

University and its Prevalence Academic Culture

Salam Priyanka Devi^{1*}

ABSTRACT

The academic environment of a university is heavily influenced by its culture. The involvement and integration of academic culture play a significant role in the development of students. Universities often set high expectations for the academic community, and higher education has multiple roles in the context of academic and social advancement. The nature of higher education is both competitive and collaborative, as it aims to advance knowledge and contribute to the field. To maximize the most of the academic experience, teachers and students must commit to the academic goal and incorporate it into institutional culture. This paper focuses on the cultural characteristics that reflect university settings.

Keywords: *Culture, Academic Community, Lifestyle, University*

The benefit of education is not restricted to a specific class or section of groups; it spreads to all sections of classes and communities. Over the past few decades, there has been a massification of enrolment in higher education; many colleges and universities have emerged under the private or public sector (Altbach, 2011; Beteille, 2008). This massification of enrollment is motivated by an ever-growing segment of the student population and belief in better opportunities and future earnings. To have a university degree is generally perceived as a promise of employment in a superior sector than non-manual occupations. However, many educational institutions have not maintained academic standards in curricula, teacher-student ratio, and resources.

The university is not an "ivory tower," but instead, it deals with the needs of society. The academic community should make time for reflection and criticism in consideration of culture, society, and its values. Higher education expectations are high, but the system has offered some grants to its communities, helps them fulfill their academic goals, academic freedom (often elusive), and maintain decent academic lifestyles. For students who enroll in college, the system provides library access, participate in classroom discussions, and opportunities to participate in extracurricular activities such as academic events (seminars, webinars, workshops, and conferences), hostel life, and the chance to make friends with other academic colleagues to build a network of their future endeavors.

The university is a place of creation and distribution of knowledge (Altbach, 2011; Raina, 2011). In this context, the students and faculty members have the responsibility to maintain professionalism and refrain from personal biases. Focusing on the university's goals and

¹Independent Researcher

*Corresponding Author

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academic ethos is crucial for its academic community. To succeed in academics, learners must adapt to the academic culture and familiarize themselves with the academic track or rules of the game. Knowing the academic track can guide learners in overcoming the challenges that may arise along the way.

Academic Lifestyles

The individuals integrating with institutional cultures have positive experiences and maximize academic outcomes. For instance, students who isolate themselves in the academic setting are often judged negatively and tend to drop out. It might be because human beings do not live in a socio-cultural vacuum, others play a significant role in our lives. Students who actively participate in classroom discussions are perceived as competent learners. Socio-cultural identity greatly influences learning experiences, and adapting to academic culture creates unique behavioral profiles for each student. In addition, students' social belonging acts as active or passive facilitators of making friends on campus. The system of higher education has high academic demands and expectations from students. Attending scientific conferences and gaining exposure to academic events is an opportunity to add skills and update knowledge for students and teachers. Also, those events enhance students' understanding and boost their confidence. Attending such an event also provides an opportunity to build a better network with colleagues from within the discipline or related area. The most appropriate behavior for learners is to take part in academic engagement.

The culture of education or mainstream institutions mainly endorses the culture of middle-class independence norms (Stephens, Fryberg, Markus, Johnson, & Covarrubias, 2012). Students whose culture is marked differently from the accepted norms are categorized as deficient and suffer academically (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Moreover, in this competitive environment, students try to show they are efficient and know the concepts. Mastering the field in a subject area is not an easy task. But often, students show confidence with the limited knowledge they possess. In addition, the university expects its academic community to explore diverse cultures, meet people from different parts of the world, and interact with colleagues who work on similar themes. University is a platform where intellectual communities interact and exchange knowledge, whether its community represents students and teachers from different academic and cultural backgrounds. Being part of such a community has immensely benefitted a person's understanding and building networks. It is mainly because of the need to belong, stimulate learning, goal-directed activity, and care about each other welfare (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Academic and social gathering of its community provides chances to interact with the best academics in the world, which helps learners to grow personally and professionally.

Furthermore, institutions are not only limited to offering academic concepts or intellectual tasks; instead, they give a chance to explore vibrant and diverse cultures. It helps students to experience a whole new world. Maximizing the educational experiences, students do not have to shy away from academic dialogue. Taking up opportunities to socialize and gaining exposure to academics with groups of students from different academic, social, and cultural backgrounds implies learners help each other to enhance their knowledge and skills. Students remember that college is the time to explore new things and is filled with unparalleled experiences. However, there is a need to maintain a balance between academic and social life. Inadequate balance has affected students' lives drastically. Sometimes, students tend to drop out and take extreme steps. Students' main goal is to develop the habit of curiosity to learn and contribute to the field.

Institutional Perception of a Learner

To attend higher education is a luxury and dream for many people. Those who attain higher education are the creamy layer of society. The system expects its creamy layer to understand and reflect the needs of society. Sometimes, its expectations are too high, and it is hard to achieve within the given time frame. In addition, academic communities are encouraged to develop their thinking and integrate into scientific knowledge. Learn to take the other points of view and understand different kinds of means around the corner of society. Also, a learner has to learn how to optimize learning while articulating what one has already learned and to build a reliable network in the field.

In higher education, rote learning is not considered sound learning. Students are expected to develop analytical and critical thinking skills, adopt a learning mindset, and be willing to contribute to the field. Many institutions encourage their academic community to publish their research in influential top-ranking journals to increase their reputation, promote scientific communication, and ensure the reliability of their work. Those who do not endorse reflective, analytic, and creative thinking may face difficulty, even if they had high grades earlier in their academic journey, as they might not be able to relate and reflect on the acquired knowledge. In addition, those who are not fluent or English is not their first language face language incompetence (Altbach, 2011). In an academic setting, knowledge is disseminated globally through the medium of English. Those who speak other languages feel alienated, leading to lower motivation and diminished self-efficacy, causing low academic achievement (Mishra, 2017).

To maximize academic experience, learners require developing skills in reading, writing, appropriate interaction, communication, and presentation of their works. Many students have held such an attitude that they know everything, but those attitudes do not take it far. What they did was end up neglecting their lack of knowledge. They believe they are fine the way it is and do not want to make the required effort. Moreover, the environment of higher education is very complex. It encourages its academic community to be competitive and collaborative to perform their teaching, learning, and research responsibilities at the highest levels (Altbach, 2011). The academic community needs to be committed to advancing knowledge while considering the cultural and social context. The university is not an "ivory tower" representing just a few sections of groups. Instead, its functionality is firmly linked with society. Some social and cultural practices grant privileges to specific groups in society (Rao, 2019), leading to unequal power relations. Therefore, the system must recognize society's exclusionary nature and implement appropriate remedial policies (Thorat, 2006). To better understand society's needs, students and teachers' communities explore and appreciate cultural differences.

The Prevalence of University

Universities are international institutions because of their openness and acceptance of students and faculty from different nations (Altbach, 2011). Knowledge becomes borderless, and the relentless pursuit of scientific knowledge is of central importance. In this modern democratic age, higher education is an engine of social mobility, serving the knowledge economy and participating in international knowledge networks. The university expects the academic community to engage in the research culture, and the spirit of learning is illuminated through diversity. A nation cannot develop or economically sustain itself while the large population remains uneducated and underdeveloped. Thus, the role of social scientists is crucial and fails to reflect social conditions have gruesome consequences.

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In a university context, students are a primary component of its setting. A residential campus has specific benefits for its learners because the academic environment is markedly distinct from the home setting. In the academic environment, students are surrounded by other colleagues. They get more chances to have academic dialogue, better interact with academic peers, and reflect on each other viewpoints, whether in formal or informal settings. But, for many students, college is the first time they are out of their region or community. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds tend to be first-generation college students whose parents have little education and hold low-status occupations (Rao, 2002). In addition, minority students suffer the most due to encountering cultural discontinuity in the academic setting (Ogbu, 1982). Thus, in the context of accessing higher education, more scholarships are needed to endorse students from different social strata (Chattopadhyay, 2007). Learning outcomes are significantly affected by the contextual factor (Mishra, 2017).

Furthermore, student-faculty interaction positively affects student outcomes, intellectual growth, and educational attainment (Kim & Sax, 2009; Pascarella, Pierson, Woliak, & Terenzini, 2004). However, student-faculty interaction may differ by students belonging to social groups such as race and gender. Members of the disadvantaged section of society have less participation and less contributed to higher education due to sociohistorical exclusion. When they enroll in colleges, they encounter a large chunk of intellectual material and diverse socialites. It is difficult for them to fulfill academic demands and, at the same time, to integrate with the social fabric of the institution. Student success or failure in the academic system is contributed by the student's ability, effort, family socioeconomic condition, and cultural capital (Beteille, 2008; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Sinha & Mishra, 2015). Thus, educators and policymakers require addressing the cultural perspective accounts to allow access and maintain quality standards in higher education.

CONCLUSION

Higher education expectations are high, and its academic community reflects society's need to consider its cultural values. Competition and collaboration with colleagues are the appropriate role of the learners to enhance, share, and advance knowledge. However, the learning outcome can be affected by socio-contextual factors. Sociocultural factors play a pivotal role in higher learning, and the community needs to be actively engaged in academic settings. To maximize the academic experience, learners require an awareness of the academic track, improve their communication skills and language competency, and adapt to the university culture. Therefore, academic institutions and policymakers need to address the sociocultural problem to enhance the learning and welfare of society. Paying attention to the diverse society and acknowledging cultural differences can initiate appropriate policies to reduce the academic and social gap.

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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