

**The Reality of the Role of Emirati Universities to Develop their Students’  
Acceptance of Cultural Diversity from the Perspective of Faculty Members  
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**Abstract**

The researchers explored the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students’ acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members. They adopted a qualitative approach. They obtained data through interviewing 9 faculty members who were chosen from Emirati universities. It was found that Emirati universities play a major role in developing their undergraduate students’ acceptance for cultural diversity. It was found that Emirati universities exert much effort for developing their students’ acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of the majority of the sample. The university environment is convenient for developing students’ acceptance for cultural diversity and raising the cultural adaptation of students and faculty members. The religious, linguistic, and ethnic diversity among students and faculty members in Emirati universities contribute to achieving sustainable development in education. It was found that globalism affects students’ acceptance for cultural diversity. Globalism has positive and negative impacts on students in Emirati universities. Indicators of globalism manifest in daily life in the light of the advanced technological and scientific developments.

**Keywords: Emirati Universities, Developing Cultural Diversity Introduction**

Cultural diversity exists in the societies that have various cultures. It plays a major role in achieving social stability in societies. It has been existent in societies for years. Due to the many challenges locally, regionally, and globally, cultural diversity became existent in many societies.

The significance of enjoying the right to having cultural diversity is equivalent to the significance of enjoying civil, social, economic, and political rights which are mentioned in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948. Human rights must be accessible by all people without any exception (Habibah, 2014: 47-49).

Article 6 of UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity is titled (towards cultural diversity accessible to all). It suggests the following: (While ensuring the free flow of ideas by words and images, care should be exercised so that all cultures can express themselves and make themselves known. Freedom of expression, media pluralism, multilingualism, equal access to art, to scientific and technological knowledge, also in digital form, and the possibility for all cultures to have access to the means of expression and dissemination are the guarantees of cultural diversity) (UNESCO, 2001).

Higher educational institutions are responsible for developing acceptance for cultural diversity among their students in various aspects. They should do that to improve the students’ ability to adapt with the educational environment that has cultural diversity. To attain acceptance for cultural diversity among their students, those institutions must provide the faculty members with training about the teaching strategies that fit students from various cultural and religious backgrounds. They must develop the students’ abilities in cultural aspects and encourage them to integrate with the environment and interact with their peers. The developers of curricula must embed cultural diversity-related values in curricula. They must embed the prevalent values in society in curricula. To attain acceptance for cultural diversity among their students, those institutions must develop students’ communication, problem solving and cooperative learning skills. That should be done to promote understanding for other nations and interact and cooperate with them. It should be done to promote tolerance among students (Ali et al., 2016).

Boštjančič et al. (2019) add that students who study abroad through a scholarship and the ones who work abroad have more cultural intelligence than others. That is attributed to the skills and expertise acquired when interacting with people in an environment that involves cultural diversity. In this foreign environment, those people are asked to attend training courses, and workshops to understand the culture of the foreign country and adjust in the foreign environment. They are asked to attend training courses, and workshops to show respect for people in the foreign environment to communicate and have dialogues with others. That shall contribute to achieving sustainable

development.

Like higher education institutions in Arab and foreign countries, Emirati universities seek attracting international students from various countries. When attracting students from foreign countries, those students shall face a challenge in integrating in the new social cultural environments as suggested by Al-Qudah (2007). Thus, they shall be required to adjust themselves socially and accordingly interact with others, which is not an easy thing to do. Those students have two options. The first option is represented in having conflict and showing intolerance and hatred for the ones in the foreign environment. That shall lead to having discrimination and aggression. The second option is represented in cooperating with people in the foreign environment, accepting them and showing love for them. That shall lead to having much mutual trust and social support.

Academics in universities are responsible for providing attention to cultural aspects. In fact, the significance of showing such attention is equivalent to the significance of showing attention to academic aspects. That is because culture serves as the food of people's souls and minds. It's because culture contributes to developing students' personalities in the contemporary world that became a global village. In fact, culture allows one to handle challenges in life. One must realize that culture is the real framework that supports creativity, achievements, and development. One must realize that culture is the thing that allows a person and the society to develop and fight against discrimination and close-minded ideologies. Culture allows one to address humanitarian, national and university-related issues (Al-Qudah, 2004: 376). The adaptive cultural behaviour allows one to interact in a better manner with the surrounding social and cultural environments. It turns one into a person who engages actively in society. It turns one into a person who accepts the social customs, traditions, and values (Al-Mawajdeh, 2002).

The role of faculty members in universities became different than their conventional role in the past. In fact, faculty members became responsible for delivering information to learners and developing the learners' personalities in all aspects. Faculty members must have the required potentials, and capabilities to provide guidance and practice leadership. That shall enable faculty members to educate students and enable them to handle the 21st century challenges (Diab, 2006). Akari (2012) adds that faculty members are in need for receiving training and awareness-raising programs about the strategies that contribute to developing students' cultural acceptance. That is because faculty members are the ones closest to the students. Faculty members must provide students with much attention. They must create convenient learning environments that contribute to fostering communication between students and offering dialogue opportunities in the aim of developing acceptance for cultural diversity.

Al-Waheebi (2016) adds that there are various variables that affect faculty members' attitudes towards cultural diversity. Those factors include religious beliefs, language, ethnicity, academic qualification, work experience, and experience in travelling abroad. According to Golay (2006), faculty members must adopt an approach that is more comprehensive to gain more information about cultures, and to assess the performance of courses, activities and programs at the faculties.

Due to the significance of cultural acceptance and its role in developing the university environment, much attention has been provided to cultural acceptance. Thus, many scholars conducted studies about cultural acceptance in various aspects. Many scholars conducted studies about the role of universities in developing cultural diversity among students in general. For instance, Al-Mawajdeh (2002) aimed to explore the degree to which the students who are non-native speakers of Arabic language adjust themselves with the cultural environment in Mu'tah University in Jordan. He aimed to identify the impact of gender, nationality, and academic level towards the level of adjustment to cultural environment. The sample consists of 250 male and female students. A quantitative approach was adopted. A survey-based approach was adopted. The survey consists of 32 items. Those items target: academic, social, cultural, and personal dimensions. It was found that the adjustment level is moderate. There is a significant difference between attitudes which can be attributed to nationality and academic level for the favour of Indonesian students and the freshmen. There isn't any significant difference between attitudes which can be attributed to any of the three variables in the academic and cultural levels. There is a significant difference between attitudes in the social dimension which can be attributed to gender for the favour of females. There is a significant difference between attitudes in the personal dimension which can be attributed to nationality and academic level for the favour of Thai students and fourth year students.

Abukhattala (2004) explored the cultural and educational experiences of 10 Arab university

students chosen from Montreal in Canada. The origins of the students are: Libyan, Tunisian, Algerian, and Moroccan. The students had been living in Canada for a period that ranges between 3-7 years. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach to carry out in-depth interviews. He analysed documents and analysed the experiences of students. He adopted a narrative approach in presenting and interpreting data. Several cultural topics were addressed in the interviews. They are: 1)- the perceptions of Canadians about Arabs and Muslims from the perspective of respondents. 2)- Hijab and relationships between males and females. Based on the analysis, there are differences in terms of culture, language and social and educational systems between Canada and the countries that the students come from. It was found that Canadian academics can assist those students through gaining knowledge about their cultures and adopting different teaching patterns. They can assist those students by facing the downsides in adjusting with life at campus and overcoming cultural shocks. They can assist those students by enabling them to adjust with the Canadian educational system and to identify the Canadian culture.

Guo & Jamal (2007) carried out a study titled (Nurturing Cultural Diversity in Higher Education: A Critical Review of Selected Models). They explored the impact of cultural diversity on the educational environment in Canadian universities which include many immigrants and foreigners. They explored the difficulties in the societies involving cultural diversity. They adopted an analytical approach. They found that higher educational institutions must change their policies in terms of cultural diversity through three models. Those models are cultural diversity-based education model, multiculturalism-based education model, and anti-discrimination education model. Those models have an impact on the individual, grade, institution, and society.

Younis (2010) explored the effectiveness of a proposed program that is based on extracurricular activities in geography to develop an understanding for the world and attitudes towards cultural diversity among third preparatory grade students. He adopted a descriptive analytical approach. He adopted an experimental approach. To meet the goals, an instrument was used to obtain data from 46 third preparatory grade students in a school in Menya, Egypt. It was found that there are significant differences between the means of the post-test and the means of the pre-test on the understanding for the world scale and the attitudes towards cultural diversity scale for the favour of the post- scale.

Al-Hosni (2014) explored the role of the religion in forming a culture that is based on co-existence and tolerance. This culture is based on humanity and globalism. Cultural diversity is a global and social phenomenon. Based on the Islamic religion- related concepts and teachings, one must deal in a positive manner with cultural diversity and differences. The latter researcher used an inferential analytical approach. He found that co-existence occurs when each party acknowledges the rights of the other parties to adopt his values and beliefs and to practice religious rituals. Based on the Islamic religion-related concepts and teachings, citizens are equal in terms of rights and duties. They must cooperate with each other to meet the public interests rather than forcing people to be religiously committed. Islamic religion doesn't permit Muslims to oblige others to adopt Islamic views.

Chen (2014) explored the perceptions of the faculty members towards the leaders who are responsive to cultural issues to achieve cultural diversity in campus. The sample consists of 10 leaders who were chosen from US university colleges. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach. He carried out interviews and analysed documents. The results shed a light on the impact of the contemporary issues and circumstances on having leadership that is responsive to cultural issues in higher educational institutions. They shed a light on the need for having responsive leadership in cultural areas in higher educational institutions. They shed a light on the challenges that have been facing academic leaders when practicing responsive leadership in cultural areas. They shed a light on the strategies that can be employed to become a leader who's responsive in cultural areas. They indicate that exploring the experiences of academic leaders who are responsive in cultural areas shall contribute to filling gaps.

Cultural diversity in the Arab society aims to preserve cultural variety and to develop it. In this regard, Al-Domani (2015) shed a light on cultural diversity and the efforts exerted for achieving sustainable development in the Arab society. He adds that cultural diversity serves a motivator that encourage people to show respect for cultural identity, traditions, and religions. He adds that cultural diversity motivates people to promote awareness among people about the role of cultural diversity in achieving sustainable development. He adopted a descriptive approach. He found that cultural diversity has a strong impact on the delivery of education for sustainable development. He found that culture

affects the knowledge, skills, ethics, and language of the future generation. He found that culture affects the global views. He found that sustainable development requires having understanding for others' cultures. Having such an understanding shall allow people to live in peace. He found that sustainable development requires having acceptance for the cultural and ethnic groups.

Erbas (2017) explored the opinions of Turkish teachers and their perceptions for multiculturalism and multicultural education in Turkey after attending a course about such multiculturalism. This course was held in Alpha University. The researcher adopted a qualitative approach. The sample consists of 9 teachers. The whole sample consists of 30 teachers and one trainer who holds a PhD degree. It was found that all the respondents have knowledge about multiculturalism and multicultural education. It was found that the respondents' thoughts and understanding improved after finishing the course. However, the respondents are in need for gaining knowledge about various perspectives to understand the meaning of those concepts fully. In addition, it was found that the expectations of some respondents were fulfilled through the course. However, the course didn't fulfil all the expectations of respondents.

Al-Zboon and Flouh (2018) measured the degree to which faculty members in the University of Jordan for cultural diversity among students from the perspective of students. They explored whether there is a difference between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to gender and faculty. They adopted a descriptive approach and used a random sampling method. The sample consists of 100 female and male Arab and foreign students. It was found that the degree to which faculty members in the University of Jordan for cultural diversity among students from the perspective of students is moderate. It was found that there is a difference between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to gender for the favour of males. It was found that there isn't any difference between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to faculty.

Al-Musa and Al-Qudah (2021) explored the role of student clubs in Arab universities in promoting acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of students. They targeted the University of Jordan and used a descriptive survey-based approach. They used the simple random sampling method and selected a sample consisting of 100 female and males who joined student clubs in the University of Jordan.

A questionnaire was used. It was found that student clubs in Arab universities play a major role in promoting acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of students. The mean of significance of extracurricular activities is ranked first. The mean of the students' attitudes towards extracurricular activities is ranked least. There is a significant difference – at the statistical significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$  – between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to academic year for the ones who are in first and second of academic years. There isn't any significant difference – at the statistical significance level of  $\alpha=0.05$  – between the respondents' attitudes which can be attributed to gender and faculty.

The aforementioned studies shed a light on cultural diversity among people in institutions in general and educational institutions in particular. Some of the studies are carried out by Arab researchers and some of the studies are carried out by foreign researchers. The studies shed a light on the significance of understanding cultural differences in schools and universities. They shed a light on the role of cultural diversity in the delivery of education for sustainable development. They indicate that there are positive perceptions for cultural diversity in some educational environments at schools and universities.

Like the aforementioned studies, the present study sheds a light on cultural diversity. For instance, Al-Domani (2015) aimed to shed a light on cultural diversity and the efforts exerted for achieving sustainable development in the Arab society. He aimed to identify the way of fostering cultural diversity. He adds that cultural diversity serves a motivator that motivate people to show respect for cultural identity, traditions, and religions. He adds that cultural diversity motivates people to promote awareness among people about the role of cultural diversity in achieving sustainable development.

Like the study of Al-Musa & Al-Qudah (2021), the present study adopted a descriptive survey-based approach. Contrary to the aforementioned studies, this study explored the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members. It explored that in the light of the 21st century which is the digital age. This digital age requires empowering students in ethical, spiritual, cognitive, and intellectual areas. Contrary to the aforementioned studies that are published in Arabic, the researchers in this study adopted a quantitative

approach.

This study aimed to explore the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members. It targets students because they serve as a significant category of people in society. It's because students' acceptance for cultural diversity contributes to raising social and cultural interaction and showing more respect for others' cultures. It's because students' acceptance for cultural diversity contributes to creating communication channels among students. It's because students' acceptance for cultural diversity contributes to promoting knowledge about others' cultures. Thus, more attention must be shown to the programs and activities that contribute cultural diversity in a manner that fits with the requirements of the contemporary and future age.

### **Problem Statement and Study Question**

One of the researchers in the present study lived in the UAE for several years. She noticed that much attention is provided for language, culture, tolerance, co- existence, and respect for others' cultures. Such attention is required due to having people from more than 200 countries. In addition, UAE government celebrate the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development which is on April 21<sup>st</sup>. It aims to activate the role of dialogue in promoting peace and achieving sustainable development. It asks leaders in higher educational institutions to promote acceptance for cultural diversity among students. Some Emirati universities teach Arabic language to foreign students to promote acceptance for cultural diversity and foster communication between nations. They do that to promote knowledge about Arabic language worldwide and offer a good image about the cultures of Arab nations which are based on tolerance. Emirati universities teach English language to Arab students – including UAE students- to meet the same goals. However, rejection for cultural diversity may lead to having disputes, especially in the light of globalism and its impacts on national identify.

The goal sought from this study is represented in exploring the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members. This role may be activated through extra- curricular and academic activities. Extra-curricular activities include trips, competitions, and events. Academic activities include lectures and conferences about cultural and scientific areas. The latter role can be activated through dedicating the required resources. The problem of this study manifests in the question below: What is the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members?

### **Study Objectives**

- 1)- Identify the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members.
- 2)- Offer a set of suggestions for promoting acceptance for cultural diversity among students in Emirati universities.

### **The Study's Significance**

This study is significant due to the importance of cultural diversity and its dimensions. For instance, cultural diversity plays a major role on the local, international, and regional levels. The study is significant due to the reasons below:

- 1)- This study offers suggestions that benefit the academic staff in Emirati universities
- 2)- This study provides identified definitions for culture and cultural diversity. It identifies the significance of cultural diversity and the manifestations of acceptance for cultural diversity in higher educational institutions.
- 3)- This study encourages researchers to conduct quantitative and qualitative studies about cultural diversity.

### **Definition of Terms:**

Development (operational definition): It refers to changes carried out consciously in society to social, economic, political, or cultural areas. It aims to make changes to the current reality in the aim of making development. It aims to utilize resources and potentials efficiently. The changes are made through the collaboration of all the members of society (Al-Dwaikat, 2016).

Culture (operational definition): It refers to a set of traditions, customs, practices, knowledge, rules, standards, strategies, beliefs, thoughts, values, rituals, taboos, and myths. It's transferred from one generation to another. It's instilled within one and leads to having social complexities (Soqal, 2018).

Acceptance for cultural diversity: (operational definition): It refers to the acceptance of cultural differences between people. Such differences include differences in terms of beliefs, arts, languages, customs, traditions, and social, political and economic systems. Such acceptance contributes to promoting mutual respect and understanding for the ones from different cultures and civilizations. It involves respect for human rights, democracy, and living in dignity. It's measured through the study's questionnaire.

### **Study Limitations**

This study chose a sample of faculty members from UAE universities during the academic year (2020/2021).

### **Methods and Procedures The study's approach**

The researchers adopted a qualitative approach to have a deeper understanding for the study's problem and gain knowledge about the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members.

### **Population**

The population consists of all the faculty members who work in semi-public, public and private Emirati universities during the academic year (2020/2021). It consists of 7907 faculty members based on the statistical data of the UAE Ministry of Education (The UAE Ministry of Education, 2021).

### **Sample**

The sample consists of 9 faculty members who were chosen from Emirati universities during the academic year (2020/2021).

### **The Study's Instrument**

To meet the goals, the researchers drafted the interview questions (i.e., one main question and 6 sub-questions). Those questions were asked to faculty members in UAE universities to explore the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Instrument**

Three interviews were chosen randomly. They were recorded and analysed. They were presented to experts to assess them. The experts added that the answers are analysed in an accurate manner.

### **Statistical Analysis**

Interviews were carried out with 9 faculty members:

- Excel file was created to write and analyse the respondents' answers.
- The researchers wrote the respondents' answers.
- The researchers analysed the respondents' answers in depth to reach knowledge. The respondents' answers were categorized into groups.
- The data was analysed through using the content analysis method and codes were used through using MAXQDA program. This program is used for analysing qualitative data.

### **Results and Discussion**

What is the reality of the role of Emirati universities in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members?

Based on the analysis of the interviews, it was found that all the respondents believe that Emirati universities play a major role in developing their students' acceptance for cultural diversity. All the respondents believe that Emirati universities show much attention to such development. Based on the analysis of the interviews, such attention manifests through plans, and strategies that fit with the orientations of the government. Such orientations include showing respect to multiculturalism. They include emphasizing the significance of tolerance and co-existence values. Some UAE universities have high ranks on the global ranking that is related to cultural diversity among students and academic staff. The attention provided by UAE universities to cultural diversity manifests through encouraging students to engage in extra-curricular activities in cultural, sport, and social areas. It manifests through annual celebrations that are held by student clubs under the supervision of the student affairs deanship.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, it was found that all respondents believe that students have awareness about the significance of cultural diversity. Most of the students have been spending many years in the UAE. Thus, they interacted with students from various cultures. Due to such interaction those students have more understanding for people from other cultures and communicate

with them effectively. Acceptance of cultural diversity shall contribute to preserving the cultural heritage.

Based on the analysis of the interviews, it was found that the environments of UAE universities are suitable for developing acceptance for cultural diversity.

It was found that all the faculty members believe that globalism has an impact on students' acceptance for cultural diversity. Globalism has positive and negative impacts on students in UAE universities. It manifests in technological and scientific aspects. It has impacts on students' acceptance for cultural diversity and respect for cultural privacy. It manifests in the way some students behave and dress.

It was found that all the faculty members believe that religious, language, and ethnic diversity among students in UAE universities contributes to achieving sustainable development in education. The latter result agrees with the one reached by Al-Domani (2015). The latter researcher shed a light on cultural diversity and the efforts exerted for achieving sustainable development in the Arab society. He adds that cultural diversity serves as a motivator that encourages people to show respect for cultural identity, traditions, and religions. He adds that cultural diversity motivates people to promote awareness among people about the role of cultural diversity in achieving sustainable development. He adds that cultural diversity affects global views and the future generation choices in terms of the values, skills, and languages. He adds that education for sustainable development requires understanding for others' cultures, living in peace with others and accepting the ethnics and cultural groups

Some suggestions are proposed through interviews for developing students' acceptance for cultural diversity. They include developing programs for student interexchange in collaboration between Arab and foreign universities. They include promoting respect for others' beliefs and thoughts to achieve development. They include addressing cultural diversity through academic curricula, projects, and activities. They include emphasizing the significance of cultural diversity through holding counselling sessions by student clubs in collaboration with the representatives of faculties under the supervision of the students' affairs deanship. They include encouraging people to do scientific research about cultural diversity in UAE during the 21st century. That shall have benefits on the local, regional, and international levels. This result agrees with the one reached by Guo and Jamal (2007). The latter researchers carried out a study titled (Nurturing Cultural Diversity in Higher Education: A Critical Review of Selected Models). They explored the impact of cultural diversity on the educational environment in Canadian universities which include many foreign and immigrant students. They identified the challenges facing the societies that have cultural diversity. They found that higher educational institutions must change their policies in terms of cultural diversity through adopting three models. Those models are cultural diversity-based education model, multiculturalism-based education model, and anti-discrimination education model. Those models have an impact on the individual, grade, institution, and society.

### **Recommendations:**

#### **The researchers recommend:**

Embedding concepts related to cultural diversity in the training courses provided for faculty members in universities. That shall contribute to promoting awareness among faculty members about cultural diversity. It shall encourage researchers to do more scientific studies about cultural diversity in collaboration with university students from various cultures. Doing such studies shall contribute to developing students' innovation and creativity.

Activating the role of student exchange programs that are implemented in collaboration between UAE universities from one hand and other Arab and foreign students. Holding cultural conferences in universities for students and universities in collaboration with international bodies that are affiliated with the United Nation (UN).

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