

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Influences of International Exchange Programs and Research Engagement on Faculty Development in Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the significant effects of their satisfaction with international exchange programs and their participation in international research activities on faculty members' professional development within higher education institutions. The main objective of this study is to find out the considerable correlation between faculty members' professional advancement and their satisfaction with international exchange programs. Results indicate that faculty development is highly influenced by satisfaction and participation in international research activities. In this research paper, survey data from various departments across multiple Chinese universities is quantitatively analyzed. Purposive sampling was utilized in this starfield to gather the intended respondents. The findings highlight the significance of exchange program quality and content and the benefits of active engagement in global research. The study also focuses on how faculty members' global experiences enhance their innovative teaching practices, research output, and professional development.

INTRODUCTION

The global economy is intertwined, and progress in science and technology influences politics, culture, and education worldwide (Beelmann and Lutterbach, 2020). Based on the findings of the World Development Report, from 1889 to 1999, developed nations shifted towards Knowledge-based economies by emphasizing four approaches: implementing an economic framework, nurturing a skilled workforce, developing a varied information network, and fostering an effective national innovation system (Clarke and Gholamshahi, 2018). Acquiring education

is vital in implementing these plans as it shapes a proficient workforce and fosters creativity. In today's world, nurturing talent has emerged as a critical priority for nations and areas, with educational institutions worldwide emphasizing the development of Students' global competencies and abilities (Jam et al., 2011; Zheng et al., 2019).

Participating in exchange programs significantly contributes to the growth of faculty members' careers beyond academic trips, as noted by Perkmann et al. (2021). These initiatives support sharing teaching approaches, research methods, and networking

opportunities, as emphasized by (Wu and Zhu, 2023). Through these interactions, educators benefit from various experiences, shaping their teaching and research methods and enhancing their impact on their institutions. Hence, this research aims to explore how faculty members' satisfaction with programs impacts their advancement, potentially shaping their academic identity and influence.

Additionally, this study delves into how participating in research activities contributes to the development of faculty members. Getting involved in global research broadens connections, enhances research capabilities, promotes comprehension, and strengthens the capacity to tackle worldwide challenges. This part of our study illustrates how engagement in research influences the journeys of faculty members, enhancing their roles as educators, innovators, and leaders in their respective fields (Bautista and Ortega-Ruíz, 2015).

In our study, we endeavor to explore the intricate interplay between educators' international engagement and their professional growth. Our focus revolves around two pivotal inquiries: firstly, the impact of satisfaction derived from international exchange programs on teacher professional development, and secondly, the influence of participation in international research on professional growth. By exploring these questions, we aim to offer perspectives on enhancing experiences to foster a vibrant, creative, and interconnected academic environment. This study contributes to the conversation surrounding faculty growth in education. It presents recommendations for colleges and universities seeking to leverage the benefits of academic involvement to enhance their faculty members' career development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

International exchange initiatives are commonly recognized as playing a role in enhancing the development of educators. Such programs foster the expansion of networks, Cross-cultural competencies, and educational interactions, all of which greatly enhance their impact (Michl et al., 2023). Teachers often showcase teaching techniques and a broader global outlook as a result of engaging in programs, as Nielsen et al. (2022) noted. Similarly, Beelmann

and Lutterbach (2020) stress the importance of satisfaction in endeavors, indicating that positive encounters greatly influence One's interest in teaching and research methodologies.

Previous research has delved into the elements that impact the contentment of educators in study initiatives, such as the importance of backing from establishments, the advantages of intercultural exchanges, and how well program goals correspond with individual aspirations and professional ambitions (Madigan and Kim, 2021). Gomez et al. (2019) pointed out that the support institutions provide influences the growth and satisfaction derived from these programs, as mentioned by (Chi et al., 2019). In Contrast, Madigan and Kim (2021) emphasized the impact of cultural exchanges on teaching approaches and research viewpoints within faculty groups. Engaging in research activities greatly benefits faculty members. Contributes to their advancement. Engaging actively usually includes collaborating on research endeavors, joining conferences, and networking with society globally (Poquiz et al., 2023; Walshe et al., 2019). These interactions contribute to progressing interests and enhancing their institutions' research standing and capacities. Moreover, global research partnerships bring advantages like improved research output and standards as obtaining funding.

Engaging in research is best understood by recognizing the value of participating in research beyond one's institution, as supported by academic references (Fatima et al., 2023; Parsons et al., 2018). Therefore, scholarly sources indicate that involvement in research projects enhances Individuals' comprehension of research at a level that encourages collaboration across disciplines and enhances the applicability of research findings to tackle global challenges.

The literature thoroughly explores the advantages of exchange programs and individual research engagement. Nonetheless, there needs to be more understanding about how these elements synergize to boost the development of faculty members. This research seeks to address the gap by exploring how faculty members' satisfaction with exchange programs and involvement in research activities impact their growth in education settings. The

study aims to uncover how international academic engagement contributes to faculty development, offering insights that can inform policies and practices.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

The relationship between participation and professional development in universities is the main topic of the current research. The outline of the groundwork for examining the relationship between faculty growth and their level of satisfaction with exchange programs and research project participation is given. It helps lay a foundation for understanding the interactions using established theories and models. The foundation of our theoretical framework is the Adult Learning Theory (ALT), which emphasizes Knowles and Handy (1984) concepts and andragogy principles.

As per this theory, adults are viewed as individuals who guide their learning journey by leveraging their experiences (Knowles and Handy, 1984). This theory is significant in understanding how faculty members progress as it indicates that their development can be fostered by participating in problem-solving tasks that impact their professional environment. Faculty members can integrate knowledge and skills into their teaching and research approaches through hands-on learning experiences provided by exchange programs and research endeavors. A comprehensive framework emerges when these perspectives are combined, examining how faculty Member's professional development intersects with their satisfaction with exchange programs and involvement in global research endeavors. By bringing these approaches, we can see faculty growth as an idea shaped by adapting to different cultures, building social relationships, practical learning experiences, and sharing innovative concepts. Through this framework, the current study seeks to investigate how the dynamic interaction among these elements affects the development and progress of professionals. This research seeks to investigate how worldwide academic partnerships influence faculty members' advancement and uncover the mechanisms that drive development. We aim to improve comprehension of how universities can boost faculty growth through collaborations that ultimately enhance education.

Satisfaction with international exchange programs

The idea of feeling content about participating in exchange programs involves a range of experiences that can significantly influence the growth of a professional. In this scenario, satisfaction goes beyond being pleased with the program setup; it also encompasses finding joy in the chance for immersion, academic collaboration, and building professional connections while engaging in an exchange program (Bennett et al., 2011). Faculty members gain insights. Enhance their skills by participating in such experiences. These interactions play a role in refining their teaching techniques, research strategies, and overall worldview. Research has underscored the significance of these experiences for faculty members in honing their abilities and flexibility and fostering a mindset. These elements are integral to the growth of faculty members (Madigan and Kim, 2021; Sabbar et al., 2023).

Furthermore, participating in programs has been associated with an increase in creativity and advancement in the fields of education and research. This is because these initiatives expose educators to various teaching approaches and research frameworks. Developing approaches for designing content, overseeing classes, and carrying out investigations is integral to this educational process. Embracing diversity, interacting with settings, and respecting customs enhance the effectiveness of these endeavors (Babar and Ahmed, 2023; Beelmann and Lutterbach, 2020).

Engaging in exchange programs with partners helps broaden networks and strengthen collaborations. Faculty members benefit significantly from these interactions as they provide opportunities to work together on research projects published jointly and seek guidance from one another. The link between exchange programs that provide networking chances and the advancement in university staff member's careers and research productivity emphasizes the significance of program satisfaction (Nielsen et al., 2022). In light of this background, our study presents the following hypothesis;

Hypothesis (H1): Satisfaction with international exchange programs positively affects faculty

members' professional development in higher education institutions.

Engagement in international research activities

Participating in research goes beyond working within one's institution. It involves joining forces on projects, engaging in discussions, and attending seminars and conferences around the world (Jacolbia, 2016; Parsons et al., 2018). Research involvement showcases not dedication but a faculty member's passion for furthering knowledge and its real-world impact in their area of expertise. Walshe et al. (2019) suggest that taking part in research studies helps develop research abilities, exposes individuals to methodologies, and enhances problem-solving skills for global issues. Being involved in research means building partnerships that pave the way for academic exploration and creativity opportunities. Collaborating in research enhances the environment by offering educators access to resources, data, and diverse perspectives necessary for meaningful research. Involvement in research initiatives is intricately connected to career advancement opportunities, such as assuming publication responsibilities and spearheading global research initiatives (Borg and Alshumaimeri, 2012). Social capital theory provides insights into how faculty development connects with research involvement. Active participation in research communities boosts faculty members' social connections by providing opportunities for collaboration, mentorship, and access to Up-to-date information and technology. Beyond assisting academics in progressing, this social network also influences their researcher identity. Based on these findings, we propose the following hypothesis for our research.

Hypothesis (H2): Engagement in international research activities positively affects faculty member's professional development in higher education institutions.

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model indicating that (SIEP) Satisfaction with international exchange, (ERIP) Engagement in international research activities, and (FDHI) professional development in higher education institution.

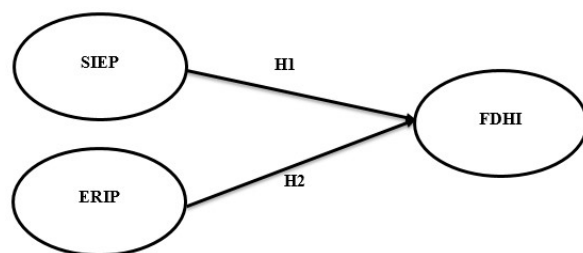


Figure 1: Research framework

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data from the many fatalities at various Chinese institutions were collected as part of the quantitative study design. The university's ethics committee accepted the ethical consideration before data collection to guarantee adherence to established research standards and ethical norms. This course safeguards participants' rights, privacy, and ethical integrity throughout the study. The researcher follows ethical guidelines to protect everyone's confidence and well-being throughout the study. Based on earlier research by Al-Rubaish et al. (2011) the research questionnaire (Instrument) was created. In 2011, the construct of Satisfaction with International Exchange (SEIP) was established, and three critical areas examined with this tool included networking chances, satisfaction levels, and exposure to cultures. Another construct of the questionnaire engagement in international research activities (ERIP) was developed by Nasir et al. (2021) to measure respondent engagement with international communities. The assessment tool includes five components linked to how people cooperate, the range of partnerships, and the research results. Faculty Development in Higher Education Institutions (FDHE) construct is imported from Kennedy (2016) study. Faculty growth was evaluated using a four-part scale examining teaching improvements, research achievements, and professional progress. A pilot study was conducted to evaluate the questionnaire's content and ensure reliability and validity, with the participation of 30 faculty members. Responding to the pilot study participants' feedback, some items were slightly modified, and others were removed to enhance clarity. Table 1 indicates the final survey consisted of a five-point Likert scale for all constructs, with one denoting "strongly disagree" and five signifying "strongly agree."

Table 1: Instrument design

Constructs	Items	References
Satisfaction with International Exchange (SEIP)	SEIP1: I am satisfied with the opportunities for professional growth the international exchange program provides. SEIP 2. The international exchange program supports me in advancing my professional goals. SEIP 3. The faculty members involved in the international exchange program treat participants fairly. SEIP 4. I have confidence in the faculty members leading the international exchange program. SEIP 5. The faculty members leading the international exchange program are effective in their roles. SEIP 6. I experience a sense of camaraderie and teamwork with fellow participants in the international exchange program. SEIP 7. I am satisfied with my supervisor's support	Al-Rubaish et al. (2011)
Engagement in International Research Activities (ERIP)	ERIP1. I Actively participate in collaborative research projects with international partners. ERIP2. I Contributed insights and ideas to international research discussions and forums. ERIP3. I Conduct comprehensive literature reviews to inform global research endeavors. I ERIP4. I am analyzing cross-cultural data sets and synthesizing findings for international audiences. ERIP5. I Present research outcomes at international conferences or workshops to foster global knowledge exchange.	Nasir et al. (2021)
Faculty Development in Higher Education Institutions (FDHE)	FDHE1. I am growing professionally within the higher education institution. FDHE 2. I took the initiative to support mechanisms for our institution which facilitate professional growth among faculty and staff FDHE 3. I can engage in challenging and meaningful tasks related to my role within the institution. FDHE4. I regularly experience a sense of accomplishment in my professional endeavors at the institution.	Kennedy (2016)

Sample and sampling techniques

Purposive sampling was utilized in this starfield to gather the intended respondents because the study was centered on the developed infrastructure of the eastern region of China, which is well known for its development, such as Guizhou Province. Participants were recruited by contacting institutions directly and through professional networks and connections. 34 universities out of 57 expressed interest in participating in the study. Managers received thorough explanations of the study's objectives before data collection. They received assurances that the data collected would be kept private and used only for those purposes. The information was translated into Mandarin from English and thoroughly examined by linguists to guarantee linguistic accuracy. Emails and WeChat groups were used to collect the data for the questionnaire.

The survey included details about participants' backgrounds, experiences with exchange programs, involvement in research initiatives, and areas of

interest for professional growth. Participants were requested to contemplate particular international experiences that profoundly influenced their career paths to augment the perception of context and immersion.

Invitations were extended to 350 faculty members across diverse departments to complete the online survey disseminated via email and WeChat. Thus, 265 responses were received. Fifteen were excluded due to incompleteness or uniformity in responses, resulting in a final dataset of 250 respondents. A statistical package for Social Science version 2022 was used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

Table 2 displays the study's participant demographics, which include a variety of genders, ages ranging from recent graduates to seasoned scholars, and disciplinary backgrounds. According to the data, the majority of respondents—roughly 64.40 percent—were male, and a considerable fraction

of respondents were under the age of 25. The highest participation level was a bachelor's degree. Approximately 25% of participants in the study come

from the faculty of education, with 20% from the business and management departments.

Table 2: Respondents profile (N=250)

Characteristic	Items	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	161	64.40
	Female	89	35.60
Age	Under 25	109	44.8
	25-35	78	32.1
	Above 35	56	23.1
Education	Bachelor Degree	123	49.2
	Master Degree	90	36
	PhD	37	14.8
Faculty	Education	63	25.2
	Social Science	49	19.6
	Physics	19	7.6
	Sport Science	22	8.8
	Business Management	51	20.4
	Engineering	21	8.4
	Bio-Science and Medical	25	10.0

Common method bias

The cross-sectional study's use of a single instrument raised concerns about the possibility of Common Method Bias (CMB). We took a few actions to resolve this. First, to limit the danger of CMB at the individual level and to keep respondents interested, we included a reverse item in the questionnaire design. Since a single component only accounted for 24.2% of the entire variance—well below the 50% threshold—Harman's single-factor test revealed no substantial CMB problem. We evaluated each construct's Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) to reduce CMB even more to ensure it was less than the suggested ten. This allowed us to look for multicollinearity. Furthermore, we used the conventional latent technique to compare the standardized regression weights with and without standard components, and we did not find a significant difference. This thorough approach confirmed the absence of common method bias in our study.

The measurement model

The present study assessed the measurement model for both validity and reliability. The values of factor loading (ranging from 0.62 to 0.96), Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values (ranging from 0.69 to 0.86), and Composite Reliability (CR) values (ranging from 0.94 to 0.96) all exceeded the recommended thresholds, highlighting the strength of

our convergent validity. Additionally, the cronbach alpha coefficients, which varied between 0.92 and 0.96, provided assurance regarding the reliability of the constructs.

We followed the guidelines outlined by Ab Hamid et al. (2017) to evaluate reliability. Henseler et al. (2015). This involved comparing the roots of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values and the correlation coefficients among the variables. Our findings indicated that the square roots of AVEs consistently showed significance compared to their respective correlation coefficients.

In Table 3, you can see that the correlation matrix displays relationships between factors with the elements representing the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values. The table also presents AVE values and squared correlations for three constructs: Satisfaction with International Exchange Programs (SIEP), Participation in International Research Activities (ERIP), and Faculty Development in Higher Education Institutions (FDHI). The correlation coefficient squared for the two structures is depicted in every column of the tables. For example, considering the variances of these structures, the shared variance between SIEP and ERIP is represented by a squared correlation coefficient of 0.2233. ERIP and FDHI displays a correlation of 0.3139, whereas SIEP and FDHI exhibit a correlation of 0.3532.

Table 3: Factors loadings

	Indicator	Factors loading	Cronbach Alpha	CR	AVE
Satisfaction with the International Exchange Program (SIEP)	SIEP1	0.9082	0.920	0.940	0.699
	SIEP2	0.9152			
	SIEP 3	0.882			
	SIEP 4	0.9175			
	SIEP 5	0.905			
	SEIP6	0.6385			
	SEIP7	0.6207			
Engagement in International Research Activity	ERIP1	0.9284	0.963	0.961	0.866
	ERIP2	0.9425			
	ERIP3	0.9149			
	ERIP4	0.9255			
	ERIP5	0.9434			
Faculty Development in Higher Education	FDHE1	.9628	0.945	0.960	0.857
	FDHE2	0.9316			
	FDHE3	0.8984			
	FDHE4	0.9096			

The coefficients mentioned in the text offer insights into the relationships between factors and the extent to which individual items contribute to variability within each factor. Table 4 showcases the Fornell

and Larcker criteria, where the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is positioned diagonally. This setup serves as a method for gauging the consistency of constructs and testing their distinctiveness.

Table 4: Fornell and Larkers

Construct	SEIP	ERIP	FDHE
SEIP	0.6992		
ERIP	0.2233	0.8668	
FDHE	0.3532	0.3139	0.8574

Squared Correlations; AVE in the Diagonal.

HETEROTRAIT-MONOTRAIT (HTMT)

Furthermore, the research examined the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) matrix. As mentioned in studies, all values were below the recommended threshold of 0.85 (Henseler et al., 2015). The results of this investigation provided evidence for the uniqueness of the concepts, indicating that no significant issues

were faced in terms of data consistency or differences as depicted in Table 5. The methods described by (Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Henseler et al., 2015) were used to evaluate credibility. The HTMT matrix values were all under the 0.85 limit, affirming credibility, and the square roots of the AVEs surpassed the corresponding correlations.

Table 5: Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT)

Construct	SEIP	ERIP	FDHE
SEIP			
ERIP	0.4866		
FDHE	0.6256	0.5866	

Path coefficients analysis

The researchers computed the path coefficients. I found them to be meaningful. It was observed that there is a correlation (H1 = 0.424) between satisfaction with the exchange program and faculty progress in education, as indicated by the study

results. This finding is consistent with research on institution faculty development trends (Lee-Hsieh et al., 2004). Therefore, H1 was deemed to be valid. The research hypotheses examined aligned with the findings in the literature (Acevedo-Osorio et al., 2020). Additionally, a significant connection was established

between participation in research endeavors and professional growth among educators ($H2 = 0.360$), underscoring the outcomes' importance. As a result,

the hypothesis received support, as depicted in Figure 2.

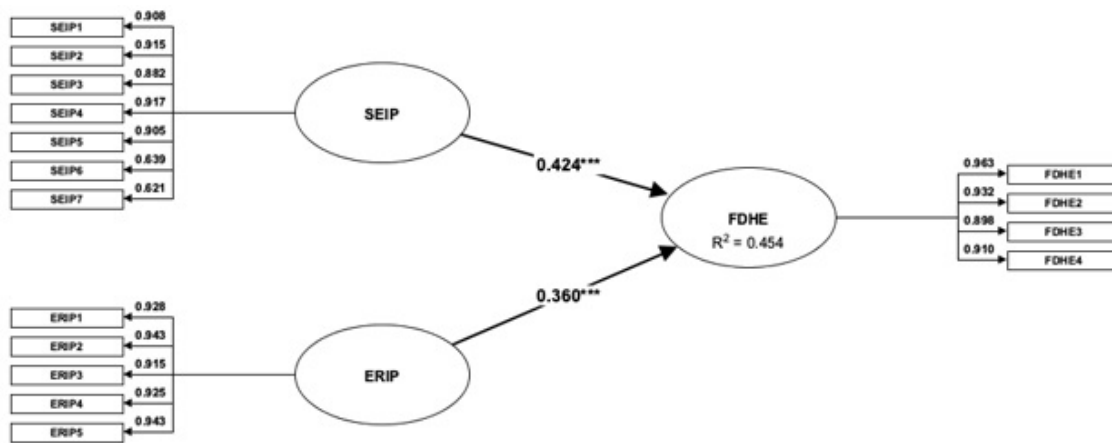


Figure 2: Structural path analysis

DISCUSSION

According to our hypothesis, the findings indicate a favorable connection ($H1 = 0.424$) between faculty members' satisfaction with exchange programs and their career growth. This is consistent with the definition of happiness in settings given by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) and the effect that happiness has on progress. These programs' varied effects on faculty development are highlighted by their emphasis on offering cultural immersion and networking opportunities. According to research by Lee-Hsieh et al. (2004), our study bolsters the idea that meaningful interactions impact educational innovation, academic output, and career advancement for college faculty. Engaging in these programs entails more than just signing up; exchange programs' nature and caliber help create a setting conducive to professional growth. As we had predicted, research initiatives greatly enhanced faculty growth ($H2 = 0.360$).

FINDINGS

The findings support the research conducted by Fang et al. (2017), diverse partnerships and regular collaboration are underway on the significance of research output. Our study highlights the influence of involvement in research on fostering innovation and professional development, underscoring the

importance of building a range of global connections and collaborative projects to advance existing knowledge. Participating in research endeavors through partnerships not only enhances the standing of educators but also strengthens their contribution to shared knowledge in academia, as indicated by the positive correlation. Based on our theory, our results suggest a link ($H1 = 0.424$) between how academic departments engage in exchange programs and their professional progress. Anderson and Gerbing (1988) discuss the importance of satisfaction in work environments and how it influences career development. The positive impacts of these programs on faculty members, such as promoting satisfaction and fostering connections and exposure to cultures, are emphasized. Our research results indicate that actively participating in activities can enhance teaching methods, boost research productivity, and promote career progression among university professors. This is consistent with the observations made by Lee-Hsieh et al. (2004), indicating that the quality and types of efforts are crucial in creating an environment for professional development beyond mere program participation. As per our theory, engaging in research has influenced faculty growth ($H2 = 0.360$).

The research supports the idea that immersive learning environments can enhance instructional strategies, boost efficiency in research, and help

college instructors grow. This implies that the caliber and scope of exchange programs are essential to create an atmosphere that promotes development beyond involvement. The findings are consistent with the study carried out by Fang et al. (2017), which highlights the significance of research productivity, diverse relationships, and ongoing collaborations. These results are consistent with Fang et al. (2017) that emphasized the importance of partnerships, regular collaborations, and productivity in research for advancement. Our research highlights the value of fostering a wide range of interests and demonstrates how involvement in research promotes creativity and professional development, adding to the body of knowledge. Involvement in research through partnerships not only enhances the reputation of educators but also elevates their impact on the collective knowledge base of academia, as noted by the positive association.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study highlights how participation in research projects and satisfaction with exchange programs might impact college instructors' career advancement. By analyzing the methods and ramifications of the findings, the researcher offers a perspective on the debate on attempts to advance faculty development. More research is needed to fully understand these interactions, focusing on the long-lasting effects and the blending of fields and cultural contexts.

Universities should prioritize improving the caliber of their student programs through experiences and networking opportunities. This can increase faculty satisfaction and assist them in developing professionally. Universities should also implement policies that assist and encourage academic members to engage in research by providing them with resources. This tactic can significantly enhance faculty development, which will increase the institution's competitiveness and reputation on a global scale.

Limitations and future research

Although the research has provided insights, it also comes with constraints. The way we establish causality is restricted by the sectional nature of the study. In the future, researchers could explore methodologies to delve into the enduring effects of faculty development, such as through exchange

programs and research initiatives. Additionally, the specific geographical location and academic discipline of the study participants may limit the generalizability of the results. By including a range of fields and cultural contexts in the investigations the researcher could deepen understanding of the phenomena being studied.

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