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Racism, Equity, and Quality of Education for International Students in South Korean Higher Education Institutes

Abstract   This study aims to understand equity issues of international students' learning in Korean higher education institutions by engaging with the issue of racism and identifies how international students in Korea reshape their learning trajectory and how we could provide equitable and quality education for international students. Espousing a qualitative case study design, six students from different background were interviewed to examine features of perceived institutional racism based on their learning experience in Korea. Major findings showed that internationalization has not been fulfilled in terms of engaging with international students although Korean government and higher education institutions have developed relevant policy to attract international students. This study indicates that Korean universities need to reconstruct their social, cultural, and institutional systems to embrace equity, diversity and inclusiveness to empower international students' capacity.

Keywords   diversity, equity, higher education , multicultural education, racism

Introduction

With extensive migration, Korea's social landscape has started to change dramatically. The Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs reported that the number of foreign residents including migrant workers, marriage migrants, and international students now stands at over 1,741,919, approximately 3.4 % of South Korea's population of over 50 million (Eum, 2015, July 6). The increase in foreign population is not simply about numbers. It reflects the reality

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that South Korea is fast becoming a multicultural and multiethnic society. More importantly, it shows that adapting to social diversity has become inevitable in South Korea (Kim, 2010). Indeed, it could be argued that multiculturalism is an irreversible social phenomenon in contemporary South Korea. When South Korea decided to recruit foreign migrants to meet the economic and demographic needs of a fast-growing society (Castles, 2007, October), the multicultural social landscape of South Korea was inevitably reshaped.

In particular, this changing context has led to a need for a reconfiguration of higher education. After the new millennium, internationalisation of higher education[1] was launched full-scale and became one of the important policy agendas, opening the nation to foreign educational service providers and enrolling students from other countries. In South Korea, recruiting international students has been highlighted under the government project named "Study Korea Project" which was launched in 2004 (National Institute for International Education, n. d.). The project aims to respond to globalisation by attracting international students from around the world into Korean universities. Almost every Korean higher education institution puts great effort into inviting international students by offering financial resources such as scholarships and research grants. This effort has paid off, according to international as well as domestic data. OECD (2013) reports that South Korea is one of the destination countries in Asia for international students.

It could lead Korean universities to reach some level of multiculturalism. More broadly speaking, this indicates that South Korea is gradually, but also noticeably, moving away from having a homogenous population. It is obvious that the number of international students is growing. However, the processes which they undergo in coming to South Korea and their academic achievements and interactions are rarely documented. On the other hand, cases of international

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[1] According to J. Knight, the globalisation of higher education refers to the "flow of technology, economy, knowledge, people, values, ideas… across borders. Globalisation affects each country in a different way due to a nation's individual history, traditions, culture and priorities…. Internationalisation of higher education is one of the ways a country responds to the impact of globalisation yet, at the same time, respects the individuality of the nation." J. Knight (2001). Internacionalización de la educación superior [Internationalisation of higher education]. In Calidad e internacionalización de la educación superior [*Quality and internationalization in higher education*]. México City, México: Asociación Nacional de Universidades e Instituciones de Educación Superior, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México [Mexico City, Mexico: ANUIES and the National Autonomous University of Mexico], p. 20.

students being mishandled by both institutions and the individuals within those institutions have been constantly reported on (Shin, 2006). Indeed, few studies have investigated issues of equity and quality of teaching and learning for international students in Korean higher education institutions. In addition, there are concerns of invisible exclusion and discrimination against international students. Thus, this paper seeks to identify how the international students reshape their learning trajectory and life experiences. The research questions are:

(1) How do international students think of their learning experiences in Korean universities?

(2) What are the challenges and hidden racism that international students experience in Korean universities?

It is expected that this study could lead to some meaningful implications for multicultural education in higher education institutes in South Korea.

Internationalisation of Korean Higher Education and Its Multicultural Landscape

A huge and imposing trend of higher education in South Korea is globalisation. Under the pressure of globalisation, the governance, structure, policy, and management of higher education has been converging and diverging at the same time. The transformation of education programmes, curriculums, pedagogy, and even accreditation of the learning system in higher education institutions is observed not only within the states. It goes beyond national boundaries. For instance, the *Bologna Process* indicates an agreement between European countries to ensure the quality of higher education qualifications, which implies European higher education institutions are encouraged to reconstruct their higher education system in the global context. However, impact of the process differs with a state's historical, political, educational, and social variables such as funding and the power status of stakeholders (Dobbins & Knill, 2014). Korean universities have started to pay attention to these global trends, which triggered them to react with internationalisation. This paper discusses how globalisation impacts on the Korean higher education sector and how South Korea's higher education has been internationalised to meet globalisation in its own ways.

Knight (1993) described internationalisation of higher education as the integration of an international and/or intercultural dimension into the teaching,

research, and service function of the institution. It has been believed that South Korea has been a homogenous society for a long time in its social and cultural dimensions. However, in the contemporary context, developing pluralistic identities that allow people to have flexibility in coping with cultural differences and understanding others seem indispensable. Kang (2010) identified "multicultural education for all" and suggested that South Korean society is being rapidly transformed into multicultural society, yet there is still a strong nationalist ethos among Koreans which creates hostility and ethnic discrimination, particularly towards migrant workers. Also, issues related to student migration in the field of higher education have been studied by scholars. Jon (2012) studied how students coming from overseas for higher education, under the impact of globalisation, has influenced the unequal power relations between local and international students.

Table 1 shows the trend of Korea's efforts to recruit international students into Korean colleges and universities for the last 10 years.

Table 1 Numbers of International Students in Korean Higher Education Institutions (2003–2012)

Year	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Number	12,314	16,832	22,526	32,557	49,270	63,952	75,850	83,842	89,537	86,878

Source. Domestic foreign students exceeded 10 million people. (2015). 헤럴드경제 [*Korean Herald*]. Retrieved July 27, 2016, from http://news.heraldcorp.com/view.php?ud= 20151026000457

Data showed that South Korea had some 376 official higher education institutions (out of which 171 are universities) with about 3,700,000 students and over 60,000 academic staff by 2010, as compared to 160 higher education institutions with about 200,000 students in 1970 (Parry & Lee, 2011, October). By and large, this is a huge achievement for a country as small as South Korea whose total area is 100,210 square kilometres with a total population of about 50 million (International Business Publications, 2016). Notwithstanding this achievement, it can be asserted that the system is implicitly more geared towards domestication rather than internationalisation.

One thing evident in Korean higher education statistics is the skewed composition of international students. For example, out of the 1,841 international

students at Hanyang University in 2011, 1,503 (82 %) were from Asia and, more interestingly, 1,359 (90 % of all Asians) were Chinese (Domestic Foreign Students, 2015). A very similar composition was observed in Seoul National University (SNU). Of the total enrolment of 28,018 students in 2011 at SNU, a mere 2,486 students (8.9 %) were international students (Domestic Foreign Students, 2015).

Universities and other higher education institutions make deliberate efforts to enrol international students for various reasons. The main benefits of having international students include: financial gains through tuition fees and other expenses; providing local students with multicultural and global learning experiences; enhancing their greater exposure to international education; cultivating intercultural sensitivity and global understanding; and creating a platform for fostering global citizenship (George-Jackson, 2010). Despite all the benefits of internationalisation of higher education, it is still challenging for educational environments in Korean institutions to be inclusive and multicultural enough to accommodate the growing numbers of international students. Given that international students have different cultural backgrounds, ethnicity, values, and languages, it could generate complex challenges in widening the multicultural landscape of higher education (Brown, 2004). International students are likely to encounter social restrictions and discrimination while they study and reshape their lives in South Korea.

Theoretical Understanding: Institutional Racism

For a long time, racism was considered a political slogan lacking in analytical rigour until it could be more specifically conceptualised, theorised, and subjected to empirical investigation. Early appearance of the concept includes the radical writings of the United States black political activists, Stokely Carmichael and Charles V. Hamilton in *Black Power* in 1968 (Carmichael, 2006). Unfortunately, their conceptualisation failed to offer a clear theoretical basis for specifying the mechanisms through which institutional rather than individual racism operated to marginalise certain groups over others.

In Europe, the concept re-emerged as part of political discourse by the end of the 1990s when it was used to label the England Metropolitan Police Service for its failure to investigate Stephen Lawrence's racist murder in the United

Kingdom (Macpherson, 1999). Wight (2003) contended it is still not easy to differentiate between institutional racism as either an outcome or a cause, recognising the overt and accidental practices of individuals but not the interacting causal structural conditions. In South Africa, before 1994, there existed pervasive forms of exclusion and exploitation of blacks, other coloured races, and Indians by the whites; the more modern forms of institutional racism in South Africa are centred on interracial relationships such as mixed marriages (Bozalek, 2010).

Therefore, institutional racism can be defined as the process of deliberately discriminating against certain groups of people through biased laws or practices. The bias is usually hidden. On the surface, they seem to appear as justified and innocent, but its effects are no less destructive to human life and human dignity. It could be stated that institutional racism includes established, evident, visible, and respected forces, social arrangements, structures, policies, and systems of social relations that operate and are manipulated in such a way as to allow, support, or comply with acts of individual racism. In some sense, many descriptions of the term of institutional racism are fragmented; thus this study adopts Macpherson's (1999) definition of institutional racism as the collective failure of an organisation to provide appropriate professional services to people because of their culture, colour, race, or ethnic group. He further clarified that it can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes, and behaviour, which amount to discrimination through intuitive prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage the minorities. Hence, institutional racism can be a critical lens to understand discrimination and equity matters toward international students in Korean universities.

Despite the long-lasting policy effort towards multiculturalism to accommodate "foreigners" in South Korea, local newspapers such as *JoongAng Daily* (Multiculturalism in Korea, 2010, August 26) and *Korea Times* and foreign medias like BBC have been reporting on various issues related to racial discrimination against migrant wives and international students. This discrimination, exacerbated by race, nationality, and language barriers, leave non-Koreans as marginalised "others." In this regard, Koreans are identified as "us" while non-Koreans as "them." A certain level of ethnic homogeneity and bloodline nationalism within South Korea has strengthened a powerful sense of collective oneness deeply embedded in the Korean society (Shin, 2006). How

successfully South Korea handles its marginalised population in the process of globalisation will depend on its ability to build a fair and equitable prosperous society embracing a diverse population. Lim (2011) asserted that despite the reforms of Korea's institutions, the spirit of institutional racism and the exclusive culture towards foreigners are still embedded in Korean society. Shin (2006) opined that Korea's pride in the nation's apparent lineage-centred ethnic homogeneity, despite its many advantages for the national oneness and identity, induces a sense of identifying non-Koreans as outsiders.

This theoretical framework provides a lens to understand international students' narratives on racism and discrimination in Korean universities. Data from various sources in Korea describe a few specific cases that may contain certain elements of racism (e.g., Power, 2013, April 29; "Why are some Koreans," n. d.). In 2009, Mr Bonojit Hussein, an Indian research professor at Sungkonghoe University in South Korea was called "dirty" and a "pitch-black foreigner" by a male Korean on a bus, and a foreign female graduate student at Gyeongsang National University was bullied by her male professor in 2013. There are a few other reported and unreported cases including the discriminatory procedures for house-renting and room-mate matching service, and prejudicial treatments for international students on campus. It shows the multifaceted nature of equity issues for international students in higher education institutes.

Research Setting and Methodology

Employing a qualitative case study design, this study examines the presence and features of perceived institutional racism based on international students' experience in South Korea. Qualitative researchers are interested in exploring and understanding how people interpret their experiences, how they construct their worlds, and what meaning they attribute to their experiences (Merriam, 2009). Qualitative studies take into account an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences, hence, enabling contextualisation of the analysis of phenomena. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) suggested that qualitative research approaches are preferred due to their iterative nature, naturalistic grounding, need for descriptive data, concern for process, and interest in how participants make meaning. In this regard, this study employed qualitative research epistemology and its methodology to explore institutional racism matters and equity through

understanding international students' voices.

Empirical data via in-depth individual and focus group interviews were collected from international students in Korean higher education institutions. It would not be feasible to reach the whole target population (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006) of the students who are studying in hundreds of universities scattered throughout Korea; hence, a decision to have six purposively selected students was made. The selected students are pursuing undergraduate programmes at four different universities within metropolitan Seoul. Interviewees were chosen among those who were willing to share their narratives and campus life experiences. Most participants have stayed in South Korea for over two years and some of them have been awarded a Global Korea Scholarship under the Study Korea Project. In terms of selection criteria, I underlined participants who have a reflective attitude towards their campus-life experiences. Six students from different backgrounds were interviewed. Three male students came from the African countries of Ethiopia, Tanzania, and Kenya; and three female students from the Asian countries of China, India, and Indonesia. The participants were from four different universities in Seoul. Their academic fields and majors range from bioengineering to Korean literature. Hence, the informants' cultural differences are significant and may have meaningful implications for multicultural education in higher education institutions. For ethical reasons, names of participants are presented as pseudonyms. Their details are presented in Table 2.

Table 2   Background Details of Participants

Name (pseudonym)	Nationality	Race	Gender	Duration of Stay
Solomon	Ethiopia	Black	Male	3 years
Tacoma	Tanzania	Black	Male	2 years
Manu	Kenya	Black	Male	2 years
Lily	China	Asian	Female	3 years
Savi	India	Asian	Female	2 years
Ashima	Indonesia	Asian	Female	3 years

Data Collection and Analysis

Semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the participants' life

experiences (Creswell, 2009). Semi-structured interviews have the flexibility to give room for asking a series of questions and then probing more deeply using open-ended questions to obtain additional information and supplemental data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The face-to-face interviews, averaging two hours in length, were conducted over an eight-month period from 2013 to 2014. There are altogether eight individual interviews and four focus group interviews. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. A few days after the interviews, I made *KakaoTalk*[2] calls to the interviewees to obtain stories of what other related issues happened since then. Member checking was also conducted for the interview transcripts.

In addition, field observations were conducted for four months during informants' regular classes and occasional events on campus. Through observations, this study collected data of verbal and non-verbal communications as well as their interactions in their campus lives. I also supplemented relevant episodes to their respective transcripts to make participants more illuminating and let their voices be heard in the research process.

Data analysis was done as an ongoing and iterative process during and after data collection. It involves a process of flowing back to the research questions and re-checking emerging categories about international students' learning experiences and perceptions on racism and sense of exclusion within the universities. The analysis started with open coding that forms contextualised concepts, followed by theoretically selective coding deploying a higher level of abstraction. Finally, data were reduced into coherent main categories and related themes on institutional racism and perception on discrimination as a foreign student.

Perceived Institutional Racism in Korean Universities: Hidden Agenda

While the interacting factors responsible for institutional racism can be as many as one may wish to describe, findings from this study suggest narrowing them down to three categories: official institutional policies, routine practices within the institution, and informal culture of the institution. This section presents a

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[2] *KakaoTalk* is a popular social network service based in South Korea, which provides free-calling and convenient text-messaging services.

summary of the cases that depict issues perceived as racism by the participants, who are six international students at four different universities in Seoul.

Lack of Inclusive Policy for International Students

In the context of internationalisation, many higher education institutions are struggling with diversifying their staff and student population, and creating a supportive environment for such diversification. In South Korea, like in some other countries, there exists a mismatch between institutional policy (whenever they have it) and staff members' commitment to truly implementing internationalisation. This anomaly persuades us to join Brown (2004) in urging institutions of higher education to develop strategies and put in place systems that would facilitate them to achieve the goal of truly diversified higher education communities. Once they feel the gap between institutional propaganda and reality, their motivation for studying and staying in South Korea is reduced. This is what student Ashima expressed: "I feel like I was tricked into enrolling in this university. The school website provided attractive information about the courses. It shows friendly culture for international students. But the reality was different" (personal communication, September 2, 2013).

   The participants regularly commented that they were not receiving the kind of educational provision and services they had expected. Savi recalled that her initial choices for higher education were somewhere between Japan and Hong Kong, but she was attracted to South Korea due to the scholarship programme which was attractively advertised. After she came to South Korea for her study, however, she began experiencing the unexpected barrier: language.

> When I was applying for admission, the university said I don't need to be fluent in Korean because the courses are taught in English. But it was totally not true. I am suspicious whether my university has a decent policy to support the international students. (personal communication, October 14, 2013)

But when she began attending classes, almost all courses were taught in Korean. This experience was reported by all six participants and Solomon even remarked: "I was extremely shocked to realise that I got wrong information from the school website and scholarship advertisement. It made it tough to understand class"

(personal communication, September 2, 2013).

Some participants disclosed that they made several attempts to raise this issue to the university administration, but their efforts ended up in vain. To the students' surprise, the indirect advice from the administration was for them to continue learning the Korean language until they acquire the proficiency to help them participate in classes. Most of the international students in Korean universities confessed that they felt constantly isolated. Apart from the lack of institutional support, some professors' negligence in facilitating non-Korean students' active engagement in classroom activities also frustrated them. Universities may need to fundamentally reconstruct their curriculum. Chinese student Lily made the critical comment: "Is our university's curriculum viewed as multicultural and inclusive ever-changing to meet the different needs of international students? Because of this huddle, I can't fully achieve my academic progress. Shallow understanding, shallow knowledge" (personal communication, February 11, 2014).

Students' comments indicate that some Korean universities could not establish an inclusive policy for international students at the institutional level, which hinders students' engagement in the university programmes.

Racism Embedded in Routine Practice and Culture across the Campus

Campus organisational culture was mentioned as one crucial factor influencing students' sense of exclusion (Bhatti, 2003). An institution's commitment to diversity can also be easily discerned through the way students interact among themselves and with the faculty and other staff (Brown, 2004). Availability of support structures such as restaurants, academic and social counselling services, accommodation, and recreation facilities for a diverse population have great implications for diversity in universities. When asked about the challenges experienced as an international student, Tacoma shared his frustrations caused by unexpected classroom experiences, an unfriendly school and dormitory environment, and poor information and counselling services.

> I don't know what I should tell you… my school life here is miserable. When I was applying for this university I thought the courses would be taught in English and I thought I can communicate in English. But, all courses are taught in Korean. Although

some professors use English books, they give lectures in Korean; give all instructions related to the course schedule, assignments, and examinations in Korean. I got cross with these and I asked for help from classmates informally. I can rely on social support, but the routine practices are not fully supportive. (personal communication, April 21, 2014)

Many participants showed their strong agreement with Tacoma's comment during the focus group interviews. They alleged that despite all these challenges, there were few chances for international students to meet a professor to ask advice on these matters. Although help from professors was available to these other participants, there were other cases in which administrative staff members were reluctant to solve problems for international students. As described by Savi:

There was a time I had serious problems related to course registration. I told my professor who then advised me to report the issue to the Graduate Admission staff. After writing the department two emails which were never responded to, I went to meet them physically. They told me [in Korean) that they cannot speak English, thus they gave me somebody to talk to through the phone. Of course, it was somehow helpful, at least for that time…. But, the truth is that I have been having many problems and chances of getting solutions are constrained by the lack of counselling services offered by staffs who really understand what it means to have students from different cultures. (personal communication, March 19, 2014)

The data reveals that the participants have struggling with unfriendly routine practices in school life and the institutional culture pushes them into a fringe position. It is crucial for institutions to raise multicultural awareness among all faculty and administration staff, and students, and help to bridge the unnecessary binary opposition between "them" and "us" (Inokuchi & Nozaki, 2005, p. 72), which is the dichotomy between local and international students.

Alienation in Teaching and Learning Activities

Institutional racism is not a simple phenomenon; rather, it is a complex interaction of many dynamic factors (Pilkington, 2013). Sometimes, it may be covert, and therefore, it makes it difficult to discover racism in its early stages. For this reason, Miller and Garran (2007) used a concept "the web of institutional

racism" when they described various interacting factors such as cultural and linguistic hegemony, educational discrimination, criminal justice prejudice, and media and political racism. As for the context of higher education institutions, other factors may appear to be insignificant as illustrated by the international students. They criticised the way classroom activities were undertaken within their institutions. They expected to be involved in active interactions between professors and themselves, and with other students.

When students were asked to form groups for class activities, Solomon testified that he regularly witnessed "foreigners'" were being excluded. Even when circumstances forced them to be included, they could neither contribute nor gain anything meaningful from their classes. Manu, who comes from Africa recalled one incident:

> Sometimes we have to prepare class presentations as a group. It has happened several times, they [Korean students] go to discuss and prepare for the presentation. In most cases they also present by themselves, but my name is often included in the participants' list. Occasionally, a few minutes just before the class, the Korean students gave me a small portion to present during the class… remember that I don't know what they have discussed, I'm just told to present and pretend that I had worked with them. You know, obviously I am excluded for all the collective classroom activities. (personal communication, February 11, 2014)

The data showed that most participants have a sense of alienation during their learning activities. Combined with the language barrier, cultural and linguistic hegemony and the sense of alienation make it hard for the international students to navigate their learning journey with any sense of agency.

Issues related to bias in assignment marking, examinations, and thesis supervision appears to be persistent for participants in this study. Four out of the six participants shared incidents of being treated differently from local students when it comes to assessment of their academic works. Ashima shared her experience related to assessment and supervision:

> When semester examinations are very close, I have been witnessing our Korean classmates busy photocopying some papers… during exams, I realised that those are the papers containing most questions we are doing…. One time, a professor whose course

> was taught in English explained in Korean during the last lecture that the exam will be an open-book format…. Including me, the international students only got to know it was an open-book exam during the examination. (personal communication, March 18, 2014)

The participants of the study viewed it as unfair to them. It could naturally produce unfair course outcomes. It should be acknowledged that some data in this study are controversial in terms of whether they are actually a matter of racism or some other phenomenon like discrimination and ethnocentrism. However, the findings suggest that we have to critically reconsider the equity and justice issues in international students' learning processes in the Korean universities.

Implications and Conclusion

It has been widely acknowledged that Korean higher education institutions have a level of competitiveness producing remarkable outcomes of research and development in the global market. However, this study showed that internationalisation has not been fulfilled in terms of engaging with international students. It is time for Korean universities to reconstruct their social, cultural, and institutional systems to embrace diversity and heterogeneity. A few implications could be made as follows:

Implementing Multicultural Education at the Level of Universities

Migrant education is not only about multicultural education. Multicultural education needs to be clearly understood by education policymakers. It should be explained with passion that multicultural education is an interdisciplinary educational process that informs all academic disciplines, and other aspects of the curriculum are based on inculcating and perpetuating justice, equality, equity, human dignity, freedom, and democracy. Instead of focusing on how to assimilate international students, multicultural education should challenge educators to critically ask how institutions can truly make diverse members engaged within the institutional policies and routine practices.

Thus, we need to build up higher level of equity to embrace multicultural educational settings within the higher education institutions. The government

needs to provide continuous support for the policies aimed at internationalising higher education; launch more foreigner-friendly institutions, programmes, and courses; and facilitate collaborative academic activities promoting multicultural engagement. Although it is evident that both international and informal support are powerful for international students' learning process and campus life, this study underlines the need for Korean universities to put deliberate efforts into implementing multicultural education and making campus a good model of a multicultural community respecting diversity. Korean universities are undertaking an experimental journey to achieve global competency and diversity engaged with multiculturalism. This study offers important implications for the support of international students' learning in higher education institutions. Indeed, Korean universities need to build up a capacity to implement friendly multicultural education provision.

Preparing Reflective Educators Embracing Diversity in the Campus

It is doubtless the case that teachers are crucial in leading the way towards a proper multicultural community (Bennett, 2001; Webb, 2001). But the effectiveness of teachers as multicultural and reflective professionals remains an unanswered question. Banks (2007) argued that we need professional teachers who are reflective thinkers and action takers to engage students of diverse backgrounds. Teachers involved in multicultural education are compelled to know about people different from themselves. Therefore, they must first "examine their racial and ethnic attitudes toward diverse groups before engaging in cultural sharing" (Banks, 1996, p. 22).

Reflective educators and university staff who are deeply conscious of equity, anti-racism, and diversity are crucial in supporting international students' learning journey in Korean universities. They can create a more inclusive, multicultural, and friendly culture. It can be a community of practice that prevents racist pedagogy formally as well as informally.

Multicultural education needs students and educators who are globally minded. In this regard, success of effective multicultural education demands programmes that broaden students and faculties' understanding of multiculturalism and global issues. In many cases, the practice of "othering" ("them" vs "us") creates a feeling of superiority of "us" and this goes in tandem with generating and

spreading fragmented and often erroneous information about "others."

Korean higher education institutions are advised to implement multicultural programmes which can have a long-lasting impact on both local and international students. Activities like Multicultural Day, Country X Cultural Day and Multicultural Dinner, and International Friends Club may have a certain impact on creating multicultural awareness and celebrating diversity in society. However, the long-term impact of these activities is doubtful. Continual and active engagement from civil society is important to achieve sustainable development. On the other hand, Kim and Chun's (2015) study demonstrated that domestic students, facing the heterogeneous learning environment with the increased number of foreign students, are in fact challenged in terms of socialising with international students. Therefore, the most important issue is the need for institutional flexibility and inclusiveness to accommodate different cultures and diverse members. There is no shortcut solution. What this study implies is that we need concerted efforts to engage with "others" and embrace diversity.

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