Cultural Competence

Cultural competence is learning how to accept and respect the differences among people from different cultural groups, respond to those differences positively, and be able to interact effectively in a range of cultural environments related to that group. (International Coalition of Sites of Coalition- 2018).

The importance of understanding the respective differences among different people who are from different backgrounds is not a new concept and the need was felt almost more than half a century back. Madeline Leininger took the lead back in the 1950s and identified the need to recognize and respond to individuals' differences (Leininger, 1988). She viewed culture as "learned, shared, and transmitted values, beliefs, norms, and life practices of a particular group that guides thinking, decision, and actions in patterned ways" (1988, p. 156).

Educational settings need to introduce a paradigm shift in terms of developing their workforce i.e. faculty members to boost their motivation and take them to new heights! now connecting with others after knowing their backgrounds can make sense and for this, educational leaders are adopting new ways to develop strong relationships across the fine cultural lines thus fostering a sense of belongingness, laying the foundation for becoming change agents, and contributing significantly to educational outcomes of students. The

study goes with the assumption that Cultural competence can serve as a catalyst in taking universities to higher performance.

Factors of Cultural Competence

A few important factors are awareness, attitude, and knowledge. Now it looks imperative at this stage to take a quick synopsis of these three:

Awareness: Knowledge and awareness about the deep-grained beliefs, values set, and customs become a prerequisite to begin with the initiative of developing cultural competence. People generally are governed by their deep-grained beliefs and values so knowing these details is very important to ensure a smooth going of the competency development journey.

Attitude: Attitude will help estimate the acceptance of diversity in the environment and help calculate the willingness to accept others' differences in an organization. Attitudes can be changed positively with effective leadership.

Knowledge: Knowing about all the important factors will facilitate developing a sound strategy and implementing it effectively. The underlying assumption of this approach is that the greater the knowledge one has about another culture, the greater the competence in practice.

Despite its importance, only a few researches can be found in the education sector to validate the importance of cultural diversity management using cultural competence as a tool. (Cheryl L. Lehman Ed.D, 2017; Mary P. Curtis, 2016; Dick, Estell, & McCarty, 1994; Krater, Zeni, & Cason, 1994; Au & Jordan, 1981; Mohatt & Erickson‘s, 1981. The present research highlights the factors of internal skills, knowledge, and attributes that empower teachers to effectively deal with a diverse set of students in the classroom. The above-said gap was also brought to notice and worked by Cheryl L. Lehman Ed.D (2017) emphasizing the need to orient the faculty with diversity management using cultural competence as a tool.

E. Arruzza · 2020, Dorothy E. Stubbe (2020), and Shepherd et al. (2019) also examined the impact of diversity management emphasizing the need to use cultural competence as a catalyst to improve the performance of team members in corporate and health sectors respectively.

The proposed Environment for Universities is depicted below:



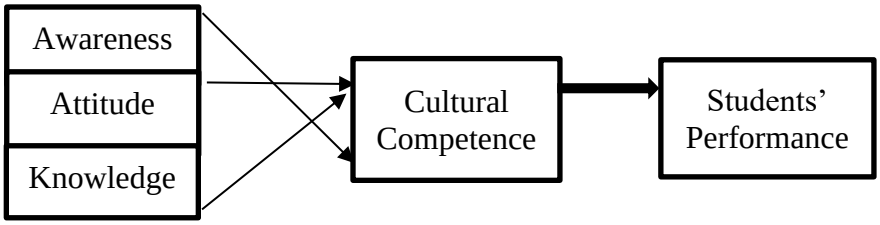
The presented model is our hypothesis that despite all the religious, ethnic, and cultural differences of the workforce (small ball) the effective diversity management approach can help narrow the gap of cultural divide and further help harness the diverse potential resulting in better learning, performance and financial impact of Public Sector Universities.
Source: HBR "The Othering Effect in Dealing with Diversity"

Hypotheses

H1: Cultural Competence and its factors have a significant and positive impact on the development of Sustainable Education of the Three Universities of Sindh.
H1a: Awareness of the cultural difference has a significant positive impact on the development of Cultural Competence.
H1b: The attitude of faculty has a significant positive impact on the development of Cultural Competence.
H1c: Knowledge about cultural competence has a significant positive impact on the development of Cultural Competence.
H2: Cultural Competence has a significant positive impact on student's performance

Conceptual Framework

During our study, we gathered the validation of the variable from various sources; the qualitative research conducted during the Ph.D. research in the form of interviews of VCs and Deans of all three Public Sector Universities. The aforementioned variables were also studied with the help of secondary data in the form of research articles from Research Gate, Sage publication, and from the Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology (JCCP) and Cross-Cultural Research (CCR), published between 1970 and 2020. The online journals were also an important resource.



Source: Author's Estimation

Research Methodology

As endorsed by many previous researchers, the study uses Hofstede Cultural Dimension VSM-08 to assess cultural competence i.e. Awareness, Attitude through a self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 112 subjects in three public sector universities of Sindh. Purposive Random sampling was selected for the study emphasizing the serious approach to arrive at the expected and hypothesized model. Cronbach Alpha was used to check the reliability and reported validity of our research construct. Predictive Correlation style was used to predict the relationship among the variables.

Welman and Kruger (1999) are one of the advocates of Purposive sampling, we also chose it to arrive at a point that is consistent with the previous research.

Questionnaire: Self-developed Questionnaire helped check the preferences and satisfaction levels of diverse groups of students that highlighted five broad domains encompassing almost all the important variables of students' satisfaction and achievement. Reasonable efforts were made to distribute the questionnaire to the maximum available number justifying the generalization of results with high-level validation. The questionnaires were distributed randomly without any gender discrimination/ preference.

Findings/ Results

Table-1
Mean, Standard deviation, and Cronbach Alpha values of the Variables

Variables	No. of respondents	Mean	Std. Deviation	Cronbach Alpha
Awareness	112	3.9721	.54672	.912
Attitude	112	4.1892	.74563	.901
Knowledge	112	4.0238	.62575	.854
Cultural Competence	112	3.6598	.67453	.842
Students' Performance	112	3.0675	.69321	.886

Our study validates in terms of the mean values as shown above. The standard deviation values also validate the selection of variables as the important factors or determinants of cultural competence and students' performance. The low standard deviation and high mean values validate the variables and also confirmation of the research paradigm through our respondents Similarly, the Cronbach alpha values are much greater than 0.7 which proves the instrument's reliability.

Correlation of the Study

The following Table shows the strength of the correlation between the chosen independent and dependent variables:

Table-2
Correlation Values among the Variables

Scale	1	2	3	4
Awareness	1			
Attitude	.512	1		
Knowledge	.498	.589	1	
Cultural Competence	.891	.799	.791	1

The correlational values indicate the strength of empirical association among the chosen variables of Awareness, attitude, knowledge, and Cultural competence. The values for Awareness, attitude, and knowledge are .891, .799, and .791 showing significant contributions of these three factors toward building cultural competence.

Table-3
Correlation values among the variables

Scale	1	2
Cultural Competence	1	
Students' Performance	.792	1

Table 3 reveals the strong association between cultural competence and students' performance hence validating the construct.

Regression Analysis

Table-4
Input variable and Cultural competence (outcome variable)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients		
		Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	.688	.301		.625	.010
Awareness	.199	.079	.191	.051	.040
Attitude	.180	.047	.192	.067	.002
Knowledge	.310	.060	.312	.194	.000

Dependent Variable: Cultural Competence

Regression reported a strong and positive association of determinants of cultural competence on the development of Cultural competence in three Universities of Sindh. The P-values for Awareness, attitude, and knowledge are .040, .002, and .000 concluding our hypothesis H1 also the sub-hypothesis H1a, H1b & H1c are accepted and supported by the regression analysis findings.

Table-5
Cultural competence showing the association with Students' Performance (outcome variable)

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Stand. Coefficients		
		Std. Error	Beta	T	Sig.
Constant	.928	.301		.761	.010
Cultural Competence	.231	.078	.191	.051	.020

Dependent Variable: Students' Performance

Regression results with a coefficient of and P-value of .20 helped in the acceptance of H2 concluding that there is a strong and positive association of Cultural competence with students' performance.

Discussion

Both our research questions and Research hypothesis were validated as the results reported about the positive impact of cultural competence on students' performance in three public sector universities of Sindh. The construct is consistent with many other past studies conducted in the service sector with a special focus on education and Health lines for the positive link between cultural competence and performance, and satisfaction of students. (Cinzia et al.,2020; Daniel Baracskay, 2020, Smart & Ang,2000; Tony S. Kuo,2018; Cheryl L. Lehman Ed.D,2017; Chris Lehmann, 2016; Amy Louise Brace, 2011; Agyeman, J., Erickson, JS,2012). Hence we conclude that cross-cultural diversity management is a vital need in all public sector universities of Pakistan to uplift the performance of faculty and students and to improve the socio-economic trajectory of Pakistan.

Conclusions

The research concludes that cross-cultural diversity management using cultural competence as a tool if developed diligently can help elevate the performance of students to a greater extent. The study would surely assist the actual doers to unearth the real reasons and then capitalize on the strengths overcoming the weaknesses ultimately taking the Public Sector Universities to the zenith of performance.
Recommendation: The study recommends the application of the proposed model of cross-cultural diversity management using cultural competency as a tool in the context of higher education in a country like Pakistan.

- The effective application may help build a positive environment in universities through cross-cultural collaboration making possible levels of impact that wouldn't be achievable without otherwise
- The research will help increase our understanding of the relevance of the SDGs to how institutional diversity management priorities are framed (and the drivers for this).

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Seema Khalid is an Assistant Professor in the Commecs Institute of Business & Emerging Sciences.