

**CULTURAL PARADIGM SHIFT IN TEACHING****Tamta Mshvidobadze**

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**Abstract.** This paper aims to focus on the cultural paradigm and its shift over the years in learner-centered classrooms. In contemporary classrooms, in times of globalization, 21st-century skills require a lot of alterations in the instructional process. In the learning process, the educators have to shift the materials and content according to the learner's culture. For teachers worldwide, the task of adapting and customizing resources to students' requirements, expectations, culture, and interests is sometimes regarded as overwhelming. Novice teachers find it extremely difficult to make some adaptations and adjust the content to culture. The purpose of this research was to identify if teachers have to shift the learning process due to the cultural background of the students and to what extent. To achieve desired learning results, the teachers not only change the teaching materials but take into consideration the cultural background of each individual in the classroom. The article underlines the significance of changing learning materials and modifying resources to learners' cultural paradigms. The questionnaire was used to collect data from four universities in Georgia and various universities abroad. The study found that teachers needed to change the materials as when resources are created with students' culture in mind, the learning process is greatly impacted.

**Keywords:** cultural paradigm, adapting materials, globalization, shift in teaching.

**Introduction**

Learner autonomy, motivation, multiculturalism, and learner-centered education are among the key ideas guiding recent advancements in modern education. The shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach, which has its origins in the instruction of foreign languages, is intimately associated with the endeavor to enhance motivation in the classroom. At the moment, it is acknowledged that learner autonomy and multicultural education may be used to improve overall student motivation. These concepts are now widely accepted in educational philosophy. The fact that diversity is included in scientific humanities programs and international academic exchanges highlights its importance on a global scale.

Due to globalization, educators and students can now relocate and work in many different settings and nations. In several nations around the world, bilingual and multicultural education is highly successful, while in others, it appears to be dubious.

Education is an essential component of a society's overall strategy for preparing the next generation of capable and productive citizens, and it is inextricably linked to national culture. Education is the process of supporting learning, or the development of information, skills, attitudes, beliefs, and habits. Therefore, education is not just about imparting information; it is also closely related to human culture and values in many circumstances. The Latin word "*educare*," which means "to lead out or bring forth," is where the word "education" originates. This implies that structured inquiry is a key component of education, bringing forth the learner's knowledge, comprehension, and potential. Undoubtedly, at that time, the teaching methodology evolved. Education has a lot of dimensions, two of them having the most importance: 1. Teachers and learners, whose success is determined by their interactions, including cultural norms. 2. Knowledge, skills, and teaching/ learning techniques reflected in cultural attitudes, beliefs, and habits.

First and foremost, education is the transfer of knowledge, concepts, and attitudes, along with specialized training in many fields. It is clear that education, as a system, propagates cultural ideas by nature and ought to be understood as an essential part of national culture, both shaped by and contributing to the particular national cultural paradigm. Education has taken place in both formal and informal contexts throughout history. It is undeniable that every European nation has some sort of state-regulated institutional framework, even considering the current focus on informal education, which encompasses the lifelong learning concept.

It should be mentioned that with globalization, national education systems began to diverge. However, they all share characteristics such as a learner-centered approach and various forms of assessment.

In almost every community, the teacher-student relationship embodies the dynamics between teachers and students in various national education systems, and the results show a wide range of interactions, from intimate friendships to circumstances in which the teacher has total control over the student and the student still shows unwavering respect for the teacher.

Since the culture of the institution reflects the characteristics of the larger cultural environment, I am certain that the diversity in these variations arises from the underlying cultural paradigm that governs the operation of the educational system. The social roles that instructors and students play, changes in traditionally established patterns of teacher-student interaction, and variances in society's expectations for student learning are the main reasons causing these inequalities. National educational systems face challenges from universalist concepts that strive to unify educational practices and methods globally in the context of continuing globalization.

These systems need to face and overcome these obstacles, which calls for a change in the way that culture currently thinks. Above all, this change needs to happen in the classroom, and educators need to modify their methods to fit each student. Teachers all over the world need to alter teaching process/materials because of cultural differences in the classroom. Not only cultural habits should be taken into consideration but materials while teaching lessons nowadays.

This is crucial for the students and the teachers to know what kind of changes they need to undergo to plan and deliver successful lessons with the cultural differences in the classroom. To make alterations an educator needs to focus on two major categories: 1. Cultural Paradigm and 2. Cultural Paradigm Shift.

### 1. Cultural Paradigm

Similar to the individual paradigm, a culture is a set of customs that shape how people behave within a certain community. Because they fit with established norms and traditions, members of the group follow certain anticipated behaviors. A nation has its own culture. Every organization has a distinct culture. In a similar vein, those who belong to an institution—a school or university—have a culture that essentially embodies a cultural paradigm. According to Hofstede (2009, p. 24), culture is “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from another.” Corporate conduct is very important when it comes to culture in schools and universities. In any given environment, six cultural characteristics are significant: individualism, power distance, avoiding ambiguity, masculinity, time orientation, and indulgence.

*Individualism* is the study of how people view themselves; in an individualistic society, the emphasis is on "I," whereas in collectivist civilizations it is on "we." People are expected to put themselves and their immediate families first in an individualist society. On the other hand, those who belong to "in-groups" at schools or universities are referred to as such in a collectivist society (Minor, 2019).

*Power distance* -The degree to which a society accepts innate social inequality is reflected in power distance. Cultures are classified as low power distance, where centralization and social hierarchies are minimized, or high power distance when these components are uncontested. Unquestioning

centralization and hierarchy are expected in high power distance civilizations. On the other hand, societies with low power distance regard hierarchical systems as normal. The chosen leader offers direction, but to get approval and respect for their choices, they must continually demonstrate their abilities. In this instance, the power distant age is revered and seen as a knowledgeable individual.

*Uncertainty avoidance* - The way a society responds to the future's inherent unpredictability, which creates ambiguity and causes worry, is known as uncertainty avoidance. Strict norms of behavior and belief are common in societies with high levels of uncertainty avoidance. These societies show an emotional attachment to norms, despite their seeming inefficiency. People value time highly and are therefore motivated to work hard and keep busy. Accuracy and timeliness are expected, and security serves as the cornerstone of personal drive. On the other hand, societies that have low levels of uncertainty avoidance have a more relaxed stance and value experience over theory.

*Masculinity* is the motivation behind people's behavior, which might be the desire to succeed (common in cultures associated with males) or the enjoyment of the activity itself, regardless of the result (usual in cultures associated with women). High masculinity alludes to a culture that values achievement and competitiveness, defines success in terms of winners, and is typified by status symbols like expensive automobiles, luxurious homes, and fashionable clothes. People in these cultures aspire to a high level of living and are expected to publicly display their accomplishments, which frequently calls for lengthy workdays and a steadfast commitment to one's job. On the other hand, high femininity denotes a culture where care for others and one's own well-being are valued above all else. The focus switches from the standard of living to life quality, which is seen as the most important measure of society's achievement.

*Time Orientation* - The concept of Time Orientation concerns the way a society strikes a balance between its ties to the past and its commitments to the present and future. A short-time perspective is indicative of pragmatic societies that encourage effort and frugal living as forward-thinking measures. These cultures exhibit a high propensity towards saving and investment, and they are quick to modify customs to fit shifting circumstances. Conversely, a long-term perspective characterizes normative cultures, which place a high value on upholding long-standing customs and traditions and are suspicious of social change.

*Indulgence* - The degree to which people attempt to control their urges and wants is referred to as indulgence. Indulgence cultures emphasize life happiness and lay a strong emphasis on leisure time, demonstrating a more permissive satisfaction of basic human desires. Restrained nations, on the other hand, tend to be cynical and pessimistic and regulate the satisfaction of wants (Linsin, 2016).

First, a teacher working in a different cultural environment or working with students from various cultural backgrounds should identify the cultural type she needs to focus on and then start making alterations accordingly.

A cultural paradigm shift refers to a significant and fundamental change in the prevailing attitudes, norms, values, and ways of thinking in a community or cultural context. This change represents a shift away from the cultural norms that are in place and towards new concepts, perspectives, and ways of thinking. These changes can be caused by a variety of things, including advancements in technology, social movements, economic changes, or changes in political beliefs. As a result, these shifts typically result in adjustments to institutions, social structures, and behavior, which in turn shape how people perceive and interact with their environment.

A shift in the cultural paradigm would mean a break from the status quo in education and a move towards new concepts, viewpoints, and methods of instruction. Modifications to curriculum, improvements in teaching techniques, shifting social views about education, and changes to educational legislation might all be contributing factors. As a result, this shift may result in modifications to instructional methods, the incorporation of cutting-edge technology, and a general reassessment of the objectives and results of education.

In many nations, the migration of instructors and students brought about by globalization required a change in cultural paradigms. To prevent culture shock, teachers had to modify curricula and make every lesson more relevant to the students' diverse backgrounds.

## 2. Cultural Paradigm Shift in Teaching

The cultural paradigm in teaching is connected to the minor or fundamental alterations the teachers have to conduct to integrate the cultural aspects and learners in the environment. A Paradigm shift, in general, means altering models of events and assumptions, but a cultural paradigm shift in teaching includes some key aspects: cultural awareness and sensitivity; inclusive curriculum and materials; cultural competence development; adaptation of teaching methods; fostering inclusive classrooms; customization of assessments; and community engagement.

Cultural awareness and sensitivity in Teaching – Teachers are increasingly conscious of the many cultural origins of their learners. They aim to comprehend and cherish the cultural distinctions, values, and beliefs that impact students' educational experiences (Hammond, 2014).

Inclusive Curriculum and Materials- There is a movement in the direction of developing curricula that represent many cultural viewpoints. Making the instructional content more accessible and relevant to a wider range of learners, may entail adding literature, history, and examples from diverse cultures, and changing all teaching materials to involve participants from different cultures (Minor, 2019).

Cultural Competence Development- Teachers strive to become more culturally competent so they can connect with learners from diverse backgrounds effectively. This might entail continuing education, training, or professional development (Paris et. al., 2017).

Adaptation of Teaching Methods- To suit the various learning preferences that are common in many ethnic groups, teachers might modify their pedagogical approaches. This might entail using a range of teaching techniques that connect with learners from different cultural backgrounds (Doyle & Zakrajsek, 2019).

Fostering Inclusive Classrooms- Regardless of their cultural background, learners should feel appreciated and respected in an inclusive and inviting classroom setting. This might entail encouraging students to understand one another and to have candid conversations about cultural differences (Salend, 2019).

Customization of Assessments - Cultural sensitivity may be incorporated into assessments and evaluations by acknowledging that various cultural groups may have distinctive methods of exhibiting knowledge and abilities. This guarantees a just and impartial assessment procedure (Angelo & Cross, 2018).

Community Engagement - Teachers who are aware of how community beliefs and customs affect students' learning may actively incorporate the community into the educational process. Working together with parents and community members can yield insightful information and helpful connections (Dostilio, 2019).

Moving away from a one-size-fits-all approach to education and towards a more inclusive and culturally responsive one that acknowledges and celebrates the variety of learners in the classroom is essentially what is meant by a cultural paradigm shift in teaching.

## Methods

The research method includes:

- Literature review and analysis of the topics provided in the research.
- The questionnaire was filled out by teachers abroad and in four universities in Georgia.
- The questionnaire consists of a Likert Scale format in most questions; however, these questionnaires have a qualitative component as the surveys have some open-ended questions we well

## Results and Discussion

The questionnaire was created to check if teachers needed to make some alterations in relation to cultural paradigms in their teaching setting (university).

Prior to distributing the questionnaire to participants, it underwent a pilot test with 10 English language teachers. The teachers completed it twice, with a 5-minute break in between. Since their

responses were identical, the researcher did not calculate Cronbach's Alpha, considering the questionnaire reliable. To ensure content validity, teachers provided feedback on the questions, and one question was modified based on their remarks. The questionnaire, conducted via Google Forms, was shared with various teachers through email and social media groups. Participants maintained anonymity by not providing their names or emails. Data collection occurred after a month, with a total of 161 participants responding to 10 questions. The questions encompassed demographic data (teaching subject, nationality, gender, age, teaching experience, location) and information related to culture and classroom adaptations.

The questionnaire aimed to investigate whether teachers should prioritize cultural paradigms and adjust materials based on students' cultural backgrounds. Demographic data (questions 1-5) revealed interesting insights about the 161 participants. Among them, 137 were female, 24 were male, and all were teachers. A majority (105 participants) were from Georgia, while others were from various countries.

Ages ranged from 27 to 57, with 75% of participants having more than 10 years of English teaching experience (minimum: 3 years). In terms of teaching settings, 56.8% taught at schools (state or private), 18.9% at universities (state or private), and 24.3% at language centers.

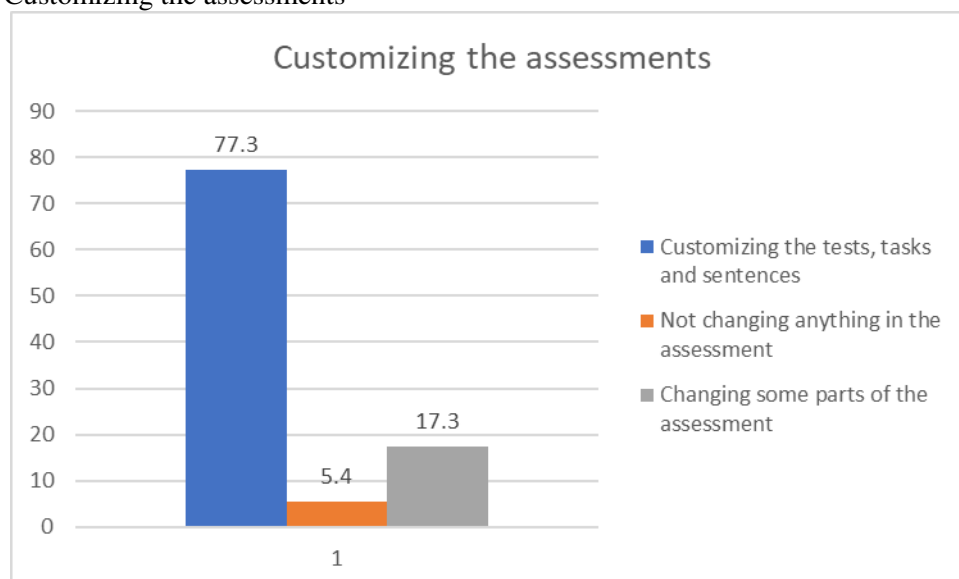
Question 6: 89.3 % of participants wrote that they have received no prior information related to the specifics of students' different cultures, values, habits, and so on. The teacher had to seek the information using different websites and needed to do a needs analysis to understand the learners more. The remaining 10.7 % of participants stated that they had cultural awareness to some extent.

Question 7: While 25.7% of participants said they use authentic materials, looking for topics and texts related to students' cultures, 57.2% of participants said they mostly use inauthentic materials and coursebooks, and they have to adapt the topics and content according to the students in the classroom to adjust the content to their culture more. It should be noted that 10.6% of students utilize just one coursebook with little to no modification. The remainder, 6.5 %, was divided among a variety of real items, such as novels, films, music, posters, craft projects, or fake books. It was discovered that the participants adjusted the content to the cultural background of the learners and used more inauthentic resources.

Question 8: To add interest to the lessons of the participants, 72 said they redesign the materials for every lesson, and 69 said they do it sometimes when they feel a paradigm change in the materials is necessary. It is interesting to notice that 20 respondents said they never designed or adapted the coursebook. This question demonstrated how many teachers had to create and modify their lessons in light of cultural differences that arose in the classroom.

Question 9: 77.3 % of participants wrote that they customize the assessments [quiz, mid-term, final exams] and adapt some tasks and sentences according to different cultures, 17.3% change only the words but not tasks and sentences, 5.4% of participants mentioned that they do not customize the assessments (See Figure 1).

Figure 1. Customizing the assessments



Question 10: The last question was an open question connected to changing anything in the teaching methods because of the cultural paradigm. The teachers stated that they altered some methods and used more pair work/ group work or even project work to involve the learners more and enable the students to share and micro-teach. Participants stated that textbook materials should be modified. Some teachers mentioned that they had to alter language and content and taboo topics. The results showed that a cultural paradigm shift is needed in the classroom, especially in terms of materials used in lessons.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the study showed that the participants mainly had to shift the lesson aspects because of the cultural paradigm, in particular, they needed to modify the coursebook because of content as the textbooks are not adjusted to one specific culture and might use the taboo topics. Moreover, the teachers had to modify or design the materials. Overall, the results showed that the teachers needed to alter the materials due to cultural paradigm differences.

The findings of this study suggested the conclusion that the teachers needed to shift the lesson content, and materials because of cultural paradigms. It can be claimed that if the teachers are retrained in how to adjust the materials according to different cultures it might make the teaching and learning process more effective, and it will enhance the learning process more.

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