

Faculty International Experience and Internationalization Efforts at Community Colleges in the United States

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years, internationalization has been a strategy for colleges and universities to recruit overseas students, as well as to raise institutional and national revenue (Raby 2007; de Wit et al. 2013; Raby and Valeau 2013). Internationalization at colleges helps to “educate their students for global citizenship, to keep pace with their peers, to better serve the national and international community, and to remain great universities” (Biddle 2002, p. 7). Faculty can enhance their international experiences by teaching in another country or by traveling and participating in programs such as study-abroad, exchange program, Fulbright fellowship, and international seminars. In addition to such out-bound opportunities (in which US-born faculty get educated), faculty who were born abroad bring linguistic and cultural diversity, different worldviews, and international skills to American colleges (in-bound). When faculty exchange ideas, innovative curricula with colleagues, and participate in international development program, the college gets involved in the process

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of internationalization (Raby 1995). Such occasions develop faculty's awareness of and appreciation for the rich diversity of human experience found in the customs, traditions, and cultural contributions outside of their frame of reference. Along with globally emerging technology, cross-cultural communications, and shifting political alignment, institutions of American higher education have reshaped the strategies for "global consciousness and a critical understanding of how national and international issues intersect" (Biddle 2002, p. 5).

Although some community colleges have made a commitment to internationalization, there are no significant changes in promoting international experiences of faculty when compared to four-year institutions in the last few decades (Green and Siaya 2005; O'Hara 2009; Raby 2012; Siaya and Hayward 2012). There are limited opportunities for the faculty members in the community colleges that focus on international experiences. In this line of inquiry, the purpose of this chapter is to examine the demographic and career-profile characteristics, the perceptions of community college faculty's international experience and resulting internationalization at their campuses. The author examines whether two groups of faculty, that is, (a) with and without a prior international experience; and (b) foreign-born faculty and the US-born faculty, report the perceptions of internationalization differently at community colleges.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Faculty International Experience

In universities and community colleges, faculty international experience builds an international perspective into "courses and research agendas where it did not currently exist" (Biddle 2002, p. 8). It is one of the least expensive and most effective ways to globalize the campus resources (Czarra 2002; Bales 2008). Internationalization plays an important role in creating a global curriculum, expanding study-abroad, and developing cross-border education (Raby 1995; Sandgren et al. 1999).

However, there are limited empirical studies that focus on community college faculty's international experience and their perceptions toward internationalization of college resources in particular. Some studies suggest that community college faculty seem to have positive attitudes about infusing an international and intercultural perspective into their teaching, research, and service (Bissonette and Woodin 2013; Bradshaw 2013; O'Connor et al. 2013; Watson 2014). A few empirical studies related to community

colleges show a positive relationship between international experiences of faculty and satisfaction with instruction, workplace perceptions, and tenure process (Wells 2007; Mamiseishvili 2011; Siaya and Hayward 2012).

For instance, Watson (2014) interviewed 23 community college faculty to examine how they understand, describe, and practice internationalization. Her study suggested that early life experiences of faculty influenced their global practice. Similarly, teaching was “the most prevalent way faculty globalized their work, followed by research and service” (Watson 2014, p. 10). Burdzinski’s (2014) study conducted in Florida community colleges suggested that an extensive international travel experiences is correlated with support for internalization activities, and those who possess more international experience are more likely to have higher perceptions in internationalizing community colleges.

Despite positive attitude for internationalization, faculty also have reported organizational barriers in implementing internationalization into their practice at their colleges (Harder 2010; O’Connor et al. 2013; Watson 2014). For instance, lack of resources, lack of curriculum infusion, heavy workload/lack of time, and lack of faculty inclusion were the major barriers to further internationalization (Watson 2014).

In another quantitative study, O’Connor et al. (2013) surveyed 243 general education faculty at 18 Missouri community colleges. They found that administrative support, geographical location (urban vs. rural), and faculty with international awareness were the key indicators of successful internationalization efforts. Blair et al.’s (2000) study found that 82 % of college faculty had international components in their courses. Also, 44 % of the colleges recruited international faculty and staff on their campuses, and 50 % of the colleges offered faculty development and training (Blair et al. 2000). Similarly, Iuspa’s (2010) study found both students and faculty had positive attitudes and perceptions regarding international experience and internationalization of education.

The role of college faculty is significant when educating students about world views and making curriculum and instruction competitive and creative. Childress (2010) mentioned the positive role of faculty in promoting international and global experience in order to internationalize curriculum, skills, and technology. Childress (2010) also reported that colleges should have intention, investment, infrastructure, networking, and individual support to promote international education and global knowledge. Bradshaw (2013) presents an example of faculty-led study-abroad programs at Madison Area Technical College as a case study to present the breadth and depth of internationalization in community college education. Reports

related to award-winning community colleges for “internationalization” indicate that faculty are engaged in a variety of activities related to teaching, research, and services (NAFSA 2014). For instance, faculty at Albion College developed exchange programs for both faculty and students in Costa Rica, Cameroon, and France. Kapi’oani Community College faculty created Project Shine, a service learning project infused into some of the courses at the college. Similarly, faculty at the Community College of Philadelphia developed international studies courses (NAFSA 2014).

Foreign-Born and US-Born Faculty

According to National Science Foundation report (2014), foreign-born faculty increased from 12 % in 1973 to 26 % in 2010 with particularly high proportions in engineering (49 %) and computer sciences (51 %). The benefit of international faculty is associated with better global literacy or transnational competence (Biddle 2002). Previous research indicates the importance of services and experiences of foreign-born faculty in the US higher education system, particularly at four-year institutions (Wells 2007; Lin et al. 2009; Mamiseishvili 2012; US Census Bureau, 2013). Their international experience promotes campus diversity, helps students develop worldviews, and offers an array of perspectives and experiences to the institution (Pascarella 2001; Wells 2007; Mamiseishvili 2011).

There is limited literature on the work and scholarship of foreign-born faculty at community colleges. Wells (2007) noted that foreign-born faculty were more satisfied with their jobs than US-born faculty in community colleges. On the contrary, Mamiseishvili’s (2011) study indicated that foreign-born faculty reported lower scores on job satisfaction and workplaces than the US-born professoriate at two-year colleges. Some foreign-born faculty’s dissatisfaction with employment and workplace might be attributed to their cultural differences such as country of origin, language, and religious background (Mamiseishvili 2011).

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a cross-sectional study—that is, descriptive in nature (neither longitudinal nor experimental). Cross-sectional research is based on observations that take place in different groups at one time on several variables such as gender, income, and education (Johnson and Christensen 2014). This means there is no experimental procedure; no variables are manipulated by the researcher.

As a convenience sampling technique, two community colleges were selected in this study. As Johnson and Christensen (2014, p. 263) describes, a convenience sampling includes participants “who are available or volunteer or can be easily recruited and are willing to participate in the research study.” An online survey was used to collect data. In addition to descriptive data, chi-square and independent *t*-tests were used to analyze the data.

Data and Participants

Based on the Institute for International Education (IIE) list of top five hosting institutions for international students (Open Doors 2014), two US public community colleges were randomly chosen to be part of the study. Both colleges, Santa Monica Community College located in California and Lone Star Montgomery Community College located in Texas, offer a wide range of associate degree programs (more than 75 fields of study), and campus communities are diverse and vibrant. Both colleges offer programs that prepare students for careers of the twenty-first century, host study-abroad programs, enroll international students, and conduct cross-cultural activities on campuses.

A staff contact was made at each institution to be the liaison in getting an online survey to all full-time faculty members. The online survey was distributed to this staff contact after the approval of my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB). I did not have direct access to faculty and as such, could not verify the total number of faculty who received the survey nor how many faculty from each campus received the survey. Of the 400 potential full-time faculty from both institutions, (300 from the first site and 100 from the second site), only 263 ($N = 263$) usable samples (i.e., completely filled out sample; no outlier) was included in the final analysis after data screening. Female faculty participants doubled (70 %) male faculty (30 %). Over half of the total faculty were 50 and older. Similarly, 51.3 % of total faculty were tenured; 36.1 % of faculty had 20 or more years teaching; 74.1 % of faculty identified themselves as White. Nearly half of the total participants represented humanities (49.4 %), education (12.5 %), and business and management programs (5.3 %). Also, 13.3 % of professoriates were international faculty (foreign-born) compared to 86.3 % US-born peers. Faculty members with international experiences (50.2 %) were almost equal with faculty without international experience (49.4 %). Likewise, 82.5 % faculty expressed interest to participate in study-abroad programs.

Instrument and Measures

Data was collected using the *Faculty International Experience* questionnaire. Developed by Adebay and Paracka (2010), this instrument includes 35 items (eight items on faculty attitudes about international experience, five on faculty support for internationalization, seven on international learning interest, six on the effects of internationalization, and seven demographic items). Previous studies indicated a strong validity and reliability of this instrument (Iuspa 2010; Bacalis-Arیمان 2012). The following reliability was measured in the current study: Attitudes about International Experience ($\alpha = .74$), Support for Internationalization ($\alpha = .78$), International Learning Interest ($\alpha = .81$), and Effects of Internationalization ($\alpha = .89$).

Demographic Characteristics. Three demographic variables were examined in the current study: gender, age, and ethnicity. Male and female status was coded as 1 = male, and 2 = female. Age was merged into five categories: under 35, 35–40, 41–45, 46–50, and 51 and above. Faculty ethnicity was coded as 1 = African-American, 2 = Latino/a, 3 = Asian, 4 = White, 5 = other. Six career-related variables were included in the analysis: primary teaching field/discipline, years of teaching, tenure status, types of institutional affiliation, prior international experience, and interest in international experience. The primary teaching field of faculty was grouped into eight broad areas: 1 = humanities, 2 = education, 3 = business and management studies, 4 = social sciences, 5 = health professions, 6 = physical/natural sciences and engineering, 7 = math and computer sciences, 8 = other. The number of years of teaching was listed into five groups: 1 = less than 5, 2 = 5–10, 3 = 11–15, 4 = 16–20, and 5 = 21 and more. Academic tenure status indicated as 1 = tenured, 2 = non-tenured/tenure-track, 3 = non-tenure track, and 4 = other. Other variables such as (faculty prior international experience, interest in study-abroad program, birth status–foreign born) were coded as 1 = yes, no = 0.

International Experience and Internationalization Perceptions. Twenty-six items were included to measure faculty international experiences and campus internationalization perceptions: attitudes, support, interest, and effects of internationalization. The responses were coded as follows: 1 = *strongly agree*, 2 = *agree*, 3 = *neutral*, 4 = *disagree*, and 5 = *strongly disagree*.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Descriptive statistics were used to report the demographic and career related characteristics of community college faculty, the international experience ratings, and the campus internationalization perceptions. Chi-square tests were conducted to observe whether the differences in the demographic and career-profile characteristics between the two faculty groups (a) foreign-born faculty vs. US-born faculty, and (b) faculty with a prior international experience vs. faculty without an international experience were statistically significant. Means, standard deviations, and independent *t*-test scores were used to examine faculty international experience ratings and campus internationalization perceptions.

Chi-square tests revealed that 9.5 % of foreign-born faculty participants were female compared to 60.3 % of the US-born professoriate. Similarly, 67.9 % of the US-born faculty participants were White compared to 6.1 % of foreign-born faculty. A chi-square test indicated that there was a significant difference in the racial make-up of the two groups, $\chi^2 (4) = 20.37$, $p < .001$. Cramer's statistic was .28 (out of a possible value of 1) which suggests a small and a positive significant relationship ($p < .001$). Cramer's value provides a test of statistical significance and also provides information about the strength of the association between two categorical variables (Morgan et al. 2014). Other demographic and career profile variables such as gender, tenure status, years of teaching, discipline/department, faculty prior international experience, and interest in study-abroad were not statistically significant between the US-born faculty and foreign-born faculty.

Similarly, faculty with prior international experience were similar to faculty without international experience in terms of their ethnicity, gender, age group, years of teaching, and tenure status. The majority of faculty with international experience were female (34.4 %), were White (37 %), were in the age group of 51 and above (25.6 %), were tenured (30.5 %), were interested in a study-abroad program (45 %), and were US-born faculty (42.5 %) ; this was very consistent with the characteristics of the faculty without international experience (35.5 %, 28.3 %, 20.6 %, 15.3 %, 22.1 %, 38.1 %, and 44.1 % respectively). There were more tenured faculty with international experience (30.5 %) or in tenure-track (5.7 %) than faculty without international experience (20.6 % and 5.3 % respectively).

There were more faculty with international experience in humanities (27.1 %) and social sciences (5 %) than faculty without experiences (22.1 % and 3.1 % respectively). Also, the majority of community college faculty

members without international experience were in education (7.6 %), business and management studies (3.4 %), health professions (4.6 %), and math and computer sciences (2.7 %). Interestingly, faculty with international experience indicated an interest in a study-abroad program (45 %) than faculty without an international experience (11.5 %).

Chi-squared tests also revealed that whether faculty were interested in study-abroad or not was statistically significant between faculty with international experience and faculty without international experience, $\chi^2(1) = 7.303$, $N = 263$, $p < .05$ with a Phi's value of .17 ($p < .05$). Foreign-born faculty members reported lower values (i.e., positive scores on a Likert scale 1–5) on their perceptions related to international experiences, campus support for internationalization, international learning interest and effects of internationalization than US-born faculty members (Table 3.1). Further analysis showed that foreign-born college faculty were significantly different from US-born college faculty on attitudes regarding international experience ($p < .05$), international learning interest ($p < .001$), and effects of internationalization ($p < .001$). These two groups of faculty were not significantly different on faculty support for internationalization on campuses ($p > .5$).

Community college faculty with international experience were significantly different from faculty without international experience on attitudes ($p < .001$), learning interest, and effects of internationalization (both $p < .05$). Inspection of the two group means indicates that the average mean scores for faculty with international experience were significantly

Table 3.1 Comparison of the foreign-born and the US-born faculty on international experience, support for internationalization, international learning interest, and effects of internationalization, $N = 263$

Variables	Community college faculty members		
	Foreign born, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	US born, <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>p</i>
Attitudes on international experience	1.44 (.40)	1.69 (.47)	.004*
Support for internationalization	2.61 (.92)	2.71 (.83)	.593
International learning interest	1.47 (.42)	1.81 (.57)	.000**
Effects of internationalization	1.15 (.30)	1.45 (.53)	.000**

Note. *M* Mean, *SD* Standard deviation. Mean ratings on a scale of 1–5 where 1 = *strongly agree* and 5 = *strongly disagree*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

Table 3.2 Comparison between faculty with an international experience and faculty without an international experience, $N = 263$

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Faculty members</i>		<i>P</i>
	<i>Faculty with an international experience, M (SD)</i>	<i>Faculty without an international experience, M (SD)</i>	
Attitudes on international experience	1.53 (.37)	1.78 (.52)	.000**
Support for internationalization	2.61 (.92)	2.77 (.74)	.119
International learning interest	1.67 (.54)	1.84 (.56)	.011*
Effects of internationalization	1.32 (.43)	1.51 (.57)	.002*

Note. *M* Mean, *SD* Standard deviation. Mean ratings on a scale of 1–5 where 1 = *strongly agree* and 5 = *strongly disagree*

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

lower than the scores for faculty without international experiences in perceptions related to attitudes, support, learning interest, and effects of internalization (Table 3.2).

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study has several limitations worth mentioning. First, the results of this study are based on a small sample drawn from two public community colleges, located in California and Texas. Findings presented in this study (based on 263 returned sample) are pertinent for full-time (regular) faculty in two community colleges and do not generalize to part-time faculty, nor those in four-year institutions.

International experience of foreign-born faculty may depend on the country of origin, duration of stay in the USA, and institutions attended or affiliated with during their college career. Some of these variables were not collected in the current study. Finally, this study relied on self-reported data. It is important to note that self-reported data may not have “real” responses to questions and the answers may be biased (Fowler 2014). Thus, faculty who participated in this study may be biased, or have little or high interests on internationalization. The researcher has made an attempt to check multiple measures of international experience. The researcher, however, would like to suggest future research with a larger sample size

including faculty from multiple community colleges. Future researchers may choose a different research design such as a mixed-method to uncover international experiences and internationalization perceptions of diverse college faculty.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the demographic characteristics, the perceptions of faculty international experiences, and support for internationalization at their campuses. Results from this study show some distinct differences in international experiences and internationalization perceptions between foreign-born faculty and US-born peers as well as between faculty with a prior international experience and without an experience. This difference may be attributed in part due to faculty's individual and institutional characteristics such as sociocultural backgrounds, international education/study-abroad expectations, institutional available resources, and academic workloads.

As results indicated, there is a growing number of foreign-born faculty, mostly White (non-US-born 6.1 % vs. US-born 67.9 %) and females (non-US-born 9.5 % vs. US-born 60.3 %) at community colleges. This finding reflects the national trends pointed out in previous research that foreign-born faculty proportion is present (8.4 % foreign-born faculty and 91.6 % US-born community college faculty in a sample of 5220 faculties) at community colleges (Mamiseishvili 2011). This indicates that faculty composition in the US community colleges are diverse and contribute in fostering global and international perspectives in academic discourse and teaching. However, these statistics may need a caution because foreign-born faculty in the current study was affiliated largely in humanities, education, physical/natural science, and engineering disciplines.

The findings that foreign-born faculty were significantly different on attitudes on international experience, international learning interests, and effects of internationalization might be because of the sociocultural differences between US-born faculty and foreign-born faculty. It may also be because of various disciplinary affiliations, years of services, tenure status, and age within the study sample. However, the findings indicated that both groups of faculty were not different in terms of faculty support for internationalization (engagement, encouragement, community resources, and teaching content related to international experience).

Where differences in faculty international experience occurred, faculty with prior international experience reported lower score on attitudes, support, learning interest, and effects of internationalization. As seen in the results, this finding does not seem surprising because the majority of faculty with international experience were tenured faculty with aged 51 and over. A possible explanation for this finding could be a combination of individual and cultural characteristics of faculty and/or other opportunities and resources available to senior and tenured faculty (Mamiseishvili 2011).

Previous researches (Green and Olson 2003; Bacalis-Ariman 2012; Siaya and Hayward 2012) state that faculty international experience matters in developing and designing curriculum, and advising students with diverse backgrounds. Findings from the current study showed that there is a growing number of foreign-born faculty serving at community colleges with international experience in their profession. Such faculty population is a valuable resource for community colleges to prepare their students and campus resources diverse and global.

As seen in descriptive statistics, community college faculty reported positive attitudes toward internationalization and the importance of international experience in higher education. Green (2005) mentioned that international experience also helps students to be more knowledgeable and understanding of different cultures and languages. Foreign-born faculty members serve as a valuable resource extending worldviews to their students and campus community. Future research that highlights the differences among two faculty groups (foreign-born and US-born) will help colleges better serve the needs and challenges of faculty and students, and particularly toward campus internationalization. It is acknowledged that foreign-born faculty increase cross-cultural competence, global literacy, and the growing internationalization efforts at colleges (Mamiseishvili 2011, Raby 2012). In this context, college administrators (presidents, deans, chairs) may need to recognize the role that foreign-born faculty may serve on their campuses to contribute toward the internationalization mission.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study may help faculty and administrators understand the perceptions of faculty regarding international experience and campus internationalization. This research may also help community colleges enhance

internationalization efforts by strengthening study-abroad, international education, international/student diversity, and exchange programs on campus. Foreign-born faculty bring with them diverse perspectives and worldviews that potentially enrich the university in the global context (Kim et al. 2011). As colleges are changing their mission to include the internationalization of education, faculty has the potential to be role models in global and international education. The current study emphasizes the need for further understanding of the experiences and contributions of foreign-born faculty if institutions' missions are campus internationalization and the twenty-first-century knowledge production. This study may also contribute to future research in the field.

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