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## Pedagogical Pathways to Inclusion: Advancing Cultural Diversity in Kuwaiti Higher Education Institutions

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**Abstract.** Globalization has heightened the need for higher education institutions to cultivate culturally inclusive environments that prepare students for increasingly diverse societies. This study examines the role of higher education institutions in Kuwait in promoting cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members. Grounded in James Banks' five-dimensional model of multicultural education, the research operationalized these dimensions across four institutional domains: administration, faculty members, curricula and activities, and obstacles. A quantitative descriptive design was used, and data were collected through a validated questionnaire administered to 97 faculty members across universities and higher education institutes. The results indicated a moderate overall institutional role in promoting cultural diversity ( $M = 3.57$ ), with curricula and activities rated highest and faculty engagement rated lowest. Significant differences appeared by academic specialization, favoring humanities faculty, while gender and workplace showed no statistically significant effects. These findings reveal a gap between ethical commitment and pedagogical practice, reflecting limited intercultural training and the absence of systematic diversity measurement mechanisms. The study validates Banks' framework in a Gulf context and offers an empirically tested model for assessing multicultural education in non-Western systems. Implications include the need for institutionalized intercultural pedagogy training, development of diversity dashboards, and integrating inclusion metrics into accreditation standards. Overall, the findings highlight that cultural diversity in Kuwaiti higher education is ethically supported yet structurally underdeveloped.

**Keywords:** Cultural diversity; multicultural education; faculty perceptions; Kuwait; Banks' model; quantitative survey design; intercultural pedagogy

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## 1. Introduction

Higher education institutions, once sheltered from the challenges posed by cultural pluralism, are now experiencing the same changes as the rest of the world in terms of globalization, digital connectivity, and mobility of people and ideas. In recent decades, global patterns of migration, international academic mobility, and transnational knowledge flows have made cultural diversity a central feature of university life worldwide, and Kuwait is no exception.

Cultural pluralism is no longer in the background for Kuwait, where people of different nationalities, religions, and languages live together; rather, it is a social and educational necessity. However, the global trend toward greater cultural plurality becomes particularly significant in Kuwait because the demographic composition of the country, where non-nationals constitute the majority, creates distinctive educational pressures, such as linguistic diversity, divergent learning norms, and unequal cultural capital among students.

Globalization and the rising systems of education that encourage respect for diversity, critical intercultural awareness, and global citizenship are central to multicultural education that views diversity as a source of enrichment (Killick, 2014). As a result of the connections between the global forces and national educational demands, research on Kuwaiti higher education is able to identify the mechanisms through which Kuwaiti higher education institutions respond to cultural diversification. However, this study highlights the issue from an educational and sociological point of view.

### 1.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the multicultural education framework of James A. Banks (2019) which allows a detailed and thorough understanding and application of diversity in education. Banks identified five connected strands: (1) content integration, (2) knowledge construction, (3) prejudice reduction, (4) equitable pedagogy, and (5) an empowering school culture and social structure. These strands together embody the full model that links classroom practices with institutional transformation.

The utilization of Banks' framework in this research was used to identify three particular aspects that are directly related to the functions of higher education institutions:

- The **curricula and activities** section considers *content integration* (1) and *knowledge construction* (2) as it demonstrates the extent to which the diverse viewpoints have been incorporated into the curricula and the engagement through co-curricular activities.
- The **faculty member** section connects to *prejudice reduction* (3) and *equitable pedagogy* (4) as it outlines the faculty roles in practicing fairness, inclusion, and the respect of the diverse students through the activities of teaching and assessing.
- The **administration** section is associated with the *empowering school culture and structure* (5) theme, which relates to the institutional policies,

governance practices, or leadership initiatives that create access and encourage participation by different groups.

This research translated Banks' framework for schools to higher education and, thus, connected multicultural education theory with university administration. Theoretical correspondence makes it possible to investigate in a structured manner the degree to which administrative policies, faculty practices, and curricular designs together determine cultural inclusiveness in the Kuwaiti educational institutions. This study also addresses a key gap in the literature which was the lack of studies that empirically apply Banks' full framework to higher education systems in the Gulf region.

### **1.2 Problem Statement**

The need for this inquiry is highlighted by the demographic makeup of Kuwait: the citizens only make up almost 41% of the total population, while non-nationals consist of Arabs, Asians, Africans, and Western expatriates. The universities reflect this diversity in the students, teachers, and even the administration. As a result, higher education institutions face specific challenges (such as varied linguistic competencies, disparities in prior educational experiences, and the need for culturally responsive pedagogy) that require systematic institutional responses (Findlow, 2006). However, universities lack empirical evidence on how cultural diversity is managed and sustained through institutional policies, teaching practices, and curriculum design, despite operating within a highly diverse environment.

Existing studies in Arab contexts (Kufan et al., 2023; Al-Mahawish, 2021; Al-Yousef & Al-Mutairi, 2022) have explored diversity management, faculty attitudes, or administrative roles in isolation. Nevertheless, none have systematically implemented the Banks' extensive framework to investigate the ways different aspects work together in the specific demographic and institutional context of Kuwait. Thus, the specific research gap lies in the absence of comprehensive, evidence-based analyses that integrate administrative, pedagogical, and curricular dimensions using a theoretically grounded multicultural model. The lack of balance was addressed in this research paper through studying the mechanisms by which higher education promotes cultural diversity from the perspective of faculty members, as well as what demographic factors and contextual barriers are associated with these perceptions.

To address these issues, the study was guided by the following research questions:

- RQ1:** To what extent do higher education institutions in Kuwait promote cultural diversity across administrative, pedagogical, and curricular domains?
- RQ2:** What obstacles hinder the advancement of cultural diversity within these institutions?
- RQ3:** Do faculty perceptions of cultural diversity differ by gender, academic specialization, or type of institution?

This study explores the administrative, faculty, curricula, and activities that promote cultural diversity in higher education institutions in Kuwait and identifies important barriers to advancing diversity, as well as evaluates how faculty perceptions vary across gender, academic specialty, and institution.

While this study contributes to multicultural education scholarship by constructing Banks' theoretical model with a Gulf Arab context, it further expands its scope across cultural and ethnic boundaries. It also provides practical feedback for university leaders and policymakers who seek to build institutionalized diversity, inclusiveness, and intercultural competence as an important component of higher education quality assurance and national development.

By situating the study's contribution in the introduction, the study now moves from a global context to a national context, to theoretical framing, to problem identification, and finally to the clearly stated research questions.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

In compliance with the study problem and questions, this study intended to achieve the following specific objectives in the year 2024–2025:

1. Objective 1: To examine how Kuwaiti higher education administrations practice cultural diversity with organizational policies, leadership practices, and campus culture.
2. Objective 2: To identify the extent faculty members use culturally inclusive and equitable teaching and assessment practices in their courses.
3. Objective 3: To assess the integration of cultural diversity within curricula and co-curricular activities in Kuwaiti higher education institutions.
4. Objective 4: To identify key institutional, pedagogical, and cultural obstacles that hinder the advancement of cultural diversity.
5. Objective 5: To determine whether faculty perceptions of cultural diversity differ according to gender, academic specialization, and type of institution.

Collectively, objectives 1–4 articulate the descriptive aims of the study, whereas objective 5 specifies its analytical aim concerning demographic and institutional differences.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Conceptual Foundations of Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Competence**

Cultural diversity has become a central discourse in higher education policy and practice worldwide. It refers not only to demographic heterogeneity but also to the recognition and equitable engagement of differences in ethnicity, gender, nationality, religion, language, and worldview within educational environments (Mazur, 2010; UNESCO, 2009).

The two paradigms of multicultural education and intercultural competence have been used to express the concept of diversity in educational psychology. Banks' multicultural education model addresses structural alteration in the five interrelated dimensions of content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice

reduction, equitable pedagogy, and an empowering school culture (Banks, 2019). These dimensions constituted the conceptual framework for the current research, which connects university governance, teacher conduct, and course development.

Deardorff's process model of intercultural competence is a developmental counterpart to Banks' institutional model (Deardorff, 2020). It regards intercultural competence as the cycle of attitudes (respect, openness), knowledge (cultural self-awareness, sociolinguistic understanding), and skills (adaptability, empathy) interaction, which ends up producing effective intercultural behavior (Deardorff, 2020).

Banks' and Deardorff's models, therefore, highlight that diversity is both a structural capacity and a behavioral one, advocating for a combination of policies that institutionalize inclusivity and individuals who practice it through academic daily interactions (Enyeart et al., 2017; Hurtado et al., 2012). However, despite the wide use of these theories in Western educational systems, their direct applicability to tightly cohesive Gulf societies, in which institutional hierarchy, social cohesion norms, and cultural sensitivities shape campus life, remains underexplored (Hajisoteriou & Angelides, 2016). This indicates a theoretical weakness that the present study addresses, situating both frameworks within the demographic and sociocultural landscape of Kuwait.

The recent international initiatives, especially the concept of "internationalization at home," continue to utilize concepts by incorporating intercultural learning opportunities in the native higher education space (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Finardi & Aşk, 2024). However, the literature shows that the success of such initiatives depends on institutional commitment to incorporating diversity into governance, particularly in areas such as Kuwait, where cultural pluralism is strongly pronounced but not always supported by inclusive pedagogical training or accountability systems. This represents both a social and academic concern, reinforcing the need to promote diversity within Kuwaiti higher education.

## **2.2 Administrative Leadership and Institutional Culture**

There has been a long history of leadership commitment as a factor in successful diversity management. Al-Samie (2012) found that Saudi academic leaders expressed strong support for diversity as a way to improve institutional performance across the country. Kufan et al. (2023) further expanded this with a framework for Omani universities that integrates diversity indicators to strategic planning and quality assurance. Al-Mahawish (2021) noted that inclusion is best accomplished when it is outlined as an institutional value rather than a slogan.

These observations appear to be consistent with data from around the world. According to Esparza et al. (2024), institutions that show strong support for inclusion policies tend to increase faculty engagement and student belonging. Lu et al. (2024) asserted that institutional leaders must apply epistemic inclusion because diversity is an ethical resource and a source of knowledge, rather than simply a checkbox for compliance.

The administrative domain of this study included leadership commitment, governance patterns, and accountability mechanisms as defined by Banks (2019). This applicability is particularly significant in Kuwait, in which administrative structures are highly centralized, and policy implementation, in its widespread form, relies on hierarchical decision-making rather than shared or distributed decision-making. Therefore, Banks' approach helps to draw attention to whether empowerment is institutionalized or rhetorical. While there are no measures of diversity in the literature of the region, such lack of tools for determining diversity suggests that Gulf institutions may use symbolic over substantive inclusion, which is why this study has examined these assumptions empirically. This is not merely a matter of formal policy, but rather the cultural context in which intercultural conversations are allowed in Kuwait.

### **2.3 Faculty Roles, Pedagogy, and Professional Practice**

Diversity management is primarily handled by faculty members who are the operational agents. Classroom practices, assessment methods, and mentoring styles of faculty bring institutional policies down to the level of experience. Studies conducted at Arab universities provide different results. Al-Yousef and Al-Mutairi (2022) found high levels of faculty participation in advancing cultural awareness at Najran University. Al-Mahawish (2021) found moderate implementation at Al al-Bayt University. Al Sharif (2020) confirmed the effectiveness of diversity management at Tabuk University, but Rahman (2019) warned that leadership alone does not address the faculty's lack of training. Al-Mutawa and Al-Marri, (2019) reported that Kuwaiti teachers are fair and unbiased, but have a challenge with dialect and school expectations.

In addition to this perspective, studies in international literature explore the benefits of intercultural pedagogy in teacher empathy, reflexivity, and inclusive assessment design (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2021; Civitillo et al., 2019; Lee et al., 2012). Mitchell (2023) demonstrated that intercultural competence in teacher relations can strongly link student engagement and success in multiple learning settings. Most of these studies found that faculties are passive recipients of diversity policy, not active pedagogical agents. This highlights the need to address both faculty members' ethical commitments and the curriculum's capacity to operationalize inclusivity, because teachers in Kuwait are not only responsible for ethical commitments, but also have the ability to promote inclusivity at school. This distinction between attitudinal support and pedagogical practice, as in Banks' "prejudice reduction" and "equitable pedagogy", is central to Banks' conceptual framework of the differences in faculty engagement and provides a theoretical lens through which to analyze the gaps identified in this research.

These studies work together to further substantiate the rationale for including the faculty member domain of the present research as further aligned with the Bank's corresponding prejudice reduction and equitable pedagogy dimensions while providing indications that regional institutions rely on goodwill and not systematic capacity building, which this study also hoped to redress.

## 2.4 Curricula, Activities, and Student Engagement

Curricula and co-curricular activities represent a strong avenue for institutionalizing diversity values. Al-Shazly et al. (2020) believed that if diversity is to be endorsed, it needs to be through curriculum change, professional development for teachers, and support from administration. A study by López and La Malfa (2020) demonstrated that the adoption of inclusive curricula positively affects teachers' intercultural attitudes towards Roma students. Likewise, Bakkay (2015) remarked that non-diversified cultural backgrounds in Algerian firms give rise to value conflicts thereby pointing to the necessity of imparting intercultural education at an early stage.

The latest worldwide movements, such as the "internationalization at home" concept, are extending the boundaries of cultural learning beyond international students and faculty interactions to local higher education contexts (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Finardi & Aşık, 2024; Leask, 2015; Leask & Green, 2020). Stentiford (2022) strongly advocated for curricular inclusivity through integration of the underrepresented cultural viewpoints, rather than treating them as supplementary elements.

However, the Gulf context presents a unique learning context. While civic and Islamic values emphasize coexistence, institutional curricula are often standardized and regulated and thus constrain critical multicultural engagement. Abu-Saad and Haj Ali (2024) suggested that cultural and religious values can support inclusion by being explicitly tied to curriculum design and can help guide the understanding of inclusiveness. This particular insight is especially relevant in Kuwait because cultural legitimacy is central to decision-making about curricular priorities.

The outcomes of curricula and activities are thus similarly consistent with Banks' "content integration" and "knowledge construction" dimensions that are based on the socio-cultural and religious context of Kuwait. This study builds on these insights by assessing the extent to which curricular and co-curricular practices reflect not only representational diversity but also critical engagement with cultural assumptions.

## 2.5 Obstacles to Promoting Diversity

Even though the overall perception is positive, challenges still have to be overcome at institutional and personal levels. According to Rahman (2019), diversity management has been hampered through lack of proper leadership skills and training provided to a limited extent. According to Al-Mutawa and Al-Marri (2019), one of the main hindrances to the development of Kuwaiti schools has been the reluctance of the administration to act and the lack of intercultural resources.

Likewise, prior research noted the absence of proper methods to evaluate the outcomes of diversity in Omani universities (Kufan et al., 2023; Widiputera et al., 2017). Internationally, the phenomenon of "initiative fatigue" caused by lack of proper support, in terms of incentives or accountability systems, weakens diversity efforts even more. Hartwell et al. (2017) showed that disciplinary silos

and weak cross-departmental cooperation hamper diversity efforts across STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) and humanities faculties.

In Kuwait, specifically, institutional caution surrounding politically sensitive topics and the prioritization of social stability may inadvertently restrict open intercultural dialogue, creating structural barriers to deeper diversity engagement. This coincides with Banks' argument that a strong school culture is defined by equitable structures and emotionally safe spaces for critical discourse that are only partially realized in Gulf higher education.

## **2.6 Demographic and Disciplinary Influences on Perceptions**

It is well-established that the perceptions of cultural diversity vary according to demographic and disciplinary factors. Gender, academic background, and the environment of the institution are some of the aspects that play a major role in the interpretation of inclusiveness by teachers. Al-Yousef and Al-Mutairi (2022) found a gender difference in that female faculty were more committed to diversity, which is in line with psychological studies that point out that women are more interculturally empathetic (McDonald & Kanske, 2023). In contrast, Al-Mahawish (2021) and Al-Sharif (2020) found no difference between genders, indicating that the culture of the institution might negate the demographic influence.

Education based on academic fields has emerged as an important factor. The diversity values are mostly accepted by humanities scholars owing to their deep disciplines which require critical reflection on culture and identity (Reinholz et al., 2019). Alternatively, STEM professors usually portray themselves with meritocratic or universalistic views which might ignore sociocultural subtleties (Harrison & Peacock, 2010). Conversely, faculty's perceptions of institutional diversity can also influence their individual institutional type. Research universities or teaching-oriented colleges and teachers' perceptions are shaped by institutional type (Gordon et al., 2021).

These demographic and disciplinary differences highlight the importance of analyzing diversity perceptions in Kuwait, in which academic units range from humanities faculties, with strong cultural engagement, to STEM programs shaped by standardized instructional models. The present study's inclusion of gender, specialization, and institutional type as independent variables responds directly to these documented patterns.

## **2.7 Synthesis and Research Gap**

The literature reviewed suggests a developing agreement that if cultural diversity is to be promoted in higher education it requires a multilayered approach involving leaders, faculty, and the curriculum. While studies from the Arab world are important because they provide insights, most research has been descriptive and focused either on attitudes of individuals or one dimension of diversity in isolation, rather than an integration of frameworks within an institutional context.

No prior research has systematically operationalized Banks' five-dimensional model of multicultural education to study faculty beliefs about cultural diversity

in Kuwaiti higher educational institutes. This study addressed this gap by examining the administrative, pedagogical, and curricular layers of Kuwait's higher education institutes in terms of the extent to which they help to foster and develop cultural diversity and what obstructs this. The study also contributes to the global theorization of diversity research by demonstrating what the application of Banks' model reveals in a non-Western, high-diversity, but socially conservative, context.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

This research utilized a descriptive-analytical quantitative design to investigate how higher education institutions in Kuwait promote cultural diversity (Al-Munezel & Al-Atoum, 2010). This approach was selected because it allowed for the systematic measurement of faculty perceptions across multiple institutional domains while capturing existing conditions without manipulating variables. A purely experimental or mixed-methods design was not feasible due to institutional access restrictions and the study's aim to quantify perceptions across a broad population, rather than analyze individual cases in depth. Furthermore, a descriptive-analytical quantitative design aligns with prior regional studies on diversity (Al-Mahawish, 2021; Al-Yousef & Al-Mutairi, 2022), allowing for methodological comparability and statistical generalization at the level appropriate for policy-oriented educational research.

#### **3.2 Population and Sampling**

The study's population consisted of all professors employed at universities and higher educational institutions in the State of Kuwait in the second semester of the academic year 2024–2025. At the time of data collection, the total population was approximately 5,800 faculty members across public and private institutions (Kuwait University, Public Authority for Applied Education and Training – PAAET, and licensed private universities). A stratified random sampling method was used to ensure proper representation based on three variables: gender, academic specialization (humanities or sciences), and type of institution (university or institution).

The method used ensured that there would be a fair representation of all higher education institutions in the country, namely Kuwait University, PAAET, and chosen private universities, and the rest of the institutions. These institutions were selected due to their status as the primary higher education providers in Kuwait, representing diverse academic missions (research-oriented, applied, and private sector) and, therefore, offering a realistic cross-section of the national educational landscape. There were 120 questionnaires sent out both electronically and physically, and 97 valid responses were received (response rate = 80.8%).

#### **3.3 Sample Size Justification**

G\*Power 3.1.9.7 was utilized to conduct a power analysis which was aimed at ascertaining whether the sample size was large enough for independent-samples t-tests to detect differences that were statistically significant. Through the assumption of medium effect size ( $d = 0.5$ ), significance level  $\alpha = 0.05$ , and power

$(1 - \beta) = 0.80$ , the minimum sample that was required was  $N = 64$ . The sample acquired ( $N = 97$ ) far exceeded the specified limit, which gave analyses sufficient statistical power.

Although the sample size limits the external generalizability of findings, it is also appropriate in meeting the research objectives because the aim of this study was to inquire into faculty perceptions rather than produce national estimates. With the stratified sampling methodology, representativeness to key demographic groups improved, but sample size constraints prevented further improvement.

### 3.4 Instrument Development and Validation

A structured questionnaire to be used by researchers was designed using an extensive literature review and theoretical constructs on culture and multicultural education (Al-Yousef & Al-Mutairi, 2022; Banks, 2019; Deardorff, 2020; Kufan et al. 2023).

In addition to literature guidance, the initial item pool was developed through expert consultation, based on the evidence of the development of multicultural education in Kuwait, interpreting the context, language, culture, and institutions. This improved the interpretive validity of the instrument beyond mere content alignment.

The tool included a total of 35 items, categorized into four domains, that represented the functional aspects of cultural diversity in higher education:

- **Administration** (8 items) – institutional leadership and governance.
- **Faculty Members** (9 items) – teaching practices and academic roles.
- **Curricula and Activities** (9 items) – inclusion within content and learning environments.
- **Obstacles** (9 items) – challenges impeding the promotion of diversity.

All items were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree, to 5 = Strongly agree.

### 3.5 Validity Procedures

Face and content validity were confirmed by a panel of seven experts in curriculum studies and higher education from Kuwait University and PAAET. The clarity, cultural relevance, and appropriateness of items were reviewed and adjusted based on reviewer feedback. In order to evaluate the construct's validity an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was carried out, which included principal axis factoring with varimax.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value of 0.86 proved the sampling adequacy, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was also significant ( $\chi^2 = 1421.55$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), which confirmed that the factor analysis was suitable for the data. The four factors with eigenvalues larger than one were isolated, which together accounted for 67.8% of the total variance and were consistent with the conceptual domains. The factor loadings were from 0.55 to 0.81, which together gave strong and coherent correspondence of items with their respective constructs.

Although EFA supported the four-domain structure, the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was not conducted due to sample size limitations. This is acknowledged as a methodological constraint and offers the opportunity for future research, using a larger sample.

### 3.6 Reliability Analysis

Reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency. The results are presented in Table 1:

**Table 1: Reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alpha) for study domains**

Domain	Cronbach's $\alpha$
Curricula and Activities	0.83
Faculty Members	0.81
Administration	0.78
Obstacles	0.89
<b>Overall Scale</b>	<b>0.88</b>

All values exceeded the minimum reliability threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency across domains (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

### 3.7 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed with the help of SPSS version 29. Descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviations were utilized to measure the participation of the institutions in cultural diversity. Frequencies and item-level distributions were examined to capture detailed variation across items, but for parsimony, only domain-level results have been highlighted in the results section. Additional numerical details can be provided upon request.

Independent-samples t-tests were used to examine differences by gender, specialty, and workplace, while Cohen's d was determined to give effect sizes. The EFA was conducted to explore the dimensionality of the tool. The mean scores were then classified as low (1.00–2.33), moderate (2.34–3.67), and high (3.68–5.00).

### 3.8 Ethical Considerations and Limitations

The Research Ethics Committee at the Higher Institute of Musical Arts, Ministry of Higher Education, Kuwait, gave approval for ethical considerations on May 3, 2025. The project "Pedagogical Pathways to Inclusion: The Role of Kuwaiti Higher Education Institutions in Advancing Cultural Diversity" was described by the use of a descriptive survey design including an online questionnaire filled by the faculty.

The study was classified as minimal risk. Electronic informed consent was obtained from all participants and the Declaration of Helsinki, as well as the national ethics regulations were followed. Limitations included a moderate sample size, EFA without CFA dependency, and a cross-sectional design restricting causal inference. Additionally, the use of a purely quantitative design limited the ability to capture nuanced faculty experiences, and the absence of

student perspectives reduced the multidimensionality of the data. These limitations were mitigated by the study's broad institutional coverage, strong reliability indices, and systematic operationalization of a well-established theoretical model.

Future research is encouraged to include qualitative interviews or focus groups, integrate student perspectives, and employ a mixed-methods or longitudinal design for capturing institutional diversity dynamics over time.

#### 4. Results

The findings in this section are presented in direct alignment with the study's three research questions (RQ1-RQ3). Table 2 displays the arithmetic means and standard deviations for the four main domains: administration, faculty members, curricula and activities, and obstacles.

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics for main domains**

Domain	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Interpretation
Curricula and Activities	3.83	0.71	High
Administration	3.51	1.02	Moderate
Faculty Members	3.36	0.74	Moderate
Obstacles	3.47	0.81	Moderate
<b>Overall Role</b>	<b>3.57</b>	<b>0.82</b>	<b>Moderate</b>

In Table 2, the general mean of the institution's role was 3.57, or SD = 0.82, reflecting a moderate institutional engagement with cultural diversity directly responding to RQ1. A "moderate" score suggests that diversity is acknowledged, backed conceptually, but that its relationship to learning, assessment, and governance is incomplete and not yet institutionalized in full. Across the domains, curricula and activities had the highest mean, followed by faculty. The structure and curricular efforts complement the implementation of pedagogical methods, which is an important pattern for RQ1.

##### 4.1 Key Items within Each Domain

Table 3 summarizes the two highest-rated and lowest-rated items of each domain in two distinct domains. This item-level analysis enhances understanding of RQ1 by demonstrating which domain elements drive higher or lower performance.

**Table 3: Highest and lowest items per domain**

Domain	Highest-Rated Item	Mean	SD	Lowest-Rated Item	Mean	SD
Administration	Equal opportunities for students and faculty	3.74	1.07	Opportunities for international exchange	3.12	1.42
Faculty Members	Objective, unbiased student assessment	3.91	0.99	Using cultural diversity to enhance research	2.65	1.35
Curricula and Activities	Introduction of local and global cultural concepts	4.12	0.93	Warning against cultural stereotypes	3.25	1.24
Obstacles	Absence of effective measurement mechanisms	3.96	1.15	Weak interaction between faculty and students	3.02	1.19

The top-rated items are ethical commitment and fairness, and the bottom-rated items relate to intercultural participation and research application. This further confirms that cultural diversity practices can be partially implemented regarding RQ1, establishing the results for RQ1.

#### 4.2 Inferential Results

As shown in Table 4, t tests for gender, educational specialization and workplace differences were evaluated on independent-samples t-tests for participants by gender, academic specialty and workplace.

**Table 4: Group differences by gender, academic specialization, and workplace**

Variable	Domain(s) with Notable Difference	t	df	Sig. (p)	Direction
Gender	None	-	-	> 0.05	-
Academic Specialization	Faculty Members, Administration	1.37 / -0.20	95	< 0.01	Humanities > Sciences (Faculty); Sciences > Humanities (Admin)
Workplace	None	-	-	> 0.05	-

No statistically significant differences were found based on gender or workplace. However, academic specialization produced significant differences at the 0.01 level in the faculty member and administration domains. These differences respond directly to RQ3, showing that specialization meaningfully shapes diversity perceptions, whereas gender and workplace do not. The higher scores among the humanities faculty suggest a stronger orientation toward cultural interpretation and dialogue, whereas science faculty emphasize structural fairness and procedural neutrality.

### 4.3 Interpretation of Obstacles

To address RQ2, the obstacle domain mean of 3.47 and a standard deviation of 0.81 indicated a moderate but persistent set of problems. Among the most challenging concerns in this domain was “absence of effective measurement mechanisms” (mean of 3.96), and “weak interaction between faculty and students” (mean of 3.02). This underscores the importance of institutional-level barriers, such as lack of structured assessment and monitoring systems, in comparison to other institutional-level barriers, specifically interpersonal or classroom level barriers.

### 4.6 Practical Meaning of “Moderate” Findings

The term “moderate” refers to partial fulfillment of diversity goals in RQ1 and RQ2. Policies exist, curriculum exists, but systematic pedagogical and institutional practices, including educational and institutional frameworks and processes, are limited. Thus, the results revealed progress but also highlighted broader structural needs which need to be reinforced, especially in training and measurement systems within institutions.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 The Moderate Role of Kuwaiti Higher Education Institutions

The analysis suggests that Kuwait’s higher education institutions have benefited from moderate promotion of cultural diversity, which indicates improvement but is limited to the national context. Though the policies and ethical values include tolerance and peaceful coexistence, these values are not fully integrated into institutional practices and teaching.

Similar to other Gulf states, access, modernization, and quality assurance have become central priorities to the higher education sector in Kuwait since the 1990s, but diversity management has not been established as a core necessity compared to quality assurance or international ranking. Similar findings have been reported in other regional studies, such as Al-Mahawish (2021), in Jordan; and Al-Samie (2021), in Saudi Arabia. However, the moderate outcome appears to indicate that it is a structural issue rather than a cultural limitation, in the context of international research.

In countries with robust multicultural infrastructures, such as Canada, Australia and the Netherlands, diversity frameworks are tied to accreditation, reporting, and faculty assessment (Devon et al., 2023; Leask & Green, 2020). Kuwaiti institutions have ethical commitments to inclusion but have no systematic governance mechanisms. This indicates that the moderate results for RQ1 in this study are not based on resistance, but because the comparatively moderate results are based on insufficient institutionalization.

### 5.2 The Paradox Between Curricular Integration and Faculty Implementation

An important observation of the data is the disjuncture between the high curricular integration and low pedagogical enactment. Curricula and activities were the highest-score domain ( $M = 3.83$ ), signaling institutional capacity to integrate multicultural values at an explicit content level. Faculty practices were

the weakest scoring domain ( $M = 3.36$ ), which suggests a clear disjuncture between work that occurs in policy and that is enacted in classrooms.

This paradox is a manifestation of Banks' (2019) distinction between content integration, or the representation of various cultural perspectives in the curriculum, and equitable pedagogy, or the adjustment of pedagogical practices to students' varied backgrounds. In higher education in Kuwait, it seems the content integration is accomplished institutionally, but equitable pedagogy is yet to be furthered. Faculty participants articulated a strong sense of ethics and commitment to equity (e.g., "I assess students objectively with no bias"), but rarely, if ever, do they show those beliefs in action through intercultural pedagogy (e.g., "I cite cultural diversity among students to accomplish my objectives in the lecture,"  $M = 2.91$ ).

The probable rationale stems from little professional training and pedagogical freedom. Whereas, in the West, faculty usually have opportunities to participate in workshops on diversity or inclusive teaching. Kuwaiti and other Gulf universities prioritize disciplinary expertise over pedagogical innovations. This gap aligns with global findings that intercultural competence requires the development of attitudes, knowledge, and skills through intentional and iterative processes (Deardorff, 2020). Thus, Kuwaiti faculty may value cultural difference but lack the developmentally supportive pathways to transform these values into classroom practice. This observation further enhances the analytical perspective of RQ1 and RQ2 by providing evidence that inclusive curriculum content cannot replace low educational ability.

### **5.3 The Fear of Sensitive Topics: Power, Culture, and Academic Freedom**

In response to sensitive topics, power, culture, and academic freedom, compared with identified barriers, the value  $M = 3.74$  reflects not only an institutional barrier but also a broader cultural and political phenomenon. Facing multiple issues such as gender, sectarian identity, or political distinction, faculty's resistance to discussing controversial subjects such as gender, sectarian identity, or political difference reflects a layered relationship between academia and authority in Gulf societies and notions of social harmony and legitimacy through education.

These behaviors are a form of "self-controlled silence" in which academic caution protects the institution while also restricting the critical involvement of the institution. This conforms with Al-Mutawa and Al-Marri (2019), who noted that Kuwaiti teachers had high respect for justice and would not engage in debate over culturally sensitive issues.

In Banks's framework, this insistence is limited by the creation of two essential dimensions: knowledge construction that requires students to address cultural assumptions more critically, and an empowered school culture that demands dialogue and shared decision-making. This finding indicates that Kuwaiti higher education practices respectful pluralism and critical pluralism that would be of great importance for leadership aspiring to create more meaningful cultural change.

#### 5.4 Academic Specialization and Epistemic Cultures

As an epistemic culture, such cultures are able to appreciate the important differences of academic disciplines; more of the faculty in the humanities focus more on diversity, while those in science focus less on administrative fairness (Knorr-Cetina, 1999). Disciplines, apart from content, come from different conceptions of the nature of knowledge and its role for individuals, and the purpose of education. The latter distinction is demonstrated in international studies, such as Harrison and Peacock (2010), which show that the development of diversity competence in higher education does not occur simply in the same way through training for all fields.

International studies, such as Kersey et al. (2021), demonstrate that STEM teachers often have an interest in objectivity and universalism which can undermine social culture. This global alignment indicates that the Kuwaiti pattern is not unique but part of broader epistemic differences across disciplines. Accordingly, Banks' dimensions of prejudice reduction and equitable pedagogy may require discipline-specific professional development rather than uniform training.

#### 5.5 Regional Context and Comparative Reflection

In comparison, while Kuwait displays a moderate level of institutional engagement, as seen in other Middle Eastern contexts, it differs from universities in the West, in which encompassing diversity frameworks have been in use since the 1990s. In European and North American universities, multicultural education occurs within a framework already embedded and linked to accountability (e.g., equity offices, diversity audits, and student representation). Gulf systems display values, but they are non-mechanistic, unguided by formal governance instruments but rather social ethics.

The distinctions between this study and earlier research (Al-Yousef & Al-Mutairi, 2022; Al-Sharif, 2020; López & La Malfa, 2020) can be regarded as stemming from cultural and methodological variation. For example, Saudi and Egyptian universities may generate higher levels of recorded engagement with diversity because of their national visions (such as Saudi Vision 2030), which explicitly link diversity to goals of modernization, while Kuwait has conceptually relied on civic inclusion to a greater extent than possibly developmental policy.

At an international level, countries such as Canada, Australia, and the Netherlands incorporate diversity indicators into accreditation systems, annual institutional review cycles, and national quality frameworks. This contrasts with Kuwait, in which diversity remains primarily an ethical expectation rather than a mandated institutional criterion. Such global practices suggest that diversity in a governance context tends to increase when diversity is tied to governance tools, rather than to individual good will.

Thus, the moderate results in the Kuwaiti context indicate the relative positivity of value-based inclusion and structural multiculturalism. While in the West, policy, funding, and institutional accountability are tied to multicultural engagement, Kuwaiti higher education institutions often rely heavily on cultural

norms and administrative discretion. This structural difference helps explain why ethical support for diversity is strong but not necessarily sustainable.

### 5.6 Theoretical Integration: Banks' Framework in the Kuwaiti Context

Interpreted through Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education, the findings suggest a partial but promising implementation, as shown in Table 5.

**Table 5: Application of Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education within Kuwaiti higher education**

<b>Banks' Dimension</b>	<b>Corresponding Domain</b>	<b>Status in Kuwaiti Higher Education</b>
Content integration	Curricula & activities	Strong – evident in the inclusion of cultural and global values.
Knowledge construction	Curricula & activities	Moderate – limited critical engagement with cultural assumptions.
Prejudice reduction	Faculty members	Moderate – ethical fairness present, pedagogical integration weak.
Equitable pedagogy	Faculty members	Weak – insufficient adaptation to student diversity.
Empowering school culture	Administration	Moderate – equality achieved, empowerment lacking.

This mapping shows that the higher education sector in Kuwait is generally inclusive and aware of pedagogical practices. A lauded and respected cultural diversity has still not been fully utilized for learning, innovation or institutional growth.

### 5.7 Implications

The findings of this study suggest a shift from ethical inclusion to strategic inclusion, and from acknowledging diversity to strategically institutionalizing it. This needs to be done at Kuwaiti universities by means of monitoring measures to assess the impact of diversity, helping faculty learn more about inclusive teaching practices, and changing all curricular content from tolerance theory to multicultural competence. This approach could integrate scientific rigor with cultural responsiveness in instructional practices.

The results further expand multicultural education research by demonstrating the way in which Banks' (2019) five dimensions operate in the sociocultural context of Gulf society in which content integration, school culture, equitable pedagogy, and prejudice reduction are supported structurally. This provides a comparative example of how multicultural models move across governance systems and adds a dimension to global debates regarding context-sensitive diversity practices. The results provide an important context for the literature in that ethical inclusion alone is not sufficient without structural and pedagogical reinforcement, which is also demonstrated in international studies across multiple contexts, such as Australia, Canada, and the Netherlands.

Practically, these results suggest that Kuwaiti institutions need to switch from voluntary, value-based diversification practices into measured policies. For example, monitoring systems for diversity audits include annual assessments, faculty self-assessments of intercultural pedagogy, climate surveys and regular reporting of inclusion measures to academic councils. This might be a concern for faculty training as well, because it requires classes in culturally responsive teaching, semester-based microcredential programs, or mentoring programs for trained faculty mentoring novice teachers. These practices reflect the best practices used by international institutions in higher education systems that integrate diversity governance fully into the institution.

Considering the contrast between humanities and science faculty, interdisciplinary collaboration also has positive implications. Shared curriculum-design projects at undergraduate colleges and the combined work of teaching groups, seminars, and curriculum-design projects can bridge epistemic divides for science teachers, helping to integrate sociocultural issues and the humanities faculty, allowing for structure-oriented practices applied in STEM fields. Such collaboration can help to create a more comprehensive institutional capacity for diversity competence.

Finally, the implications highlight a structural barrier in Kuwaiti higher education: diversity governance mechanisms still remain fragmentary and informal. Addressing these gaps through more formalized governance structures would help institutions meet international accreditation requirements, and align performance and planning documents with global developments. This, in turn, would promote sustained institutional accountability and embed diversity within educational quality measurement frameworks.

## **6. Conclusion**

While the faculties identified the role of higher education institutions in Kuwait in encouraging cultural diversity, this study also examined how higher education in Kuwait could further initiatives. A moderate institutional role, a well-informed ethical approach, and adequate instructional support are accompanied by weaker pedagogical implementation. This study underlines the nature of content integration and the construction of knowledge in Banks' five dimensions and the fact that content integration and knowledge-building elements are relatively well-integrated within national priorities of tolerance and global awareness. In contrast, prejudice reduction and equitable pedagogy, empowerment, and school culture are limited due to a lack of learning about inclusive teaching and wider sociocultural constraints within the classroom.

In addition, the study confirms that Banks' model can be applied effectively in a Gulf context, showing how the conceptual dimensions are mutually transcendent in cultural settings, although its definition is influenced by local governance tradition and institutional norms. This research also provides a validated measuring tool that transforms multicultural theory into quantifiable domains, thereby providing a valuable reference instrument for future evaluation of diversity in higher education.

Differences between humanities and sciences highlight the relevance of epistemic cultures in shaping faculty engagement with diversity, adding an analytical contribution to literature in Arab and comparative contexts. Overall, Kuwaiti higher education institutions exhibit strong ethical intentions toward inclusion, yet the implementation remains informal, uneven, and insufficiently measured. Future research should incorporate larger and more diverse samples, include student perspectives, and use longitudinal or mixed-method designs to capture institutional changes over time. Comparative Gulf studies may further illuminate how national policies and sociocultural environments shape diversity governance in higher education.

## **7. Recommendations and Limitations**

Moral principles can inform a renewed educational approach when systematically integrated into institutional policies and teaching practices. The first recommendation is the development and implementation of a professional development module compulsory for all university staff, covering the topic of intercultural pedagogy, giving the teachers the necessary tools to incorporate diversity into the planning of the courses, assessment, and interaction with students.

The second recommendation is the establishment of a university-wide diversity dashboard by administrations, which would have as its main indicators the training rates of the teaching staff, the percentage of international speakers, and the results of the students' climate surveys, among others, that are quantifiable. This would address the most critical obstacle identified in the study, which is the absence of effective measurement mechanisms, to align Kuwaiti higher education with international best practices in evidence-based diversity governance.

Moreover, each institution should create a diversity and inclusion council to oversee policy execution, supported by interdisciplinary collaboration between humanities and science faculties through joint seminars and cultural exchange programs that foster mutual understanding and shared responsibility for inclusion. The inclusion of diversity in the national accreditation systems would not only bolster the reforms but would also sustain accountability. While this research is highly empirical and theoretically valuable, there are some limitations. The limited convenience sample ( $N = 97$ ) impedes generalization; self-reported data may be misleading; and cross-sectional design complicates longitudinal interpretation. Future research should be based on larger and randomly selected samples, considering student perspectives, and utilizing longitudinal or mixed methods approaches in observing the institutional culture and faculty attitudes.

Comparative research among Gulf countries will also help better understanding of national policies and sociocultural factors that contribute to the management of diversity. Additionally, qualitative, discipline specific case studies can provide insights into the mechanisms that the different epistemic orientations impact faculty engagement with diversity. However, the overall depiction is of a changing Kuwaiti education that is ethically inclusive and multicultural, but

limited and informal. There are no doubts about the ethical and curricular commitments to diversity but the implementation is still limited and unmeasured.

By employing Banks' framework in the Gulf context, this study links the theory of multicultural education with the practice of Arab higher education, emphasizing that the effective management of diversity entails both cultural sensitivity and structural rigor. Reforms such as the training of instructors in intercultural pedagogy, the setting up of a diversity dashboard, and interdisciplinary cooperation would allow the Kuwaiti universities to move from value-based inclusion to strategic, evidence-based, multicultural education.

## 8. Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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