


# EXAMINING INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AMONG PRESERVICE TEACHERS AT A PAKISTANI UNIVERSITY


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## ABSTRACT

This investigation examined the intercultural competence of undergraduate students in pre-service teacher education at the Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering Management and Sciences (BUIITEMS). The researchers hypothesized that the students would be polarized in their orientation toward persons of cultures different than theirs. Each student completed the Intercultural Development Inventory® (IDI). The findings suggest that the BUIITEMS students do have a clear sense of their own values and practices, as well as a desire to preserve their own traditions. However, the BUIITEMS students have little life experience beyond their own home cultures. They see other persons as ‘others,’ without much definition or understanding. With intercultural competence skills, prospective teachers would be prepared to address specific differences from an adaptation perspective and achieve an inclusive learning environment. Faculty may want to redesign the curriculum and policies, so that they intentionally incorporate strategies to foster intercultural competence among their students.

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## **Introduction**

As our world becomes more globalized, professionals increasingly interact with people beyond their own cultures and countries. In November 1947, the first post-independence Pakistani National Education Conference convened in Karachi. As he opened the conference, the Quaid-i-Azam (The Great Leader) Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared:

There is no doubt that the future of our State will and must greatly depend upon the type of education we give to our children and the way in which we bring them up as future citizens of Pakistan. Education does not merely mean academic education. There is an immediate and urgent need to give scientific and technical education to our people to build up our future economic life (Jinnah, 1947).

For more than 70 years, the leaders of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have made efforts to design and implement a system of education to globalise their scientific, economic, and social systems appropriately for their own cultures. Related to this study, multiculturalism (cultural diversity) is an important characteristic of Pakistan. The population is extremely diverse in terms of religions, languages, castes, and regions of birth (Shah, 2020; Zeidan, 2022).

## **Literature Review**

Diverse social identities have been shown to affect life in every culture throughout the world (Cushner et al., 2022). These social identities form individual and group cultures. Culture, for purposes of this investigation, includes the norms, behaviors, values, and characteristics shared by a group of people and passed on to other generations (Li and Karakowsky, 2001). Teacher preparation programs should foster intercultural competence (IC) so that teachers can facilitate learning by pupils from various cultural backgrounds. This investigation examined IC among pre-service teachers at one Pakistani university.

As it is generally used, IC ‘refers to the awareness, knowledge, skills, and processes needed by individuals, professions, organizations, and systems to function effectively and appropriately in culturally diverse situations in general and particular encounters from different cultures’ (Bean, 2006). Overall, IC encompasses other concepts, such as global competence, individual qualities, employability skills, global citizenship, and education for sustainable development (Gopalkrishnan, 2019).

IC is the capability of a person to change their thoughts and knowledge and gain or adapt appropriate new behavior when encountering cultural similarities and differences. The term ‘intercultural competence’ involves important characteristics: being aware of one’s own culture, recognizing and experiencing differences, understanding the meaning behind the differences, and adapting to differences. Researchers concluded that a good working definition of IC would be: “the capability of an individual to interact efficiently and properly in cross-cultural arrangements based on an individual’s knowledge, skill, and attitude” (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247).

This investigation used the term IC because it may help achieve personal, regional, national, and international accomplishments and developments. Since there is a variety of terms used (global mindedness, international worldview, multicultural awareness, etc.), schools may find it difficult to interpret what it means, which in turn compromises their ability to teach and assess it (Hayden and Thompson, 2014). According to Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003), two variables are important for describing IC: the cultural engagement of individuals towards their ‘owns’ and toward the ‘others.’ To achieve this cultural engagement, individuals need to cultivate deeper cultural self-understanding and deeper understanding of other cultures (Hammer et al., 2003).

Other theorists have described IC in three ways: intercultural traits, intercultural attitudes and worldviews, and intercultural capabilities (Leung et al., 2014). Intercultural traits are related to IC, which determines an individual’s actual behavior when encountering a culture new to them. Such traits may involve persistence, open-mindedness, working through cognitive dissonance, and acceptance of ambiguity. Intercultural attitudes and worldviews are demonstrated by awareness, insight, and

assessment of meaning from outside a person's own culture. This can involve negative or positive perspectives of other people's thoughts, beliefs, and communications. Highly culturally competent persons will have positive expectations for connections with others. They see the other cultures in the view or context of their own, including difficulties and disagreements among various cultures within nations. Intercultural capabilities enable people to know, think, act, and perform in ways that will make them able to connect and communicate effectively in intercultural situations. Intercultural capabilities highlight what a person can do to be successful, active, and useful in intercultural connections.

### *Intercultural competence of schoolteachers in Pakistan*

Pre-service TEPs equip teachers with the skills, knowledge, and attitudes necessary to take up teaching as a profession (Ahmad et al., 2014). The TEPs in Pakistan are embedded in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Pakistan. HEIs, sometimes called 'tertiary education' or 'post-secondary education,' involve programs beyond secondary school, especially at a college or university. These institutions may be publicly sponsored and supported or privately funded, perhaps even for profit (Zeidan, 2022). Tahira and colleagues (2020) noted that the quality of public-sector education in Pakistan has declined over the years. The private sector now enrolls about one-third of students at all education levels. This has created competition for the public sector.

Recently, several investigators explored the IC among schoolteachers in Pakistan to consider how well teachers are prepared for what they termed 'global acceptance' (Sadruddin and Amanullah, 2015). They found that Pakistani schoolteachers were not very global-minded (i.e., culturally competent). The authors suggested that the schoolteachers' theoretical understanding is satisfactory, and the teachers believed that they were part of a global society. However, their practical experience was missing. The research participants also found it difficult to connect global attitudes with their local issues. To produce IC school teachers, the TEPs must adopt and include

intercultural and international dimensions in their programming (Sadruddin and Amanullah, 2015).

### *Issues and problems for TEPs in Pakistan*

The Higher Education Commission of Pakistan created the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (NACTE) to oversee TEPs (NACTE, 2009). The NACTE standards list these needs and importance of a TEP: (a) curriculum and instruction; (b) assessment and evaluation; (c) facilities and learning resources; (d) human resources; (e) finance and management; (f) research and scholarship; and (g) community links and outreach. However, none of these 2009 standards related to the preparation of teachers with IC related to diversity, i.e., differences among clusters or classes of individuals, based on background, gender, geography, language, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status, as defined by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2008).

Ahmed (2012) described teacher education programs (TEPs) as providing education and development for prospective teachers as they prepare to enter the classroom for the first time in their roles as teachers. She argued that TEPs should address the theoretical and practical needs of teaching environments. Since 1947, the number of TEPs in Pakistan has increased enormously. Policy-makers have suggested many improvements for TEPs. However, these measures and policies were implemented in bits and pieces and, therefore, could not reach the results anticipated by the policies (Ahmed, 2012).

TEPs have been considered the responsibilities of the Pakistani provinces. Each province has a centralized department for teacher education. In Balochistan, the Bureau of Curriculum and Extension Center is responsible for pre-service teacher education (Tahira et al., 2020). Such decentralization has resulted in inconsistencies among provinces.

Highly talented professionals are not very interested in the teaching profession in Pakistan. Young people prefer to enter professions such as engineering or medicine. Among the reasons for the reluctance to join the teaching profession at the primary and secondary levels are relatively low salaries, few fringe benefits, lack of opportunity for promotions, unattractive working conditions, and the high teacher-student ratio, which is around 1:40 at the primary and 1:36 at the secondary level (Rashid and Mukhtar, 2012).

Before independence in 1947, the colonial powers designed and required all curricula, textbooks, and materials to serve the colonial interests and not for the prosperity of Pakistani society. TEPs in Pakistan have inherited this centralized approach to curriculum design (Faroog, 1996).

Teachers in highly collective cultures (such as Pakistan) may focus on their local concerns, while teachers in individualistic cultures may engage more with regional or global issues. Macpherson (2017) found a significant difference in what she called 'international mindedness' between two groups of school staff members. Those from Iraq and surrounding countries (Turkey, Greece, and Azerbaijan) showed lower levels of IC than those from Western countries.

A recent study conducted by Tahira et al., (2020) suggested that the most common problems faced by TEPs in Pakistan are lack of funding and resources, narrow scope of curriculum, over-emphasis on theory, poor quality textbooks, lack of research and evaluation of TEPs, and lack of supervision and accountability within the examination system.

### *Teacher education and IC in Pakistan*

If schoolteachers in Pakistan are going to guide their pupils to become global citizens, the TEP faculty members must promote IC among their pre-service teachers. Habib (2018) conducted research in Pakistan to explore the IC, or global mindedness, of higher education faculty. The research revealed that there was no practical

implementation of IC among the faculty due to a lack of focus in the curriculum for TEPs. Furthermore, most faculty members considered understanding local cultures more relevant before moving on to international visions, and there just was not room in the curriculum beyond the more local concerns (Habib, 2018).

Sadrudin and Amanullah (2015) concluded that TEPs should integrate global subjects to strengthen IC of graduates. They recommend international teacher exchange programs, standardized teacher qualifications, and compulsory B.Ed. and M.Ed. degrees for secondary school teachers.

In a study reported in 2009, Ball emphasized that “initiatives are doomed to fail if the primary agents of instruction are incapable of acting as generative agents of change in our schools and classrooms” (Ball, 2009, p. 70). TEP faculty members and schoolteachers should be willing to examine their own attitudes toward culture and learning. This self-reflection could be facilitated by professional development programs.

### *Pedagogical innovations in TEPs*

TEPs should be designed with IC embedded in the standards, curriculum, community spirit, and commitment. Paige and Goode (2009) reported that TEP faculty members were unaware of culturally competent pedagogical strategies that would lead students on how to respond to culturally sensitive ways (Paige and Goode, 2009). Appropriate pre-service and in-service training should nurture and motivate TEP faculty members and schoolteachers to introduce innovations into their practice. Thus, there needs to be explicit and purposeful pedagogy in schools to develop students’ global engagement to foster IC (Wasner, 2016). IC can be promoted through pedagogy, curriculum, and extra-curricular activities (Metli et al., 2019).

Metli et al (2018) suggested several steps that TEPs might take to foster IC. First, review and analyze the mission statement. Address knowledge, skills, experiences, dispositions, and capacity. Then, revise essential learning outcomes to promote IC.

Incorporate activities beyond the classroom, such as service learning, field trips, and partnerships. Finally, assess IC development with a rubric.

A 2008 report from Longview Foundation promoted the internationalization of TEPs. Many of the report's ideas will foster IC among pre-service teachers, such as faculty leadership and engagement, general education curriculum, faculty development to embed IC within teaching and learning, and cross-cultural experiences at home, abroad, and online (Longview Foundation, 2008).

In summary, TEPs in Pakistan face many issues and problems related to quality, curriculum, resources, and recruitment of talented pre-service teachers. None of the TEP accreditation standards related to IC preparation of teachers. Furthermore, most university faculty members considered understanding local cultures more relevant than international visions, and there just was not room in the curriculum beyond the more local concerns. In addition, Pakistani TEP faculty members did not know explicit and purposeful teaching and learning methodologies that would lead pre-service teachers how to react with cultural sensitivity. Researchers cited above demonstrated that Pakistani schoolteachers were not very global-minded (i.e., culturally competent). The researchers found that schoolteachers had a satisfactory theoretical understanding. However, they did not have practical experience and professional qualifications:-

The literature review reported in this study shed some light on the values, beliefs, behaviors, and resources about intercultural competence among leaders, teachers, and university faculty in Pakistan. However, no evidence was found in the literature related to the values, beliefs, behaviors, and resources of pre-service teachers (i.e., students preparing to become teachers). The main purpose of the study was to examine IC among teachers in BUITEMS, Pakistan.

### **Background of the study**

Modern schoolteachers are expected to be knowledgeable about various ethnic groups, to teach in a multiethnic classroom, and to prepare all pupils for life in a



multicultural society. Consequently, this investigation examined the intercultural competence of undergraduate students in the pre-service teacher education program, at the Balochistan University of Information Technology Engineering Management and Sciences (BUIITEMS). Graduates are challenged to learn and adapt new skills, to function effectively across many cultures, to be critical thinkers and performers, and to implement positive working styles with people of different backgrounds.

National, regional, and local agencies are addressing improvements in Pakistani higher education. According to the BUIITEMS Vice Chancellor, Ahmed Farooq Bazai, the greatest change can be seen in higher education. The prospects are getting rejuvenated through expanding the scope of education from a mere exchange of information to innovation and inquiry, cultural preservation, altercations, and even enterprise and governance (Bazai, 2023). To understand this emphasis, these investigators reviewed the multi-cultural characteristics of Pakistan as a country and Balochistan as a province.

### *Pakistan*

Pakistan is a multicultural country, highly influenced by its neighboring countries: Afghanistan, China, India, and Iran. Commonalities among the region's residents can be seen in similar foods, clothes, myths, ideologies, and traditions. Pakistan is the fifth most populous country in the world and has the world's second-largest Muslim population (Burki and Ziring, 2023).

Before the partition into Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan, the region was part of the Indian Subcontinent, which included Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Altogether, this is the most populated region in the world, with about 25 percent of the world's population (Zeidan, 2022).

After Pakistan's separation from India in 1947, millions of Hindus and Sikhs left Pakistan. About eight million immigrants (*muhajirs*), equal to one-fourth of Pakistan's population, arrived from India, with their mother tongue (mostly Urdu), culture, and identity. Most settled in Sindh, the province with the national capital. Pockets

of *muhajir* pockets can be found throughout the country. The major demographic shifts in the post-independence period have been movements within the country (largely from rural to urban areas), the exodus of large numbers of Pakistanis to live and work abroad, and the arrival of large numbers of Afghan refugees into the country beginning in the early 1980s (Burki and Ziring, 2023).

Pakistan's literacy rate is lower than ~~that of~~ many developing countries. The overall literacy rate in Pakistan is around 50%. The literacy rate is considerably higher for males than for females. The proportion of females in educational levels progressively diminishes above the primary school level (Burki and Ziring, 2023). Many of those who are literate, however, have not had any formal education. The literacy rate in Balochistan province (41%) is the lowest in Pakistan, compared to Punjab province (62%) and Sindh province (55%) (Zeidan, 2022).

Pakistani-people share common cultural norms with Arab groups and people of South Asia. The Arabic-Persian culture of Muslim conquerors influenced the entire region beginning about 1000 years ago. Regional similarities extend beyond ~~the~~ national boundaries. For example, cultures in Pakistan are broadly similar to those in large parts of Afghanistan and northern India.

It is difficult to describe a single Pakistani culture. Diverse regional cultures show rich variety. Residents of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, for example, have similar daily lives as the Pashtuns in Afghanistan. In other parts of the country, Urdu-speaking *muhajirs* share many cultural ways found among the Hindu, Sikh, and Muslim populations of northern India. In general, the region might be said to constitute a collective culture, rather than an individualistic culture. Pakistan has a more collective style of living life, while European countries are more individualistic. Due to the collective setup of living and highly focused cultural context, when Pakistani university students graduate, they encounter challenges beyond their cultural environment in trends and traditions that they have not experienced before (Burki and Ziring, 2023).

### *Balochistan Province*

Balochistan is one of five provinces of Pakistan and includes 43.6% of the land in Pakistan. Balochistan shares boundaries: northeast with Punjab and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces, east and southeast with Sindh, south with the Arabian Sea, west with Iran, and north and northwest with Afghanistan. Multiculturalism is an important characteristic of Balochistan. The population is extremely diverse in terms of ethnicity, caste, religion, language, and literacy (Zeidan, 2022). This diversity in population makes Balochistan extremely distinct and varied, and a good place for this investigation.

**Ethnicity.** The term ‘Balochis’ refers to tribes and clans that share cultural, religious, ancestral, traditional, and linguistic identities (Marri, 1974). The population of Balochistan is divided into 27 major tribes. The dominant ethnic groups in the region consist of the Baloch, comprising 52%, and the Pashtuns, making up 36%. The remaining 12% includes various ethnic groups, such as Brahvi, Hazara, Sindh, Punjab, Uzbeks, and Turkmens (Zeidan, 2022).

**Caste.** The caste system classifies people based on inherited social status. Castes correspond roughly to social class and economic class in other countries. The government of Pakistan has declared 32 castes and tribes (Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, 2008, p. 131). Traditionally, people have been expected to marry and interact with people of the same social class within a caste system.

**Religion.** In Balochistan, 99.28% of the population identifies as Muslim, according to the 2017 census (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017). Most of the population is Sunni Muslims; Shia Muslims are less than 1%. The remaining 0.72% represents the non-Muslim population. Among the minority communities, Hindus make up the largest group, 0.37% of the total population, followed by Christians, 0.27% of the province's population (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017).

**Language.** Usually, the natives of this province can speak more than one language. Most of the population speaks Balochi (35.49%), with approximately 35.34% speaking Pushto and nearly 17% speaking Brahvi. Urdu and Seraiki are spoken among other groups. Geographically, the Balochi-speaking groups are mainly concentrated in the sparsely populated areas of West, East, South, and Southeast of the province. The Pashtuns-speaking communities are the majority in the northern region and encompass nomadic and settled groups. Brahvi-speaking people congregate in the center of the province (Sabir, 2021).

**Literacy.** The literacy rate in Balochistan (41%) is the lowest in Pakistan, compared to Punjab (62%) and Sindh (55%). For individuals aged 10 years and older, the literacy rate is recorded at 43.58%. The literacy rate for males is 54.15%; females is 31.89% (Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, 2017; Zeidan, 2022).

### *Teacher Preparation in Pakistan*

There are various types of TEPs in Pakistan.

1. The one-year primary school teacher-training certificate program includes basic subjects and teaching methods, including child psychology.
2. One-year or three-year programs lead to a B.Ed. (Bachelor of Education) degree.
3. Higher-level work leads to degrees in education at the master's level for an M.Ed. (Master of Education), M.Phil. (Master of Philosophy), or a doctorate-level Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy). Universities produce specialists as well as academic administrators.
4. There are also several types of in-service training programs for 'untrained' teachers or for upgrading skills. Participants are nominated by the school principals, approved by the district officer, and generally receive full salary during the in-service training.

*Balochistan University of information technology, engineering, and management sciences (BUITEMS)*

BUITEMS is one of the top public universities in Quetta, Pakistan. It is ranked #651-700 in Asian University Rankings 2023: Southern Asia. Rankings were based on academic reputation, employer reputation, faculty-to-student ratio, papers per faculty, international faculty, faculty with PhD, and participation in international research network (Barbieri, 2023).

Established in 1970, BUITEMS is a member of the International Association of Universities (IAU), the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU), the United Nations Academic Impact (UNAI), the American Society for Quality (ASQ), the World Confederation of Businesses (WORLDCOB), the Talloires Network of Engaged Universities (TNEU), and the Association of Quality Assurance Agencies of the Islamic World (IQA) (BUITEMS University Quetta, 2023).

At BUITEMS, there are more than 10,000 students from different regions of Balochistan, as well as from throughout Pakistan. This diversity among the students creates a diverse environment for the university. These students have many differences and commonalities, for example, nourishment, growth, schooling, personal willingness, wishes, and plans (BUITEMS University Quetta, 2023).

Also, at BUITEMS, more than 600 faculty and staff are organized into faculties of Arts and Basic Sciences, Engineering and Architecture, Information and Communication Technology, Management Sciences, Social Sciences and Humanities, and Life Sciences and Informatics. The language of instruction is English (BUITEMS University Quetta, 2023).

### *BUIITEMS department of education*

Recently, BUIITEMS launched the Department of Education in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities. The TEP has been revised from traditional pedagogical practices to learner-centered, and active learning. The teacher preparation program is accredited by the National Accreditation Council for Teacher Education (BUIITEMS University Quetta, 2023). In 2018, the Education Department accepted its first group of 17 students for the degree of Bachelor of Science in Education. Later groups accepted were 39 in 2019, 48 in 2020, and 63 in 2021. A 3-credit hour research project was expected of each student. Graduates are eligible to serve as teachers at the school level and as lecturers at the university level (BUIITEMS University Quetta, 2023).

### **Significance of the study**

HEIs must achieve several goals in citizenship, multicultural, and moral learning to cultivate global citizens. Among other things, IC will include knowledge and skills related to local and international contexts, as well as intercultural knowledge and competence (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2008).

Researchers and leaders in Pakistan acknowledge the importance of IC for the schoolteachers and university faculty members. Their rationale includes, for example:

- Global markets and economies (Harrison, 2014)
- Population migrations (Harrison, 2014)
- Enhanced tolerance and respect for differences (Haywood, 2015; Muller, 2012)
- Regional peace and harmony (Haywood, 2015)
- Capacity of schoolteachers to successfully teach diverse school children
- Reducing ethnocentrism (Muller, 2012)

Pakistan is rated among the lowest countries in terms of education, with a 54.9% literacy rate (World Population Review, 2024). BUIITEMS leaders have been diligently working to enhance its reputation for collaboration and research to offset this. This study is one of the first conducted by this department in collaboration with a professor from the USA, ranked the top country in education. The study reported herein provided useful and essential information, from American sources, about the concept of intercultural competence.

### *Pre-service teachers*

This study is helpful for students, as once students become aware of intercultural competence, the skills, attitudes, and behaviors will be helpful for them in every phase of life. The study is especially useful for pre-service teachers because they will become aware of the value of IC in their success at teaching pupils from a variety of cultural backgrounds.

### *BUIITEMS department of education*

Currently, the Education Department of BUIITEMS University is not highly regarded by other University faculty. This is a very new department, so the study will be essential for student recruitment. These interactions demand teachers to have global mindedness so that they can participate enthusiastically in solving issues faced by country people besides expanding the horizon of knowledge by transferring the same values to the students.

### *Higher education policymakers*

This study can benefit policymakers by revising and rebuilding the curriculum and policies to make the students culturally competent. This involves the ‘Board of Studies’ that designs and makes changes in the content at BUIITEMS University to revise the curriculum and rebuild it accordingly and support the culturally competent content that is essential for the development of both teachers and learners.

## Theoretical Framework

The study used the Intercultural Development Continuum® (IDC®) as its theoretical framework. This framework was adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), originally developed by Bennett (1986). The DMIS and the IDC® describe the orientations of a person or group toward cultural differences and similarities (Bennett, 1986, 1993; Hamme et al., 2003).

### Figure 1.

#### *The Intercultural Development Continuum®*

Denial      Polarization      Minimization      Acceptance      Adaptation  
Ethnocentric & monocultural ----- / ----- Ethnorelative & intercultural -----

Presented in Figure 1, the IDC® includes benchmarks or stages about individual or group understanding and experiences of cultural differences. The first two stages are ‘ethnocentric,’ in which an individual’s or group’s culture is viewed as the only culture or belief that their culture is ‘the best.’ The final two stages are “ethno-relative,” in which an individual’s or group’s culture is considered as equal among many other cultures and the person shows a positive orientation to cultural differences. These stages reveal a person’s more inclusive approach. The middle stage, Minimization, is a transitional stage in which individuals or groups develop from ethnocentric to ethno-relative worldviews.

The continuum illustrates the development from a monocultural mindset toward an intercultural mindset. A monocultural mindset refers to a person who has their own view of cultural commonalities and differences; they use stereotypes to identify global differences. In contrast, the multicultural cultural mindset is more open to new cultures. They use their own and others’ values to make sense of cultural differences (Bennett, 1986). The stages or orientations on IDC® are as follows:



- Denial: not attentive to or unaware of differences between cultures.
- Polarization: sees and judges the cultural differences.
- Minimization: de-emphasizes difference and focuses on commonality; transition from ethnocentric to ethnorelative viewpoints.
- Acceptance: deeply understands differences, may disagree with other cultures, but accepts the persons or groups.
- Adaptation: changes one's own behavior to bridge across differences (Hammer et al. 2003).

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

The participants for this study involved the students of the Education Department at BUITEMS University in Quetta, Balochistan, Pakistan. There have been 4 badges or cohorts in the Education Department since 2018. This study focused on all the students from Fall-2018 (16 students), Fall-2019 (47 students), Fall-2020 (50 students), and Fall-2021 (58 students).

Participants were selected randomly from each of the four badges or cohorts. The selection of 10% of each badge was facilitated with a random number generator, so there was less chance of bias (James and Moneta, 2020). A total of 17 persons responded to the request. All the participants were enrolled (29%) or had completed (79%) the BUITEMS university program in teacher preparation, and all the participants were citizens of Pakistan. Of the 17 respondents, 8 were male and 9 were female. No additional demographic data was collected through the online survey.

### **Measures**

The research instrument in this study was a survey of Intercultural Developmental Inventory® or IDI®, based on the IDC®. This survey assesses an individual's concept, mentality, and orientation towards other cultures. The IDI® is a standardized

assessment of an individual's or group's intercultural competence along the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC®). The mindsets range from Denial (disagree that cultural difference exists), Polarization (view cultural differences from an 'us versus them' perspective), Minimization (trivialize cultural differences; focus on cultural similarities), Acceptance (recognize and value cultural differences), to Adaptation (take another person's cultural point of view and communicate accordingly) (Hammer et al., 2003; Vande Berg et al., 2012).

The survey contains 50 questions and is administered by specially trained persons certified as 'Qualified Administrators (QAs).' Only the QA has access to arranging to use the IDI®. The IDI® may be completed online and is currently available in seventeen different languages. Results lead to the understanding of differences and commonalities about knowledge, beliefs, and practices, among people of differing cultural backgrounds, castes, and cultures.

### **Data collection**

Participants were invited to complete a survey online. They received a description of the study, an introduction to the faculty supervisor, a link to access the survey, their unique username, and an access password. They were invited to ask questions for clarification. Several participants received reminder messages, so that, eventually, all did complete the survey. After each student completed the survey, the IDI® generated individual profiles.

### **Data analysis**

Descriptive statistics were used to report the participants' IC. The IDI® procedures automatically combine results into the group's scores and profile. An IDI® Qualified Administrator, trained and certified in the use of the IDI®, reviewed the results with the BUIITEMS researcher to understand and reflect on three scores: the Perceived Orientation (PO), the Developmental Orientation (DO), and the Orientation Gap (OG).

The PO indicates how the group locates itself within the Intercultural Development Continuum. It shows how the group members see themselves while interacting with people from different or diverse cultures. This orientation can be at any stage, such as Denial, Polarization, Minimization, Acceptance, or Adaptation.

The DO shows the group's primary orientation towards cultural differences and commonalities along the Continuum as assessed by the IDI®. Developmental Orientation of a group can be Denial, Polarization, Minimization, Acceptance, or Adaptation.

The OG is the calculated difference between the group's PO and DO. The OG illustrates the discrepancies between perceived and actual understandings and skills in working across cultures.

## Results

The study examined intercultural competence as described by the scores on the IDI® for seventeen pre-service teachers from the Education Department of BUITEMS, University Quetta. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between IDI® scores and the orientations on the IDC®.

### Figure 2.

*IDI® Scores and Orientations on the Intercultural Development Continuum®*

55 ----- 70 ----- 85 ----- 100 ----- 115 ----- 130 ----- 145

Denial Polarization      Minimization      Acceptance      Adaptation

Three group scores were calculated for the seventeen pre-service teachers by the data analysis: Perceived Orientation, Developmental Orientation, and Orientation Gap. Table 1 presents the three group scores.

**Table 1.***IDI® Group Scores for Pre-service Teachers at BUIITEMS University Quetta*

<b>IDI® Group Profile Report</b>	<b>IDI® Score</b>	<b>IDI® Stage</b>
Perceived Orientation	110.83	Ethnorelative Minimization
Developmental Orientation	62.23	Ethnocentric Polarization
Orientation Gap	48.6	

The group profile of IDI® describes how the group made sense of cultural differences and commonalities. The group's Perceived Orientation score was 110.83, indicating that the sample perceived their intercultural competence was almost in the Acceptance orientation toward cultural differences. Analysis reported that 11.8% were in the Polarization orientation and 68.2% were in the Denial orientation. The group's average Developmental Orientation score was 62.23, indicating that the group was in the Denial orientation toward cultural differences. The Orientation Gap between the group's Perceived Orientation score and its Developmental Orientation score was 48.60 points.

## **Discussion**

The main purpose of the study was to examine the intercultural competence among the pre-service teachers in BUIITEMS, Pakistan. Participants made responses that showed they *perceived* that they were able to minimize differences and emphasize commonalities across cultures. However, they also ignored important cultural differences in values, perceptions, and behaviors. As a group, the pre-service teachers overestimated their level of intercultural competence and may have been surprised that their actual developmental orientation score was not higher. However, bias in self-reported measures is not unusual. Devaux and Sassi (2016) suggested that human beings often feel they are more effective in a variety of pursuits than they are. For

example, people in general consistently rate themselves as better at communicating than they are.

In contrast, the findings showed that the pre-service teachers were inexperienced in their orientation toward persons of cultures different than theirs. They saw other persons as different ‘others,’ without much definition or understanding. The developmental orientation scores indicated that the subjects recognized some observable cultural differences (such as music, dress, food, etc.). However, the developmental orientation scores also indicated that they did not notice cultural differences that were less easily observed (e.g., the meaning of time, problem-solving methods, etc.) and may avoid or withdraw from differences among cultures. These characteristics reflect an explanation from Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003): individuals and groups in the Denial orientation to cultural differences are more comfortable with their familiar culture, are more likely to socialize with people from their own culture, and even avoid meaningful interactions with other people. Additionally, these individuals and groups demonstrate less awareness of the deeper patterns of cultural differences and are more likely to notice surface, easily observed differences. The group’s Denial orientation toward cultural differences indicated that they will probably be unable to adapt across differences to reach common goals.

Furthermore, nearly all subjects were in the same orientation toward other differences. The narrow range of orientation suggests the group used a very consistent perspective when confronted with cultural variations. Since the group interacted primarily with people from their cultural community, they may have a very clear sense of their values and practices. They are more focused on their cultural or traditional norms. This may be a strength; however, the group may have less experience interacting with people from different cultures or they have less interest in other cultures. Consequently, there were cultural differences that were escaping their notice. The results suggest that BUITEMS students who are pre-service teachers may be less competitive in culturally diverse environments.

## **Implications and Recommendations**

The investigators' findings may help students, teachers, instructors, organizations, curriculum designers, policymakers, and authorities to adapt their approaches to foster IC among pre-service teachers. This section presents some suggestions.

Faculty, as well as students, need to experience cultural diversity more deeply (e.g., decision-making strategies, and communication styles). University faculty members should create opportunities for interactions with persons from various cultures. These interactions will give opportunities to identify how people with different cultural experiences interpret and respond to situations in ways that may be different from their own.

Colleges and universities may change or challenge the design of teaching and learning in all professions at regional, national, and international levels. More teacher educators need to frame IC as an essential element of teaching and learning in higher education. In addition, using the IDI® for guided development may increase the IC of all college and university students. The IDC® offers a process for colleges and universities to test the theoretical model presented in this study. Overall, the government should take steps to make intercultural competence a meaningful outcome for university studies.

## **Conclusion**

One of the objectives of the study is to examine the score of Intercultural Competence of the Students in BUITEMS. The second objective was to analyze the cultural competence of the pre-service teachers of the 4 sessions or badges of the Department of education. To achieve these objectives, the research took the Intercultural Developmental Inventory for which the help of an international professor from the United States of America was taken. The 17 randomly selected participants from 4 badges or cohorts were requested to complete the survey. Each participant was

sent the IDI® survey link and a unique username and password. The received was analyzed by the IDI® providers and interpreted by a Qualified Administrator.

The researchers hypothesized that the students would be polarized in their orientation toward persons of cultures different than theirs. In the BUISTEMS Education Department, investigators randomly selected 10% of students from each of the four classes. Each student completed the IDI®.

According to the results, the group perceived its intercultural competence as that of Minimizing differences to get along with persons from other cultures. However, the group's developmental orientation toward cultural differences was within a stage called Denial. Persons in this orientation recognize some observable surface cultural differences but have very little actual life experience with other cultures.

The findings suggest that the BUISTEMS pre-service teachers do have a clear sense of their own values and practices, as well as a desire to preserve their own traditions. However, the BUISTEMS students have little life experience beyond their own home cultures. They see other persons as 'others,' without much definition or understanding. With intercultural competence skills, teachers would be prepared to address specific cultural differences, adapt teaching and learning, and achieve an inclusive learning environment. Faculty may want to redesign the curriculum and policies to intentionally incorporate strategies to foster intercultural competence among their students.

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### **Ethics statement**

The study design was approved by the BUIITEMS Ethics Review Committee (ERC). The study complies with the Declaration of Helsinki. Participation was voluntary, and the right to ask questions, to decline participation, or to leave the study at any time was made clear during the data collection. Data collection was facilitated by an IDI Qualified Administrator. Data was anonymized during data management (using serial numbers), analysis, and reporting.

### **Contributions**

Azam, Sandell, and Sandell contributed to the study design, data collection, data analysis, and data interpretation. Sandell participated as an IDI Qualified Administrator. Azam and Sandell contributed to the writing of the article manuscript. Baloch provided overall supervision of the project. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

### **Disclosure statement**

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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