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Faculty Perspective on Curriculum Internationalization

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ABSTRACT: *Curriculum internationalization in higher education affects faculty, as they design and deliver curricula. Therefore, related faculty experiences are important to consider for an effective internationalization process. This research aims to explore faculty insights, including the challenges they face, their identities, and curriculum internationalization opportunities. Narrative interviews of three female faculty members were then transcribed, and inductive, deductive, and thematic coding was used for analysis. This study uniquely integrates a radical feminist lens to critically discuss the power dynamics in curriculum internationalization processes in three higher education institutions in Uzbekistan and the U.S. Key findings demonstrate institutional barriers, including stigmatized sensitive topics that limit open discussions and hierarchies within the universities. Faculty positionality also affects their andragogical practices and approaches, as well as their perception of curriculum internationalization. Faculty discuss opportunities for inclusion, increasing global awareness, and curriculum decolonization. The findings highlight the need for institutional support and critical approaches in andragogy.*

Keywords: curriculum decolonization, curriculum internationalization, faculty perspectives, higher education, narrative inquiry

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INTRODUCTION

Curriculum internationalization is widely discussed and implemented in higher education settings across various countries (Dhar & Chakraborty, 2025; Eidson, 2025). It involves educational practices, international and intercultural exchange, curriculum and instruction redesign, and student support services according to international, intercultural, and/or global standards (Leask, 2009). It is associated with a global perspective that shapes both faculty and student experience. Even though the internationalization of curricula can address diversity and global awareness as well as challenge inequality, power dynamics, and curriculum colonization (Jones, 2022), more work is needed to ensure measures toward these goals. For instance, different research methods need to be implemented to understand the internationalization process across disciplines (Eftekhari, 2025).

Understanding the meaning of internationalization is crucial for faculty to navigate the process. Some faculty believe that internationalization is required because of the global and interconnected world, while others are resistant; a subgroup believe that internationalization should be intentional and should not replace local knowledge (Teshome et al., 2024). Faculty experiences and backgrounds are vital in shaping their perception of the process (Hammond & Radjai, 2022). Curriculum internationalization has been studied from students' perspectives and policy-making (Chikuvadze et al., 2025; Cuevas Álvarez et al., 2025; Liang, 2024; Miao et al., 2024). However, faculty perspectives, especially in terms of our ethics, identities, and values and the way in which faculty shape our experiences with curriculum internationalization, are less represented. Existing research does not focus on the identity-based dimensions of curriculum internationalization (e.g., Chikuvadze et al., 2025; Dhar & Chakraborty, 2025; Weisova & Johansson, 2022). Additionally, research that implements narrative approaches to analyze faculty perspectives of internationalization through their identities and experiences is limited (e.g., Eftekhari, 2025; Liang, 2024).

The purpose of this study is to explore faculty perceptions of curriculum internationalization in their work. The following research questions served as guides for this inquiry:

- What are the challenges faced by faculty when they are adapting curricula?

- In what ways do cultural, personal, and professional identities intersect with curriculum internationalization standards (processes)?
- What are the opportunities for faculty in terms of curriculum internationalization?

To analyze curriculum internationalization, this study integrates narrative inquiry and a radical feminist lens. As the process of curriculum internationalization is related to power dynamics in terms of knowledge production and curriculum design (Heleta & Chasi, 2023), we employ a radical feminist lens to explore these issues of power and inequality. Additionally, as this study prioritizes narratives of female faculty in transnational contexts, we employ a theoretical framework that validates women's experiential knowledge and considers research as an emancipatory act (Mies, 1991). This study therefore contributes to the theoretical knowledge and understanding of faculty identity and experiences in higher education. This paper highlights faculty approaches to ethical and inclusive curricula.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum internationalization evolves with globalization and higher education policies and priorities. This process of integrating global, international, or intercultural perspectives into the learning process (Leask, 2015) is a necessary response to globalization for many universities. Limited access to student mobility resulted in increased attention to the internationalization of the curriculum (Shahjahan et al., 2024; Weisova & Johansson, 2022).

The internationalization of the curriculum takes various forms, including internationalization through study abroad and transnational education (TNE) (Yue et al., 2025). Additionally, internationalization at home can involve the integration of international and intercultural aspects into the curriculum in the domestic environment (Beelen & Jones, 2015; Yue et al., 2025). It can also shape the content of the curriculum by balancing the local and international context (Chikuvadze et al., 2025). Thus, curriculum internationalization affects the way knowledge is shared and constructed; more specifically, it affects whose knowledge is prioritized within the curriculum (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020).

Challenges Institutions Face

In terms of the type of educational establishment, its location, and the perception of curriculum internationalization, various challenges may occur in the process of implementation. One of the challenges is misinterpretation of the concept, as it was inaccurately perceived as multiculturalism, leading to confusion among professors and students (Miao et al., 2024). Other challenges include resistance from the faculty (Teshome et al., 2024). Budgeting is another challenge, as the curriculum internationalization process requires collaboration and investment. A lack of funding is a barrier to international collaboration, as institutions do not have the required resources (Miao et al., 2024; Chikuvadze et al., 2025).

Another concern is related to external influence on the curriculum. As Shahjahan et al. (2024) state, there is not enough evidence on how colonial influence, power dynamics, and geopolitics shape the curriculum internationalization process and collaboration between institutions. However, it is no surprise that a patriarchal colonial process, such as the internationalization of the curriculum in its most prominent form, would have interest divergences (Gunier, 2004; Kolster & Westerheijden, 2020) not only within curriculum internationalization but also with the overall discourse pertaining to it. The canonization of knowledge frequently privileges male-dominated, Western intellectual traditions (Connell, 2007). Many fundamental texts and frameworks are disproportionately authored by men and grounded in masculinist assumptions about rationality, hierarchy, and objectivity (Harding, 1986). In this way, curriculum internationalization can be an act of extending patriarchal and Western norms across borders rather than challenging them.

Benefits of Curriculum Internationalization

Despite these challenges, the internationalization of the curriculum has the potential to transform education and positively impact it. Internationalization can make the curriculum more inclusive, and as a result, students are more engaged (Liang, 2024). A focus on social issues and inclusiveness may also attract more students and social change. Internationalization, as Liang (2024) notes, makes both curriculum and instruction more diverse, as different perspectives are integrated. Additionally, the use of technology for international virtual exchange as a part of curriculum internationalization helps students develop their intercultural competences (Cuevas Álvarez et al., 2025).

Faculty Perception

Faculty are an important part of curriculum internationalization, as they are key agents (Chikuvadze et al., 2025). However, their perceptions of curriculum internationalization are shaped by their experiences, backgrounds, and settings. Some faculty members express their dissatisfaction with internationalization, as it is influenced mainly by Western countries, from epistemology to formatting styles (Ma, 2024; Teshome et al., 2024). Faculty may have a positive perception of curriculum internationalization if they comprehend the concept of internationalization or have had international experience themselves. However, such educators are in the minority (Hammond & Radjai, 2022). Although all the faculty overall have the ability to view curriculum internationalization positively, much research in this regard prioritizes international faculty, with little gender-specific exploration (e.g., Lemana II et al., 2024). Thus, several documented faculty perspectives of curriculum internationalization prioritize viewpoints on student language/English proficiency (e.g., Lemana II et al., 2024) and positive effects on student world outlook and skills (e.g., Ma, 2024).

Understanding students' backgrounds is important for the meaningful internationalization of the curriculum. It can challenge colonial ideas, but it is crucial to recognize the geopolitical and political situation (Heleta & Chasi, 2023).

Student Perception

Although faculty are the focus of this study, we briefly note the student experience as well. A growing number of adjunct faculty members are present in institutions around the world (Barnes & Fredericks, 2021), and the role of doctoral students can range from aiding the faculty as a teaching assistant to being the instructor of record. Thus, we consider some student experiences through international teaching assistants, as this is the most prominently documented area regarding graduate instructors and curriculum internationalization. We define faculty as those who have the primary responsibility for instruction. Although international teaching assistants often face unique challenges, they benefit from cross-cultural professional development (Adebayo & Allen, 2020).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

As female faculty continue to be underrepresented and undersupported in internationalization processes (Tasci, 2021), this paper integrates a radical feminist lens to critically analyze female faculty narratives on curriculum internationalization. Radical feminism, often misinterpreted because of its name, focuses on challenging root causes of women's oppression, such as patriarchy and misogyny (Fahs, 2024), making it relevant for both narrative inquiry and the internationalization of curriculum discourse. Radical feminism studies power structures that make certain perspectives dominant and privileged (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020; Fahs, 2024). As this study highlights narratives of female faculty in the context of Uzbekistan and U.S. higher education institutions, radical feminism was selected so that we could pay attention to the ways in which patriarchy is more than a local systemic barrier for women in higher education spaces, particularly in curriculum internationalization discourse (Az-Zahra & Mustikawati, 2024; Cin et al., 2024). The internationalization of the curriculum is often a Western and patriarchal endeavor (Angervall & Simonsson, 2025; Mbah et al, 2024; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2021); we take this opportunity to decenter these in this narrative inquiry.

For the purpose of this study, we prioritize the following radical feminist principles: (a) patriarchy as the most deeply rooted system of domination (Fahs, 2024), (b) a call for structural transformation (Connell, 2007), (c) collective consciousness-raising as a political act (Mies, 1991), and (d) skepticism toward state and institutional neutrality (Harding, 1986). The authors of this study are personally aware of the hierarchical censorship and oppressive gendered expectations experienced by ourselves and our women colleagues. Although there are frameworks in internationalization discourse, we deliberately integrate a radical feminist lens as a quiet but visible emancipatory act in research (Mies, 1991) to empower our colleagues in their respective geopolitical spaces. We

believe in the intent of curriculum internationalization, but as we aim to improve curriculum internationalization practices, we must first explore its fundamental shaping and critique and dismantle its patriarchal nature if we hope to offer any equitable paths forward.

METHOD

The radical feminist lens embraces methodological practices such as qualitative interviewing that expose power and center women (Wilson, 2023). Similarly, narrative inquiry also centers on lived experiences (Sunday et al., 2020). Narrative inquiry is implemented in this study to analyze women faculty members' experiences in curriculum internationalization in higher education. Narrative storytelling allows people to rethink and reshape their understanding of their experiences, and it is researchers' responsibility to listen, collect, and retell these stories (Wei, 2023).

Our research team consists of five women: four doctoral students and one adjunct faculty member with prior full-time faculty experience. All have teaching and/or learning experience in Uzbekistan and the U.S. through transnational education (TNE). Among the students, three are adjunct faculty across undergraduate and graduate programs. Our team collectively conceptualized this paper, but only three provided narratives as participants. Of the three authors, two conducted the study and authored this paper. Therefore, we made the unanimous decision to acknowledge the contributions of the team in this manner (Researchers C, D, and E, respectively), and we present data from Author 1, Author 2, and Researcher C, whose narratives have been changed to pseudonyms in no particular order (Laura, Alice, and Amber). As researchers with differing faculty experience, we viewed narrative inquiry as a tool best suited to allow ourselves to be reflexive, open, and creative with responses, as well as most comfortable discursively with one another as both researchers and participants. With radical feminism (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020; Fahs, 2024) as our theoretical guide, we employed narrative inquiry as a tool that privileged situated, experiential knowledge. We leaned into this as we sought to tell our stories in a way that countered masculine notions of hierarchy and privileges more care-oriented epistemologies.

Data collection and analysis

Radical feminism allows us to confront the relationship between researchers and participants and reject the notion that the research process is objective and value-free (Harding, 1986). Although all participants and researchers are women, we acknowledge the power dynamics that exist across us on the basis of race and ethnicity (i.e., white, Black, ethnic Korean, Russian, and Asian), nationality (i.e., Uzbek, American), and professional and academic standing (i.e., PhD holder, Ed.D. students; graduate or undergraduate faculty). With radical feminist praxis in mind, to flatten the dynamics to the greatest extent possible, we prioritized students as taking the lead in design and authorship. All the researchers had been

collaborating together for approximately nine months prior to beginning the interviews. This helped the group learn each other's communication styles, work and family priorities, and overall concerns about the condition of women in our figured worlds. Our organization was not of competition or hierarchy but of relational knowledge of both the research process as researchers and the research itself as participants.

Data were collected through narrative semistructured interviews over a span of two months in Fall 2025. The questions guided our reflections on our experiences with the internationalization of the curriculum. We produced narratives and described our experiences, including challenges and opportunities. The interviews were approximately two hours long and were conducted both in person and via MS Teams. With consent, the audios were recorded and transcribed. As we listened to each other's stories, we allowed ourselves to have our roles as researcher and participant intermingle. We were in conversation and community with one another, with no one interview being exclusively of one person's story. We embodied our stories and held space for the delivery of whatever tone, word choice, or body language was necessary to process. We carried this practice into our data analysis as well.

Women's experiential knowledge is reflected not only in the documented narratives but also in our interpretation and analysis of them (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020). We met weekly for collective reflective memoing throughout the data collection process. Next, the interview transcriptions were analyzed using inductive coding to further interpret its possible meaning and deductive coding to connect narratives to the aforementioned radical feminist principles. Sample deductive codes included words and definitions for misogyny, empowerment, culture, emotional labor, and organization. Finally, we conducted thematic coding to group similar ideas under the same category or theme (Bihu, 2023).

Overall, 38 codes were identified (Figure 1) and ultimately grouped into eight themes to respond to the three research questions. All questions regarding the coding and grouping processes and the division into themes were resolved through dialog between the researchers. We viewed the data as both the researchers, concerned with following analytical methods, and participants, who were concerned with being properly represented through the member checking process. This standpoint continued to inform our collaboration as we wrote this manuscript. As some themes were somewhat related to one another, several are presented as subthemes to prioritize three main themes—one per research question. This was done to strengthen the breadth and depth of narratives shared in relation to our question instead of spreading the data too thin and detracting from the overall theoretically informed discourse. In Figure 1, we list the codes on the right and the corresponding themes on the left.

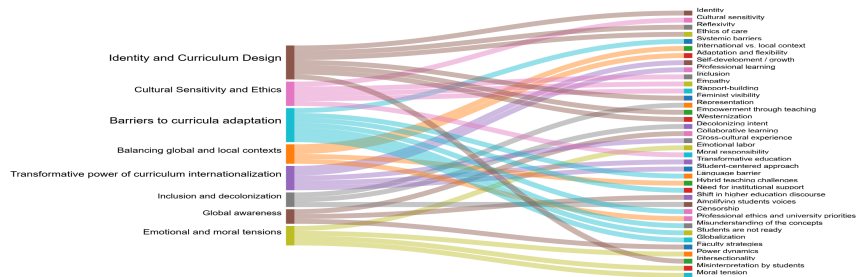


Figure 1. Data Themes and Codes

RESULTS

Barriers to Curricula Adaptation

Participants mention institutional, systemic, and cultural barriers during the curriculum adaptation process. With respect to public higher education institutions (HEIs) in Uzbekistan, we found that they are not flexible enough and are based on strict hierarchies within the institution, including classroom professor–student behavior. Describing the different mentality of the local students from her and the resulting challenges to andragogical innovation, Amber says, “My students assumed that the teacher is the one who talks and we are the ones who listen...they didn’t feel as if they had the social permission to speak.” Laura also reflects on the experience by stating that “Instead of student-center, it became student-centric at some point. Because, again, internationalization occurred, it was not implemented properly. I think because it was a different perception and different understanding of this process.”

Language is also mentioned as one of the challenges of curriculum internationalization. Laura notes that language barriers are common when delivering a class or communicating with colleagues. She adds:

I prefer to speak English, mostly because, where I studied [in Uzbekistan], the medium of instruction was always English, and rational that it's quite difficult for me to use other languages in a professional setting. But still, people look at me and they tell me that I am Westernized.

Some universities also have a hierarchy among faculty, which also serves as a barrier to implementing changes and innovative approaches. As Laura mentions,

I have to say that there is a hierarchy: first, apart from the administration, if you look only at professors, how it works is that first, foreign professors, then, professors with PhD, then those with Master's degree and lots of years of experience. And the last in this hierarchy are yesterday's Master's degree holders.

Amber confirms this by adding,

There is definitely that stricter hierarchy...it was also interesting for me, going through the Master's degree. Because I feel like, as a foreigner, I was artificially and unfairly placed at the top of a hierarchy, but I d have the qualifications for that.

Additionally, in some HEIs, topics such as LGBTQ+, politics, and race are stigmatized because they are “sensitive” or government restricted. One explanation provided by the institutions is that “students are not ready” or “students may complain.” There is a lack of institutional support in introducing changes into the curriculum. According to Alice, “...faculty and instructors are now being told what they can and cannot say.” Laura also added, “[the] university even tells us which topics not to discuss.” Alice responded,

For me, as staff and as faculty, I remember there being a lot more conversations around, that we need to make it so that students are not angry with us. We used to have conversations around how can we support a student's development and help them be who they want to be... [now,] what keeps us from being sued? What keeps our enrollment high?

This neoliberal approach represents a departure from care-oriented work that Alice prioritizes in her praxis, with this representation closely aligning with patriarchal values.

A budget is another stated institutional barrier. Alice is a proponent of the internationalization of the curriculum as a path to intercultural competency and critical consciousness development. However, she reports fewer person-centered and more economy-centered reasons as to why university leaders may prioritize international student enrollment. When discussing the disconnect between individual and systemic preferences for the internationalization of curriculum, Alice noted, “... from an internationalization perspective in response to globalization, international students are the most attractive students to have, because they pay the most money and international students are typically required to have sponsorship to be enrolled.” This raises a question of the reasons behind the internationalization of the curriculum. In addition, internationalization requires finance, and as mentioned by Amber, some HEIs may struggle with finding investments.

Emotional and Moral Tensions

Apart from the abovementioned challenges, participants also focus on emotional and moral challenges in their narratives. Emotional labor comes with curriculum internationalization, as faculty, particularly female faculty, have to balance internationalization with cultural constraints and care with authority. Anxiety, uncertainty, and questioning of one's role and purpose were mentioned among the issues. As mentioned by Amber, “I was looked at as an expert, and I knew that I was not that,” or, as Alice reflects,

... the way in which learned to become an instructor is the way in which I should not be an instructor [these days]...Before, I tried to ask students

questions to get them to think further. So, instead of saying “Oh no, you’re wrong, this is bad,” I might say, “Well, what about this?”, “Have you considered this?”, or I might say “This is interesting,” or something to have the students think more. Now, if I do that, and related to diversity, equity, or inclusion, I run the risk of a student reporting me.

These two statements highlight internal conflict and moral tension between the requirements of the educational institution and a faculty member’s personal expectations. As a result, faculty must constantly reshape their andragogical approaches so that they do not contradict new policies and regulations, thus reinforcing masculine intellectual traditions.

Balancing Global and Local Contexts

Another concern is related to local realia and global trends in education. Balancing between international educational standards and the local Uzbek post-Soviet system is a challenge that Laura mentioned. Amber remembered a situation from a class:

... a Socratic seminar, one of my favorites, I love it... I tried to do that with my students, and I quickly realized that this style does not work here. Because what I didn't realize is Socratic seminar requires that the social hierarchy be intentionally broken, like the teacher is sitting in the circle with everybody else, and the teacher acts more as a guide of a conversation. I took the Socratic seminar style, which I loved when I was a student, and I added in a lot of scaffolding and a lot of guidance to get the students to the point.

As the Socratic method originates in a masculine, Western epistemology, even with local adaptation, this process may still reinforce patriarchal processes that mitigate epistemic transformation.

With respect to students’ ideological beliefs and curriculum internationalization, Alice reflects the following:

Even though I'm challenging people to know that ideologies may be different, and okay for us to not always agree, I do think important for us to know the time in which we should take a stance that something is globally a problem...just because something you like does mean that it has to be something that disappears.

In general, we recognize the need to create learning experiences for students that are both equitable and context sensitive, even when challenges are present when the often neoliberal internationalized learning curricula are implemented. Structural transformation is necessary.

Identity and Curriculum Design

In alignment with the personal being political, it is impossible to separate the professional identity of a faculty from curriculum design. Global mobility, personal stories, and andragogical principles shape the way we teach. As Laura mentions,

Even though I grew up here, never studied in a local setting, except for school. My Bachelor's and Master's degree all come from international settings. that is why I'm probably different. That is why it really affects the way I teach because my universe just shaped my outlook... I consider the university as a place where identity is shaped, where you're taught to think critically.

The positionality of the faculty also informs the curriculum internationalization process, informing our coercion and consent to the process. "I have this different and complicated positionality where I'm both an insider, but mostly an outsider, because I do not speak a local language and I look like locals," continued Laura. Alice reflected on her experience in serving as an instructor but not curriculum designer for one course by saying, "...the first class had things like Black Lives Matter in it; I was the only Black person teaching, so I had students who thought I wrote that." Students both praised and ridiculed the curriculum, and at times, the instructor, based on their perceptions of the content and the deliverer. Amber discussed a similar notion:

I am an American...And that instantly means that any preconceived stereotypes or ideas they have about America, they instantly apply to me with whether they're correct or not instantly like from the first meeting, those are applied to me.

It is an intersection of cultural, personal, and professional identities shaped by patriarchal societal and educational systems that inform the internationalization of the curriculum, as it affects both the way the curriculum is designed and how students perceive change.

Cultural Sensitivity and Ethics

Another topic that is repeated through the participants' narratives is cultural sensitivity. We reflexively note how important ethical awareness is in cross-cultural communication. In regards to culturally sensitive topics, Amber points out, "... it is never my goal to teach my students what to think, my goal to teach students how to think for themselves, how to think critically." This is an approach that is based on ethics of care, as she tries to create a safe space for students to develop their skills while maintaining mutual respect, regardless of one's personal views. It is also a challenge to masculinist assumptions about objectivity and competition.

In continuing to reflect on points of deviation from privileging Western male-dominated epistemologies, Alice realigns her work to increase the collective consciousness around faculty participation in curriculum internationalization:

...Because everything I had learned about the U.S., it was [at times] erasing who I am. a part of how the U.S. operates. But then I go to these other places and I see cultures preserved, I see cultures evolving. I see cultures blending. I learn about these different things, and I am fascinated, which eventually leads to me going to go work in South Korea, leads to me deciding to get my PhD, to kind of emphasize international education; leads to me trying to have my research to blend domestic and international diversity as ways that prioritize both.

Amber reflects on the importance of culture and international experience: “Even if I have the very best local teacher who has been teaching for 50 years with effective methodologies, if I place her in an international school, she likely will have issues fitting in with the culture.”

To counter the centering of masculinist assumptions about rationality, gender, and objectivity, we also attempt to address dilemmas related to the discussion of topics such as gender, religion, or sexual orientation. One of the solutions proposed by Laura is to first build trust before discussing sensitive topics with students: “When I designed the syllabus, I tried to put all the sensitive topics like tolerance or gender inequality somewhere in the middle or by the end of the course, when students already know me and they’re more comfortable talking.” This is how cultural sensitivity could be integrated into curriculum design and delivery. Regarding ethics and discussions around potentially sensitive topics, Amber reflexively adds, “I would take the position of facilitating, but I would never share my personal views, because, as a teacher, what you say, sharing your opinion has more impact.”

Amber’s unwillingness to share her personal counternarrative with the dominant, patriarchal intellectual tradition in shaping curriculum internationalization aligns with masculine assumptions about objectivity. Although Amber also expresses desires to subvert views of knowledge construction and hierarchy, she may unintentionally reinforce the dominant narratives for which she seeks to disrupt.

Transformative Power of Curriculum Internationalization

Curriculum internationalization is an opportunity to introduce changes to the curriculum and to make it a transformative experience for both students and faculty. We mention concepts and processes such as “opportunity to grow and broaden one’s horizon,” “opportunity to connect with students,” “a doorway between local and international,” “research collaborations,” and “knowledge and experience” when we discuss opportunities.

Additionally, we discuss inclusion and/or decolonization, a desire for structural transformation and a skepticism toward state and institutional neutrality. “I want to empower my students on my own example, to show them

that society's opinion does not truly matter for me if it oppresses me,” proclaimed Laura. Alice added:

...as a person who likes to make my students feel seen, and I want to celebrate and acknowledge who they are individually and collectively... increasing the enrollment, but if I'm contributing in the system, I try as best as I can to contribute in ways that I am morally and individually aligned with. I want to humanize the experience, and I think that faculty have that as something they can choose to do. it does come with a bit of self-sacrifice and honesty.

Inclusion and Decolonization

Instead of continuing to push for Westernized and patriarchal views of learning, productivity, and employability, we want to design our syllabi in a way that amplifies the voices of students while acknowledging their differences. Laura shared, “...it was considered as colonization of the curriculum and now whenever I do, some people say it is westernization and that this is big propaganda of Western values.” Therefore, it is important to include different perspectives in knowledge production to challenge Western dominance. Apart from curriculum decolonization, we also advocate for being role models, especially for female students. Amber mentioned:

...from the perspective of students, they have so many teachers and they have so many role models...Therefore, if there's a student who comes through your classroom,... sees the way that she presents herself the way like she's very smart, she's very talented...If there's a girl who goes through your class and feels that it ly resonates with her...

We generally consider internationalization to be a harmonious dialog between faculty and students rather than a transmission of colonial-patriarchal narratives.

Global Awareness

Global awareness is also mentioned among opportunities that come with the internationalization of the curriculum. Amber notices, “And in that case I also believe that this is our duty as a global residential program to highlight security...to teach to accept the differences.” She also mentions that “those who go through internationalized curriculum have fewer issues with culture shock.” As there is collaborative learning, students become more aware of global problems. Laura mentioned the introduction of global citizenship philosophy and education as one of the examples of increasing global awareness among university students. It promotes empathy and reflexivity and, as a result, reshapes their minds. The interpretation, influence, and implementation of curriculum internationalization, however, may not always influence students beyond dominant narratives.

DISCUSSION

Through radical feminist-informed narrative inquiry, this research analyzes female faculty members' experiences with curriculum internationalization in Uzbek and U.S. higher education institutions, including our challenges, intersections of our identities, and opportunities. The study considers that processes of curriculum internationalization are not neutral, as there are forms of oppression, dominant epistemologies, and cultural factors that affect curriculum internationalization (Chikuvadze et al., 2025; Dhileep & Baisel, 2024). The findings also demonstrate the faculty's objectives to engage students in open critical discussions, as well as the importance of cross-cultural communication and novel topics and courses in an attempt to subvert the dominance of patriarchal and Westernized framings of curriculum internationalization. This is not without its challenges.

As explained through our theoretical framing (Fahs, 2024), there are institutional barriers, such as hierarchy, the stigmatization of sensitive (subjective) topics, and market-driven decision-making. For instance, we discuss and critique the hierarchy among faculty based on positionalities shaped by oppressive power systems (Dhileep & Baisel, 2024). Resistance to "sensitive" (subjective and decentering) topics demonstrates systemic oppression on the basis of race, gender, nationality, or sexual orientation. As a result, it influences curriculum design and classroom instruction, stigmatizing these topics not only inside the classroom but also outside of students' academic lives. This resistance protects existing power structures (Fahs, 2024). Additionally, our description of our feelings when we balance university requirements and personal philosophies and professional ethics highlights the challenges and opportunities of "personal is political" (Wesling, 2025), demonstrating how personal beliefs are related to institutional and professional requirements. If ignored, it may lead to an "intellectual trap," which is a repetition of the same power relations (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020).

Another research question explored is the intersection of cultural, personal, and professional identities with the internationalization of the curriculum. Faculty positionality is informed by their race, nationality, and gender, as well as students' perceptions of them and their curriculum internationalization. Radical feminism recognizes women's stories and their importance for ontology and epistemology, including the intersectional nature of our experiences, even though it is criticized for not always addressing them properly (Duriesmith & Meger, 2020). It also considers that gender is socially constructed, often through a patriarchal and colonial lens (Dhileep & Baisel, 2024). From this perspective, it is crucial to critically reflect on the process of curriculum internationalization to make strides toward disrupting its current foundations in support of ensuring that its expressed goals of equality and collaboration are closer to being actualized. Additionally, narrative inquiry shared by transnational researchers introduces various perspectives on identity, language, and power dynamics in academia (Norova & Gutiérrez, 2024).

Regardless of existing challenges, this paper identified opportunities for faculty that come with the internationalization of the curriculum. Amplifying the voices of students, empowering them, and challenging Western dominance in knowledge formation were mentioned. This intention relates to the radical feminist view regarding challenging existing power structures (Dhileep & Baisel, 2024; Fahs, 2024), as patriarchal perceptions can be compared to Westernization practices. Therefore, making curriculum internationalization processes culturally sensitive to students (and faculty) more equitable is important. We also mentioned a balance between international and local contexts to align more with a feminine, subjective construction of knowledge. This is reflected in our focus on reflexivity, global awareness, and empathy among students. New and rational approaches and open discussions with students during class time make the curriculum internationalization process transformative (Eidson, 2025; Phan, 2023).

Implications

This study has theoretical, practical, and policy implications. Theoretically, analyzing the intricate nature of curriculum internationalization and its resulting spheres of influence using different theoretical and methodological frameworks contributes more to the counternarrative discursive space aimed at disrupting and/or dismantling oppressive normalized systems and prioritizing transformative action. For instance, by utilizing radical feminism and narrative inquiry in this study, we shift the discourse from domestic versus international students and/or faculty, which largely refers to Western versus non-Western (Ma, 2024; Teshome et al., 2024), into a call for anti-patriarchal foundations globally and a replacement with more feminine, community-based systems.

As power is not lost but merely transferred. Men are disproportionately in positions of authority both in institutional processes such as decision-making power and overall primary benefactors of systems structured by and for the interests of men. Therefore, practical and policy implications involve male faculty and administrators allocating human, financial, and time resources to create and sustain pipelines for women from students to faculty to leadership. This program should be designed and implemented by women. Although this may not achieve the full radical feminist goal of structural transformation, it mitigates the hidden curriculum experience and avoids advocating for assimilation. It instead aims to be emancipatory in community authorship.

To make the curriculum internationalization process meaningful for both students and faculty, it is important that higher education institutions prepare the faculty for upcoming changes through professional development sessions and faculty support. Faculty support should not only be limited on a technical side but also focus on power issues, emotional labor, sensitive content, and hierarchy within the institution itself. Additionally, policies that guide curriculum internationalization while not limiting the academic freedom of faculty should be developed. It will help faculty navigate the changes and design and deliver the content effectively.

Universities should also create a task force and standing committee to assess institutional policies and practices regarding curriculum internationalization and determine baseline uniform praxis for all curriculum and instruction and inter-institutional and governmental relationships. An example may include an institution-wide course material usage process where sources must be representative of international and feminine epistemologies, with Western and masculine epistemologies decentered and critiqued. It may also involve a recalibration of how institutions self-promote in relation to global rankings.

All faculty, regardless of rank, gender, or institutional type, should receive training on the ways in which “the personal is political.” As faculty may think of themselves as “neutral” or “objective,” they may reproduce patriarchal power relations. Faculty support should not only be limited on a technical side but also focus on power issues, emotional labor, sensitive content, and hierarchy within the institution itself. Faculty should learn what positionality is and develop a practice of being reflexive in all their work. As faculty work on this topic, administrative leaders should also acknowledge the positionalities of the entire program, department, etc., and how these standpoints intersect, overlap, and/or restrict each other on the basis of gender and other marginalized experiences. Policies that guide curriculum internationalization while not limiting the academic freedom of faculty should be developed. It will help faculty navigate the changes and design and deliver the content effectively. This may involve redistributing service work, both compensated and not, articulating and demonstrating a value for interdependence and care, and publicly acknowledging past systemic inequities.

These implications have broader applications beyond this study. The researchers’ experiences encapsulate experiences within case-specific Uzbek and U.S. HEIs. However, the nature of the findings, in conversation with the literature review, and with the application of the theoretical framework extend this work to institutions with curriculum internationalization participation more broadly, with special attention to TNEs and post-Soviet nation states.

CONCLUSION

This radical feminist informed narrative inquiry analyzes the experiences of faculty with curriculum internationalization. The findings highlight the complex nature of the process, which involves both challenges and opportunities in higher education settings.

The study also discussed some institutional barriers resulting from patriarchal centering, such as misunderstanding of the internationalization concept, culturally sensitive topics that are banned on an institutional level, and internal hierarchy. These problems also contribute to faculty members’ emotional state and morality, highlighting the difficulties they face in the process. The paper also discusses the relationship between faculty identity and curriculum internationalization. Faculty positionality affects the way students and faculty engage with internationalized curricula and curriculum design as well.

One of the opportunities for curriculum internationalization is student empowerment and the development of critical thinking. The narratives reveal that curriculum internationalization can be used to introduce alternative perspectives and epistemologies if faculty members are transformative in their approaches. The commitment to empathy, global awareness, and reflexivity among students leads to transformative experience. This study contributes to a deeper understanding of curriculum internationalization processes by centering the experiences of faculty through a radical feminist approach. Recommendations for future studies include comparative and/or longitudinal studies of similar framing; studies examining proposed changes before and after implementation; and a critical literature review and synthesis of studies by decade, region, and approach.

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☒ *None*

☐ *Some sections, with minimal or no editing*

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