

Global Connectedness and Global Migration: Insights from the International Changing Academic Profession Survey

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Abstract

The Changing Academic Profession (CAP) international survey was designed in part to consider the effects of globalization on the work context and activities of academics in 19 countries or regions around the world. This paper draws from a subset of these data to explore the extent to which academics are globally connected in their research and teaching, and the ways this connectedness relates to global migration. Across multiple measures, immigrant academics (i.e., academics working in countries where they were not born and did not receive their first degree) were more globally connected than national academics (i.e., those working in the countries of their birth and first degree). Global migration by academic staff is clearly a major contributor to the internationalization of higher education institutions, yet there was no evidence these contributions led to enhanced career progress or job satisfaction for immigrant academics relative to national academics. The international expertise and experience of immigrant academics may not be sufficiently recognized and valued by their institutions.

Key words: immigrant academics, internationalization, workload, Changing Academic Profession survey

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Globalization and internationalization are dominant themes in higher education worldwide. Higher education policies, institutional mission statements and strategic plans, and the research literature abound with references to globalization and corresponding internationalization strategies (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010; Kehm & Teichler, 2007). Attempts to understand the prevalence, motivations, and consequences of global connectedness have focused predominantly upon students, with comparably less attention devoted to academic staff (Altbach, Reisberg, & Rumbley, 2009; Kim, 2009; Saltmarsh & Swirski, 2010). The purpose of this paper is to explore the intersections between global connectedness and global migration for academics as reflected in the Changing Academic Profession (CAP) international survey. In particular, we draw attention to differences in global connectedness for academics who are working in the countries of their birth and first degree (i.e., national academics) compared to those who are working in countries where they were not born and did not receive their first degree (i.e., immigrant academics). We are interested in the extent to which immigrant academics contribute to the internationalization agendas of their institutions and the ways these contributions relate to their work practices and career performance.

Globalization and Internationalization in Higher Education

Globalization is the context of economic and academic trends that are part of the reality of the 21st century. Internationalization includes the policies and practices undertaken by academic systems and institutions—and even individuals—to cope with the global academic environment. (Altbach & Knight, 2007, p. 290)

Universities have had a decidedly international focus and constituency since their inception in early medieval times, and this emphasis has expanded considerably in the present era of globalization and rapid technological advances (Altbach et al., 2009; Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010; Kim, 2009). The Bologna process, the Latin American and the Caribbean area for higher education initiative, the African Network for Internationalization of Education, and other such schemes are evidence of an enhanced focus on globalization and internationalization for universities worldwide. These schemes draw attention to the fact that “students and programs [are] moving across borders with increasing ease” (Altbach et al., 2009, p. 56) and recognize that “universities, the knowledge they produce, the academics they employ, and the students they graduate are directly and intimately connected to the global knowledge economy” (p. 27).

Branch campuses, off-shore programs, collaborative degree programs, and research exchanges are just a few of the many international opportunities for students and academics. Altbach et al. (2009) clarify that internationalization can be achieved at home or abroad:

Internationalization at home typically consists of strategies and approaches designed to inject an international dimension into the home campus experience—for example, by including global and comparative perspectives in the curriculum or recruiting international students, scholars, and faculty and leveraging their presence on campus. Internationalization abroad, on the other hand, calls for an institution to project itself and its stakeholders out in the world. Key examples include sending students to study abroad, setting up a branch campus overseas, or engaging in an interinstitutional partnership. (p. 24)

Immigrant academics can provide internationalization at home, while immigrant and national academics can both contribute to internationalization abroad.

Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010) document the rationale, motivations, obstacles, and risks for a whole range of internationalization strategies at home and abroad. They found 87% of the 745 responding institutions from 115 countries identified internationalization in their strategic plans or mission statements, 65% of the institutional leaders ascribed high importance to internationalization, and 78% reported that internationalization had increased in importance from three years prior. As Egron-Polak and Hudson noted, internationalization is linked to prestige and reputation, and is therefore a key feature of competitiveness for institutions and for nations.

The Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (2007) conducted a survey of internationalization within Canadian higher education institutions. All institutions identified internationalization as a priority and core mandate, which was most often reflected in a commitment to prepare “internationally knowledgeable graduates,” that is, to enhance students’ international and intercultural skills as part of their preparation to contribute productively and compete successfully in a globalized economy. The survey revealed a “deepening and broadening of activities to integrate an international dimension into [institutions’] core teaching, research and service functions” (p. 3). In Canada, as in many nations around the world, internationalization is recognized as integral to “institutional strategies, organizational approaches, and expected learning outcomes for students” (p. 3). More and more, the various policies and practices associated with internationalization have become critical to the mission of universities and higher education systems.

Academic Staff and Internationalization

Internationalization policies and practices in higher education institutions have implications for the academic staff who work in these institutions. “As the driving force behind teaching and research in higher education institutions, [academic] faculty play a pivotal role in campus internationalization” (Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, 2012, p. 14). For this reason, the Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement (2012) identifies policies and practices for academic staff as one of the six target areas for “comprehensive internationalization.” Unless academic staff are engaged in and committed to internationalization, institutions will be unable to achieve their internationalization goals. The International Association of Universities’ third global survey revealed that academic staff can be major drivers for internationalization within their institutions, and at the same time, limited interest, involvement, or experience of academic staff can be major obstacles (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010). As Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010) have argued, there is a need for “greater attention [to be] paid to ensuring the [academic] faculty members have the needed knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the wider world” (p. 63) in order to achieve the internationalization goals their institutions set.

Egron-Polak and Hudson (2010) identified the lack of recognition of internationalization work in promotion decisions as a particular risk in North America. Despite the importance of such recognition, the Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement’s (2012) survey of 1,041 U.S. higher education institutions found few institutions had guidelines for considering international work or experience in tenure and promotion decisions (8%); however, this amount

varied by institution type, with higher rates in doctorate-granting universities (25%) than master's colleges and universities (12%), baccalaureate colleges (11%), or associate's colleges (1%). Engaging in international research collaboration, taking students abroad, and other international activities require considerable time and effort, and may be considered "simply too risky in terms of career progress" (p. 15) in institutions where tenure and promotion criteria do not value these aspects of the institution's mission. This limited attention to internationalization work for tenure and promotion decisions also comes at a time when there has been a slight drop in the percentage of institutions that present awards to recognize academic staff for their international activities (from 21% to 16%). There were, however, sharp increases in the percentage of institutions that consider international background, experience, and interests when hiring academic staff, even in fields that are not explicitly international (from 32% to 68%).

Global Migration Within the Academic Profession

Hiring individuals from other countries for academic positions is an obvious means to enhance the international quotient (Knight, 2001) of an institution. There is a sense that "'international experience' is inherently valuable, because it increases exposure to new skills, ideas and ways of working, it facilitates the transfer of knowledge and creativity" (Seeber & Lepori, 2011, p. 1). Academics who have emigrated from elsewhere bring international experience that could positively affect the research, teaching, and service that they provide on campus (internationalization at home) and, at the same time, may predispose them to activities that can enhance internationalization abroad. However, without ongoing recognition for their international experience and the international activities in which they engage, it may be difficult for these new staff members to maintain these emphases, especially if they are in the early stages of academic careers.

Immigration levels are high for academics relative to other professions due to the general trend for more highly educated individuals to be more likely to emigrate than less educated people as a result of employment opportunities, financial resources to pay the costs of migration, and immigration policies geared toward newcomers who are highly skilled and educated (Sriskandarajah, 2005). Various studies have considered the experiences of immigrant or expatriate academics (Fahey & Kenway, 2010; Hoffman, 2003; Richardson & McKenna, 2002), yet these individuals are still considered an "under-researched group" whose experiences are little understood (Richardson & McKenna, 2002, p. 76). Although higher education institutions prioritize internationalization, it is unclear how this affects the work lives and activities of immigrant academics relative to national academics.

Methods

A large-scale international survey on the Changing Academic Profession was administered in 2007 to document academics' professional backgrounds, work activities and perceptions, job satisfaction, and other considerations. Participants included 25,819 academics working in 19 countries and regions: Argentina (826), Australia (1370), Brazil (1147), Canada (1152), mainland China (3612), Finland (1452), Germany (1265), Hong Kong (811), Italy (1701), Japan (1408), Malaysia (1220), Mexico (1973), Netherlands (1167), Norway (1035), Portugal (1320), South Africa (749), South Korea (900), the United Kingdom (1565), and the United States

(1146). To the extent possible, randomized cluster sampling was used for each country or region to achieve broad representation according to institutional type, academic field, gender, and rank. A common questionnaire, with country-specific modifications when appropriate, was translated into the relevant language (or languages) for each country or region. (Further details regarding survey administration and preliminary reports from most countries are presented in Research Institute for Higher Education, 2008.)

For the purposes of this paper, we designated three groups of participants within the database:

- National academics whose current country of residence was the same as their country of residence at birth and country of residence at time of first degree ($N = 18826$ or 87.7%);
- Immigrant academics whose current country of residence differed from their country of residence at birth and country of residence at time of first degree ($N = 1479$ or 6.9%); and
- Other academics whose current country of residence differed from either country of residence at birth or country of residence at time of first degree, but not both ($N = 1153$ or 5.4%).

Each of the analyses in this paper compares the situation for national academics to that for immigrant academics. We are most interested in understanding the experiences and work activities of immigrant academics with international backgrounds compared to national academics employed in the countries of their birth. In this paper, we have excluded from consideration the other academics who immigrated prior to completion of a first degree and those who travelled abroad for a first degree before returning to their home countries because we felt their situations could be quite different from those who immigrated after receiving their first degrees and were now working in universities in countries where they had not been born and had not completed their first degrees.

Given the unequal sample sizes between the two comparison groups, all analyses in this paper use a random sample of the national academics ($n = 1479$) to compare to the full group of immigrant academics ($N = 1479$). We did not control for completeness of the data sets, so individual analyses have comparable but not identical sample sizes. All immigrant academics were employed full time, as were all national academics selected for these analyses.

The immigrant academics group includes 58 individuals who currently reside in Hong Kong with residence at birth and residence at first degree as mainland China. There were no evident differences in the output from our analyses when we considered these individuals as immigrant academics or excluded them as “other academics.” Given that these individuals explicitly identified a change in their country of residence, we present these individuals as immigrants even though Hong Kong is a special administrative region within the People’s Republic of China. The divergent governance structures and education systems for Hong Kong and for mainland China warrant different treatment of academics in the two regions. We also note that in their preliminary overview of the Changing Academic Profession data for Hong Kong, Postiglione and Tang (2009) specifically compared Hong Kong academics who lived in China at birth with those who lived in Hong Kong at birth. They furthermore reported that mainland China is “an increasing source of recruitment of academics into the profession” (pp. 241–242) in Hong Kong. Since these are the scholars selected to report from Hong Kong, we felt that it was appropriate to follow their lead and distinguish Hong Kong academics who were born

in Hong Kong from those who were born in China. There were no participants currently employed in China who were born and had earned a first degree in Hong Kong.

Global Connectedness

Consistent with prevalent institutional emphases on internationalization, participating academics as a whole displayed a high level of global connectedness in their scholarship and their teaching. Most characterized their scholarship to be international in scope or orientation (63.1% for the current year). Many collaborated with colleagues in other countries as part of their research efforts (56.0% in the current year). A substantial number had coauthored publications with colleagues from other countries ($M = 16.3%$ of their publications in the past three years). Some had received a portion of their external funding from international organizations ($M = 8.8%$ of their funding in the current year). They published a high proportion of their work in other countries ($M = 40.6%$ of their publications in the past three years). Much of their teaching was also internationally focused. Specifically, most participants indicated they had emphasized international perspectives or content in their courses that year (67.9%). Some had taught courses in other countries that year (13.7%). Given the extent of their global connectedness, some had considered moving to academic positions in other countries (28.0%) and some had even initiated concrete action to make such moves happen (10.9%). Several had spent time since their first degree in a country other than the country where they had received their first degree or were currently employed ($M = 2.2$ years). As well, the participants felt more strongly affiliated with their disciplines or fields than with their institutions: 90.5% rated affiliation to their discipline or field as important or very important, whereas 60.9% rated affiliation to their institution as important or very important. The various measures provided considerable evidence of a globally connected academic work force.

Personal biographical details influenced the extent to which these academics were globally connected. In particular, we found noteworthy differences between immigrant and national academics. Across multiples measures of global connectedness, we found immigrant academics were more globally connected than national academics.

A higher percentage of immigrant academics ($M = 70.7%$) compared to national academics ($M = 55.1%$) perceived their research as international in scope or orientation; however, this effect size was small ($U = 593575$, $Z = -7.94$, $p < .001$, $r = -.16$). Specific measures of the international scope of participants' research included information about the prevalence of collaboration, co-authorship, and publication across national boundaries. Research by the immigrant academics was more likely to cross national boundaries in each of these ways than research by the national academics (with moderate effect sizes for each statistical comparison). Immigrant academics were more likely to collaborate with international colleagues (70.1%) than were national academics (41.1%), $\chi^2(1) = 218.9$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .29$. Hence, it is not surprising that immigrant academics were also more likely to coauthor with colleagues located in other countries ($M = 21.3%$ of publications in the past 3 years) than were national academics ($M = 10.6%$ of publications), $t(2313) = -10.1$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .41$. Immigrant academics also published a higher percentage of their publications in other countries ($M = 49.5%$ of publications in the past 3 years) than national academics ($M = 30.4%$ of publications), $t(2332) = -11.3$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .46$. As well, immigrant academics had received a higher percentage of their funding from international organizations ($M = 10.6%$, $SD = 26.3$) than national academics ($M =$

6.7%, $SD = 19.8$), $t(1870) = -3.70$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = 1.7$. Across all these measures, the research of immigrant academics was clearly more international than that of national academics, although there was only a small effect size for the differences in self-ratings of the international scope or orientation of their scholarship and the portion of external funding from international organizations. It seems that global migration by academic staff is a major contributor to the internationalization of scholarship and institutes of higher education.

There were small effect sizes for the differences between immigrant and national academics in terms of the international focus of their teaching. Immigrant academics ($M = 73.4\%$) were more likely to emphasize international perspectives or content in the courses they taught than were national academics ($M = 62.5\%$), $U = 722438$, $Z = -7.36$, $p < .001$, $r = -.14$. Immigrant academics were more likely to have taught courses abroad during the current academic year ($M = 19.4\%$) than were national academics ($M = 8.2\%$), $\chi^2(1) = 71.0$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .16$. Small effect sizes were associated with statistically detectable differences on both measures of internationalization of teaching activities.

Beyond teaching, collaborating, or publishing in other countries, there were also moderate effect sizes between immigrant and national academics in their propensity to consider international moves for work. Immigrant academics were more than twice as likely as national academics to have considered moving to an academic position in another country (39.3% vs. 16.6%), $\chi^2(1) = 179.1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .25$. The difference was even more striking for those who had taken concrete action to initiate a move to an academic position in another country: 17.9% of immigrant academics had taken concrete action compared to 3.8% of national academics, $\chi^2(1) = 141.1$, $p < .001$, $\phi = .23$. The differences in these propensities toward international moves may be related in part to the differences in the participants' affiliations to the discipline or field compared to their affiliation to their institutions. Immigrant academics defined themselves as more highly affiliated with their discipline or field ($M = 91.7\%$) than did national academics ($M = 89.3\%$), $U = 876008$, $Z = -3.53$, $p < .001$, $r = -.07$. In contrast, immigrant academics were less highly affiliated with their institution ($M = 55.1\%$) than were national academics ($M = 66.7\%$), $U = 876185$, $Z = -7.34$, $p < .001$, $r = -.13$. While these effect sizes are small, the trend is evident.

For the most part, data from the Changing Academic Profession survey do not reveal whether immigrant academics are connected with the nation of their birth or first degree, or if they are connected with some other nation or nations. There is evidence, however, that immigrant academics had spent more time since their first degrees in countries other than the ones where they had obtained their first degree or were currently employed ($M = 3.3$ years, $SD = 5.5$ years) compared to national academics ($M = 1.1$ years, $SD = 3.1$ years). This difference is statistically detectable with a moderate effect size, $t(2309) = -13.6$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .50$. Hence it is clear that at least some of the immigrant academics were connected with the world, not just their home countries.

It is evident that the immigrant academics reported extensive international connections for their research and teaching that surpassed the kinds of connections reported by national academics. Clearly, immigrant academics are contributing more to the internationalization agendas of their institutions than national academics, in terms of internationalization at home and internationalization abroad (Altbach et al., 2009).

Global Connectedness and Other Work Factors

We also sought to explore any differences in workload, career progress, or job satisfaction among the respondents. The single-item measures of career progress and job satisfaction did not reveal any differences between immigrant and national academics, but there were clear differences in workload between the two groups.

Workload

Participants across both groups worked an average of 44.8 hr/week while classes were in session; this included an average of 18.5 hr/week for teaching, 14.5 hr/week for research, 2.8 hr/week for service, and 6.2 hr/week for administration. Immigrant academics worked about 3 more hours each week than national academics ($M = 46.6$ hr/week, $SD = 15.6$, and $M = 43.2$ hr/week, $SD = 17.6$, respectively), $t(2617) = -.11$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .20$. While classes were in session, there were no differences between immigrant and national academics in time devoted to teaching, $t(2625) = .511$, $p = .610$, two-tailed, or to service, $t(2545) = .885$, $p = .376$, two-tailed, but there were differences with a moderate effect size for time devoted to research, $t(2581) = -5.31$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .21$, and a small effect size for time devoted to administration, $t(2580) = -4.03$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .16$. Immigrant academics spent more time on research compared to national academics ($M = 15.8$ hr/week, $SD = 12.3$, and $M = 13.3$ hr/week, $SD = 11.6$, respectively), and more time on administration ($M = 6.8$ hr/week, $SD = 7.5$, vs. $M = 5.7$ hr/week, $SD = 7.0$, respectively). The difference was even stronger (with moderate effect sizes) when classes were not in session, with immigrant academics working 44.4 hr/week ($SD = 16.0$) compared to national academics working 39.1 hr/week ($SD = 19.9$), $t(2012) = -6.97$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .30$. This difference reflects more time devoted to research for immigrant academics (26.1 hr/week, $SD = 15.4$) compared to national academics (20.9 hr/week, $SD = 15.1$), $t(2263) = -8.06$, $p < .001$, two-tailed, $d = .34$.

Career Progress

The differences in academic ranks across nations limit the kinds of meaningful comparisons we could make about career progress. About half of each group was tenured (50.9% of immigrant academics and 50.4% of national academics). There were no differences in tenure rates between immigrant and national academics, $\chi^2(1) = .09$, $p = .766$.

Job Satisfaction

Participants were also asked to rate their overall satisfaction with their current jobs. The majority (65.4%) rated their satisfaction as high or very high, with no differences in the ratings between immigrant and national academics, $U = 1038835$, $Z = -.04$, $p = .969$.

Conclusions

The Changing Academic Profession survey provided considerable evidence of a globally connected academic work force. The increased emphasis on internationalization (Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, 2012; Höhle & Teichler, 2013) was reflected in the actions and perceptions of participating academics. There were differences, however, between immigrant and national academics. Across multiple measures, the immigrant academics were more globally connected than the national academics. The immigrant academics also worked longer hours, especially on research tasks. Despite these differences, which would be expected to favour the immigrant academics over the national academics, there was no evidence of differences between the two groups on measures of career progress or job satisfaction.

Internationalization initiatives for higher education institutions depend upon the commitment, engagement, and expertise of academic staff (Altbach et al., 2009; Center for Internationalization and Global Engagement, 2012; Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2010). Given the high levels of immigration within the academic profession, institutions can advance their internationalization quotients (Knight, 2001) by capitalizing upon the experience of immigrant academics and valuing the global connections of these scholars. Immigrant academics are well poised to contribute to internationalization at home as well as internationalization abroad (Altbach et al., 2009).

With such clear evidence of the global connectedness of immigrant academics, institutions should expect a higher yield in terms of career progress and job satisfaction, yet no such evidence was present in the Changing Academic Profession survey. It is not possible, however, to determine whether the absence of such benefits for these academics is the result of measurement limitations or prejudice.

The Changing Academic Profession survey included a single question to assess job satisfaction. General principles of measurement warn against reliance upon an individual item to measure a complex construct. While some research has shown that single-item measures of job satisfaction have acceptable validity (Nagy, 2002), other empirical studies have identified the limitations of reliance upon a single item (Oshagbemi, 1999). Specifically, Oshagbemi (1999) found a single-item measure relative to a multiple-item measure overestimated job satisfaction and underestimated both job dissatisfaction and indifference. Accordingly, results from the single item on the Changing Academic Profession survey do demonstrate the kind of “rosy picture” that Oshagbemi found, with 65.4% of participants rating their job satisfaction as high or very high. In fact, the ratings on the Changing Academic Profession survey were sufficiently high that a kind of ceiling effect may be at play, which could explain the absence of any differences between the immigrant and national academics.

There were also challenges with measuring career progress in the Changing Academic Profession survey. The only measure of career progress that we could use was tenure rates. About half of the academics held positions with tenure, regardless of whether they were immigrants or nationals. Academic rank is a clearer measure of career progress, however, the lack of comparability in academic ranks across the 19 countries means that career progress could be assessed only within individual countries and not at the broad international level. The scope of the current paper and the relatively low numbers of participating immigrant academics in some countries did not allow us to undertake these more detailed comparisons, which is a focus that could be taken up by the individual country research teams.

Despite these measurement shortcomings, it is still possible that career progress is stunted for immigrant academics due to some level of bias or prejudice. Based upon his review of published studies in Australia, the U.K., and the U.S., Shaikh (2005) identified an inherent bias that undermined the career progress of immigrant and foreign academics as assessed through peer review. He argued, “academics arriving into local institutions are likely to be seen as taking local jobs, increasing competition and winning an undeserved share of research funds. This makes it very difficult to rely on peer review for judging performance” (p. 26).

As Yang and Welch (2010) found, there is a strong pull to the “home country” for many globally mobile academics. Yet, anecdotal evidence suggests immigrant academics travelling to countries where they have lived in the past or undertaking research collaborations with scholars based in their former institutions may be perceived as selfishly focused upon ways to fund trips “home” to visit family and friends rather than contributing to the internationalization agenda of their institutions. There is an assumption that immigrant academics have not had to work as hard as national academics to establish or maintain these international connections, and hence the international work they do often goes unrecognized or remains undervalued. If institutions are committed to internationalization, then they need clear mechanisms to recognize, support, and reward the international experience and activities of immigrant academics on their campuses. Foregrounding the international experience and expertise of immigrant academics as part of hiring and promotion decisions, and rewarding the international contributions made by these academics throughout their careers are achievable objectives for institutions.

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