

Beyond Deficit Narratives: Negotiating Teacher Identity Across Cultural and Linguistic Borders Among Internationally Educated South Korean Faculty in North American Higher Education

Abstract

International faculty is commonly defined as “those who have received their advanced degrees in another country and were born outside of Canada” (Yudkevich & Altbach, 2016, p. 2). However, such definitions often reduce international faculty to demographic categories. In this study, internationally educated South Korean faculty members (IESKFMs) are understood as professionals shaped by South Korean and Canadian academic and sociocultural contexts. The purpose of this study is to examine the shared experiences and challenges IESKFMs encounter in navigating academic culture and how these affect their teacher identity and interaction with students and other faculty members. Drawing on transnational feminist perspectives, this study challenges binary constructions of “home” and “host” cultures and instead conceptualizes teacher identity as fluid, hybrid, and continuously negotiated across transnational spaces. Central to transnational feminism is an emphasis on agency and resistance, positioning IESKFMs not as passive recipients of institutional norms but as active agents who strategically navigate, negotiate, and resist institutional expectations and cultural stereotypes. Using narrative inquiry, this study draws on participants’ lived experiences to understand identity formation as an ongoing and relational process. As an in-progress study, this research aims to contribute to broader conversations on transnational faculty in Canadian higher education and to address the underexplored experiences of South Korean faculty members, highlighting how they negotiate professional identity, belonging, and agency within a new academic environment.

Keywords: South Korean faculty, teacher identity, transnationalism, identity negotiation, higher education

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