

A Proposed Business/Education Hybrid Model for Enhanced Global Readiness: U.S. and Chinese Faculty Exchange

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Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative research paper is to address a current void in program models for cross border higher education exchanges between the U.S. and China. The authors propose a hybrid exchange model. The model integrates business project management concepts with educational curriculum design by investigating two research questions: a) What models currently exist?; and b) What process model can be developed which results in streamlined, transparent, and mutually effective academic exchange programs for U.S. and China higher education institutions?

Introduction

Globalization, information and communication technologies (ICT), and the knowledge economy have all accelerated the expansion of cross border alliances including exchange programs through a varied options based on institutional goals and contexts. These programs range from study abroad, joint degree, academic exchange, and faculty research partnerships to the creation of branch campuses (The Institute of International Education, 2012). Transnational academic faculty exchange programs prepare faculty to better respond to knowledge economy pedagogies as part of an integrated process of intelligent internationalization which has become a fundamental part of higher education reality in the last two decades (Knight, 2006, p. 4).

A review of literature yields little data on faculty exchange models between the U.S. and China. As a result, the authors propose a comprehensive model based on both specific business tools and curriculum development model.

The hybrid model serves as a standardized roadmap in developing a transnational faculty exchange program which is applicable to U.S. universities working with China or vice versa and beyond. The value proposition is that models provide both a transparent structure and a specific public process which identifies points of accountability, establishes scope and roles and responsibilities, and pinpoints methods to revise, improvise, and innovate. The proposed model draws on both business and education disciplines. In addition, the significance of the model is that the model itself is applicable and adaptable to most academic exchange programs or similar set ups and aims to demonstrate that both the disciplines and practices in business and education can be parallel and have points of connection. The proposed model serves as a checklist including questions and issues in planning and executing an agreement as well as practical advice on the “how to” of creating a successful exchange experience.

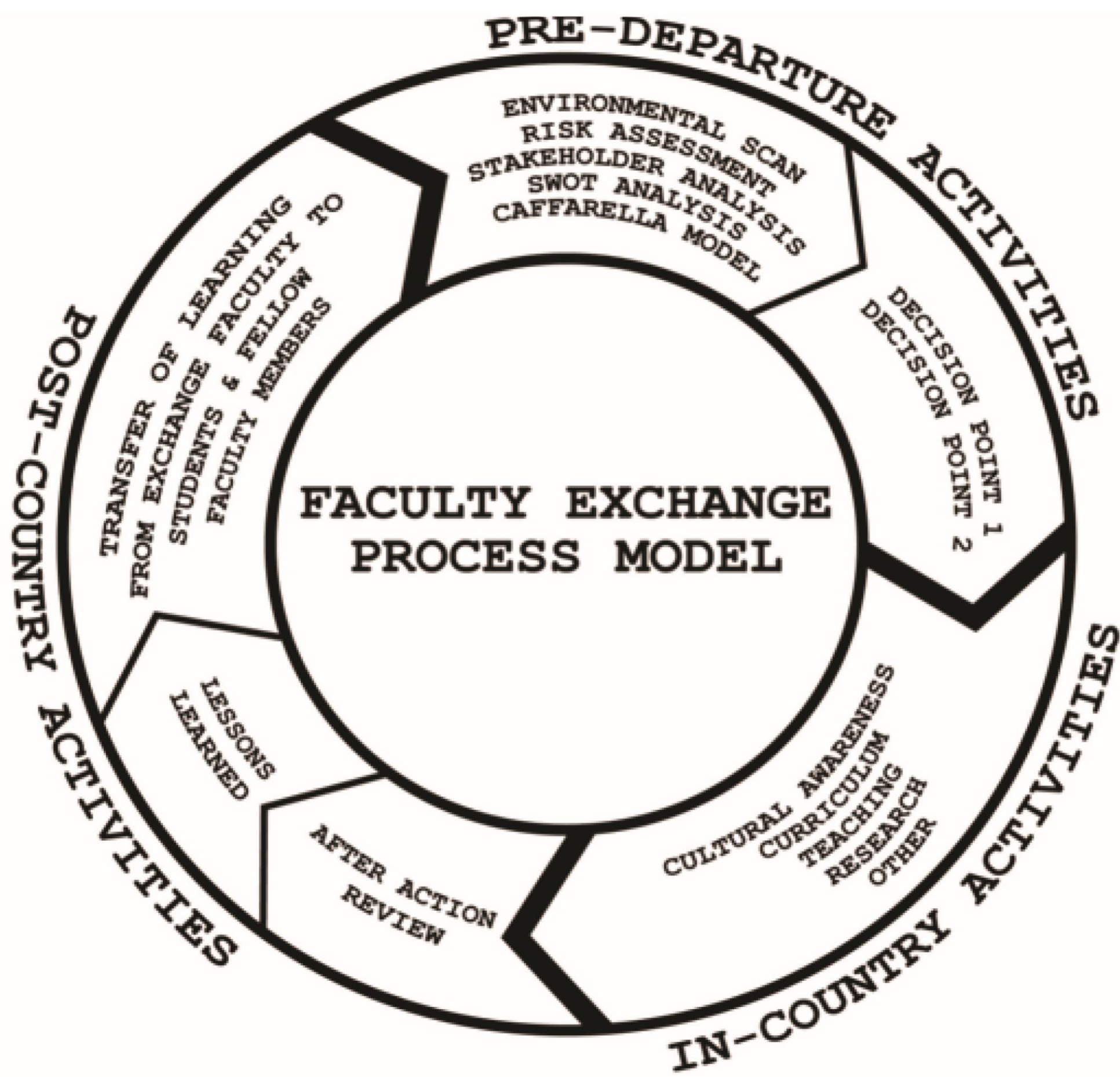
Research Design/Methodology

Review of literature does not yield studies regarding comprehensive hybrid models to serve as a standardized roadmap for the development of transnational academic exchange programs. However, there are rich data on faculty exchange programs. In fact, many of the faculty exchange programs reference nursing programs. The components of one of these nursing programs are identified as pre-departure preparations, instructional methods, and language issues (Enskar, Johansan, Ljusegren, & Widang, 2011). In fact, one topic of a qualitative study on a nursing academic exchange program included the participation of a total of 26 nursing lecturers made up of 10 lecturers from Sweden and 16 from Botswana, South Africa and Tanzania. Data were based on the participation of the reflective narrative writings of the subjects. This study revealed three major findings. First, teaching was viewed as a challenge but results favorably in that “being on exchange inspired the visiting lecturers to use different teaching methods” (Enskar, Johansan, Ljusegren, & Widang, p. 542). Second, preparation in advance of travel was viewed as essential. Third, language “was described as an obstacle to interaction, and could prevent visitors from taking part in activities like seminars and staff meetings” (Enskar, Johansan, Ljusegren, & Widang, p. 542). The findings

of this study revealed that “participating lecturers judged their international exchange to be a positive experience that had resulted in personal as well as professional development. Enskar, Johansan, Ljusegren, and Widang also concluded that “a successful exchange requires planning, support and an open mind from all involved lecturers and institutions” (p. 541).

Findings

Overall the hybrid business/education faculty exchange process model is divided into three major phases: 1) Pre-departure activities, 2) In country activities in China or in the U.S., and 3) Post-China or Post-U.S. activities.



Pre-Departure Activities

Pre-departure activities envision the use of four business tools in the decision making process: a) an environmental scan, b) stakeholder analysis, c) risk assessment, and d) a Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat (SWOT) Analysis.

An environmental scan as defined by Kroon (1995) is “the study and interpretation of the political, economic, social and technological events and trends which influence a business, an industry or even a total market” (p. 76).

The environmental scan is often conducted via a PESTLE analysis, which is an examination of the political, economic, social, technological, environmental and legal factors involved: “PESTLE analysis is in effect an audit of an organization’s environmental influences with the purpose of using this information to guide strategic decision-making” (Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development, 2015).

Stakeholder analysis is an examination of how everyone in the process will be impacted by the faculty exchange process. The impacts need to be categorized (such as time involved as well as determination and analysis of available human and financial resources) by both parties and be reviewed. The exchange of this information will again assist in developing “buy in,” trust, and a common vision as well as purpose.

Risk assessment asks the question: What can go wrong? And if something goes wrong, what can we do? Risk assessment examines potential roadblocks and barriers, possible miscues, and unforeseen events. Mitigating risks requires that the organization have a Plan B, a pre-determined set of actions that can be implemented to correct the situation or problem.

SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) examines both internal (strengths and weaknesses), and external (opportunities and threats) factors.

The model also proposes a set of key decision points in which those responsible, particularly the Executive Sponsors and program Champions and the Steering Team. These management elements formally agree to two key items: officially support university-to-university agreements, and the design and execution of the faculty recruitment process.

In-Country Activities

In country activities provide opportunities to discuss curriculum, teaching, and research. This phase may also involve lecturing, job shadowing and classroom observation. Actual events in the host country can be documented for further discussion and potential use by future exchange faculty.

Post-Country Activities

Post-Country activities include: a) a focused improvement of future exchange through an After Action Review (AAR) to capture lessons learned; and (b) transfer of learning to both on campus students and faculty.

An After Action Review (AAR) asks four questions: What did you expect to happen on this exchange before you went? What actually happened? What did you personally learn? What would you do differently in the future?

The Caffarella Model (Caffarella, 2002) also emphasizes communicating recommendations and results: “...both the program successes and failures are explored in terms of identifying the realities of programming situations” (pp. 267-268). Sork (1991) argued that identifying failures is as important as identifying successes, and three major areas for program failure were highlighted: 1) unrealistic expectations; 2) mismatch between objectives, program format, and instructional techniques; and 3) lack of transfer of learning.

Conclusions

This study fills an existing gap in the design of a faculty exchange process model. Further research is suggested and includes a) structured interviews with large numbers of returning U.S. and Chinese faculty; 2) Case Studies on the application of the tools suggested by the model; and 3) interviews with faculty exchange program managers.

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