

Exploring the Influence of Learning Culture on the Effectiveness of Pedagogical Tools within Management Faculties

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Abstract: *The learning culture remained a vital factor and was identified as important due to the changing nature of learning towards flexible and more geographically spread. This research project seeks to explore and better understand the lived experience of the academic staff and undergraduate learner perspectives on the influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of different pedagogical tools within management schools. The study was conducted in four different parts of the world (the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan), which are unique in their learning cultures and styles. Therefore, it is important to examine the literature to investigate the influence of learning culture on the effective delivery of various pedagogical tools. The research revealed that lectures, PowerPoint presentations (PPTs), lecture notes, class debates, group projects, role play, case studies, internships, guest speakers, mentoring, technology-embedded devices (mobile phone, gaming, simulation, virtual learning environment VLE), multiple choice questions, and reading and writing remained one most effective pedagogical tool but their application is varied throughout four business schools due the cultural perception of academics and students. The influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools was found to be challenging. Learning was found to be associated with the values, beliefs, and attitudes that an individual holds and supports.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Learning culture is the “belief, values and behaviour a person or a group of people have with regard to their own teaching or learning specific context” (Sagy et al, 2016 pg. 03). The definition of culture is linked with the learning culture as it allows the identification of which elements of culture are more associated with carrying out effective learning. The Hofstede model of cultural dimension was applied to understand the learning cultural elements such as student-teacher interaction, students’ varied learning styles, prior learning, motivation and preferred pedagogies, languages, and academic roles in learning which UK, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan exhibit and how vital the influence is in terms of shaping the perception of the students and the academics in exploring the effectiveness of various pedagogical tools.

The ‘overall aim’ of this research was to explore and better understand the lived experience of the academic staff and undergraduate learner perspectives on the influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of different pedagogical tools.

From a pedagogic viewpoint, it is reasonable to say that the impact of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools within higher education ought to be regularly examined (Tlili et al. 2021) and aligned with the industry/sector skills set. In the same vein, the World Economic Forum (2016) maintains that to better what the stakeholders “think, say or do” concerning the effectiveness of pedagogical tools, more studies are required in the field. As such, it is hoped that the findings of this study will contribute to the existing work of literature in this field. To assist learning providers and regulatory agencies to reflect on the impact of learning culture and the effectiveness of pedagogical tools within the higher education system. From the conclusions derived from this research, it is anticipated that learning providers, academic

staff, and government bodies will take a closer look at the findings of the study to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of learning culture on various pedagogical tools and take the appropriate measures to address the challenges. Hence, to guide the study in addressing the issue identified, a question is posed:

ROI: Investigating the influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools across various management faculties.

Whereas the scope of this study was limited to four cases and countries, it is expected that this research will prompt more studies to consider more institutions and enhance programme quality and standards. Also, it enables learning providers to understand better how to deliver the provision with a greater degree of success.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The review explores the context and influence of learning culture in the context of higher education. For an in-depth understanding of the cultural aspects such as student-teacher interaction, students’ varied learning styles, prior learning, motivation, and preferred pedagogies, languages, and academic roles in learning; the Hofstede model of cultural dimension was introduced to underpin the review. The analysis offers a summary of some of the most relevant works of literature, mostly related to learning culture and pedagogical tools in higher education. The focus area of this literature analysis is the impact of learning culture in the context of higher education. The review will be concerned with learning culture and pedagogic tools as it relates to the delivery of industry-relevant skills for the 21st-century workplace.

A contextual explanation of the learning culture and pedagogical tools are provided, and the lines of argument are informed by high-level practical knowledge and skill delivery process within the context of higher education. In fact, both learning culture and choice of pedagogical tools play an essential role in transforming learners into

skillful workers for a successful and productive career while using a lifelong learning approach for a sustainable footing. The review comprises conceptual viewpoints and outcomes, as it relates to the impact of learning culture on pedagogical tools. To increase and sustain knowledge, skills, and behaviors (KSBs) in the cutting-edge fields of management and business for the 21st-century workplace (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Indeed, for a nation's economy to have appropriate resources that are required to respond timely to the burden of accelerated change, as well as the intricacy brought about by the advancement of technology and globalisation of the labour markets (Delebarre, 2016). Learning and Work Institute (2018) suggests that the structure of the nation's economy is anticipated to evolve significantly to absorb the changes in the global marketplace. The idea resonates with Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) maintains that the bigger onus is on the higher education providers to proffer effective real-time solution and sustain it, especially in this era of a transition to a greener economy.

III. INFLUENCE OF LEARNING CULTURE – HIGHER EDUCATION

The notion of the term “culture” regards it as a characteristic of a group of people, and it's important to acknowledge that individuals within groups belong to multiple, overlapping cultures (Sagy et al., 2016). Therefore, the influence of learning is crucial to understand the effectiveness of various pedagogical tools, as it is embedded in the individual learner and academic and subsequently people may view it differently from each other. The focus of the learning culture has always remained on improving the learning for all students. Kirkebaek et al. (2013) illustrated that culture cannot be taught in a vacuum or learned in isolation and could be influenced by various factors inside and outside the classroom and at the same time, culture also influences the context of learning. Further, Kirkebaek et al. (2013) explained the context of learning could either be an “invisible” factor that is hidden in knowledge, embedded values or as described by

Damary et al. (2017) it is merely in our thoughts, or it may be “visible” and present in the curriculum or an established tradition. Therefore, the learning culture and the context were found to be essential in developing cultural awareness and intercultural understanding.

While examining the notion of flexible learning and understanding its effectiveness in the flexible learning environment, learning culture was determined to be a distinct variable while carrying out teaching and learning (Cronje, 2011; Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro, 2016; Kang & Chang, 2016; Venaik & Brewer, 2016; Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth, 2016; Tlili et al., 2021). Therefore, for the present study, it is essential to understand the influence of learning culture in developing effective flexible pedagogical tools for skill development. Also, the process of skill development combines theory with practice, and knowledge with experience (Kang & Chang, 2016), while appreciating the fact that most workplace provides a range of opportunities for learning similar to that of a classroom.

Hofstede's seminal work from 1980–2001 on cross-culture and its consequences were found to have a clear link with current studies despite the criticism. Hofstede remains fundamental in examining cultural issues related to the learning and delivery of education, as highlighted by Steers et al. (2013), Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro (2016), and Tlili et al. (2021). As the current research evolves around flexible learning, it's important to investigate if the influence of cultural factors, also referred to as cultural diversity plays any role in the delivery and understanding of various pedagogical tools. In addition, the study provides a comparison of the four business schools which are located in four different parts of the world. Therefore, the Hofstede cultural dimensions help to understand the differences in the students' and academics'

characteristics across these four management schools.

The study carried out by Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro (2016) investigated the success of multicultural online learning from learners' perceptions and their relationship with six dimensions of Hofstede's model. For this purpose, two surveys were carried out in four e-learning universities in four different universities in Spain, the USA, China, and Mexico. The findings from the study suggest that countries with a high-power distance index, such as China and Mexico, are more likely to respect the hierarchical structure and therefore the student's attitude towards learning was found to be more passive and their motivational level was low. However, in contrast, the countries such as Spain and the USA with low power distance provide students with an opportunity to take control of their own learning and remain highly motivated. Similarly, students in Spain and the USA connected more with the individualism dimension as they are highly motivated, and achievement-focused as compared to China and Mexico whose students were more linked with the collectivism dimension due to their dependence on the instructor for their learning.

In terms of the pragmatism dimension, students with prior knowledge of one topic seemed to find it easier to relate new knowledge to their own experience and learn more effectively. The students in China were more pragmatic than the students in Mexico. The students in normative education were found to be less creative and require immediate gratification. The countries with a high score on indulgence, such as Mexico, which place a higher importance on leisure as compared to restraint societies such as the USA are more motivated in registering for online courses and starting their education. Overall, the study provides a geographical analysis of the cultural differences in four countries and learners' autonomy levels at the beginning of the educational process, and their satisfaction levels at the end of the instruction. The main drawback

of this study was its use of a simple self-report instrument as suggested by Tlili et al. (2021).

Tlili et al.'s (2021) study used a lag sequential analysis approach to understand how cultural differences affect students' learning behavioural patterns in an online six-week course of 262 students from three different cultures: Confucian (Chinese), Arab (Tunisian), and Serbian (Serbian) students. The study also investigates learning behaviour based on the model presented by Hofstede's cultural dimensions. This study, like Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro, (2016), also provides a classification of the learning cultures of Chinese, Arab, and Serbian students based on Hofstede's model. The Chinese students seem to have strong power distance even in an online setting and perceive learning as instructor-led and seek help from their peers rather than the instructor. The Arab culture was found to have high uncertainty avoidance and students were restrained from taking online education. In addition, Arab culture in some countries restricts interaction between female and male students in the classroom but online education allowed woman students to participate equally without social pressure.

Arab culture's high score on the femininity index shows their eagerness to learn and therefore end up in low participation in class. In contrast, Serbian culture also scores high on power distance which allows people to follow hierarchical orders in a similar way to China as suggested by Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro's (2016) study. The findings from the studies show that culture impacts the way students use the forums or get motivated to learn. Students from each culture behave differently due to some interconnecting factors such as educational traditions. The study helps to understand certain perceptions associated with students' learning behaviour. The study also highlighted that some of the learning behaviours are not due to the students' cultures such as high-power distance and low individualism in interactions with each other, but in this case, was found for Chinese and

Arab students but not for Serbian students. The literature shows the significance of learning culture as suggested by Cronje (2011), Gomez-Rey, Barbera & Navarro (2016), Kang & Chang (2016), Venaik & Brewer (2016), Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth (2016), and Tlili et al. (2021). Therefore, for this study, the Hofstede model of cultural dimensions was applied to the selected

countries, the UK, Germany, Pakistan and Canada, to review if any cultural factors influence learning in terms of the delivery of the pedagogical tools to ensure they are effective in developing the employability skills of the undergraduate management students.

Effectiveness in the sense of applying pedagogical tools in the delivery of a degree-level management course across four countries.

Practical activity in management schools	In the area of knowledge	In the domain of skills	In the area of personal conduct
Effectiveness in sense 1	Management students develop useful knowledge in the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciplinary • Interdisciplinary • Epistemic • Procedural 	The students can manage strategically, make informed decisions, write a good report, think critically, use inductive, deductive, and statistical reasoning, engage in oral and written presentations, be active listeners, be socially sensitive, and be able to solve complex issues.	Learners have an interest in professional development, complete projects once started, stay calm and collected most of the time, function well in high-pressure environments, support people and sympathize with them
Effectiveness in sense 2	Students can convert knowledge gained in the classroom into a relevant skill set and attitude in the workplace	Learners can identify and use appropriate skills to solve real-life issues, using the ideas intended, or implicit in the process	Management students can reflect on the process using the ideas and skills developed, or which were implicit in it (and can possibly demonstrate understanding of these ideas and skills in the context of their daily tasks in the workplace)

Fig. 1: The above Table is used to simplify the meaning of pedagogical tools the effectiveness in management schools, by scaffolding student learning experience in four different countries.

A growing body of scholarship acknowledges the influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools, in the development process of skill sets for undergraduate learners within management schools (Cronje, 2011; Gomez-Rey,

Barbera & Navarro, 2016; Kang & Chang, 2016; Venaik & Brewer, 2016; Beugelsdijk, Kostova & Roth, 2016; Tlili et al. 2021). In fact, this idea resonates with the current study findings that there is a growing consensus in the field about the

influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools and skill sets should be aligned with the future management degree curriculum and the delivery approach to enhance the process of skills development and application for undergraduate students.

In summary, research in this field is currently fragmented in terms of the effectiveness of pedagogical tools in fostering industry-relevant skill sets for undergraduate learners. The various studies clearly lack agreement in terms of their findings, and, as a result, there are different measurement standards for programme outcomes across different countries. The elusive concept of the “skills development process for undergraduates” is often used as evidence by critics who argue that the existing pedagogies in the higher education system are weak in meeting the ever-changing skills needs of the 21st-century workplace.

IV. METHODOLOGY

The current study adopts an exploratory approach using the multiple case study design as proposed by Yin (2014). In order to examine the causal relationships between the key determinants involved in this study and its outcomes they need to be carefully examined (Yin, 2014). The approach plays a prominent role in identifying the relationship between learning culture and the effectiveness of pedagogical tools in developing management undergraduates’ skill sets. The rationale for this choice is based on Yin’s (2018) reasonable model of proof, analysis, and interpretations of the causal relationships between the variables.

Yin (2018, p. 15) postulates that a “case study is an empirical method that investigates the phenomenon (the case) in-depth within the real-world context”. In view of the studies in the field, Yin’s assertions are consistent with the fact that there are two major variables involved in a case study approach (the phenomenon) ‘the influence of learning culture on pedagogical tools’ and (the study background) ‘undergraduates’ management schools. This notion aligns with the current study because a case study design is advantageous in exploring individual choices (education managers) and curriculum (skills set). A case study is deemed a suitable research approach as the proposed study addresses a contemporary phenomenon, which researchers have no control over; the research is largely exploratory

because it explores ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions as recommended by Yin, (2014).

A case study design was thematically used in gathering evidence from multiple sources across four universities (undergraduate students, academic instructors, and curriculum documents). To analyze how respective skill development processes are integrated into education practice and their relation to the learning culture. Yin (2018, p.7) asserts that cases may have one or a combination of exploratory, descriptive, or explanatory purposes. Yin (2014) adds that both single and multiple case studies can support the mentioned three aspects. To this end, the research was carried out in four management schools in the UK, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan by conducting surveys with undergraduate students in management schools and semi-structured interviews with academics. Multiple strands of data were triangulated to validate findings.

V. STUDY KEY FINDINGS

For the present study, Hofstede’s cultural dimensions helped to identify the learning culture differences based on the scores developed by Hofstede and presented in Figure 01. This analysis provides an understanding of learning culture differences among students in the chosen four countries. The model also helps to understand the other aspects related to learning culture such as interactions with academics, learning styles, language, and the contribution of academics to deploy innovative pedagogical tools to help students develop 21st-century employability skills.

Hofstede’s cultural dimensions will enable an appreciation of the cultural impact on the learning and delivery of various flexible learning pedagogical tools used by academics, how they are perceived, and how they relate to student backgrounds and beliefs to support them in developing the desired employability skills. Hofstede’s work on cultural dimensions provides a framework for understanding the learning cultural differences of students from various countries. In addition, helps to review the concept of perception. He grouped these cultural dimensions as power distance, individualism versus collectivism, masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term and short-term dimensions, and Indulgence/Restraint, as shown below in Table 01. Hofstede scored each country on a scale of 0 to 100 for each dimension and divided them accordingly into high and low scores.

Cultural Dimensions	Explanation	Link with the Current Study
Power Distance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inequality of power distribution in society (individuals and society). • Countries with high scores- accept unequal hierarchical distribution of power and their place in the system. • Countries with low scores- shared power and widely dispersed and do not accept situations that are unequally distributed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student and academic interaction with each other.
Individualism Vs Collectivism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpersonal ties or connection to others within their community. • Countries with high scores- weak interpersonal connection with those who are not part of the family. • Countries with low scores- loyalty to group and focus on skill development and intrinsic rewards. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students' willingness or approach towards learning and developing key skills.
Masculinity Vs. Femininity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distribution of roles of men and women overlap. Being strong and fast is found to be a positive characteristic of success. • Countries with a high score - masculine behaviour show assertiveness. • Countries with low scores- feminine societies show a great deal of overlap and are placed on a good relationship with direct supervisors or working effectively with others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male and female undergraduate students and how they perceive learning, pedagogical tools being used, and the skills required to acquire employability.
Uncertainty avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How people cope with uncertainty and anxiety • High score – makes life predictable and controllable. • Low score – relaxed and open or inclusive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face Vs flexible teaching. • Willingness of academics to use innovative ways of teaching.
Long / Short-Term Avoidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Originally described as Pragmatic versus Normative • Time horizon people in a society. • Countries with long-term orientation - pragmatic, modest, and thrifty. • Countries with short-term orientation – people emphasise on principles, consistency, and truth (religious and nationalist). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills development for employment or lifelong learning.
Indulgence / Restraint	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People's preferences for freedom. • Countries with a high score- people satisfy their own drives and emotions. • Countries with low scores- suppress their gratification and more restricted regulation of people's conduct and behaviour 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choice and freedom of students' career paths and personal happiness.

The above Table 01 shows the dimensions identified by Hofstede. These dimensions, once applied to academics and students in different parts of the world, illustrate the characteristics of student-teacher interactions, students' willingness or approach towards learning and developing key skills, male and female undergraduate students and how they perceive learning, the pedagogical tools being used, and the skills required to acquire employability, face-to-face vs flexible teaching, the willingness of academics to use innovative ways of teaching, skills development for employment or lifelong learning, and choice and

freedom in terms of students' career paths and personal happiness. These dimensions are crucial in understanding the perception of the students and academics and how they perceive teaching and learning in four different business schools.

To evaluate the dimension set above, Hofstede provided a score-based tool insight (2022) to identify the cultural dimension of selected countries, the UK, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan. These scores are presented below in Figure 04 and analyzed based on the characteristic they should entail.

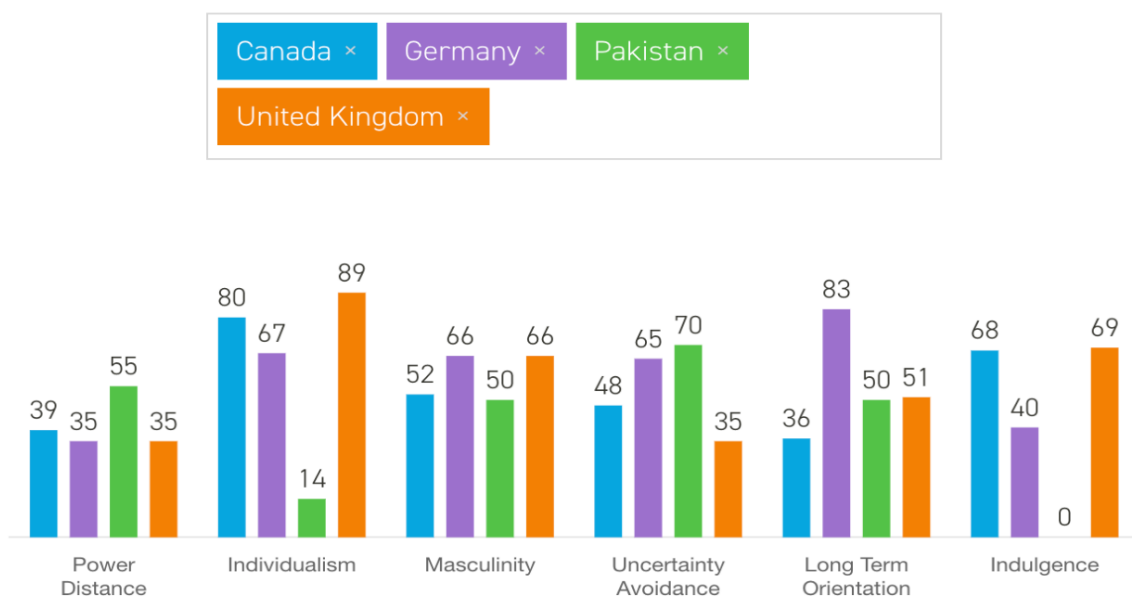


Figure 01. The score provided by Hofstede to each country.

Source: Hofstede Insights, (2022)

The scores presented above provide an insight into various cultural aspects; power distance, individualism, masculinity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation, and indulgence for the chosen four countries. These cultural dimensions are examined below in detail.

a) Power Distance (PD)

The figure above shows that the low score given to Canada, Germany, and the UK in power distance makes them equal distributors of power. The students and lecturers are perceived to be equal contributors to education. Whereas, in Pakistan, due to higher PD scores, the lecturers are assumed to be the ones with ultimate knowledge, power, and learning decisions and students should treat them with respect. The perceived role of the

lecturer is to transmit the knowledge and class discussions are for clarification, not debates (Kaur & Noman, 2015).

b) Individualism Vs Collectivism (IC)

In terms of individualism, Canada Germany and the UK scored high and possess the characteristics of autonomy and focused on personal goals and choices. Therefore, students make their own choices in terms of their learning and focus on

personal development, self-satisfaction, and career choices. Whereas Pakistan scores low on IC and possesses the characteristics of a collectivist culture where learning takes place for the benefit of the community and earning livelihood (Kaur & Noman, 2015). The student choices are influenced by members of larger groups, extended groups, respect for traditions, and elders (Dennehy, 2015); therefore, the decision of their parents, teachers, or current career trends in the job market.

c) Masculinity vs Femininity (MA)

Masculinity scores in Germany and the UK were slightly higher than in Canada and Pakistan, which shows that teachers should openly praise the students in the class and competition is encouraged among students. However, in low-score MA countries like Canada and Pakistan, it shows feminine traits which display quality of life interpersonal relationships and concern for the weak. The teachers will praise and support weak students to encourage them but avoid competition in the classroom to avoid failure as a calamity (Dennehy, 2015; Kaur & Noman, 2015).

d) Uncertainty Avoidance (UA)

Canada and the UK scored low on uncertainty avoidance, which allows students to learn in various settings at their own pace within the classroom or flexible learning; at the same time, it allows the teachers an opportunity to have innovative ways of teaching and learning. Whereas for countries like Pakistan and Germany, the scores are high on UA; therefore, more structured classroom teaching and assessment are being carried out and students consider them experts in learning to avoid any confrontation with each other. At the same time, controversial topics are avoided at all costs to maintain order in the classroom (Kaur & Noman, 2015).

e) Long-term vs short-term orientation (LTO)

According to the dimension of scores, Canada is low and, therefore, focuses on the short term, whereas Germany is high, which is more long-term-oriented. The UK and Pakistan scored in the middle. Therefore, in countries with a long-term orientation dimension, teachers usually reward students for motivational purposes whereas in

short-term orientation countries students are being rewarded to make them happy (Kaur & Noman, 2015).

f) Indulgence vs Restraint (IVR)

The relatively new addition to the Hofstede dimensions does not work in terms of higher education. The dimensions focus on freedom of people and emotions which translates to education as student willingness to learn and actively participate. Countries such as Canada and the UK have a high score, which allows students freedom to learn and develop their own careers, whereas a country with a low score is referred to as a restraint culture where pre-determined successful careers are a way to success and personal happiness.

All four countries seem to have similarities or differences in one or another cultural dimension which allows an understanding of the perception of students and academics in the UK, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan more clearly. The model helps us to understand the identified learning culture characteristics such as student-teacher interactions, students' willingness or approach towards learning and developing key skills, evaluation of the pedagogical tools being used, and the skills required to acquire employability, face-to-face vs flexible teaching, the willingness of academics to use innovative ways of teaching, and skills development for employment.

Student and Academic Perspective

The findings show that both students and academics in the UK, Germany, and Canada believed that there is a cultural influence on learning and the delivery of various pedagogical tools. The main reason suggested here is that these countries attract students from across the world, i.e., India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other Middle Eastern countries, and have always been challenged by the diversity that needs to be incorporated into the development and delivery of courses. Spronk (n.d.), also disclosed similar findings where it is important to cater to the needs of international students; universities need to deliver culturally diverse courses which meet the learning styles, prior learning, motivation, and maturity of students. Some academics in the UK,

Canada, and Pakistan found students struggle to work with each other due to differences in their learning levels, motivation, language fluency and prior learning pedagogies. However, the use of diverse pedagogical tools by academics seems to address these issues and provide students with correlative and inclusive learning environments. Having made those observations and reflecting upon the findings of the data collected, it is fair to say that academics have shown their ability to use diverse pedagogical tools. However, these are mostly dependent on their own cultural backgrounds or previous experiences of working within multicultural classrooms. The inclusion of culturally sensitive pedagogies allows the students to learn and develop skills in a safe environment.

This learning cultural influence was found to be minimal among Pakistani students and academics. The main reason for this is the fact that there is a similar culture across the country, but the flexible learning environment has been challenged by the presence of various languages across the country and sub-cultures, along with a delivery of educational content through the English language which is different to the native and working language of the country. The other challenges found were related to encouraging students to think beyond grades and more towards developing critical thinking skills and arguments within higher education. Conversely, academics were found to be more interested in the content of subject matter rather than how students process the information, strategies, or pedagogies they can deploy, and how they may regulate their students' learning processes and understanding. Similar results were found in the study carried out by Marambe et al. (2011) among Sri Lankan and Indonesian academics only. These studies also highlighted a cultural aspect for students from certain countries which means they are more accustomed to and comfortable with receiving and repeating information rather than going ahead and looking for it themselves.

The current study also investigated the ways in which students like to communicate with their lecturers. The students were asked to select their preferred type of interaction, from one-to-one, face-to-face settings; small groups with face-to-face settings; one-to-one by phone; and small groups in audio/telephone conferences and via

social media. Students in all countries prefer to communicate with their lecturers or instructors via one-to-one, face-to-face settings. This aspect of the interaction seems to be more challenging as students, despite studying in flexible learning settings across various countries, still prefer face-to-face/one-to-one communication. As a new alternative to personal communication, some suggestions were made by students about using Zoom and Microsoft Teams, both of which seem to overcome the challenges but, at the same time, maybe time-consuming practices for academics. Damary et al. (2016, p.89) also illustrated "culture as a means of communication and an invisible control mechanism operating within our mere thoughts" and its importance in learning.

This study found that the role of academics is shifting within the learning environment, and they are performing more as facilitators rather than authoritative figures driving the activity in the classroom. The academics interviewed suggested that culture significantly influences the choice of pedagogical tools in delivery. The academics were all from different continents and shared a similar opinion that their personal beliefs, previous learning, teaching experience and language impacted on the delivery of various pedagogical tools. They believed that, despite teaching the same students, their choice of pedagogical tool was different from others depending on their own cultural background. However, these differences in delivery were considered important by the academics as they allow the students to understand the various business and management concepts from different points of view. The academics also shared that, when students see them working effectively in multicultural teams, it motivates them to follow similar practices in their workplaces. As a result, the current study saw similar results to those found by Nathan and Ruggieri (2009) within cross-cultural studies where teachers need to devise hierarchical and teacher-centered learning pedagogies to ensure students find the learning environment safe and comfortable; they also found that any conflict should be resolved by open-communication/debate and acceptance of the different cultures and learning styles associated with the students.

g) Power distance (PD)

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h) Individualism vs Collectivism (IC)

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k) Long-term Vs Short-term Orientation (LTO)

According to the dimension of scores, Canada is low and, therefore, focuses on the short term, whereas Germany is high, which is more long-term-oriented. The UK and Pakistan scored in the middle. Therefore, in countries with a long-term orientation dimension, teachers usually reward students for motivational purposes whereas in short-term orientation countries students are being rewarded to make them happy (Kaur & Noman, 2015).

l) Indulgence vs Restraint (IVR)

The relatively new addition to the Hofstede dimensions does not work in terms of higher education. The dimensions focus on freedom of people and emotions which translates to education as student willingness to learn and actively participate. Countries such as Canada and the UK have a high score, which allows students freedom to learn and develop their own careers, whereas, in a country with a low score, it is referred to as a restraint culture where pre-determined successful careers are a way to success and personal happiness.

All four countries seem to have similarities or differences in one or another cultural dimension which allows an understanding of the perception of students and academics in the UK, Canada, Germany, and Pakistan more clearly. The model helps us to understand the identified learning culture characteristics such as student-teacher interactions, students' willingness or approach towards learning and developing key skills, evaluation of the pedagogical tools being used, and the skills required to acquire employability, face-to-face vs flexible teaching, the willingness of academics to use innovative ways of teaching, and skills development for employment.

STUDENT AND ACADEMIC PERSPECTIVE

The findings show that both students and academics in the UK, Germany and Canada believed that there is a cultural influence on learning and the delivery of various pedagogical tools. The main reason suggested here is that these countries attract students from across the world, i.e., India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and other Middle Eastern countries, and have always been challenged by the diversity that needs to be incorporated into the development and delivery of courses. Spronk (n.d.), also disclosed similar findings where it is important to cater to the needs of international students; universities need to deliver culturally diverse courses which meet the learning styles, prior learning, motivation, and maturity of students. Some academics in the UK, Canada, and Pakistan found students struggle to work with each other due to differences in their learning levels, motivation, language fluency, and prior learning pedagogies. However, the use of diverse pedagogical tools by academics seems to address these issues and provide students with correlative and inclusive learning environments. Having made those observations and reflecting upon the findings of the data collected, it is fair to say that academics have shown their ability to use diverse pedagogical tools. However, these are mostly dependent on their own cultural backgrounds or previous experiences of working within multicultural classrooms. The inclusion of culturally sensitive pedagogies allows the students to learn and develop skills in a safe environment.

This learning cultural influence was found to be minimal among Pakistani students and academics. The main reason for this is the fact that there is a similar culture across the country, but the flexible learning environment has been challenged by the presence of various languages across the country and sub-cultures, along with a delivery of educational content through the English language which is different to the native and working language of the country. The other challenges found were related to encouraging students to think beyond grades and more towards developing critical thinking skills and arguments within higher education. Conversely, academics were found to be more interested in the content of subject matter rather than how students process the information, strategies, or pedagogies they can deploy, and how they may regulate their students' learning processes and understanding. Similar

results were found in the study carried out by Marambe et al. (2011) among Sri Lankan and Indonesian academics only. These studies also highlighted a cultural aspect for students from certain countries which means they are more accustomed to and comfortable with receiving and repeating information rather than going ahead and looking for it themselves.

The current study also investigated the ways in which students like to communicate with their lecturers. The students were asked to select their preferred type of interaction, from one-to-one, face-to-face settings; small groups with face-to-face settings; one-to-one by phone; and small groups in audio/telephone conferences and via social media. Students in all countries prefer to communicate with their lecturers or instructors via one-to-one, face-to-face settings. This aspect of the interaction seems to be more challenging as students, despite studying in flexible learning settings across various countries, still prefer face-to-face/one-to-one communication. As a new alternative to personal communication, some suggestions were made by students about using Zoom and Microsoft Teams, both of which seem to overcome the challenges but, at the same time, maybe time-consuming practices for academics. Damary et al. (2016, p.89) also illustrated “culture as a means of communication and an invisible control mechanism operating within our mere thoughts” and its importance in learning.

This study found that the role of academics is shifting within the learning environment, and they are performing more as facilitators rather than authoritative figures driving the activity in the classroom. The academics interviewed suggested that culture significantly influences the choice of pedagogical tools in delivery. The academics were all from different continents and shared a similar opinion that their personal beliefs, previous learning, teaching experience, and language impacted on the delivery of various pedagogical tools. They believed that, despite teaching the same students, their choice of pedagogical tool was different from others depending on their own cultural background. However, these differences in delivery were considered important by the academics as they allow the students to understand the various business and management concepts from different points of view. The

academics also shared that, when students see them working effectively in multicultural teams, it motivates them to follow similar practices in their workplaces. As a result, the current study saw similar results to those found by Nathan and Ruggieri (2009) within cross-cultural studies where teachers need to devise hierarchical and teacher-centered learning pedagogies to ensure students find the learning environment safe and comfortable; they also found that any conflict should be resolved by open-communication/debate and acceptance of the different cultures and learning styles associated with the students.

CONCLUSION

The research revealed that 'lecture, PowerPoint presentations (PPTs), lecture notes, class debates, group project, role play, case study, internship, guest speaker, mentoring, technology-embedded devices (mobile phone, gaming, simulation, virtual learning environment VLE), multiple choice questions, and reading and writing' remained one most effective pedagogical tool but their application is varied throughout four management schools due the cultural perception of academics and students.

The influence of learning culture on the effectiveness of pedagogical tools was found to be challenging. Learning was found to be associated with the values, beliefs, and attitudes that an individual holds and supports, which aligns with the conclusion of a study by Damary et al. (2016). No matter how we define education, the cultural perspective is essential. The inclusion of cultural consideration in education allows each society to transmit and perpetuate its perceptions of fundamental beliefs concerning the nature of the world, knowledge, and values. These beliefs vary from society to society and culture to culture. In addition, culture lies in the subconscious and learning cannot be framed in isolation (Marigine, 2012). As the study evolved and investigated flexible learning, data was collected from four different business schools located in different parts of the world. Therefore, while examining the perception of academics and students it was important to review if learning culture influenced the choices or delivery of these pedagogical tools.

The cultural difference is more visible in countries like Canada, Australia, and the UK where there are migrant settlers from around the world and the strong education

system attracts international students every year, which makes them culturally diverse. Therefore, the process of learning becomes more crucial within the cross-cultural context as most of the courses taught within the universities are related to the geographical, political, societal, and culture of that country and, therefore, transmitting them in e-Learning requires necessary amendments to cater the need of a more diverse group of learners across the globe (Damary et al. 2017).

No matter how we define education is defined, the cultural perspective is essential. The inclusion of culture in education allows each society to transmit and perpetuate its perceptions of fundamental beliefs concerning the nature of the world, knowledge, and values. These beliefs vary from society to society and culture to culture and, therefore, are examined below. The learning cultural influence on skill development was considered profound by both academics and students. They both acknowledged the differences and agreed that better communication, recognising students' learning styles, and language support allow this gap to be narrowed. The study also highlighted that, due to mostly international students currently studying in the UK, Germany, and Canada, the delivery of these pedagogical tools was found to be influenced by learning cultural factors for both students and academics and the success of these tools relied on the mutual communication and respect they developed among themselves. In contrast, due to the presence of a national sub-culture within Pakistan, the delivery of these tools was also affected. However, the students and academics seemed to overcome these challenges and worked to communicate effectively using innovative pedagogies.

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