

## *Curriculum Pattern in the Higher Education of Iran Using an Intercultural Approach*

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to design the curriculum pattern for the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach with qualitative design and the Grounded Theory (GT) method. To study the characteristics of the curriculum with an intercultural approach, after conducting structured interview with 6 experts in the field of curriculum studies and higher education management, the main categories as well as subcategories of the process were extracted during the coding procedure, and as the research results revealed, the categories identified in the paradigm model with axial phenomenon included requirements (2 dimensions, 1 spectrum), objectives (2 dimensions, 1 spectrum), content attributes (2 dimensions, 2 spectrum), teaching – learning methods (1 dimension, 1 spectrum), teacher’s characteristics (2 dimension, 2 spectrums), assessment (1 dimension, 1 spectrum), causal conditions (dimensions of internal and external factors in the effective–neutral spectrum), contextual conditions (extra-organizational, intra organizational and trans organizational dimensions in broad–limited spectrum), intermediary conditions (dimensions of internal and external factors in the effective – neutral spectrum), strategies (dimension of intercultural paradigm in the stable–unstable spectrum) and consequences (comprehensive development dimension in the advanced–non advanced spectrum) which displayed the components of curriculum pattern in the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach. In the end, the final model was presented to validate the GT through focus group method.

**Key Words:** Pattern, Higher Education, Curriculum, Intercultural.

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### *Introduction*

Globalization process is a major phenomenon that has posed a challenge in higher education curriculum. According to UNESCO, globalization has made the world smaller and has brought together a wide range of different cultures. In fact, cultural diversity and intercultural communication are among the realities of the modern world, and understanding global perspectives and acquiring intercultural as well as global citizenship competencies can be regarded as decent responses to the requirements of today's world characterized by intertwined phenomena, diversity and rapid change. Interculturalization of Curriculum (IOC) in higher education is a process that has been considered by higher education experts and the world's leading universities to be a solution and a rational response to the challenges posed by globalization

As Sadeghi (2012) maintains, curriculum is a cultural-political document in which a country and region's cultural and ecological capacities must be taken into account. In the meantime, Iran as a country with a diverse range of cultures, inevitably needs to develop curricula that is responsive to its audiences in an intercultural context. Since universities are the primary organizations producing, disseminating and facilitating the use of knowledge, they play a major role in the quality of teaching and learning processes, providing opportunities to access knowledge, and the continuous

learning to relate the acquired knowledge to social requirements.

Ferasatkhah (2018) maintains that Iran, as a transitioning society, has been undergoing structural changes in the last few decades; developments that have resulted in the participation of new social groups, classes and ethnic and gender identities in higher education. These social and cultural developments, along with the impacts of globalization, media and information technology, have led to the act of consumption of science in Iran, and certain global knowledge narratives are being created according to the cultural and contextual requirements of Iran. In fact, world knowledge manifestations do not merely get transmitted through books, magazines and sites unilaterally, but Iranian users and consumers display their consumption behavior, thereby combining their hidden cultural knowledge with these forms of universal knowledge. This is a subject for cultural studies of science in Iran and a very important research program which, if followed by cultural studies in Iran, may yield significant findings. In fact, a society with this "Republic of Science" is in need of a much more qualitative description of the life of science in Iran from the perspective of cultural studies.

The UNESCO World Report, citing Sadeghi (2012) entitled *Investing in Cultural Diversity and Intercultural Dialogue*, clearly states how important the acquisition of cultural literacy is in the creative understanding of

cultural diversity. Cultural literacy has become the lifeblood of today's world, a fundamental resource for controlling the many places where education can take place (from family and tradition to new and old media to groups and activities). Unofficial) as well as an essential tool for overcoming the illiteracy war.

Mercer and Carter (2018) believe that an intercultural curriculum is a well-studied program that, with the conscious entry of diverse cultural content found in a safe learning environment, fosters shaky and effective learning. Learning experience includes: describing, comparing, understanding the text, and critically analyzing cultural content. It also includes reflection on one's own culture and other cultures, which in turn helps to respond to culture, shape identity, and empower.

From a psychological point of view (2016), just as our society continues to be diverse, the curriculum must change direction to reflect new differences. Intercultural communication is undoubtedly growing among developed and developing countries. Also, such social interactions often occur at the elite level.

It seems that with the systematic study of culture by curriculum specialists, the position of the intercultural curriculum requires a more prominent view in Iran. The intercultural curriculum is interested in how curriculum components are influenced by culture and how higher education

recognizes and integrates the main variables of culture into its curriculum design system. The content of curricula should always be reviewed and given the needs of society and the latest scientific achievements around the world provide opportunities for the growth and flourishing of talents and the development of attitudes and values. The novelty and relevance of the topic and the adaptation of the program to the training time are the most important points that should be considered in the content and provide a basis for continuous training. Also, the content should pay full attention to the preservation and dissemination of different cultures and their value system, and at the same time provide a basis for intercultural communication. The framework model of most research studies in curriculum in higher education in Iran is derived from Western research and models. However, sampling and analysis have been done in Iran. Interculturalization of curriculum in Iran can identify and intercultural personality, Create flexibility and growth. Something that seems to have been overlooked in higher education. No culture in the field of education should pursue a harmful policy of isolationism. Curriculum content should be explored in search of cultural indicators to gain a more complete understanding of each culture and thus increase the possibility of an intercultural connection. Indeed, how the intercultural curriculum is established and to what extent this

implies a change in the perspective of higher education in Iran. The process of this research project inevitably causes the perspective of curriculum study experts not only to move towards a full understanding of cultural differences, but also to pay attention to the fact that, unlike cultural differences, human beings in Different cultures are more similar than differences.

Lack of adequate intercultural discussions in the field of curriculum studies of Iran encouraged the researcher to address this approach as she believes that no country can offer its curriculum as a global model. In addition to issues such as credit and the need for efficiency and professionalism. Iranian universities are facing challenges such as quality control. Educational justice, international cooperation, and increasing demand for education. In the face of these challenges, Iran's higher education system has the tools, one of which is curricula. Teaching, researching and offering specialized services as the main mission of the university is largely to the dynamics of curricula and the ability to use a multicultural environment and intercultural interaction. Curriculum specialists interested in culture should move from theories of universal principles to conceptualizations across cultures, and the purpose of this qualitative study was to design a curriculum pattern for the PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach based on

GT. Results of the IOC project would culminate in the application of the universal principles of teaching-learning that apply to the different cultures of Iran, and can transform the introverted and self-contained university into an extroverted and responsive world.

### *Research Purpose and Questions*

The general purpose of the study was to design a curriculum for the PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach based on GT. Meanwhile, the minor objectives involved the investigation of the curriculum pattern features, including: requirements, objectives, content attributes, teaching-learning methods, teacher's characteristics, assessment and analysis of causal conditions, intermediary conditions, contextual conditions, strategies and consequences, and finally validation of the designed pattern of the PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach. In order to answer the main research question (i.e. How is a PhD curriculum in the field of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran designed using an intercultural approach based on GT?), the researcher answers three minor questions: What are the requirements of the curriculum with an intercultural approach? And what are the elements of the curriculum with an intercultural approach (objectives, content attributes, teaching-learning methods, teacher's characteristics, assessment)? And examines the

status of the elements of the paradigmatic pattern. including (axial phenomena, causal conditions, contextual conditions, intermediate conditions, strategies and consequences) with an intercultural approach?

### *The Methodology*

Using qualitative design and GT method, the target population of the study was selected from experts in the field of curriculum studies and higher education management through intentional (non-probability) targeted sampling of snowball or chain type. The research tool was interview whose content validity was evaluated by three experts in this field. After in-depth interviews with six experts in the field based on the 2008 version of Strauss, open, central, and selective coding was performed. After the first interview, the researcher extracted the categories from the 2008 Strauss version of the coding process. This was done for other interviewees as well, and after conducting the sixth interview and coding, the researcher reached the theoretical saturation of the categories and the interviews ended. It should be noted that after implementing each interview, the categories extracted from the interview process were sent again to all interviewees, and the matching of the categories was confirmed by them based on the concepts of the interview. Having reached theoretical saturation, the Open Coding (OC), Axial Coding (AC) and Selective Coding (SC) were performed, and the categories, subcategories,

dimensions, and the spectrums were extracted.

Ferasatkhah (2020) acknowledges that SC, as defined by Strauss & corbin is the same as “theory emergence” referred to by Glaser. SC is not an isolated mechanical final step; rather, it emerges during OC and AC. In fact, the GT researcher, while gradually conceptualizing, categorizing, and especially forming clusters and discovering the phenomenon, slowly grasps the joints of a theory, and through accumulative and transformative data collection, represents the relationship between these joints, and when it reaches the level of theoretizing, data saturation and the required theoretical creativity lead to the development of a theory of the situation under investigation by the researcher. This is, according to Strauss and corbin, the fulfillment of a paradigmatic pattern, and as Glaser declares, a theory emerges from the heart of data and abstract meanings of a human and social situation.

As for the purpose of this study, a paradigmatic pattern including axial phenomena, causal conditions, contextual conditions, intermediate conditions, strategies and consequences was developed. Furthermore, the main components of curriculum requirements and elements, including goals, content attributes, teaching-learning methods, teacher’s characteristics and assessment were identified, and following the focus group, pattern of the PhD in the higher education of Iran was designed using an intercultural approach.

**Findings**

Following the integration of identified categories, of the 299 concepts in each of the intercultural curriculum elements and the common features found between the categories, the repeated items were eliminated, and the final re-categorization yielded 67 categories, including 19

dimensions and 14 spectrums related to the requirements, elements, causal, contextual, and intermediary conditions, strategies and consequences. Tables 1 and 2 demonstrate the PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach.

**Table 1. Dimensions and spectrums related to the axial phenomenon categories**

Categories	Subcategories	Dimensions	Spectrums
Requirements	Attention to intercultural competence in the global community	Software	Application-Non-application
	Emphasis on understanding intercultural theory		
	Increased focus on internationalization in higher education		
	Promotion of intercultural awareness in higher education centers		
	Decentralization in the development of intercultural curricula		
	Creation of an index of equal distribution of cultural power within the intercultural curriculum		
	Attention to the interdisciplinarity of the curriculum and the priority of the interculturalization of the discipline itself		
	Fractal requirements of the intercultural design		
	The necessity of the teacher's intercultural competence		
	The need for intercultural content		
Objectives	Attention to multicultural hardware	Hardware	
	Alignment of the objectives of the intercultural curriculum with internationalized curriculum	General objectives	Accessible-inaccessible
	Cultural decentralization		
	Alignment of objectives with requirements and other intercultural elements of the curriculum		
	Intercultural competence		
Creation of intercultural identity			

	<p>Comprehensive development</p> <p>Establishment of global peace</p> <p>Raising of intercultural citizen</p> <p>Improvement of international language skills</p> <p>Preparation of graduates for international and multicultural workplaces</p>	Minor objectives	
Content attributes	<p>Intercultural fractal content</p> <p>Relevance of content with different cultures and identities</p> <p>Application of communication technology in content</p> <p>Attention to the foundations of anthropology, sociology, psychology and education in content</p> <p>Development of content in international language</p> <p>Attention to the acquisition of intercultural competence in content</p> <p>Participation of field professionals in content development process</p> <p>Attention to the components of culture in content</p> <p>International attitude and global skills in content</p>	Quality	Relevant-irrelevant
	Decentralization in content editing	Structure	Centralized-decentralized
Teaching-learning methods	<p>Use of online classes</p> <p>Attention to the hidden curriculum elements</p> <p>Use of participatory learning approach and diverse and multifocal teaching methods</p> <p>Facilitating intercultural learning</p> <p>Designing a multicultural platform for learning</p>	Consistency of teaching-learning methods with intercultural approach	Proportion-disproportion
Teacher's characteristics	<p>Teacher's individual identity</p> <p>Interest in intercultural approach to curriculum</p> <p>International language skills</p> <p>Media literacy</p> <p>Teacher's intercultural knowledge</p>	Cultural power	High- low
		Academic ranking	Possessing-not-possessing
Assessment	<p>Use of the Intercultural Development Index (IDI)</p> <p>Assessment of language skills</p> <p>Application of qualitative evaluation</p> <p>Responsive supervision process</p> <p>Team evaluation</p>	Quality of assessment	Desirable-undesirable

Self-evaluation
Intercultural fractal assessment
Intercultural justice-based assessment

**Table 2. Dimensions and spectrums of categories of causal, intermediary, and contextual conditions, strategies and consequences**

	Categories	Dimensions	Spectrums
Causal Conditions	The impact of ideology on intercultural debates	Extra-organizational	Democratic-bureaucratic
	The impact of society on the intercultural curriculum		
	The impact of university policy making on intercultural curriculum	Intra-organizational	Non-concentration concentration
Intermediary Conditions	The role of the policy making department of the Ministry of Science and the university	Internal factors	Influential-Neutral
	The role of university culture		
	Inter-university relations	External factors	
	Realistic intercultural objectives		
Contextual conditions	Expansion of the structure of a multicultural society	Extra-organizational	Broad-limited
	Policies of the Ministry of Science to achieve an intercultural approach	Intra-organizational	
	Political development	Meta-organization	
Strategies	Alignment of university's internal and external factors in the implementation of the intercultural curriculum	Intercultural paradigm	Stable-unstable
	Focus on cultural learning		
	Freedom of university activists in intercultural design		
	Understanding Iranian-Global Islamic culture		
Consequences	Intercultural literacy	Comprehensive development	Advanced - un-advanced
	Establishment of global peace		
	Reinforcement of social capital and prevention of brain drain		
	Comprehensive development		

Also, the arrangement of causal conditions, contextual conditions, requirements and causal intermediary conditions, strategies

and consequences of the PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran with an

intercultural approach based on GT are displayed in Figure 1.

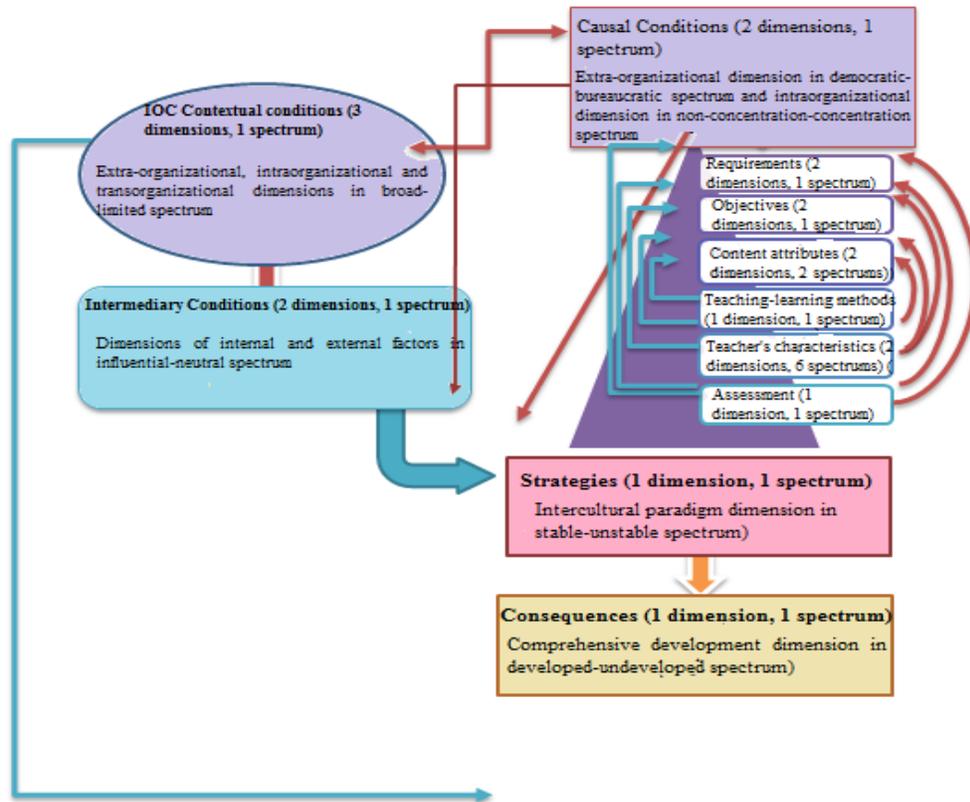


Fig. 1. Strauss paradigmatic pattern in the study

### Conclusion

The educational system of Iran is a centralized system which offers the same curricula to all learners without any flexibility, despite the existing cultural, racial, linguistic, and ethnic differences. By changing the strategic environment of higher education, IOC can exert a profound impact on educational contexts and platforms, thus offering a new perspective to its audiences. In fact, attending a multicultural university is both an invigorating experience and a prelude to an important academic achievement.

Meanwhile, controlling and managing the potential challenges and conflicts among intercultural students will be a turning point in the development of intercultural communication. Obviously, no student can continue his academic career while being apart from other students, and understanding and appreciating cultural differences will avoid unintended prejudice towards one's own culture, thereby creating interest among individuals to establish intercultural relations while being mindful of the norms, rules and regulations of different cultures.

This study investigated the contextual conditions of a PhD of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran with an intercultural approach, and the findings revealed that the most significant conditions in the broad-limited spectrum comprise the extra-organizational dimension (including the expansion of the structure of a multicultural society), the intra organizational dimension (including policies of the Ministry of Science to achieve an intercultural approach) and the Meta organization dimension (including political development). These research findings are either directly or indirectly in line with the findings of national studies conducted by Sadeghi (2011), Firoozjaian and Khorsandi Taskouh (2019) and the international work of De Wit & Lisak (2015). These scholars believe that not adequate attention has been paid to multicultural structure in preparing executive policy and curricula. Students from different cultures become acquainted with each other in situations where each has a different mental background, and these backgrounds create conditions that entail specific cultural implications and social expectations. Each university student is involved with a complex set of ideals, constraints, feelings, competitive pressures, expectations, and ideal social patterns, thus confirming the significance of IOC.

With regard to the investigation of intermediary conditions, one of the issues that fundamentally

engages students in curriculum studies is the cultural domain related to the university student's place of residence. Students can take advantage of special opportunities proportionate with the culture they belong to, and the extent of this advantage can present them as highly effective among other people. The results revealed that these intermediary conditions in the IOC are as follows: internal factors (including the role of policy making department of the Ministry of Science and the university) and external factors (including the role of university culture, inter-university relationships and realistic intercultural objectives) in the influential-neutral spectrum. The findings are either directly or indirectly in line with the results of the national study conducted by Khorsandi Taskouh (2019), as well as the foreign studies conducted by Crossman & Bordia (2011), Shower (2012), Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Sample (2013), Cabau (2013), Kidman, Manathunga & Cornforth, and Liull, Palacios & Ulkuniemi (2018). According to these researchers, culture has a significant impact on university students' social interaction, and academic projects can place power distribution at the center of the IOC.

Understanding the rationale and the why of the curriculum is an important point in designing and developing any curriculum. As per the results of the study, the most important causal conditions in IOC are the extra-organizational

dimension (including the influence of ideology on intercultural issues and the impact of society on the intercultural curriculum) in the democratic-bureaucratic spectrum, and the intra-organizational dimension (including the impact of university policy making on intercultural curriculum) in the non-concentration-concentration spectrum. These findings are either directly or indirectly in agreement with the national studies conducted by Khorsandi Taskouh and Firoozajian (2019), and the foreign works conducted by Cabau (2013), De Hei, Tabacaru & Sjoer (2019) and Ye, Molitori & Anderson (2020). These researchers believe that the nature of the curriculum is influenced by the pressures of ideology and society, and that democratic conditions can pave the way for the IOC through the support of curriculum studies experts in the university body.

The axial phenomenon in this study was examined in terms of IOC requirements and elements, including objectives, content attributes, teaching-learning methods, teacher's characteristics and assessment. The results revealed that IOC requirements involve software dimensions (including attention to intercultural competence in the global community, emphasis on understanding intercultural theory, increased focus on internationalization in higher education, promotion of intercultural awareness in higher education centers, decentralization in the development of intercultural curricula, creation of an index of

equal distribution of cultural power within the intercultural curriculum, the priority of the interculturalization of the discipline itself, fractal requirements of the intercultural design, the necessity of the teacher's intercultural competence, and the need for intercultural content) and software dimensions (including attention to multicultural hardware) in the application-non-application spectrum. Research findings either directly or indirectly comply with the findings of the domestic studies conducted by Sadeghi (2011) and Khorsandi Taskouh and Firouzajian (2018) as well as the international studies conducted by Dunne (2011), Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Sample (2013), Cabau (2013), Bunăiașu (2015), and Wang, Zhou & Heng Fu (2016). According to these researchers, designing and applying important principles such as emphasis on understanding intercultural theory and paying attention to multiculturalism can lead to the creation of an equitable distribution of cultural power within the PhD curriculum in the field of curriculum studies.

At this stage, it is important to identify the objectives that can be measured in this approach and to determine performance criteria for them. The most important ones of which in this study, with regard to IOC were as follows: general objectives dimensions (including alignment of the objectives of the intercultural curriculum with internationalized curriculum, cultural decentralization, alignment of objectives with requirements

and other intercultural elements of the curriculum, intercultural competence, creation of intercultural identity, comprehensive development, establishment of global peace, and raising of intercultural citizen) as well as minor objectives (including improvement of international language skills and preparation of graduates for international and multicultural workplaces) in the accessible-inaccessible spectrum. These research findings are either directly or indirectly in line with the findings of the national studies conducted by Sadeghi (2011) and Khorsandi Taskouh and Firouzajian (2019) and foreign studies conducted by Dunne (2011), Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Sample (2013), Cabau (2013), Bunăiașu (2015), and Wang, Zhou & Heng Fu (2016). By identifying the IOC objectives, the researchers stated that the intercultural lived experiences, thoughts and perceptions of teachers and students, along with accessible objectives, can facilitate the process of nurturing intercultural citizenship and achieving world peace.

IOC content comprises the specific facts, beliefs, principles, and issues that are included in the curriculum. At least two types of content can be identified in the curriculum of PhD curriculum studies. These include written content that is developed as texts and textbooks, and oral content that oversees the teacher's performance and teaching in the classroom as well as student

relationships. In the present study, the most important content attributes of IOC involved quality dimensions (including intercultural fractal content, relevance of content with different cultures and identities, application of communication technology in content, attention to the foundations of anthropology, sociology, psychology and education in content, development of content in international language, attention to the acquisition of intercultural competence in content, participation of field professionals in content development process, attention to the components of culture in content, international attitude and global skills in content) in the relevant-irrelevant spectrum, and the structure dimension (including decentralization in content development) in the centralized-decentralized spectrum. These research findings either directly or indirectly correlate with the findings of the domestic study by Sadeghi (2011) and the foreign ones conducted by Sample (2013), Cabau (2013), Bunăiașu (2015), Wang, Zhou and Heng Fu (2016), Liull, Palacios & Ulkuniemi (2018) and Ye, Molitoris & Anderson (2020). The researchers believe that content selection for the PhD of curriculum studies should, based on the intercultural perspective and regardless of theoretical knowledge, also be allocated to multiple cultural groups.

Meaningful learning activities are at the heart of the curriculum as they are very effective in shaping

the learner's experience and, consequently, his education. The key activities in the teaching-learning methods of the IOC in this study comprise the dimension of teaching-learning methods consistency with intercultural approach (including taking online classes, attention to the hidden curriculum elements, use of participatory learning approach and diverse and multi-centered teaching methods, facilitating intercultural learning, and designing a multicultural platform for learning) in the proportionality-disproportion spectrum. These research findings are either directly or indirectly in line with the findings of the national studies conducted by Sadeghi (2011) and Khorsandi Taskouh and Firouzajian (2019) and foreign studies conducted by Crossman & Bordia (2011), Shower (2012), Bodycott & Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Gandana & Par (2013), Bunăiașu (2015), Kidman, Manathunga & Cornforth, Lopes, Bezanilla & Elexpuru (2018), Liull, Palacios & Ulkuniemi (2018), De Hei, Tabacaru & Sjoer (2019), Jones et al., and Ye, Molitori & Anderson (2020). The researchers believe that teacher and student activities associated with IOC in the classroom, multicultural context design, the use of collaborative learning approaches and diverse and multi centered teaching methods, and deep attention to hidden curriculum elements are of utmost importance in facilitating intercultural learning of PhD students in curriculum studies.

Even if developed in the best way, IOC plan may fail at the operational stage due to improper implementation by the teacher. In this study, the most important characteristics of the teacher in the IOC process included the teacher's personal identity as well as his interest in intercultural approach to curriculum in the high-low spectrum, and the academic ranking that involved international language skills, media literacy and intercultural knowledge in the possessing-not-possessing spectrum. These research findings either directly or indirectly correlate with the results of the domestic studies by Firouzajian and Khorsandi Taskouh (2019) and the foreign ones conducted by Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Gandana & Par (2013), Furtuna (2015), and Kidman, Manathunga & Cornforth (2017). These scholars maintain that teacher's beliefs and ideas are critical in organizing higher education curricula. These beliefs are the result of the teacher's previous educational experiences, especially his understanding of his scientific discipline as well as his personal, cultural or political values.

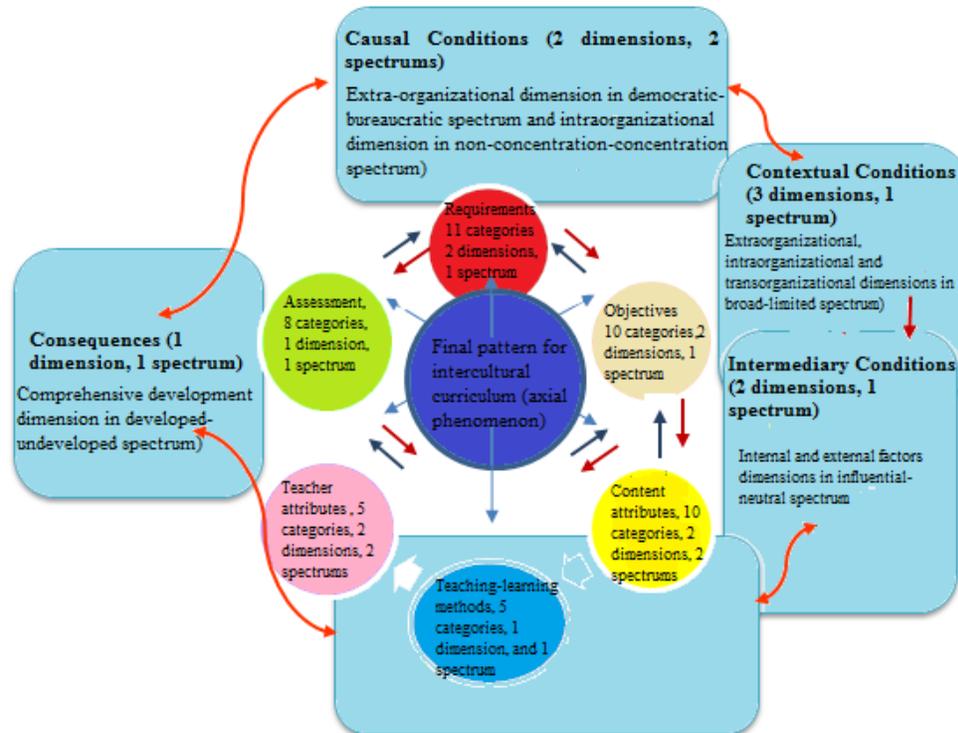
Assessment is an important and critical component of the curriculum process. The key IOC assessment methods from the point of view of the experts in this study comprise quality dimension of assessment which include (use of intercultural development inventory (IDI), language skills evaluation, qualitative assessment practice, responsive supervisory

process, team evaluation, self evaluation, intercultural fractal assessment, and intercultural justice-oriented assessment) in the desirable-undesirable spectrum. The findings of the study are in directly or indirect compliance with the findings of foreign studies conducted by Sample (2013), Cabau (2013), Furtuna (2015), Crossman & Bordia (2011), Shower (2012), Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth (2013), Kidman, Manathunga & Cornforth (2017) and De Hei, Tabacaru & Sjoer (2019). According to these researchers, due to its difficulty and complexity, IOC assessment requires consideration of several elements and dimensions, and the assessment should be viewed as part of the overall plan. Using the IDI, data are collected and analyzed clearly, and the way information is collected, processed, accumulated and analyzed is an important mechanism for evaluating students.

With regard to the analysis of IOC application, the research results revealed that the major strategies involve intercultural paradigm dimension (including the alignment of university's internal and external factors in the implementation of the intercultural curriculum, focus on cultural learning, freedom of university activists in intercultural design, and understanding Iranian-Global Islamic culture) in the stable-unstable spectrum. These findings are either directly or indirectly in line with the findings of De Wit & Lisak (2015), Wang & Zhou & Heng Fu (2016) and De Hei,

Tabacaru & Sjoer (2019). The researchers have demonstrated that disciplinary culture and identity shape one's academic life.

Results of this study yielded certain implications concerning IOC. The results revealed that the most important consequences that can be identified and recognized in the IOC are the dimension of comprehensive development (including intercultural literacy, establishment of global peace, reinforcement of social capital and prevention of brain drain, and comprehensive development) in the developed-undeveloped spectrum which are in direct or indirect compliance with the findings by De Wit & Lisak (2015), Wang, Zhou & Heng Fu (2016), and De Hei, Tabacaru and Sjoer (2019). According to these researchers, understanding intercultural communication is not an urgent solution; rather, it implies using the expertise available to analyze and understand what is happening outside a particular national environment, and make recommendations that relate to both national and international spheres. The final product of this study was the designing of a PhD curriculum pattern in the field of curriculum studies in the higher education of Iran based on GT that is shown in Figure 2. Having been designed, the model was tested and validated by three professors in curriculum studies and higher education management, and these people examined and validated the GT-based model, as well.



**Fig. 2. Validated curriculum pattern for the PhD of curriculum studies in higher education of Iran using an intercultural approach based on GT**

### *Operational Suggestions*

1- Comprehensive evaluation of the measures taken by universities by the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology to modify and design the IOC to identify the challenges and prospects of decentralization in the higher education system.

2- Establishment of coordination between departments of universities across the country by holding coordination meetings with representatives of these departments to reduce the significant differences existing between the designed intercultural curricula. Obviously, this coordination should not lead to synchronization because attention to the local capacities and requirements of the region wherein the university is located is an

integral component of the intercultural curriculum that should not be overlooked.

3- Holding workshops on curriculum planning and design, especially for the faculty members effective in curriculum.

4- Offering material and spiritual incentives for intercultural participation of faculty members of education departments in the process of changing and designing curricula toward the IOC.

5- Comprehensive evaluation by universities of the implementation of new intercultural curricula and execution of qualitative and comparative research between old and new curricula in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the programs.

6- Developing curricula tailored to the country's economic, social

and cultural needs is one of the key factors in efficient higher education. Therefore, one of the tasks of the Ministry of Science, Research and Technology is to grant curriculum authorization to the universities with audit board to make changes in the curriculum system of PhD of curriculum studies. The aim is to update the content of this field of study and its curricula to meet the diverse and evolving needs of the community as well as to transform educational methods and programs with an emphasis on intercultural approach.

7- Inter-culturalization of the curriculum of PhD of curriculum studies at university evolves other disciplines, and entails the growth and cultural dynamism of the faculty members. In addition, it promotes the use of cultural capacities to improve the quality of education and research.

8- IOC encourages faculty members to grow academically as they are persuaded to explore different perspectives on curriculum, studying, new scholarly resources, and the curriculum of other universities around the world, thus paving the way for their scientific promotion. Universities, therefore, are advised to provide the necessary incentives and legal measures to make this a part of the duties of faculty members and educational departments.

9- The Ministry of Science should monitor how curricula are reviewed at universities. It should, for instance, always demand reports of the actions taken, review

content provided by universities, and send programs to top national experts to provide the necessary feedbacks.

10- The Ministry should strive to empower, as much as possible, the officials and faculty members to revise and develop intercultural curricula. Appropriate measures include the organization of specialized seminars and workshops as well as the preparation of appropriate specialized texts on intercultural curriculum process.

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