An Investigation of Factors Affecting the Russia and Korea Student Satisfaction: The Cases of Language and Culture[1]

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Abstract

Students' satisfaction can be defined as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experience, services and facilities. Earlier it was measured by common satisfaction frameworks but later higher education specify satisfaction models were developed. Furthermore, despite Russia and Korea emerging as the new players in the international education market over the last decade, our knowledge of the extent of international students' satisfaction studying in Russia and Korea universities is modest. After being freed from the Japanese occupation, the Korean peninsula saw the formation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (under the patronage of the USSR) and the Republic of Korea (with the support of the USA). In the last few decades of the XX century, the relations between Russian Federation and the DPRK have become more active. As a result, negotiations between Russia and South Korea and between Russia and North Korea started touching upon the prospects of tripartite Russia-ROK-DPRK cooperation in the economic and other areas. Koreans showed a special interest in the culture of Russia and the Russian language in the first years after the diplomatic relations were established. Modern Korean studies began to develop.

Keywords: Student Satisfaction; Russia; Korea; Language and Culture.

1. Introduction

It is estimated that 5 million students were studying outside their home countries in 2014, more than double the 2.1 million who did so in 2000, and more than triple the number in 1990 (Shin, 2012). This astounding growth of border crossing activities (Teichler, 2004), or student mobility, accompanies the wider expansion of higher education in general, where enrolments have gone from 97

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million in 2000 to what was estimated to be 293 million in 2015 (Kim and Strandberg, 2013). While the traditional English-speaking nations (USA, UK and Australia) still provide the most substantive amount of internationalized education, (Altbach & Knight, 2007), the dynamics of mobility have begun to shift to other emerging contenders such as Singapore, Malaysia, China, Japan and South Korea (Kim & Strandberg, 2013; Namaziandost, Shatalebi, & Nasri, 2019).

While the literature has largely been devoted to understanding international students within traditional higher education markets (Lee & Rice, 2007; Maringe & Carter, 2007), much less is known about emerging contenders, particularly non-English speaking higher education destinations (Jon, Lee, & Byun, 2014). Of the emerging contenders of higher education, South Korea stands out specifically in this respect because of language. Both Malaysia and Singapore's shared British colonial pasts have resulted in a legacy of English language proficiency where English is employed and required in daily life settings (Moslehifar & Ibrahim, 2012; Pennycook, 2014; Namaziandost, Neisi, Kheryadi, & Nasri, 2019). Jon et al. (2014) used a mixed methods single case approach within South Korea to gather international student motivations and experiences in which they conclude that there is a possibility of South Korea positioning itself as regional hub in education for East Asia. We build on Jon et al.'s (2014) work by going beyond a single case setting to 62 Korean institutions. Our study expands the work done so far by additionally accounting for the increasingly diverse origins of international students within a rapidly proliferating number of Korean universities seeking to attract international students. By doing so we answer the calls of Jon et al. (2014) to "further examine the diverse experiences of international students from nearby and far away countries" (:709).

Despite significant international student growth over the last decade, our knowledge of the extent of international students' satisfaction studying in South Korean universities is modest. To the best of our knowledge, there is a scarcity of information about the levels of satisfaction between what international students expected in Korean universities and what they experienced.

Furthermore, this study hypothesizes that international students from the East Asian cultural sphere (China, Hong Kong (China, Taiwan (China), Japan, Vietnam and Mongolia) may attain more satisfaction than other international students who are more culturally dissimilar from members of the host population due to the nature of cultural and historical proximity to the host country. Again, to the best of our knowledge, to date there has been no study that has addressed this issue within South Korea. Thus, we argue that Korean universities have very high potential to attract considerably more international students from the East Asian cultural sphere, since the region is also one of the most dynamic regions in the world in terms economic development and political stability. Accordingly, addressing the above-mentioned research gaps and identifying the potential improvement areas which

contribute to raising student satisfaction levels in South Korea is timely, given the status of the extant literature on student satisfaction. In other words, addressing these contextual dynamics of a non-English speaking emerging contender would allow for South Korean higher education providers to better conceptualize and address elements that impact international students as a means to better support the enrollment of additional students and manage attrition and retention. Eventually, the findings of this study have the potential to inform higher learning institutions and other stakeholders in Korea about how to best address the needs and expectations of an increasingly diverse international student population within a country with both "real and perceived cultural and racial homogeneity" (Watjatrakul, 2014; Namaziandost, Neisi, Mahdavirad, & Nasri, 2019).

Engulfed by the ideological conflict in 1949, South Korean authorities deported employees of the former Consulate General of the USSR who remained in Seoul to watch over the property of the former Russian diplomatic mission. Its building was taken over by the police, and then almost completely demolished during the Korean war of 1950-1953. In 1970, the government in Seoul unilaterally "re-registered" the land plot, and most of it was sold to private companies and organizations. The issue of returning that land back to Russia was being solved for several years during consultations between the two countries via diplomatic channels (Beloglasov, 2015; Penkovtsev & Shibanova, 2015; Zinoviev, 2013; Yeoh, 2018; Zakharchenko; Cumings, 2005).

In 1983, the anti-aircraft aviation in the Russian Far East shot down a South Korean Boeing 747 in the Soviet airspace. It belonged to KAL, a South Korean airline, and was flying Flight 007 from New York to Seoul via Anchorage. This tragedy triggered a tremendous international scandal. Demonstrations with thousands of participants started in places from Washington to Japan and South Korea. They demanded decisive measures against the USSR. Ronald Reagan (1911-2004), who was president at the time, called the USSR an "empire of evil". The aircraft was carrying 269 passengers, including 23 children and 29 crew. This incident is duly considered one of the most mysterious incidents in the history of civil aviation. Even though more than 30 years have passed, the circumstances of that tragic event did not become any clearer, and probably turned even more mysterious (Krechetnikov, 2013; Shakibaei, Shahamat, & Namaziandost, 2019).

Satisfaction is a feeling of happiness that obtain when a person fulfilled his or her needs and desires (Wing, 1986; Nasri, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019). It is a state felt by a person who has experienced performance or an outcome that fulfilled his or her expectations (Ilyas & Arif, 2013). Accordingly, satisfaction can be defined as an experience of fulfillments of an expected outcomes (Hon, 2002). Person will satisfy when he /she achieves the expectations, hence it is a willful accomplishment which result in one's contentment. Satisfaction refers to the feeling of pleasure or disappointment resulting from comparing perceived performance in relation to the expectation (Kotler & Keller, 2012; Abedi, Namaziandost, & Akbari, 2019).

Customers will satisfy when services fit with their expectation (Petruzzellis, D'Uggento, & Romanazzi, 2006). Hence, it is a function of relative level of expectation connecting with people's perception (Mukhtar, Anwar, Ahmed, & Baloch, 2015). When a person perceives that service encountered as good, he would satisfy on the other hand person will dissatisfy when his or her perception crash with the service expectation. Therefore, satisfaction is a perception of pleasurable fulfilment of a service (Oliver, 1997).

2. Methods

The following methods have been used in this paper:

1) analysis of research literature regarding the subject;

2) case study method for analyzing examples;

3) instrumental observation;

Furthermore, this paper uses general scientific methods such as: analysis and synthesis to determine goals, resources and tools of the subject concept, as well as structural approach.

3. Results and Discussion

Students' satisfaction as a short-term attitude, resulting from an evaluation of a students' educational experiences (Elliott, & Healy, 2001). It is a positive antecedent of student loyalty and is the result and outcome of an educational system. Again Elliot & Shin (2002) define student satisfaction as students' disposition by subjective evaluation of educational outcomes and experience. Therefore, student satisfaction can be defined as a function of relative level of experiences and perceived performance about educational service during the study period. By considering all, students' satisfaction can be defined as a short-term attitude resulting from an evaluation of students' educational experience, services and facilities.

Student satisfaction is a complex concept, consisting of several dimensions (Richardson, 2005). Elliott and Shin, (2002) describe student satisfaction as the favorability of a student's subjective evaluation of the various outcomes and experiences associated with education. Whereas Wu, Tennyson, and Hsia (2010) define satisfaction as "the sum of a student's behavioral beliefs and attitudes that result from aggregating all the benefits that a student receives from using the blended system. Competition in higher education has become increasingly fierce. Extensive courses offerings from a large number of globally and regionally competing institutions has increased pressure to offer unique learning experiences as a means to capture the biggest market share (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Given the importance of this issue, universities nowadays focus more attention on student satisfaction (de Jager and Gbadamosi, 2013). Previous studies show that satisfied

students may attract new students by engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication to inform acquaintances and friends, and they may return to the university to take other courses. Student satisfaction also has a positive impact on fundraising and student motivation (Elliott and Shin, 2002). Furthermore, tracking student satisfaction and priorities plays a critical role in using resources efficiently and effectively.

Similarly, international students were asked how satisfied they are socializing with Koreans and other foreigners. The evidence reveals that we would expect a 0.019-unit increase in the log-odds of overall satisfaction with every one-unit increase in international students' socializing satisfaction with all other variables held constant. This result is in line with other findings such as Ward and Kennedy (1993) that explain international students who had more contact with host nationals reported higher levels of satisfaction, less homesickness, and less loneliness in their study abroad experience. Moreover, having local friends and spending more free time with them is related to lower stress, positive mood, greater life satisfaction, happiness and self-esteem. Also, Gill (2007) investigated the experience of a small cohort of Chinese postgraduate students in British universities and found that intercultural adaptation is in itself a process of intercultural learning, which has the potential to bring about profound changes in overseas students' overall level of satisfaction. The variable satisfaction in information accuracy received about academic and social life was also found to be statistically significant at 1 percent level. This implies that a one unit increase in international students' satisfaction in information accuracy received about academic and social life would increase international students' overall satisfaction by 0.484 unit in the ordered log-odds of being in a higher category of overall satisfaction while keeping the other predictor variables in the model constant. International students were also asked whether they were unfairly treated by Koreans based on their ethnicity or nationality, and the statistical result found no evidence to substantiate this hypothesis. Similarly, the findings found no evidence for international students experiencing difficulties in public services. These findings are contrary to previous studies such as Jon (2009) which revealed that international students in Korea usually experience discrimination. Gender (which is a binary variable for being male equals 1 and otherwise equals zero) was found to be statistically insignificant in this study, implying that gender plays no role in influencing international students' overall satisfaction. This finding is different from other studies such as Min and Khoon (2014) that used the data from a survey conducted in a private higher education institution in Singapore and found that female international students are less satisfied with the education services they received than their male counterparts. The reason might be perhaps that Korean universities and public services provide equal opportunities to all students, regardless of gender or other demographic factors. Likewise, there is no evidence for a variable-student status (regular, transfer or exchange) to significantly affect international students' overall satisfaction.

Koreans showed a special interest in the culture of Russia and the Russian language in the first years after the diplomatic relations were established. "*In early 1990s, departments of Russian language and literature were created in almost all universities in Seoul and other regions, and they invited teachers from Russia*" (Ballod, 2009; Korean Studies in Russia: history and modern state, 2004; Kontsevich, Henry, 2013; The Association of Korean History Teachers, 2011). Despite the opening of private Russian language courses and the Russian cultural center, and even though Russian books and training materials were being published, at that time there was no systematic approach to the study of the Russian language. The Asian financial crisis of 1997 and the Russian financial crisis of 1998 led to the reduced interest in Russian language and culture. Thanks to the development of the Russian-Korean relations and cooperation in various areas, a renewed interest in Russian language and culture keeps growing in Korea.

The last point is that Language and culture are intertwined. A particular language usually points out to a specific group of people. When you interact with another language, it means that you are also interacting with the culture that speaks the language. You cannot understand one's culture without accessing its language directly.

When you learn a new language, it not only involves learning its alphabet, the word arrangement and the rules of grammar, but also learning about the specific society's customs and behavior. When learning or teaching a language, it is important that the culture where the language belongs be referenced, because language is very much ingrained in the culture.

4. Conclusions

Despite significant international student growth over the last decade, to the best of the authors' knowledge, there have been few studies and scarce information on the extent of international students' satisfaction studying in South Korean universities that include the range of factors we cover. As our literature has argued, the complexities of student satisfaction fall across many domains that are more akin to a systems approach to overall perceived student satisfaction outcomes. As a result, the study identified improvement areas ranging from learning experience to living and support services which would contribute in raising student satisfaction and thereby supporting the enrollment of additional students and contributing to manage attrition and retention problems.

Moreover, with the development of higher education in the world, the importance of students' satisfaction was emerged in the literature of higher education. At the beginning, industry-based satisfaction models were applied to explain student satisfaction and later developed higher education-based models to explain it. The paper was discussed the theoretical and empirical literature of higher education with the intension of enhancing existing stock of knowledge. The theoretical review

proved that satisfaction is a psychological process and is affected by many factors in different settings.

A new page in the history of the Russian-Korean relations starts in August 1945 with the liberation of Korea. At the end of 1945, the first Korean section opened at the Moscow Institute of Eastern Studies, and in 1948 at the Eastern Department of the Leningrad (Saint-Petersburg) State University. Another opened in 1949 at the Eastern Studies Section of the Department of History at Moscow State University. The key institutions of higher education that teach Korea-related subjects are the Insitute of Asia and Africa at MSU, the Eastern Department of SPSU and Ministry of Foreign Affairs' MGIMO. Korean studies are also gaining momentum in other regions of Russia - Novosibirsk, Khabarovsk, Ussuriysk, Irkutsk, Krasnodar, Sakhalin and others. Three stages of development of modern post-1945 Korean studies in USSR are typically discussed: Stage I from 1945 to mid-1950s; Stage II from mid-1950s to late 1980s; Stage III from early 1990s, i.e. the current stage of the Korean studies in Russia. As L. R. Kontsevich writes: "*The establishment of Korean studies as a complex science among the Eastern studies completed only after the liberation of Korea from the Japanese colonialism in 1945*". These days, Korean studies in Russia turned into an independent and sizable area of the Eastern studies with significant achievements, even though it is a relatively young branch of the Eastern studies in Russia.

The phrase, *language is culture, and culture is language* is often mentioned when language and culture are discussed. It's because the two have a homologous although complex relationship. Language and culture developed together and influenced each other as they evolved. Using this context, Alfred L. Krober, a cultural anthropologist from the United States said that culture started when speech was available, and from that beginning, the enrichment of either one led the other to develop further.

If culture is a consequence of the interactions of humans, the acts of communication are their cultural manifestations within a specific community. Ferruccio Rossi-Landi, a philosopher from Italy whose work focused on philosophy, semiotics and linguistics said that a speech community is made up of all the messages that were exchanged with one another using a given language, which is understood by the entire society. Rossi-Landi further added that young children learn their language and culture from the society they were born in. In the process of learning, they develop their cognitive abilities as well.

According to Professor Michael Silverstein, who teaches psychology, linguistics and anthropology at the University of Chicago, culture's communicative pressure represents aspects of reality as well as connects different contexts. It means that the use of symbols that represent events, identities, feelings and beliefs is also the method of bringing these things into the current context.

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