

Job Satisfaction of International Educators

DeWayne P. Frazier

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Through the power and strength of faith, I have been able to overcome many obstacles and live my dreams. The Lord has blessed me beyond any expectations and I am eternally grateful.

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raised me and guided me as a child. I would not be the man
I am today without their dedication and love.

ABSTRACT

JOB SATISFACTION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATORS

DeWayne P. Frazier

March 23, 2005

Job satisfaction is one of the most researched topics in the field of industrial psychology. This dissertation is an examination of job satisfaction among college- and university-based international educators in the post-September 11th era. Many international educators are contemplating early retirement or are leaving the field for different vocations. This study is the first comprehensive investigation of the job satisfaction of international educators.

A nationwide sample of international educators ($N = 361$) responded to a field survey. The researcher used a well-established instrument from the field of industrial psychology, the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS). The JDS had been tested extensively for validity and reliability through public and private sector studies. The instrument was modified to include international educators and institutional descriptive statistics. The questionnaire is one that is used to evaluate job satisfaction of

individuals who are in positions that have undergone change, thus, being a fit for international educators. The sampling technique utilized was a stratified random sample of all NAFSA regions in the United States. Data was collected through electronic mail distribution utilizing the method prescribed by Dillman (2000).

The researcher employed a hierarchical multiple regression analysis to examine the independent variables and their effect on overall job satisfaction (dependent variable). Variable entry into the regression analysis was based on the Hulin et al. (1985) Job Satisfaction Model. The results revealed which job dimensions are most satisfying and or dissatisfying to international educators. Five predictor variables (i.e., age, autonomy, feedback from agents, dealing with others, and retire or leave the field) explained 39% of the variance in overall job satisfaction. Implications for practice and future research is discussed.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This study addressed the effect of three classes of independent variables on international educator's job satisfaction within the context of a changing environment. The three classes of independent variables are international educator demographic characteristics, psychological states, and job dimensions. Locke (1976) explained that understanding job satisfaction is only possible through introspection: "Job satisfaction may be defined as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences" (p. 1300). The present study served to advance job satisfaction research by: (a) administration of a valid, reliable job satisfaction instrument to a sample group not previously studied in research; (b) modification of the Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) to include international educator characteristics and international education specific questions; (c) utilization of the Hulin (1985) heuristic job model as a

theoretical framework to study international educator job satisfaction; and (d) employment of a hierarchical multiple regression procedure to examine international educator job satisfaction.

Understanding job satisfaction can help an organization make important strides in productivity. In the 1930s, Hoppock (1935) stated that job satisfaction is "...any combination of psychological, physiological, and environmental circumstances that cause a person to truthfully say, 'I am satisfied with my job'" (p.47). Vroom (1964) defined job satisfaction as "...affective orientations on the part of individuals toward work roles they presently occupy" (p. 99). Organizations that have a high level of employee job satisfaction can be considered healthy. Relative to the education context, Wood (1976) asserted, "The health of an educational institution depends on the job satisfaction of its employees" (p. 58).

In a recent interview with the President of Association of International Educators: NAFSA, Dr. John Greisberger, addressed the job satisfaction issue:

Research in our field on job satisfaction has always been important. It is even more important in the post 9-11 era because of the impact that SEVIS, new visa regulations, and the issues of national security and global terrorism have had on our jobs, our clientele,

and our offices. Today, international educators work in a regulation dominated environment. However, excellence in the workplace demands that we continue to provide a wide variety of programs and services needed by our international students and scholars. How we balance these demands has a great impact on our job satisfaction.

(Personal Communication, April 4, 2004)

The Importance of Job Satisfaction

Researchers posited that job satisfaction has received more attention from scholars in organizational science than any other single topic (Cranny, Smith, & Stone, 1992).

In a review of literature about job satisfaction, Locke (1976) estimated that 3,350 articles or dissertations had been written on the general topic of job satisfaction. Cranny, Smith and Stone (1992) estimated that more than 5,000 relevant job satisfaction studies had been published. Job satisfaction is clearly one of the most researched topics in the field of industrial psychology.

Spector (1997) offered three reasons to clarify the importance of job satisfaction: (a) high levels of job satisfaction can be a sign of emotional wellness and mental fitness, (b) organizations can adopt a utilitarian perspective in which employee behavior can be expected to

influence organizational operations according to the level employee job satisfaction/ dissatisfaction, (c) and job satisfaction can be an indicator of effective organizational operations.

Smith (1992) equated general job satisfaction to a "river with small tributaries converging into ever-larger branches and eventually into a lake or sea" (p. 1). Smith postulated that satisfaction with specific facets of a job situation results in satisfaction with the job in general and, finally, with life itself.

Gruneburg's (1979) study linked job satisfaction to absenteeism and turnover. Job satisfaction, as an antecedent, correlates with two variables, absenteeism and turnover, which have negative impacts on organizational costs and productivity (Lawler, 1983; Vroom, 1964). These types of behaviors can be very costly to a business; therefore improving job satisfaction can have increased financial benefits. Researchers state that job satisfaction can improve the quality of working life (Friesen, Holdaway & Rice, 1983).

With respect to the purported relationship between job satisfaction and job performance, Judge, Thoresen, Bono, and Patton (2001) conducted an extensive meta-analysis ($N = 312$ samples) about the relationship between

these two critical organizational factors and concluded the mean true correlation between job satisfaction and job performance is .30, a medium effect size as specified by Cohen and Cohen (1983).

Ironson, Brannick, Smith, Gibson, and Paul (1989) discovered blood pressure to be higher at work than at home. This finding led Ironson (1992) to explore the relationship between job stress and health. The researcher stated the relationship between work stress and health outcomes has assumed increasing importance because of mounting health care costs, concerns about absenteeism and lost productivity, and morbidity and mortality. Ironson suggested that, to combat job stress, employers must improve employee job satisfaction. Other job satisfaction studies indicated job satisfaction, as it relates to job stress, is desirable for an individual's mental and physical health (Locke, 1976; Sandman, 1992; Smith, Kendall, Hulin, 1969). In general, job satisfaction can improve a person's overall health.

Exploring job satisfaction at a time when an occupation is undergoing transition is important. This study examined the job satisfaction of international educators, a position that is undergoing an unprecedented

level of change. Smith (1992) emphasized the importance of worker job satisfaction in at a time of transition:

The employees of the future will need to be adaptable, cooperative, and willing to accept change; they must work together productively. We have evidence that such people are likely to be satisfied with their jobs and their lives. (p.6)

The Role of International Educator

International education is one of most profitable and well-established educational enterprises in the United States. Former U.S. President Ronald Reagan had this to say about international education:

There is a flickering spark in us all which, if struck at just the right age...can light the rest of our lives, elevating our ideals, deepening our tolerance and sharpening our appetite for knowledge about the rest of the world. Educational and cultural exchanges...provide a perfect opportunity for this precious spark to grow, making us more sensitive and wiser international citizens through our careers.

(Ronald Reagan, The White House, May 1982)

According to the report by the Institute for International Education's *Open Doors 2004*, there are over 570,000 international students in the United States. This group is estimated to contribute \$12.9 billion dollars to the U.S. economy each year. The leading countries in sending international students to the U.S.

are: (a) India, (b) China, (c) Japan, (d) Korea and (e) Taiwan. The disciplines of study with the largest international student enrollments are business management, engineering, mathematics and computer science. Over 17,000 of the total international student population was enrolled in English as a second language programs in 2002/ 2003. *Open Doors 2004* also reveals that nearly 175,000 U.S. students studied abroad in 2002/ 2003 (Institute for International Education, 2004).

International education is a field that has long been populated by very committed and hard working individuals. The Association of International Educators: NAFSA divides its membership into five different sections: (a) Admissions Section (ADSEC), (b) Administrators and Teachers of English as a Second Language (ATESL), (c) Council of Advisers and Foreign Students and Scholars (CAFSS), (d) Community Program Section (COMSEC), (e) Section on U.S. Students Abroad (SECUSSA). These members are distributed over 11 regions in the United States and are known as international educators. Currently over 8,700 NAFSA members represent all 50 states and 60 foreign countries. For a more detailed explanation of NAFSA and the various content areas please see the definitions at the end of Chapter I.

Gary Althen (2003) explored the world of international education in the light of the changes resulting from the events of September 11th, 2001. He expected future changes to include more complicated visa procedures, decreased international student enrollments and increased problems with establishing and maintaining international programs. For example Bowen and Foley (2002) discussed the effects that the Student Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) would have on admissions offices at higher education institutions in the United States. They stated that SEVIS would have a negative impact on international student recruitment.

All these changes are resulting in an increasing level of job dissatisfaction across the field of international education. Mrs. Cherie A. Sawinski (personal communication, 2004), Advisor for International Students and Study Abroad at the University of Wisconsin - Superior, has been monitoring this trend over the past year and has documented responses to international list serves. Many educators feel that they are losing their professional identity and are now being forced to be immigration enforcers and not educators. Other problems noted are the difficulties in the amount of clerical work needed when international offices are already

traditionally understaffed. For the complete text of responses please see Appendix B.

Problem

International educator job satisfaction is a significant issue in the United States. Despite extensive research in the private and public sector about job satisfaction, there has not yet been a published study focusing attention on international educators. Research in this area is important for two reasons. First, job satisfaction is related to such important work-related outcomes such as personnel turnover (Dreher & Dougherty, 1980; Hulin, 1968; Hulin, et al., 1985; Lawler, 1983; Locke, 1976; Rosnowski & Hulin, 1992), decisions to leave an organization (Hom & Hulin, 1981; Cartsen & Spector, 1987), psychological withdrawal behaviors (Fisher & Locke, 1992) and decisions to retire (Hanisch & Hulin, 1990; Schmitt & McCune, 1981). Continuity and longevity are paramount in the position of international educator because there is a great amount of training needed for persons in the position to remain properly informed. Second, job satisfaction of international educators is important in light of the events of September 11th, 2001. It is important to assess

international educator job satisfaction in the current working environment.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to measure international educators' overall job satisfaction, identify key factors that determine international educator job satisfaction, and report the results in a way that can make a valuable contribution to the field. The independent variable categories addressed in this study were as follows: international educator's characteristics (e.g., gender, age, years of experience), psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness of work, knowledge of results), and job dimensions (e.g., skill variety, dealing with others). The dependent variable was a global additive composite score for overall job satisfaction.

Research Questions

The research questions addressed are as follows:

1. Do demographic characteristics influence international educator job satisfaction?
2. Do psychological states influence international educator job satisfaction?

3. Do job dimensions influence international educator job satisfaction?

This study addressed null hypotheses derived from the above research questions as described in the next section.

Hypotheses

This study examined the effect of three classes of independent variables on the job satisfaction of international educators in the United States. The independent variables were international educator's characteristics (e.g., gender, age, years of experience), psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness of work, knowledge of results), and job dimensions (e.g., skill variety, dealing with others). An analysis of a linear contribution of the designated variables specified a hierarchical multiple regression model described in Chapter III. The null hypothesis for the regression model (Cohen & Cohen, 1983) was:

$H_0: R^2 = 0$ in the population relative to the association between the specified linear combination of independent variables and international educator job satisfaction (dependent variable).

The null hypotheses for each of the independent variable categories were:

H1: There is no difference in mean international educator ratings of job satisfaction associated with demographic characteristics (e.g., gender, age, years of experience).

H2: There is no difference in mean international educator ratings of job satisfaction associated with psychological states (e.g., experienced meaningfulness of work, knowledge of results).

H3: There is no difference in mean international educator ratings of job satisfaction associated with job dimensions (e.g., skill variety, dealing with others).

To assist the readers of this study, the researcher provides operational definitions for terms related to job satisfaction and international education.

Definitions

The following definitions are offered to assist the reader in understanding the study:

1. ADSEC -- ADSEC is the Admissions Section of NAFSA. Its focus is on recruitment of international students and evaluation of foreign educational credentials for admission and placement into U.S. institutions. Most members of this organization are international admissions counselors.

2. ATESL -- ATESL is an acronym that refers to the Administrators and Teachers of English as a Second Language. This subsection of NAFSA is primarily comprised of English as a Second Language Teachers.

3. CAFSS -- CAFSS is an acronym for the Council for Advisors for Foreign Students and Scholars. This subsection of NAFSA is primarily comprised of International Student and Scholar Advisors.

4. English as a Second Language Instructor (ESLI) - These international educators have responsibilities in the teaching and/or management of programs which teach English to speakers of other languages.