

Work Satisfaction: Critical Factors for Foreign-Born Faculty

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Abstract

Many higher education institutions seek to attract and retain diverse faculty in an effort to intentionally diversify college campuses and make them more inclusive. The development of a diverse faculty body that matches the diversity of the student body is crucial, but the representation of foreign-born people with doctoral degrees who are working as faculty members has been relatively low, compared to the numbers of foreign-born students, and actual numbers are difficult to estimate. Foreign-born faculty can have very different experiences than do American-born faculty and report lower levels of work satisfaction. The key factors that contribute to workplace satisfaction for foreign-born faculty are not known. Some factors that may influence work satisfaction for foreign-born faculty members include their varying degrees of independence, their salary and accompanying levels of responsibility, and their job security. Differences related to academic discipline may be an influence, as are salary differences associated with the individual disciplines. Without additional insights as to why foreign-born faculty are less satisfied in the workplace than their American counterparts, colleges and universities are in danger of continuing to invest in the recruitment and hiring of foreign-born faculty who have a higher likelihood of leaving the institution.

Keywords: higher education institutions; work satisfaction; foreign-born faculty; promotion; tenure; underrepresented faculty

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) often partner with industry in the production of knowledge and the further development of society (Munene, 2014). In turn, these partnerships assist HEIs in their efforts to help people gain new skills, expand research networks, and provide a global perspective to the learning and teaching experience (Finkelstein, Walker, & Chen, 2013; Bennion & Locke, 2010; Kim, 2012; NAFSA, 2011). Many HEIs work to attract and retain diverse faculty in an effort to intentionally diversify campuses and make college campuses more inclusive (Calderon & Mathies, 2013). The development of a diverse faculty body that matches the diverse student body is critical (Wade-Golden & Matlock, 2010) but until recently the numbers of foreign-born people with doctoral degrees working as faculty were fairly low (Finn, 2014; Munene, 2014). The racial and ethnic composition of the workforce in the United States continues to become more diverse (Mosisa, 2013). In 2012-2013, the Open Doors Report (Institute of International Education) indicated that 122,059 faculty members employed in United States HEIs had been born outside the United States. Therefore, it has become critical to examine the experiences of foreign-born faculty in their own right (Chen, 2014).

Background

Foreign-born faculty experience difficulties that their American counterparts do not, and researchers do not know the key factors that contribute to workplace satisfaction for foreign-born faculty. Researchers do not know which factors predict work satisfaction for foreign-born faculty. Sabharwal (2011b) and Sallee and Hart (2015) concluded that future research should identify factors that influence workplace satisfaction and retention for foreign-born faculty. Some factors that may influence work satisfaction for foreign-born faculty members include their varying degrees of independence, their salary and accompanying levels of responsibility, and their job security (Bozeman & Gaughan, 2011; Lawrence, et al., 2014; Sabharwal & Varma, 2012). Differences by academic discipline may also come into play, as salary differences can be based on the demands of the individual discipline (Chalikia & Hinsz, 2013; Xu, 2012). Several seminal studies (Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b) have implored future research to examine work satisfaction for foreign-born faculty related to country of origin, ethnicity and gender, and fluency in English. Without additional insights as to why foreign-born faculty are less satisfied in the workplace than their American counterparts, HEIs will continue to invest in recruiting and hiring foreign-born faculty who have a higher likelihood of leaving the institution (Constantinou, Bajracharya, & Baldwin, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011b; Sallee & Hart, 2015).

HEIs are competing for foreign faculty in a time of global expansion, and institutions must stay up-to-date in their approach in order to attract and retain them (Bennion & Locke, 2010; Hughes, 2015). While there has been a significant focus on understanding immigration regulations and obtaining visas for foreign scholars to teach in American HEIs, there has not been a corresponding focus on how foreign-born faculty fit in once they have been hired. Seminal research has found that diverse faculties often face more issues related to workload and satisfaction than faculty of the white majority (Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b), and found foreign-born faculty may be both less satisfied and more productive than their counterparts (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011b). The demands of specific academic disciplines may be a concern (Xu, 2012). Research also suggests that the greatest challenges for foreign professionals coming to the United States relates to language proficiency (Ewy, Geringer, & Taylor, 2015), a clear understanding of the dominant culture (Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013), especially as related to understanding the level of responsibility required in faculty positions; a loss of professional identity in their academic discipline; a lack of clear transferability of professional credentials, a concern related to tenure status/rank (Khrabrova & Sanzo, 2013); and the campus environment (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011a; Sabharwal, 2011b; Trower, 2012).

Without data on the factors which influence foreign-born faculty in their work satisfaction, there will be significant implications for the continued recruitment of skilled international workers (Christensen, Horn, Caldera, & Soares, 2011; Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b; Shah, 2011). For example, HEIs with goals for recruiting diverse faculty

may not be able to meet those goals (Sabharwal, 2011b) or retain foreign faculty after hire (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011).

The construct of work satisfaction includes several factors such as academic discipline, professional relationships with colleagues (collegiality), autonomy or independence, workplace environment, and quality of life factors within HEIs. These factors are believed to strongly influence how foreign-born faculty members experience their workplace (Bozeman, & Gaughan, 2011; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011b). If foreign-born faculty are found to be marginalized, their work satisfaction may be affected (Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2011; Sabharwal, 2011a; Sabharwal, 2011b; Trower, 2012).

The numbers of foreign-born doctoral recipients in science and engineering continues to increase rapidly (Gupta, 2016). The recruitment and hiring of foreign faculty can give HEIs a competitive edge (Munene, 2014), allowing the flow of personnel and knowledge to be distributed across international borders. An additional cohort of foreign-born faculty who received their education overseas now complements the skills of native-born workers, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) fields (Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011; Sallee & Hart, 2015). Seventy four percent of international scholars in the U.S. are working in science, technology, engineering and math fields (Institute of International Education, 2015). In 2016 alone, all 6 Nobel laureates associated with U.S. HEIs were foreign-born faculty (Redden, 2016).

Typically, change in higher education only occurs when there is a major crisis (financial or otherwise); when pressures mount from the community; or when the institution has a leader who is particularly visionary (Robbins & Judge, 2010). Merely having a proportionate representation of faculty to mirror the student body does not ensure that HEIs will realize all the benefits of a diverse faculty and student body (Park & Denson, 2009). In 2014/2015, a total of 124,861 international faculty were teaching and/or conducting research in U.S. HEIs (Institute of International Education, 2015). Yet, the participation of underrepresented minorities in the academic science disciplines remains one of the least successful of the diversity initiatives (National Academy of Sciences, 2011). While internationalization efforts have also allowed for a diversification of faculty across countries (Kim & Locke, 2010), until recently the numbers of foreign-born individuals with doctoral degrees working as faculty were fairly low (Finn, 2014, Munene, 2014). China, India, and South Korea rank highest as countries of origin for international scholars in the U.S. (Institute of International Education, 2015).

While many HEIs do attempt to attract and retain diverse faculty, foreign-born faculty face complex challenges, making retention and professional advancement difficult (Munene, 2014). Presently, colleges and universities hire more foreign-born new faculty than domestic racial/ethnic minority groups (Kim, Twombly, & Wolf-Wendel, 2012). Therefore, fully understanding the potential cultural barriers and career implications for foreign-born faculty (De Beuckelaer, et al., 2012) is critical to HEIs.

Academic Mobility

Faculty with international experience can bring diversity and global expertise to the classroom and to their work, and help students achieve intercultural awareness, the ability to understand multiple perspectives, and provide real-world problem solving skills (Finkelstein, Walker, & Chen, 2013; Gahungu, 2011). The recognition of the importance of internationalization efforts has additional significance, and the framework of internationalization has shifted considerably.

With mobility comes acculturation issues. When immigrants first come to the US, whether as children, as students, or as workers, they all experience some level of discomfort related to their experiences in a new setting. For foreign-born faculty, this is often a barrier to the development of their professional identity (Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016). While not specific to foreign-born faculty, research on international students has shown assimilation to academic settings can cause problems related to differences in what is considered conventional behaviors and norms in the dominant culture (Jackson, Ray, & Bybell, 2013); struggles related to race and ethnicity (Kim, 2012); and disturbances in family relationships due to academic demands and distance from home (Zhang, Smith, Swisher, Fu, & Forgarty, 2011). These same struggles, which can result in feelings of seclusion and loneliness can lead foreign-born faculty to suffer from isolation and bullying in the workplace (Denny, 2014). Over time, immigrants must choose to either assimilate and integrate into their new country and institution, or separate from the institution, or remain marginalized (Campbell, 2015; Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016). Academically, there may be challenges related to language barriers and differences in teaching styles between U.S. HEIs and foreign HEIs (Kim, 2011; Telbis, Helgeson, & Kingsbury, 2013). There is a small body of literature on the adjustment of expatriates to their new environment (Campbell, 2015; Schütter & Boerner, 2013). Foreign-born faculty in particular, face enormous pressure to conform to their new country and workplace, in a phenomenon known as cultural hybridization (Pieterse, 2015).

The mobility of academics - either post-graduation for international doctoral students or through the direct recruitment of international faculty, focuses specifically on the advancement of an individual faculty member for reasons of career progression (Cantwell & Taylor, 2013; Pherali, 2012). American faculty tend to migrate outside their own country less often than do scholars from other countries, most likely because the United States has so many HEIs, providing faculty members with many more opportunities to move from institution to institution without ever leaving the country (Halevi & Moed, 2013; Pherali, 2012). Several studies of faculty mobility comparing non-citizen and citizen faculty (Kim, et al., 2011, Kim, et al., 2012) reveal that foreign-born, non-naturalized citizens who have tenure are more likely to remain at their current institution, while those who have high research agendas and have not been in academia long, tend to leave for industry positions (Kim, et al., 2011; Kim, et al., 2012).

Each of these studies (Kim, et al., 2011, Kim, et al., 2012) determined that the strongest predictor of decisions to leave (academia and the U.S.) is work satisfaction. However, these studies, like many others that have attempted to determine factors of work satisfaction of

foreign-born faculty, did not examine the country of origin of the faculty member in their analysis, and grouped all foreign-born faculty into non-citizen versus citizen (Lawrence, et al., 2014), likely because more granular data is difficult to access. The academic mobility of foreign-born faculty may influence not only their own careers but also the social and economic situation of entire countries (Halevi & Moed, 2013; Pherali, 2012).

Foreign-Born Faculty

HEIs must seek to recruit and retain foreign or international faculty for internationalization efforts to be successful (Fink, 2013). However, the experiences of foreign faculty who come to the United States to pursue their doctoral degree are very different than that of foreign faculty who are educated overseas and then must adapt to the American higher education system after receiving their degree (Kim, et al., 2012). Little research has focused on distinctions between foreign-born and U.S. born faculty. As of 2014, there were 42.2 million foreign-born living in the U.S. (Pew Research Center, 2016; Zong & Batalova, 2016), and it is projected over the next ten years, between 12 and 15 million additional foreign-born immigrants will settle in the United States (Camarota, 2012). Many foreign-born workers contribute to the American economy, particularly in the STEM fields (NSF, 2015). In fact, 22 percent of the STEM workforce in the U.S. is foreign-born, and they have a higher percentage of advanced degrees than U.S. born STEM workers (Anderson, 2016).

Work Satisfaction Theory

Many attempts to study work satisfaction have applied an organizational behavior, personnel and human resource management, or organizational management theory to higher education, yet most of them have produced little empirical data (Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b; Sabharwal, 2011a). Research specifically focused on faculty work satisfaction have also utilized various theories of work satisfaction. Some based their foundation on expectancy theory (Lawler & Suttle, 1972; Vroom, 1964), or values theory (Kalleberg, 1977). Locke (1976) expressed work satisfaction as a connection between people's emotions, values and needs. Others focused on needs theory (Herzberg, Mausner, & Snyderman, 1959). It is the latter which has the greatest applicability to the research study. While work satisfaction is of critical importance, it is not a set occurrence and does change over time (Chen, Ployhart, Thomas, Anderson, & Bliese, 2011; Hausknecht, Sturman, & Roberson, 2011). The two factor motivation/hygiene theory of satisfaction (Herzberg, et al, 1959) differentiates between intrinsic and extrinsic factors related to work satisfaction. These differences are based on the human need to achieve and experience psychological growth. Extrinsic (or hygiene) factors such as salary, benefits and institutional policies are based upon the human need to avoid dissatisfaction, but these extrinsic factors do not impinge upon daily work of faculty. Conversely, intrinsic (or internal) factors such as work satisfaction are based upon the human need most have to grow and succeed (motivation). Herzberg's theory supports the belief satisfaction and dissatisfaction are affected by different factors, and therefore cannot be measured the same way, and are not a

continuum of the same scale. Herzberg's own work (1959) was grounded in Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of need as a way of understanding behavior, believing individuals have the ability to reach their highest potential when they have met all five tiers (physiological, safety, love/belonging, esteem, and self-actualization) of human needs. There are significantly higher satisfaction levels related to pay and benefits for native workers than for immigrants (Chiswick & Miller, 2009), and the status as an immigrant has a direct impact on lower wages and benefit satisfaction as compared to that of native workers (Chowhan, Zeytinoglu, & Cooke, 2012) but previous research has not been able to explain the specific factors which contributed to these findings.

Work Satisfaction of Foreign-Born Faculty

When diverse faculty are hired, they often face issues related to workload and satisfaction (Lawrence, et al., 2014; Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010; Sabharwal, 2011a), and some data indicates work satisfaction is often influenced by cultural and sociological values (Lawrence, et al., 2014). Therefore work satisfaction may influence how foreign-born faculty deal with conflict, change, communication and motivation (Matic, 2008), as well as their perception of the workplace. Extensive research has examined the experiences of minority faculty (Eagan & Garvey, 2015) in HEIs. Other studies have focused on the role of gender and race, as related to their experiences (Turner, Gonzalez, & Wong, 2011) but most research on faculty satisfaction examines faculty without regard to ethnicity or race. The term 'faculty of color' typically includes all underrepresented faculty, including Hispanic, Asians, American Indians and "other" (Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009), without disaggregating the groups by race or ethnicity examining their experiences.

Several studies found international faculty to be less satisfied in the workplace than their American counterparts yet still more productive (Corley & Sabharwal, 2007; Kim, et al., 2011; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010). However, these studies looked at variables separately and in isolation, and did not examine the relationship between satisfaction and productivity (Kim, et al., 2011). Many foreign-born faculty feel enormous pressure to produce at high levels because productivity is typically linked to gaining a tenure track position (Gheorghiu & Stephens, 2016). For example, a study by Corley & Sabharwal (2007) utilized data from the National Science Foundation's 2001 Survey of Doctorate Recipients (SDR) to examine the benefits of foreign-born academic scientists and engineers in the workforce. Foreign-born faculty who are not satisfied are less likely to remain at their institution, even after they are granted tenure (Kim, et al., 2011).

Factors Influencing Work Satisfaction for Foreign-born Faculty

Work satisfaction is a complex concept and satisfaction in one area of the workplace does not necessarily carry over to satisfaction in another area (Herzberg, et al., 1959; Lawrence, et al., 2014). In order to fully understand the experiences of foreign-born faculty teaching in

United States higher education institutions, it is necessary to examine the factors presented in current research on work satisfaction, including (a) demographic characteristics, including race and gender (b) promotion and tenure; (c) research productivity and (d) institutional support (Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b). Rosser (2005) suggests that even the perception faculty members have of their academic work life has a direct and powerful impact on their satisfaction. Further, any study on the experiences of foreign-born faculty should include an acknowledgement that institutional discrimination and racism still exists for many people.

Promotion and Tenure

Achieving tenure is one of the most significant events for faculty in higher education (Vogelsmeier, Phillips, Popejoy, & Bloom, 2015), but it is difficult to compare HEIs in terms of promotion and tenure requirements, as the requirements may differ even within the same college or institution (Reinsch, Titus, & Hietapelto, 2011). In all HEIs, faculty must meet specific criteria for promotion and tenure decisions. Tenure positions are considered the ultimate security (unless egregious acts of behavior occur) for a faculty member. It is granted after a review of the faculty member's teaching, scholarship and service, which are generally the agreed upon standards for the evaluation of faculty for tenure and promotion (AAUP, 2013).

In the past, tenure policies have been developed by those who had achieved tenure, usually those in the dominant groups who traditionally have been white, older males (AAUP, 2013). While it is unlikely that information is purposefully being withheld, there are assumptions made and practices that are considered common knowledge by some groups that may not be so for other groups. Decisions are made to hire diverse groups because of the value they (and their work) has to the institution, but that often does not carry over to valuing their work in the tenure process.

In order to develop a campus climate that respects the views and attitudes of every member of the college community, and to ensure parity and equity for all faculty members, transformative change is required. Consistency in tenure decisions can offer protection but by their very nature, tenure decisions are made on an individual rather than a comparative basis, with serious implications for the hiring and retention of faculty, and resulting financial consequences for the institution. In fact, half of all STEM faculty do choose to leave their institution within the first eleven years (Kaminiski & Geisler, 2012), leaving institutions with economic losses and interruptions to research and teaching agendas.

Faculty satisfaction or dissatisfaction with institutional tenure and promotion standards is linked to the availability of research support systems (McGill & Settle, 2012). Only 8% of bachelor's degree granting institutions have specific guidelines or criteria to consider international work experience in faculty promotion and tenure bids (ACE, 2012). This narrow view of work satisfaction represents a gap in the literature in regard to how foreign-born faculty fit into their institution upon hire, and as a part of tenure and promotion decisions (Mamiseishvili, 2011b). Bias and discrimination during the tenure process is linked to the diversity climate of the HEI (Castañeda, Zambrana, Marsh, Vega, Becerra, & Pérez, 2015).

Acknowledging global competencies as an asset, and making them a part of promotion and tenure decisions would support and facilitate further diversification and integration of foreign-born faculty into HEI (Gahungu, 2011). Some faculty (typically underrepresented faculty), believe that the tenure process is not clearly defined, evenly applied or consistently achieved (Street, Maisto, Merves, & Rhoades, 2012; Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b; Street, Maisto, Merves, & Rhoades, 2012). Underrepresented faculty who have not achieved tenure, and believe the system to be unfair, often leave before tenure decisions are made (Lawrence, Celis, & Ott, 2014). Many foreign-faculty are left with the belief there are major obstacles to their continued success, such as discrimination, disappointment and invisibility (Lawrence, et al., 2014), and the experiences of a faculty member can dramatically change based on their gender, ethnicity, class, nationality, sexuality and discipline (Bailey & Helvie-Mason, 2011).

These differences may contribute to higher attrition rates for foreign-born faculty than that of American faculty. Some research (Kim, et al., 2012) has found foreign-born, untenured faculty are more likely to depart their institution before attaining tenure than other faculty. Concerns for the tenure process itself is one of the most significant reasons faculty leave their campuses before tenure (Lawrence, Celis, & Ott, 2014). Sensitivity to parity and transparency in the tenure process are important components of job satisfaction for faculty (Castañeda, et al., 2015; Lawrence, et al., 2014).

Retention of Foreign-Born Faculty

Research has shown that work satisfaction is the most studied factor of turnover (O'Meara, Louder, & Campbell, 2014), and while the factors that contribute to retention and work satisfaction are not well understood, there is a relationship between the work satisfaction and retention, and dissatisfaction with any area of faculty work is correlated to an intention to leave (Lawrence, et al., 2014). Underrepresented faculty who believe their institutions are not supportive leave in greater numbers (Castañeda, et al., 2015; Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b; Sabharwal, 2011a; Sabharwal, 2011b). Faculty searches and the turnover resulting from faculty departures are very costly, and can delay the work of an institution (O'Meara, et al., 2014). Some recent research (Lawrence, et al., 2014) does indicate that foreign faculty base their decision to leave on organizational factors, but each of the factors addressed may have an impact on the retention of all diverse faculty, as the strongest predictor of intent to leave an institution is overall work satisfaction and institutional control (Castañeda, et al., 2015). Many early career international faculty are unsure about whether they will remain at their current institution (Kim, et al., 2011), and the cost of replacing faculty who choose to leave are significant (Kaminski & Geisler, 2012).

Research on the stay rates of immigrants who earn their doctoral degrees in the United States is of some importance. As of 2009, 66% of foreign students who came to the United States to earn their doctoral degrees were still in the United States 10 years later (Finn, 2014), although this percentage varies greatly depending on the country of origin (Finn, 2014). China, India, and Iran have some of the highest stay rates, while Saudi Arabia, Thailand, and Jordan

are among those with the lowest stay rates (Finn, 2014). Overall, the stay rate for all foreign doctoral recipients remaining in the United States was 64 percent five years after graduation; and 66 percent for those who graduated 10 years earlier (Finn, 2014).

HEIs must acknowledge the critical role of diversity and campus climate in the achievement of institutional excellence. Faculty diversity issues can no longer be tackled simply by hiring a critical mass of underrepresented faculty (O'Meara, et al., 2014). Studies that highlight the differences in productivity in teaching and service between U.S. faculty and foreign-born faculty suggest institutions need to do more to support foreign-born faculty so that they can be a resource for the institution (Kim, et al., 2011; Mamiseishvili & Rosser, 2010). Once goals and critical issues have been identified, administration must provide professional development and skills training to support the needs of individual faculty members (Childress, 2010).

Conclusion

Earlier research studies had concluded that further research was needed to determine the reasons why foreign-born faculty are less satisfied in the workplace than their American counterparts (Constantinou, et al., 2011; Sabharwal, 2011b). The theoretical implications of these findings supports the need for a new framework specific to foreign-born faculty members (Mamiseishvili, 2011a; Mamiseishvili, 2011b). An alternative means of predicting job satisfaction and retention must be developed for foreign-born faculty members in addition to an alternative framework for better understanding contributors to work satisfaction. Future studies of foreign-born faculty must use different methods of assessing work satisfaction and consideration given to potential confounding variables. Until then, there will be significant implications for the continued recruitment of skilled international workers (Christensen, et al., 2011; Shah, 2011), and retention of them (Corley and Sabharwal, 2007). Given the current political climate and the unknown visa implications for foreign-born in the United States, the continued recruitment and retention of foreign-born faculty will continue to be a concern. Colleges and universities continue to expand their global reach, to diversify and to become more inclusive. Therefore, understanding the needs of foreign-born faculty will continue to be a necessity.

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