Trends and Challenges: Chinese Students Studying at South Korean Universities

Andrea Rakushin Lee[1], Hak-Soo Yoo[2]*

[1]Faculty of Educational Specialties, Austin Peay State University
601 College Street, Clarksville, TN, USA 37044
leea@apsu.edu
[2]Faculty of Russian Language and Literature, Sunmoon University
70 Sunmoon-ro 221-gil, Tangjeong-myeon, Asan-si, Chungcheongnamdo, South Korea
hysoo@sunmoon.ac.kr
*Corresponding Author

Abstract: South Korea is a popular destination for Chinese students studying overseas. Prior to the pandemic, Chinese students comprised the largest percentage of foreign students in South Korea. This paper provides insights into major trends germane to Chinese students studying in South Korea. In addition, it explores challenges that Chinese students encounter while studying in South Korean universities, which include socialization problems, Korean and English language barriers, academic difficulties, and discrimination and prejudice. It also examines historical and political issues that have an impact on Chinese people living in South Korea. Strategies for improving successful integration are discussed. These include having effective academic and social support systems, promoting intercultural communicative competence, advanced preparation before leaving China, mutual adjustment activities that enhance understanding and awareness between different cultural groups, reflective practice and quality improvement, and exposure to diverse viewpoints. Finally, practical implications, which could improve the overall adaptation of Chinese students in South Korean universities are discussed.

Keywords: Chinese students, South Korean universities, intercultural communication, adaptation, cross-cultural communication

1. Introduction

Beginning in the 1980s, international study abroad programs became more popular among Chinese students (Zhang, 2000). The South Korean government has implemented various policies to increase the enrollment of foreign students. In 2004, the South Korean government created the Study Korea Project, which aimed to bolster international student enrollment (Byun & Kim, 2010). South Korea has also become a popular destination because of the relatively low cost of living and practicality (Lee, 2017). South Korean society is facing severe challenges, especially a sharply declining birthrate, which has already started impacting university enrollment (Lee, 2013). To address these issues, South Korean universities have expanded recruitment efforts to enroll more international students (Lee, 2013). Furthermore, South Korea is aiming to improve in its global university rankings and consequently, is seeking to boost the number of foreign students and faculty (Lee et al., 2016).

The South Korean government has implemented programs to recruit foreign students including the Global Korea Scholarship Program, which provides substantial financial assistance (Jon et al., 2014). The government places an admission quota on local students; however, foreign students are not subject

to this quota system, which makes the admission process less challenging and competitive for them in comparison to their South Korean counterparts (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019). In addition, South Korean students must pass a rigorous entrance exam called the *Suneung* (수능(修能)) for admission to university, whereas international students do not take this exam. Instead, they provide evidence of attaining at least an intermediate level of the Korean language on the TOPIK (Test of Proficiency in Korean). These recruitment initiatives are meant to increase the enrollment of international students. Nevertheless, the recruitment of international students without effective support systems has created pedagogical problems and led to various challenges for foreign students in the adaptation process.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, most international students in South Korea came from China (Nam, 2018). In 2019, there were 71,067 Chinese students studying in South Korea, accounting for 44.4% of the international student population, followed by 37,426 students from Vietnam, accounting for 23.4% of the international student population (Ministry of Education, 2019). In 2021, the number of Vietnamese students exceeded Chinese students, with 59,876 students coming from Vietnam and 51,094 coming from China (Y.-S. Kim, 2021). Among a total of 158,923 international students, 47,681 were studying the Korean language, 111,231 were participating in general educational programs, and 11 were studying other foreign languages. It is difficult to ascertain what these figures will look like in a post-COVID 19 environment, but based on past trends and recent literature, Chinese students will still likely comprise a large percentage of the foreign student population in the coming years.

There are various reasons why Chinese students go to South Korea. The major pull factors include the Korean Wave (popular culture), proximity, quality of education, cost, recommendations from family members, peers, and recruiters, institutional admission policies, and personal career trajectories (Lee, 2017). The major push factors include the competitiveness of the Chinese college entrance process, quality of Chinese universities, a lack of educational opportunities for specific majors, and problems attaining jobs in China. Additionally, Jon et al. (2014) found that students from Asian countries chose to attend university in Korea because of safety, better employment prospects after graduating, more relaxed visa procedures, and being closer to home. Chinese students have differing reasons for choosing South Korea as their study abroad destination, with some drawn to the appeal of South Korean society and universities, and others focused more on the practicality of leaving China, especially considering the competitiveness of the higher education entrance process.

The Korea Educational Development Institute (2019) provides valuable insight into the experiences and perceptions of Chinese students living in South Korea. Prior to 2018, the number of Chinese students in South Korea had been steadily increasing. For example, there were 54,214 in 2015, 60,136 in 2016, and 68,184 Chinese students studying in South Korea in 2017. Many Chinese students who came to South Korea failed to gain admission to Chinese universities. In 2018 and 2019, the percentage of Chinese students started to decrease, with 68,537 entering in 2018 and 71,067 entering in 2019. Although the number had slightly increased, this was a relatively small increase in comparison to previous years. In 2020, the number of Chinese students studying in South Korea dropped to 67,030, which is likely attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic. As China's economic level rises, the number of Chinese students studying in Korea is expected to decrease; furthermore, as the birthrate in China also declines, there will be more opportunities for Chinese students to study at domestic universities. Another challenge is that the number of South Korean companies in China is decreasing; thus, even though Chinese students may spend a considerable amount of time studying the Korean language, it may not directly benefit them in the long run if they are not using the language in the workplace. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to change educational and immigration policies, examining future enrollment trends among Chinese and other international students in South Korea will be beneficial for shaping educational policies and admission criteria. Other factors including the geopolitical climate, economic issues, and educational policies may also impact future enrollment projections. Additionally, the presently documented push and pull factors may also evolve over time, which can impact the number of Chinese students interested in attending South Korean universities.

Data indicate that Chinese students prefer studying in larger cities, with approximately 50% living in the capital, Seoul (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019). Table 1 provides a list of universities with over 1000 Chinese students enrolled.

Table 1. South Korean Universities with Over 1000 Chinese Students Enrolled

City	University Name	Number of Chinese Students
Seoul	Kyunghee University	4031
Seoul	Hanyang University	3484
Seoul	Jungang University Seoul Campus	3311
Seoul	Sungkyunkwan University	3275
Seoul	Korea University	2368
Seoul	Dongguk University	2094
Seoul	Kukmin University	2021
Seoul	Kunkuk University	1963
Seoul	Yeonsei University	1824
Seoul	Hongik University	1805
Seoul	Hankuk University of Foreign Studies	1634
Seoul	Sangmyung University	1433
Seoul	Soongsil University	1337
Seoul	Seogang University	1192
Daejeon	Woosong University	1183
Seoul	Ewha University	1118
Kyunggi	Dankook University	1052
Daegu	Keimyung University	1000

Source: Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019

Almost all universities hosting over 1000 Chinese students are located in Seoul. Upon arriving in South Korea, most Chinese students begin studying the Korean language in greater depth, since many only have a rudimentary understanding of the language before leaving China. Chinese students report struggling with the Korean language and usually study the language for 1 to 2 years at a Korean language institute prior to taking academic courses. Generally, international students need to attain TOPIK Level 3 (the highest level is 6), which is considered intermediate, to be able to enroll in regular academic courses that are taught in Korean. In addition, South Korean universities often provide financial support to international students. They can obtain a scholarship based on their TOPIK level as well as the grades that they received in previous semesters.

Chinese students comprise a large percentage of the foreign students studying in South Korea; nevertheless, they have experienced myriad integration challenges in South Korean universities that should be further explored and addressed through measurable and viable solutions. South Korean universities have been accused of irresponsibly recruiting Chinese students in their globalization pursuits (Chung, 2016). Although international students have reported favorable views of their experiences in South Korea, there are nevertheless challenges in adapting to the education system and feeling a sense of belonging (Lee et al., 2016). International students have also reported that students from western countries tend to be treated better than students from other locations; additionally, there have been reports of negative sentiments toward Chinese students (Jon & Jang, 2012). During this pandemic period, there have also been increased reports of discrimination toward Chinese people in South Korea (Kasulis, 2020; Kwai, 2020). Many Chinese students struggle to adapt, and universities often fail to adequately assist students with adaptation. Educators, administrators, government officials, policymakers, and other stakeholders must play an active role in ensuring that policies are in place to promote effective adaptation while also fostering a culture of intercultural awareness and appreciation.

2.   Challenges for Chinese Students Studying in South Korea

It is common for international students to experience challenges with adaptation (Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017). Research has reported a wide range of academic and social challenges among international students studying at South Korean universities (e.g. Chung et al., 2010; Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019; Park et al., 2020). The next section will examine common challenges of Chinese students that have been highlighted in the research, which include socialization problems, Korean and English language barriers, academic difficulties, discrimination and prejudice, as well as historical and political issues that impact Chinese people living in South Korea.

2.1   Socialization

International students may face internal and institutional barriers that inhibit their interactions with domestic students (Canadian Bureau for International Education, 2015). These challenges have been reported in various foreign educational contexts (e. g., Barron, 2008; Mesidor & Sly, 2016; Spencer-Oatey et al., 2017). Merely placing international and local students into classes together does not inevitably result in successful integration and interaction (Leask, 2009). Faculty have also reported having difficulties in promoting engagement between local and international students. Without having meaningful opportunities for socialization, international students will struggle to adapt to life in the host country. Universities and educators need to ensure that international and local students have ample opportunities to engage in meaningful dialogue and cross-cultural communication. Some international students prefer to interact with people from their own culture, and they may avoid engaging in extracurricular activities. Furthermore, they may not be proficient in the domestic language and cultural customs (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014), which is sometimes evident in the South Korean context. Chinese students especially have reported many difficulties in terms of social life and communication with peers in South Korea (Chung et al., 2010). There have also been reports of indifference toward international students (Lee & Bailey, 2020). This has been documented in international studies that examine interactions between local and international students (Wright & Schartner, 2013).

2.2   Language Barriers

Studying academic courses in a foreign language can present numerous challenges since students have to understand the content and learn new terms that may not be in their foreign language lexicon. Since language and culture are largely intertwined, this can be especially problematic, and Chinese students may be fearful to participate in classroom activities and interact with local students (Henze & Zhu, 2012). Studies have shown that some Chinese students studying in South Korea struggle with the Korean language (Park et al., 2020). It is challenging to receive a university education after learning Korean for only 1 or 2 years and having only intermediate proficiency (Ministry of Education, 2019). Language is often cited as one of the major challenges among Chinese students studying in South Korea. Many university classes are conducted in English in South Korea, and some Chinese students lack the language proficiency needed to succeed in these courses (Jon et al., 2014). Jon et al. (2014) found that some students feel that English is given too much priority in South Korean universities since English as Medium of Instruction courses are prevalent. Chinese students need to focus on developing both Korean and English language proficiency, and levels of language development differ depending on the individual. This can lead to an achievement gap in the classroom between local and Chinese students as well as Chinese students from different regions and backgrounds who have had varying levels of exposure to both languages.

2.3   Academic Difficulties

Besides having language difficulties in the classroom, Chinese students may struggle to adapt to educational environments that differ from the more traditional, lecture-style classes that they are accustomed to; therefore, they have difficulties participating in discussions and interactive lessons

(Henze & Zhu, 2012). Language barriers present a formidable challenge for Chinese students studying in South Korean universities, and these challenges become more pronounced in the classroom when students struggle with academic content and vocabulary. Moreover, Chinese students attending universities in Seoul especially have a lower level of academic achievement in comparison to South Korean students who had to prepare for the South Korean college entrance examination (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019). There have also been reports of international students struggling with classroom engagement in South Korea (Ock, 2016). Most universities have an international support office for foreigners that include Chinese staff (Korean Educational Development Institute, 2019). However, the number of staff members is usually limited and cannot provide adequate support for all of the students in need. Chinese students as well as other international students may have additional challenges due to the academic barriers that they face in comparison to their South Korean peers.

2.4   Discrimination and Prejudice

Chinese students studying in South Korea have been perceived in a negative light (Jon & Jang, 2012, Min, 2012). A recent survey conducted by Hankook Research and SisaIN (a South Korean magazine) reported that China is the country viewed most negatively by South Korea (as cited in Choe, 2021). Japan was previously at the top of the list, which is ascribed to the conflict caused by Japanese imperialism in South Korea. Other studies (e.g. Kim et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2016) have found that South Korean students prefer international students from Japan rather than China even though Japan had colonized Korea in the past. This might be attributed to stereotypes placed on the Chinese in Korean culture (Hwang, 2011) and economic competition between China and South Korea (Lee et al., 2016). In a mixed-method study by Lee et al. (2016), Asian students studying in South Korean universities reported having more challenges and experiencing unfair treatment compared to students from other countries, especially western ones. The study also found that Chinese students faced verbal altercations and housing problems. The negative media portrayal of Chinese people has also exacerbated prejudicial views among South Korean people since the media highlights issues including environmental pollution, government problems, restrictions on freedoms, and human rights abuses (Min, 2012).

Chinese students in South Korea have also reported not feeling welcome in the country. Interview responses among Chinese students studying in South Korea provide a deeper understanding of this. For example, in Lee et al's (2016) study, interview responses underscore this feeling of not being wanted. One student stated, "I think most Koreans don't like Chinese" (Lee et al., 2016, p. 146). Lee et al's (2016) study also found that Chinese students felt that they were being treated differently in comparison to South Korean peers. Additionally, some reported that their South Korean peers had negative stereotypes of the Chinese and openly discriminated against them. Another study of Chinese students studying in South Korea found that Korean students viewed Chinese people in a negative light, especially as a result of media portrayal, lack of cross-cultural education in South Korea, and economic and political differences between China and South Korea (Jon & Jang, 2012).

2.5   Historical and Political Issues

There are also historical and political issues that impact Chinese students studying in South Korea. Some of the recent activities among Chinese students studying in South Korea have angered the local population. For example, at Hanyang University in Seoul, South Korean students had created a poster stating, "We join the democracy movement in Hong Kong" (Choe & Shin, 2019, para. 2). Chinese students were reported to be throwing objects at the pro-democracy group and shouting, "One China" (Choi & Shin, 2019, para. 2). There were also reports of Chinese students taking photos of the South Korean students advocating for pro-democracy in Hong Kong and reportedly posting the pictures on social media. South Korea had pro-democracy protests in the past with heavy support from student-led organizations. According to university student, Kang Min-Seo, "South Korea received support from foreign countries when we fought for democracy. I couldn't remain silent as I also share the belief in the value of democracy" (as cited in Choi & Shin, 2019, para. 8).

Anti-Chinese sentiment has continued in recent years as a result of concerns over cultural imperialism and appropriation, with China being accused of trying to take credit for traditional Korean clothing called hanbok as well as kimchi, a staple in the Korean diet (D. Kim, 2021). A Pew Research report found that 31% of South Koreans had negative views toward China in 2002, but this soared to 75% in 2020 (as cited in D. Kim, 2021). Additionally, those with positive views significantly decreased from 66% to 24% for the same period. The Chinese government had also sanctioned South Korea economically after the U.S. had installed the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense missile defense system in 2016. The Chinese government encouraged its people to not travel to South Korea and buy South Korean products. K-pop stars also had their tours canceled in China (Gallo, 2021). Although this was an unofficial measure, it still resulted in $7.5 billion dollars in losses for South Korea. According to D. Kim (2021), "The rise of anti-Korean vandalism and assault in China, which followed cues from state media, made it difficult for South Koreans to separate Beijing from the Chinese people" (p. 6).

Historical division still remains, with Cold War terminology sometimes being used to describe the Chinese government (D. Kim, 2021). China aided North Korea during the Korean War, and the negative elements of communism are sometimes pronounced in South Korea, especially among conservatives. There are also fears over the expansion of China's military capabilities in neighboring countries (Gallo, 2021). These historical and political issues continue to impact how South Koreans perceive the Chinese government, and this can lead to resentment of Chinese people. The individual actions of Chinese people living in South Korea, such as the virulent actions of Chinese students at the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests in Seoul, can also lead to widespread anti-sentiment.

3.   Improving Successful Integration

Although Chinese students are experiencing challenges that are both unique to and distinct from other international student groups, strategies can be implemented to improve successful integration. The following section provides research-based practices to improve the successful integration of Chinese students studying in South Korean universities. These strategies include developing effective academic and social support systems, promoting intercultural communicative competence, advanced preparation before leaving China, mutual adjustment activities that promote understanding and awareness between different cultural groups, and reflective practice and quality improvement. Furthermore, Chinese students living in South Korea should be exposed to diverse viewpoints even if they involve historical and political issues that can lead to difficult discussions. However, this education should be done in a way that does not lead to further division or animosity.

3.1   Effective Academic and Social Support Systems

Educators and administrators should ensure that international students have access to the resources needed to effectively adapt to the local culture. Although having ample support resources and staff can be costly, it is critical that international students have access to an effective support system that can improve their social and academic adaptation, which includes foreign language resources. Chinese students have reported facing myriad challenges that have inhibited their ability to successfully adapt to life in South Korea and to thrive in South Korean university classrooms. One of the primary weaknesses noted among Chinese students is the language barrier that they face in both Korean and English classes. Universities must ensure that students are equipped with the knowledge and resources needed to excel in these classes. To be able to effectively adapt to South Korean society, Chinese students need to learn the Korean language and culture more extensively to improve adaptation (Wang & Jun, 2018). Wang and Jun (2018) recommend that Chinese students reach out more to Chinese friends, Korean friends, and professors to ensure that they have the support that they need and can effectively deal with problems that arise. Having Korean friends can also help with Korean language development and promote better adaptation to South Korean university life (Park et al., 2020). South Korean universities also need to provide sufficient resources and programs to help Chinese students adapt to life at the host institution; moreover, Chinese students need to actively study the Korean language and culture before leaving.

3.2   Promoting Intercultural Communicative Competence

Even though South Korea must quickly find solutions to address the declining number of domestic university students, simply recruiting international students without meaningful and effective adaptation policies can be detrimental. Developing intercultural competence can play a critical role in bridging the divide between groups and promoting awareness and respect for others. Intercultural communication includes skills, knowledge, and attitudes related to cultures and how individuals interact with people from other cultures (Byram, 1997). Byram's (1997) intercultural communicative competence model consists of five components, which include attitude, knowledge, discovery and interaction, interpreting and relating, and awareness. The literature provides varying definitions of intercultural communicative competence (Koester & Lustig, 2015). Although a unified definition does not exist, there are various resources and activities that can promote intercultural communicative competence.

Developing meaningful programs and activities to promote intercultural engagement can be a valuable way to promote exchange between South Korean and Chinese students. A beneficial approach could include examining Berry's Model of Mutual Adjustment (Berry, 1997), which focuses on the mutual adjustment and cross-cultural communication between local and international students while promoting awareness of cultural differences and improving social interactions. Spencer-Oatey et al. (2014) state:

> *If both international and domestic students are equally committed to increasing their intercultural competence and the institution is seen to fully endorse this transformation, we will be much better placed to promote meaningful and sustained dialogue between all nationalities on our campuses, leading to personal development and growth. (p. 6)*

Universities should take on an active role in fostering a culture of appreciation for diversity and create valuable activities and programs that lead to mutual adjustment and opportunities for intercultural communication. International students have a responsibility to learn about their host culture (Rivas et al., 2019), but local students can also gain valuable insight into other cultures and appreciation for diversity through a mutual approach to adaptation (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). Participating in intercultural exchanges and dialog can also improve intercultural competency (Fantini, 2009). Social interactions between local and host country students can stimulate a sense of community and belonging (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). Additionally, developing friendships and professional relationships with teachers in the host country can also improve adaptation (Glass et al., 2017).

3.3   Fostering Meaningful Intercultural Interactions

Supporting meaningful intercultural interactions on campuses is important for developing better communication and understanding between local and international students. Koyphokaisawan and Jeon (2020) found in a study of 83 international students and 117 South Korean students that 51.5% of international students and 31.6% of South Korean students were engaged in intercultural interactions on campus. South Korean universities have developed specialized programs to encourage interactions including language exchange and buddy/mentoring programs (Koyphokaisawan & Jeon, 2020). This study also found that participants indicated the importance of having Korean and English language skills (n=59) to communicate with each other. Korean students reported the importance of international students needing English language proficiency, while international students mentioned the need to be proficient in the Korean language. Having the motivation to interact (n=140) interculturally was also a significant result. Additionally, possessing intercultural traits was also noted (n=29), with these traits including being open-minded and having empathy, curiosity, and having an interest in the other culture. Another result is being in a learning environment that encourages interaction (n=13). It is beneficial to examine past research and consider measurable and meaningful ways that universities can foster intercultural communication between local and international students. Koyphokaisawan and Jeon's

(2020) study provides greater insight into barriers that inhibit intercultural communication in the South Korean university context, which can help educators and administrators to make better decisions to improve adaptation for Chinese and other international students.

Through these types of intercultural interactions, South Korean students could broaden their understanding of other cultures and expressed having greater personal development through these experiences (Jon, 2009). However, Jon (2012) found that South Korean students' views of international students varied depending on their country of origin, ability to speak Korean, interactions with Korean students. and understanding of Korean culture. Intercultural experiences are not isolated and should not just impact students from the host country or another country. They should be mutually beneficial experiences, in which students from both cultures develop intercultural awareness and appreciation for diversity.

3.4   Advanced Preparation Before Leaving China

Before leaving for South Korea, it is critical for Chinese students to fully educate themselves on cultural, educational, and societal differences. According to Henze and Zhu (2012), Chinese students need to examine the differences between university education in China and their destination country; furthermore, they must be prepared to adjust to the new setting. Yan and Berliner (2011) found that Chinese students studying in the United States would have had less stress and challenges if they had learned and prepared more in advance. Yan and Berliner (2011) recommend short visits to the host country and work experience in international companies to improve understanding of intercultural communication. However, these strategies may be difficult and expensive for students. The host university could establish peer mentoring and intercultural exchange activities that take place virtually and give students opportunities to ask questions about culture, educational experiences, and expectations. Intercultural programs and support groups could also be set up in advance and conducted online that give students a chance to ask and answer questions and share cultural experiences.

3.5   Reflective Practice and Quality Improvement

University administrators, educators, and other stakeholders must take an active role in promoting effective approaches for the adaptation of Chinese and other international students in South Korea. It is vital that regular reflective practices and improvement plans are implemented to ensure the success of initiatives that promote intercultural communication and integration (Leask, 2009). To promote more effective academic and social integration, educators should make an earnest effort to help local and international students to participate in meaningful interactions and assist international students in developing a stronger sense of belonging (Rivas et al., 2019). Universities should also engage in continuous review of policies, initiatives, and programs that support international students and obtain qualitative and quantitative data that examines their experiences and perceptions. Choudaha (2016) states, "It's high time to stop treating international students as cash cows and embrace the values which institutions expect their students to manifest" (p. III). Universities have a responsibility to ensure that international students have access to the resources needed to thrive in a new environment. It is vital that universities ensure that the academic, professional, and personal needs of international students are met to promote more effective integration.

3.6   Exposure to Diverse Viewpoints

Travelling to another country provides an abundance of opportunities to learn about the similarities and differences between cultures. It can also give the visitor a chance to learn about their country's past and present relations with the host country. According to Tucker (2020), being in a new environment can be transformative and open the door to valuable conversations about difficult topics that might be rooted in historical or political tension (as cited in Terry, 2020). Studying abroad gives students the opportunity to be exposed to new ideas and beliefs (Esmieu et al., n.d.). It also promotes tolerance, decreased ethnocentrism, and improves cultural awareness and knowledge of geography and

history (Anderson et al., 2006; Gaines, 2012). South Korea is a free, democratic country that also prides itself on technological innovation. The Internet provides access to an abundance of information, some of which may not be available in more restrictive countries that limit access to certain information, especially pertaining to current events, history, and politics. Students in international study abroad programs have the opportunity to immerse themselves in a new culture and learn from individuals in the host culture who may have varying viewpoints on different issues. This can be beneficial for Chinese students in South Korea to gain insight into some of the perspectives of South Koreans on particular issues, especially those that have caused conflict. Nevertheless, this should be done carefully though to not cause further problems. South Korean students studying in other cultures too should have an open mind and be willing to have conversations about topics that may not be easy to discuss.

7.   Conclusion

Although the number of Chinese students studying in South Korea has decreased in recent years, the percentage may rise again depending on various factors that impact Chinese students' decisions and options to study abroad. Additionally, the present number of Chinese students studying in South Korea is still substantial. Chinese students studying in South Korea experience a wide array of challenges including but not limited to socialization problems, Korean and English language barriers, academic difficulties, discrimination and prejudice, and historical and political issues that can adversely impact Chinese people living in South Korea. This paper also expanded on practical research-based approaches to improve successful integration, which include developing effective support systems, promoting intercultural communicative competence, advanced preparation before leaving China, mutual adjustment activities that promote understanding and awareness between different cultural groups, reflective practice and quality improvement, and being exposed to diverse viewpoints.

Universities in South Korea are facing major budgetary problems due to the declining birthrate and other factors, and they need to be resourceful and examine cost-effective measures to improve the satisfaction and integration experiences of international students. Moreover, even with financial constraints, administrators and policymakers need to ensure that international students have access to the resources that they need. There should be support for entry programs, immigration, academic problems, as well as social and cultural adaptation to ensure the success of international students (Briggs & Ammigan, 2019).

Providing students, faculty, staff, and other stakeholders with opportunities to learn more about cultural diversity and participate in intercultural exchange is crucial (Briggs & Ammigan, 2019). This paper examines the trends and challenges of Chinese students studying in South Korean universities. Benchmarking should be regularly conducted to promote effective standards and satisfaction. Merely promoting intercultural activities may not necessarily lead to any meaningful change or development (Spencer-Oatey et al., 2014). Intentional, research-based approaches should be implemented to ensure successful mutual adaptation. Future research could examine the trends of Chinese students in South Korea once COVID-era restrictions and procedures are lifted. Additionally, the number of Vietnamese students in South Korea is also rising rapidly. Gaining more insight into the trends and challenges of Vietnamese students and other international students in South Korea can provide government and educational stakeholders with critical data that can help with recruiting and integration.

8.   References

Anderson, P., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R., & Hubbard, A. (2006). Short-term study abroad and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 30,* 457-469. http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0147176705001641

Arkoudis, S., & Baik, C. (2014). Crossing the interaction divide between international and domestic students in higher education. *Review of Higher Education, 1,* 47-62. https://www.herdsa.org.au/herdsa-review-higher-education-vol-1/47-62

Barron, P. (2008). Stormy outlook? Domestic students' impressions of international students at an Australian university. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism, 6*(2), 5-22.

https://doi.org/10.1300/J172v06n02_02

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation and adaptation. *Applied Psychology, 46,* 5-68. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1464-0597.1997.tb01087.x

Briggs, P., & Ammigan, R. (2017). A collaborative programming and outreach model for international student support offices. *Journal of International Students, 7*(4), 1080-1095. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1160791.pdf

Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence: In *Issues in Course Coursebook Evaluation.* Multilingual Matters.

Byun, K., & Kim, M. (2010). Shifting patterns of the government's policies for the internationalization of Korean higher education. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 15*(5), 467-486. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315310375307

Canadian Bureau for International Education. (2015). The integration challenge: Connecting international students with their Canadian peers. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED566123.pdf

Choe, S.-H. (2021, August 20). South Koreans now dislike China more than they dislike Japan. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2021/08/20/world/asia/korea-china-election-young-voters.html

Choi, H., & Shin, H. (2019, November 15). South Korean, Chinese students face off over Hong Kong protests. *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/article/us-hongkong-protests-southkorea-idUSKBN1XP162

Choudaha, R. (2016). Campus readiness for supporting international student success. *Journal of International Students, 6*(4), I-V. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v6i4.318

Chung, H.-C. (2016, May 18). Recklessly recruiting Chinese students. *The Korea Times.* http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2016/05/181_205003.html

Esmieu, P., Mullen, S., Samayoa, A. C., Gasman, M., Perkins, C., Wolff, M., Jimenez, C. D., & Beazley, M. (n.d.). Increasing diversity abroad: Expanding opportunities for students at minority serving institutions. https://www.ciee.org/sites/default/files/content/documents/college-study/msi_study_report.pdf

Fantini, A. E. (2009). Assessing intercultural competence: Issues and tools. In D. K. Deardoff (Ed.), *The Sage handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 456-477). Sage.

Gaines, N. D. (2012). Exploring the perceptions of study abroad among Black undergraduates at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (Doctoral dissertation). Bowling Green University.

Gallo, W. (2021, April 20). In South Korea, antagonism toward China is growing. https://www.voanews.com/a/east-asia-pacific_south-korea-antagonism-toward-china-growing/6204814.html

Glass, C. R., Gesing, P., Hales, A., & Cong, C. (2017). Faculty as bridges to coccurricular engagement and community for first-generation international students. *Studies in Higher Education, 42*(5), 895-910.

Henze, J., & Zhu, J. (2012). Current research on Chinese students studying abroad. *Research in Comparative and International Education, 7*(1), 90-104. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.2304/rcie.2012.7.1.90

Hwang, K. J. (2011). A critical analysis on the multicultural education in Korea on the basis of multicultural education theories. *Research in Social Studies Education, 18,* 151-167.

Jon, J.-E., & Jang, N. (2012). Nihao? Chinese students' relationships with Korean students: From Chinese students' experience and perspectives. *The Korean Educational Review, 18,* 303-326. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART001651944

Jon, J.-E., Lee, J. J., & Byun, K. (2014). The emergence of a regional hub: Comparing international student choices and experiences in South Korea. *Higher Education, 67,* 691-710. https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-013-9674-0

Kasulis, K. (2020, February 21). Coronavirus brings out anti-Chinese sentiment in South Korea. *Aljazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/2/21/coronavirus-brings-out-anti-chinese-

sentiment-in-south-korea

Kim, D. (2021, April 5). The politics of South Korea's "China Threat." *The Diplomat.* https://thediplomat.com/2021/04/the-politics-of-south-koreas-china-threat/

Kim, Y.-S. (2021, April 29). 7 in 10 foreign students are Vietnamese or Chinese: Korean schools lack diversity in foreign nationalities. *The Korea Herald.* http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20210429000268

Kim, D. S., Kim, D., & Jung, T. Y. (2011). Cognition of Korean college students for six foreigner groups. *Korean Journal of Social and Personality Psychology, 25,* 1-23.

Koester, J., & Lustig, M. W. (2015). Intercultural communication competence: Theory, measurement, and application. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 48,* 20–21. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.006

Korea Educational Development Institute. (2019). Educational statistics. https://www.kedi.re.kr/khome/main/webhome/Home.do

Koyphokaisawan, P., & Jeon, J. (2020). Factors promoting and debilitating college students' intercultural interaction in educational setting. *Journal of Research in Curriculum & Instruction, 24*(4), 411-424. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART002621115

Kwai, I. (2020, February 12). For a Chinese traveler, even paradise comes with prejudice. *The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/12/world/asia/china-coronavirus-korea-discrimination.html

Leask, B. (2009). Using formal and informal curricula to improve interactions between home and international students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(2), 205-221. https://doi.org/10.1177%2F1028315308329786

Lee, A., & Bailey, D. R. (2020). Examining South Korean university students' interactions with foreign students. *Asian Journal of University Education, 16*(3), 43-58. https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v16i3.8622

Lee, J., Jon, J.-E., & Byun, K. (2016). Neo-racism and neo-nationalism within East Asia: The experiences of international students in South Korea, *21*(2), https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315316669903

Lee, M.-K. (2013). Why Chinese students choose Korea as their study destination in the global hierarchy of higher education. *KEDI Journal of Educational Policy, 10*(2), 315-338. https://www.kci.go.kr/kciportal/ci/sereArticleSearch/ciSereArtiView.kci?sereArticleSearchBean.artiId=ART001844840

Lee, S. W. (2017). Circulating East to East: Understanding the push-pull factors of Chinese students studying in Korea. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 21*(2). 170-190. https://doi.org/10.1177/1028315317697540

Mesidor, J. K., & Sly, K. F. (2016). Factors that contribute to the adjustment of international students. *Journal of International Students, 6*(1), 262-282. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083269.pdf

Min, K. S. (2012). Changing patterns of mutual perceptions between Korean and Chinese people after the establishment of official diplomatic relationship. *East Asia Brief, 7,* 87-90.

Ministry of Education. (2019). Statistics of foreign students in Korea 2019. https://www.moe.go.kr/boardCnts/view.do?boardID=350&lev=0&statusYN=W&s=moe&m=0309&opType=N&boardSeq=79011

Nam, S. H. (2018, February 5). No. of foreign students in S. Korea grew at a record-high 18 pct last year: Data. *Yonhap News Agency.* https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20180205003200315

Ock, H.-J. (7 July 2016). International students struggle to adapt to Korea's hierarchy culture: Survey. *The Korea Herald.* http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20160707000820

Park, W.-K., Kong, Y.-K., & Kwon, S.-B. (2020). A study on Korean speech ability of Chinese students studying in Korea. *The Journal of Transdisciplinary Studies, 4*(1), 41-55. http://journal.kci.go.kr/jts/archive/articleView?artiId=ART002657348

Rienties, B., & Nolan, E. M. (2014). Understanding friendship and learning networks of international

and host students using longitudinal social network analysis. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 41,* 165-180. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2013.12.003

Rivas, J., Hale, K., & Burke, M. G. (2019). Seeking a sense of belonging: Social and cultural integration of international students with American college students. *Journal of International Students, 9*(2).687-703. https://doi.org/10.32674/jis.v9i2.943

Spencer-Oatey, H., Dauber, D., & Williams, S. (2014). Promoting integration on campus: Principles, practice and issues for further exploration. The University of Warwick. https://www.ukcisa.org.uk/Research--Policy/Resource-bank/resources/70/Promoting-Integration-on-Campus-Principles-Practice-and-Issues-for-Further-Exploration

Spencer-Oatey, H., Dauber, D., Jing, J., & Lifei, W. (2017). Chinese students' social integration into the university community: Hearing the students' voice. *Higher Education, 74,* 739-756. https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/s10734-016-0074-0.pdf

Terry, R. (2020). Travel is said to increase cultural understanding. Does it? *National Geographic.*https://www.nationalgeographic.com/travel/article/does-travel-really-lead-to-empathy

Wang, P., & Jun, J. (2018). The effect of individual's personal characteristics, social support, and self-efficacy on the adaptive flexibility of Chinese students in South Korea. *Global Creative Leader: Education & Learning, 8*(2), 1-26. http://journal.kci.go.kr/gcl/archive/articleView?artiId=ART002362167

Wright, C., & Schartner, A. (2013). 'I can't … I won't?' International students at the threshold of social interaction. *Journal of Research in International Education, 12*(2), 113-128. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240913491055

Yan, K., & Berliner, D. C. (2011). Chinese international students in the United States: Demographic trends, motivations, acculturation features and adjustment challenges. *Asia Pacific Education Review, 12,* 173-184. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12564-010-9117-x

Zhang, Q. (2000). Reform and development of study-abroad activities in China's new era. *Chinese Education & Society, 33*(5), 91-101. https://doi.org/10.2753/CED1061-1932330591