



University Teachers' Perspective of Cultural Diversity: A Case of LUAWMS, Balochistan

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ABSTRACT

This study delves into the connection between cultural diversity and the teaching profession in the multilingual and multicultural landscape of Balochistan, coupled with the socio-political intricacies of the region. It specifically looks at the experiences and reactions of teachers of Lasbela University of Agriculture, Water and Marine Sciences (LUAWMS) to culture diversity in their classrooms. The study was conducted using an interpretive-constructivist research approach and purposive sampling was used to include teachers from various faculties who had different genders, ethnicities, languages, and academic ranks. Results reveal that language, ethnicity, and politics influence the intricate nature of teaching in a culturally diverse school environment as well as lacking institutional support. The individual effort and lack of well-structured institutional policies are seen as key factors in teachers' perceptions of managing diversity, which makes it difficult to reach inclusive educational goals in relation to the university's mission. The study concludes that the university, such as LUAWMS, should incorporate cultural diversity as a permanent and integral part of the academic life. It calls for the formulation of far-reaching, flexible and supportive institutional policies and strengthening faculty development and student support systems to make the effective shift from cultural diversity as a demographic to cultural diversity as a teaching and learning asset.

1. Introduction

Recent studies highlights globalization, internationalization, and more mobility in student populations have given rise to cultural diversity as a key characteristic of higher education, where students from all cultural, linguistic, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds are united (Bauman, 2005; Castles & Miller, 2003; Berry et al., 2021). This diversity enhances learning in many ways, such as through critical thinking, intercultural awareness, communication, and collaborative learning (Erbaş, 2018; Dandy & Hurn, 2013). The Social Constructivist Theory (SC) of Vygotsky (1978) is adopted, which sees learning as a social process where culture and interaction are factors that guide knowledge construction. Recent research also brings socioeconomic status, religion, gender identity and digital access to the table as important aspects of cultural diversity and additional areas for enhanced approaches in education (Smith, 2025; Ward et al., 2025).

As important actors in the process of developing inclusive classrooms, university teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity impact on classroom-based teaching and student engagement. Schools with positive attitudes are likely to provide culturally responsive teaching, while factors like lack of training, language barriers, limited support within the school and implicit bias

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are likely to impede inclusive education (Banks, 2015; Abacioglu et al., 2020; Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005; Keengwe, 2010). But recently some studies show a disconnect between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices because of inadequate professional development and institutional support (Abacioglu et al., 2023; Yip & Xu, 2024; Ricaforte et al., 2025). Thus, it is crucial to analyze the attitude of university teachers towards cultural diversity to enhance inclusive teaching in higher education.

This study aims to explore the other research area, that is, to examine the perspectives of university teachers on cultural diversity at LUAWMS. It is guided by three research questions.

- How university teachers perceive cultural diversity at LUAWMS?
- In teachers' perspectives, what challenges do they face while teaching in a culturally diverse environment at LUAWMS?
- What are the perceived advantages and disadvantages of working in cultural diverse classrooms?

The study takes an interpretative constructive approach which aims to understand how individuals create meanings from their experiences and the implications those meanings have on their actions (Creswell, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

2. Literature Review

2.1. Cultural Diversity and Learning in Higher Education

Higher education institutions are more culturally diverse now as a result of globalization and the growing number of immigrant and international students. As a result, this has created more and more multicultural classrooms with students of varying ages, academic backgrounds, language abilities, learning styles, socio-economic status, and cultural experiences. The differences have a significant impact on the way students learn and function within the learning context. Some students might still think that the teacher is the only source of knowledge, and therefore limit the collaborative learning, while others will have a different level of confidence, depending on their previous school education and cultural experiences. Culturally diverse classrooms have been shown to improve learning diversity, to expand academic viewpoints, and to foster creativity, problem solving, and teamwork. In addition, the presence of international students adds to classroom dynamics and fosters an exchange of ideas and ideas of global awareness and intercultural communication.

2.2. Importance of Cultural Diversity for University Teachers

Cultural diversity in higher education is not just demographic, but also linguistic and religious, and socio-economic diversity. In response, universities are seeking to make their curricula and institutional policies more inclusive, accessible, and equitable in regard to teaching and learning. Teachers are a key player in this process, and have to teach in multi-cultural classrooms with flexible teaching models that are culturally responsive and inclusive. Students with diverse cultural backgrounds make for a more interesting and productive experience of interaction and collaboration, when teachers actively invite discussion of differences. Issues of identity, sense of belonging, and representation are still very much a concern in higher education, however. These problems have been exacerbated by the surge of online learning, which has added communication barriers, disparities in digital literacy, and access to technology, demanding more flexible and accommodating teaching practices.

2.3. The Social Constructivist perspective on teaching in Culturally Diverse classrooms

A culturally diverse classroom demands that teachers have the ability to effectively deal with differences in language, ethnicity, religion, and socio-cultural backgrounds that impact student participation and achievement. The social-constructivist approach of Vygotsky views learning as a social process rather than a personal one, viewing it as socially constructed and a shared part of the culture. The teacher is a key figure in the ZPD, providing the child with the necessary scaffolding and engaging him or her in a way that will lead him or her to higher levels of understanding. Language is one of the important tools used in this process, and students' difficulties in achieving the meaning from the learning can be attributed to differences in their language skills and styles of communication. Thus, good communication, culturally relevant examples and inclusive teaching strategies are crucial. In this perspective, knowledge is created as a result of a constant mutual construction between teacher and student, and the cultural diversity influences the teaching and the learning process.

2.4. Teachers' Perspectives on Cultural Diversity in LUAWMS, Balochistan

Balochistan is a cultural basket case where historical marginalisation, resource conflicts and current socio-political issues create layers of cultural diversity (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Kakar, 2015). In this context, LUAWMS is an example of a microcosm which demonstrates ethnic diversity, including students from Baloch, Pashtun, Brahui, Sindhi and other ethnic groups, raising continuous debates over provincial identity and inter-regional equity (Grare, 2013). While higher education is generally considered as a means for development and national integration, at times, sensitivities of the ethnic and political communities

have affected academic environments, and teachers have to carefully navigate the tension between academic freedom and institutional and social pressures (Khan, 2020). A gap of research however exists on teachers' perceptions of cultural diversity in LUAWMS and other universities in Balochistan with a focus on cultural diversity specifically in Balochistan. It is significant because it demonstrates the role of teachers' experiences in their specific contexts, which involve their interpretations, strategies and problems arising from diversity in an intricate socio-cultural and educational environment.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The study is based on Vygotsky's (1978) Social Constructivist theory that learning is a socially mediated process built up through interaction and not through a process of individual effort. This theory explains that students learn by communicating, collaborating and participating in the classroom with others in a cultural way. Concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) emphasizes the role of the teacher in helping learners to go beyond their current abilities by providing the necessary support. Within culturally diverse classrooms, this position becomes more complicated because students are different with regard to language, culture, and education. The teacher's role is even more pivotal in other contexts, like Balochistan, where the learners might not have much formal academic English or have different schooling systems. Clear communication and culturally responsive teaching strategies are further emphasized by language, which is a further component of cognition in Vygotsky's theory. In this way, knowledge is produced and co-constructed as the teacher and students interact continuously and in a culturally diverse learning context.

3. Research Methodology

This research is a qualitative research that is used to understand the lived experience of teachers at LUAWMS in relation to cultural diversity. Creswell (2013) and Creswell & Poth (2018) suggest that qualitative phenomenological research is suitable for investigating an "underexplored phenomenon" by examining the subjective experience of the participants. This study is interpretive, that is, it regards multiple socially constructed realities (Crotty, 1996). Realities are perceived as beings in relation and experience, and knowledge is co-constructed through researcher-participant interaction. Axiological, the researcher's values are recognized but controlled by reflexivity and bracketing as mentioned by Moustakas (1994). The population of the study is all the teachers of LUAWMS and there are total 107 lecturers in the school. The information rich was selected using purposive criterion sampling technique with a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Data were analyzed to determine data adequacy until saturation; the final sample consisted of 14 teachers from 7 faculties. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were used to obtain the data, giving them freedom to share their experiences flexibly and in detail. This approach can be used to capture rich narratives of teaching in a culturally diverse classroom.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze data, a process which consisted of systematic coding and identifying the major themes from the interview transcriptions (Saldaña, 2015; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Creswell (2007) was adhered to in regards to ethical issues with informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity and voluntary participation. In conclusion, this methodological approach provides a comprehensive and systematic analysis of teachers' perception of cultural diversity in the higher education scenario of LUAWMS and Balochistan, with an emphasis on a rigorous, ethical, and in-depth study.

4. Result And Findings

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the collected data. Based on the data, these themes were developed:

4.1. Perceptions of diversity in the classroom context

The majority of teachers characterize LUAWMS as a "highly diverse" institution but they do not always have a consistent and unified understanding of what diversity means. Most participants consider diversity in terms of ethnic and regional differences, like the difference between Baloch and Pashtun students, Lasbela and other districts, or provincial differences (Balochistan, Punjab, Sindh).

One agriculture teacher explained, "...I might have students from 5 or 6 districts and tribes in one class." Others take this further and explain that students' languages vary such that they speak Balochi, Pashto, Sindhi, Brahui, Urdu, English and other languages and gender differences also are acknowledged by a smaller number of participants as part of diversity. One female lecturer commented, "...diversity as the case of girls of very conservative families and boys of relatively liberal urban families in the same space for me".

These views are similar to those found in the literature which promote the concepts of a more inclusive definition of diversity than just ethnicity (e.g., Banks, 2016; Hurtado et al., 2012).

4.2. Diversity as a Resource for Learning and Engagement

One of the interview findings was that diversity was seen as a pedagogical advantage. Many teachers think that students' diverse cultural and regional backgrounds contribute to vibrant classroom dynamics and enrich their learning, especially in water and agriculture-related fields.

When talking about irrigation practices, students from different parts of the country share their practice of water management at home and it becomes very lively and students learn that no single 'Balochistan' exists but there are many realities.

Teachers also reported that diversity contributes to tolerance and is an enriching experience for students. A marine sciences teacher noted that "...heterogeneous group work makes students learn to negotiate differences". and prepares them for the workplace, where they will have to communicate with people from a variety of cultural and geographic backgrounds.

These findings are in line with the contact and decision theory literature, which posits that structured contact between groups of difference will decrease prejudice and increase cognitive complexity (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; van Knippenberg & Schippers, 2007).

4.3. Communication Barriers in Multicultural Classrooms

Although teachers saw the value of diversity, they also described some ongoing issues. Language proved to be one of the significant challenges, especially for those students who do not have good command of Urdu or English, as they remain inactive in the classroom discussion. "...Some students understand it but they don't have social control to speak it in Urdu or English, so they don't speak it, eventually they lose interest", said one social sciences lecturer.

Some teachers try to make informal arrangements, such as explanations in Balochi or in the presence of someone else who can translate, but such arrangements are not systematic.

Still other difficulties are related to politically and culturally sensitive issues like ethnicity, nationalism and sectarian identity. Teachers explained how they found themselves in a delicate situation between stimulating conversation and preventing conflict. One said: "...I think there are moments when we are talking about national matters, and students start to think in terms of their ethnic identity, and sometimes feel that I have to push it hard, or it might get a bit rough, or it might be misunderstood".

Gender issues also affect participation in class, as some female students from conservative backgrounds are reportedly not inclined to speak in the presence of both boys and girls especially on sensitive issues to do with the culture. The results are in line with the general concerns about power, identity and inequality in higher education settings in Balochistan (Durrani & Halai, 2018; Kakar, 2015).

4.4. There is a lack of perceived training for diversity

One pattern that emerges is the lack of a formal course in teaching culturally diverse classrooms. The majority of teachers state that they have not been prepared in a structured way in inclusive or intercultural pedagogy. Rather they depend on experience, the advice of others, and trial and error methods.

one participant said: "...we were never taught how to deal with diversity; we learn on the job. Sometimes I feel that I'm doing an injustice to some students because I don't know how to do it."

This is consistent with the international studies showing that teachers are inadequately prepared for inclusive teaching (Hockings, 2010; Leask, 2009) and also with some studies in Pakistan which revealed a lack of awareness among teachers regarding inclusion and diversity (Malik & Shakir, 2021).

4.5. Institutional Limitations and Self-Initiated Efforts by Teachers

Participants noted LUAWMS as having some informal structures in place to discuss diversity in learning and teaching. Codes of conduct, anti-harassment policies are in place, but few explicit institutional policies were identified for inclusive pedagogy or intercultural engagement.

A few participants identified supportive actions from individual administrators, but pointed out that this is dependent on individual effort and not required by the institution. Likewise, some teachers have established their own approaches including using heterogeneous group work, conversations about identity and language and informal mentoring for first-generation students.

But often these efforts go unnoticed and unrewarded. As one participant said, "...Diversity work is invisible labour."

5. Discussion

Research results reveal that LUAWMS educators' perspectives on cultural diversity are complex and at times contradictory. Diversity is viewed as an academic and social good that enriches learning and enhances critical thinking skills and equips students for pluralistic societies, consistent with the research that supports diverse classrooms (Gurin et al., 2002; Banks, 2016). Culture is defined as a set of shared beliefs, values and practices that construct identity, communication and classroom relationships. Suggesting that culture has a significant impact on behavior and engagement, participants noted how it would impact on student performance, in line with Cruz et al. (2020) and Berry et al. (2021) who point to the influence of culture on cognition and creativity.

This study further indicates that initial culture shock or difficulty with cultural competence can be overcome when exposed to cultural diversity over time, which can result in adaptation, empathy, and a wider worldview (Furnham, 2001; Reckhow et al., 2021). Multicultural environments were also identified as a way to promote creativity when experiencing a variety of ideas (Ebersole et al., 2016). Further, cultural factors like individualism/collectivism and power distance considerably affect classroom involvement. Engagement level is likely to be lower for students who come from collectivist and high power-distance cultures, since they may not be as likely to be actively involved or challenge authority (Whalley et al., 2021; Probstl-Haider & Mostel, 2019). Cultural identity was also understood as a dynamic process and influenced by various social factors such as gender, ethnicity, religion and socioeconomic status (Chung & Measom, 2020; Kotluk & Kocakaya, 2018).

5.1. Diverse Teaching Environment

5.1.1. Students' Needs

It was highlighted that inclusive education is about acknowledging student diversity and not using a one-size-fits-all approach. Equity is the ability to modify instruction to address the needs of the individual. This is in line with the call of Ankomah (2020) and Moloney & Saltmarsh (2016) for inclusive pedagogy. Differentiated instruction and language support were found to be a critical consideration in multilingual classrooms (Banks, 2006; Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010).

5.1.2. Challenging Aspects

Language barriers, varying levels of academic readiness, cultural differences, and a lack of teacher training are significant obstacles. These are similar to the problems identified by Chesley & Jordan (2012) regarding the problem of teacher preparation for diversity. Watson (2021) also highlights the need for teachers to tailor learning to students' readiness, interests and learning profiles, and how this is challenging to do without support from the school or institution.

5.1.3. Teachers' Experiences

Teachers reported that diversity does help their professional development, creativity, and flexibility in teaching despite facing challenges. They apply techniques of group learning, visual techniques and the use of digital resources to support the learner. Howard and Rodriguez-Minkoff (2017) and Paris (2021) are in agreement that diversity leads to pedagogical innovation. Recent research also underscores the increasing importance of culturally responsive teaching and digital technologies as tools to enhance equity and inclusion in education (García & Wei, 2023; OECD, 2024; UNESCO, 2024). But the barriers to training still exist as well as resources and curriculum adaptation in institutions. Therefore, it is crucial to enhance teacher training programmes to facilitate inclusive practices in higher education (Banks, 2023; OECD, 2025; World Bank, 2026).

6. Implications

The results of the study have several implications for LUAWMS and other higher education institutions.

In addition to the qualitative findings, quantitative studies are recommended to help provide the measurable and comparative data on teachers' perceptions and practices about cultural diversity at LUAWMS and other similar institutions. This will aid generalization to wider populations.

Further research is needed in the areas of diversity training courses, barriers to inclusive teaching and students' life experiences in multicultural classrooms. Students' views can offer a fuller picture of the impact of diversity on learning outcomes.

Studies that explore collaborative teaching, leadership positions and shifts in teachers' beliefs over time are required. This can lead to the identification of sustainable strategies for improvements in inclusive education for the long-term.

Comparative studies of various disciplines, institutions, and cultures are encouraged. This would enable the identification of the practices that are most appropriate, locally and globally relevant and support better curriculum design and teaching practices.

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