



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ACADEMIC RESEARCH IN PROGRESSIVE EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT



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ISSN: 2226-6348

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Roland Attila Csizmazia, Paul Z. Jambor

To Link this Article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARPED/v3-i2/867>

DOI: 10.6007/IJARPED/v3-i2/867

Received: 15 April 2014, **Revised:** 16 May 2014, **Accepted:** 12 June 2014

Published Online: 29 June 2014

In-Text Citation: (Csizmazia & Jambor, 2014)

To Cite this Article: Csizmazia, R. A., & Jambor, P. Z. (2014). Korean Higher Education on the Rise: Time to Learn from the Success - Comparative Research at the Tertiary Education Level. *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development*, 3(2), 1–20.

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Vol. 3(3) 2014, Pg. 1 - 20

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Korean Higher Education on the Rise: Time to Learn from the Success - Comparative Research at the Tertiary Education Level

Roland Attila Csizmazia

Assistant Professor, Academy of Advanced Studies Kwangwoon University, Seoul, Republic of
Korea

Paul Z. Jambor

Assistant Professor of English for Academic Purposes Korea University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Abstract

This research paper highlights a number of important lessons that international universities and university systems - particularly those in Austria and Ontario, Canada - can learn from the South Korean higher education model, in terms of policies, practices, privatization, eligibility and mentoring. Effectively, while modern South Korean universities have short post-war histories since their establishment, in comparison to more developed countries, they can nonetheless offer viable blueprints, in terms of policies, practices, privatization and mentoring to university administrators worldwide. To demonstrate this, a comparative framework and an empirical comparison are used to assess the contrastive qualities between Austrian and S. Korean as well as between Ontarian (of Canada) and S. Korean tertiary educational environments in the fields of Business Administration and TES/FL¹, correspondingly.

In the first chapter of the paper, a contrastive assessment between the Austrian and South Korean tertiary education systems is made, with a specific focus on the undergraduate level. Suggestions to facilitate the current transition of the Austrian tertiary education system in accordance with the Bologna Process are consequently made. This process has been introduced to ensure comparability in standards and to foster the mobility of European students in an increasingly globalized world that requires diverse cultural awareness from students to raise their employability worldwide (Reichert & Tauch, 2004). The paper's suggestions are inspired by the experiences of the South Korean educational system that has evolved over a period of six decades. The following study will also show that the traditional values of Confucianism – such as harmony, community, strong morality and respect toward older family members – have been

¹ TES/FL – Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language

preserved in Korea. They still influence Korean society in general and higher education in particular, playing a major role even in the recent rise of Hallyu (Yang, 2012).

In the second section of the paper, an empirical analysis and comparison of tertiary level ESL in Ontario, Canada and EFL in the Republic of Korea, are conducted on a systematic and empirical basis. It aims to highlight the advantages of the Korean EFL system over that of ESL in Ontario, Canada in the areas of policies and practices. Essentially, the Canadian Language Benchmarks is shown to give way to extreme linguistic regionalism that is built on a disproportionate reliance on the concept of Canadianism. In general, as a result of the outcome of the comparative analysis, it is suggested in the scope of this paper that Ontarian tertiary ESL providers and administrators have specific lessons to learn from the university EFL model in the Republic of Korea.

Keywords: Comparison, Tertiary/Higher Education, EFL & ESL, Canadianism, Humboldtian, Bologna Process

While the Ontario model is compared to that in Korea in the TES/FL context, one might be inclined argue that the Ontario model should be held paramount due to the province's right to the English language, as an English as a first language region, however, given the status of English as a Lingua Franca/Global Language the argument loses much of its credibility since exclusive English language ownership is all but inconceivable.

Taking the outcomes of the two sections as a whole, an overall hypothesis is made, proposing that as a result of the combined comparative analysis, specific lessons can be learnt from the Korean system of post-secondary education.

Methodology

In the first section of the paper, the affirmative observation of the rapid development of Korean higher education can support the ongoing reform efforts at the Humboldtian – or typically German-style – universities in Austria. It has to be mentioned that the time span of the article covers the period before the full adoption of the Bologna Process to further emphasize the alteration between the German-style and the Korean tertiary education systems. To scrutinize this perspective, a comparative meta-framework is applied based on the concepts revisited in the article composed by Kwon and Danaher (2000). The framework serves to generalize the internal processes and external influences on the tertiary education sector in a comparative system. It covers the historical background; teaching methods; student-instructor interactions; the significance of higher education; the driving factors of the reforms as well as prevalent social and political aspects. The author gained in-depth experience in the Austrian higher education system over a decade and is currently an instructor at the tertiary level in South Korea.

In the second section of the paper, Korea and Ontario, Canada are selected and employed as the primary settings for a comparative empirical analysis, in view of the fact that the author of this section is from Ontario, Canada and is now teaching in South Korea in a tertiary educational environment. He has been an instructor/professor at the tertiary level, in South Korea, for 11 years now, which makes the Korean setting all the more relevant in this comparative essay. The empirical approach is employed in this comparative analysis since the subject of comparison is practical in the case of the applicable policies as well as in the administrative practices employed

by the two systems of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education systems in Canada and the Republic of Korea, respectively.

It is imperative to note that the second section of the research paper is built on, and is an expanded and more developed version of, an earlier comparative analysis between Korean EFL and Canadian ESL (Protectionist Measures in Postsecondary Ontario (Canada) TESL, 2012).

Comparison between Korean and Austrian Universities with a Particular Focus on Undergraduate Education

Historical Background

This chapter starts with a short description about the establishment of modern tertiary education, wherein particular country-specific information contributes to the framework of the recent elaboration within both countries, Austria and Korea. The development of higher education in both countries has been influenced by multiple factors; among them the establishment of the Humboldtian research university model in Austria, and the Confucian model in Korea, having played determining roles.

The history of Austrian tertiary education can be traced back to the year 1365 when the University Vienna was founded by Duke Rudolph IV (Stat, 2012:b). In Austria, to this very day, – similar to other German-speaking states – the idea of “education through science” has been fully ingrained. The idea has mainly focused on the scientific discipline rather than the students themselves. Pasternack et al (2005) stated in their scientific report – which was carried out on behalf of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Education – that the ideal of “education through science” permanently shaped students’ research-active learning. On the one hand, due to this aspect, the university education system in the German-speaking territories became highly efficient research institutes in the 19th century, and it did not regard the existing dynamic context, of external factors and goals, potentially contributing to positive developments. Moreover, the Humboldtian quest for truth through an unlimited period of time has largely contributed to inconsistencies, with pursued time restraints, in the system of academic studies. Hence, Austrian higher education has been characterized by a high level of autonomy. Contrary to Humboldtian universities, the limitation of studies could be put into operation without objections both in the Anglo-American world and in the realm of Confucian-based higher education. It also has to be added that due to the most recent EU the Austrian government had to push into a more internationally standardized institution of tertiary education.

Similar to Austria, the institution of tertiary education in Korea has its origin in the 14th century, the time of the Yi (Choson) dynasty. In 1398, Confucian scholars established an institution of higher learning (Kim & Lee, 2006). However, unlike in Austria, higher education in Korea has been significantly influenced by governmental policies. The establishment of a modern university system in Korea can be traced back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries when Western ideas of education were implemented. In the Japanese colonial era, the German model of education was implemented in the Korean tertiary education system. The demand for higher education was suppressed and it was provided only to a narrow elite, since the Japanese government regarded it as a potential threat (Kim & Lee, 2006). The US university system has influenced the development of South Korean education since the end of World War II (Altbach, 1989). The influence of US universities is still very pronounced, as indicated by the fact that 40%

of all Korean academics have studied at foreign universities (of whom, the vast majority studied in the United States), and this ratio has remained unchanged since the 1960s (Shin, 2012). At the same time, the country's Confucian cultural background was a major factor in the evolution of modern Korean education as well as educational policies. According to Shin, Koreans have traditionally had a strong preference for education. This is also demonstrated by the high investments made by Korean parents and also by the high budget allocated toward education by the Korean government (OECD, 2011:a and Shin, 2012). Another important social impact brought by the Confucian heritage is the exaggerated desire to separate children with higher abilities early on. Before the late 1960s a filtering method had already been implemented by middle and high schools for the case of students applying for entrance examinations. This, however, shows a few similarities with the Austrian system that pushes to select children for the elite secondary education at around age of 10. The Korean system of entrance exams was then abolished at that level, but the College Scholastic Achievement Test (abbr. CSAT) remained. Even though it is a very tough issue, it can be agreed that the extreme high demand for higher education and the fierce competition to be qualified for any of the most renowned Korean universities will continue to remain in effect (Choi, Calero & Escardíbul, 2011).

Teaching method based on characteristics of the society

Applied teaching techniques differ considerably between the two countries. Korea is a high power-distance society. Moreover, collectivism is accorded a high value in Korea. Both high power-distance and collectivism distinguish Korean society from that of Austria, which in terms of these values seems to have rather the opposite set of characteristics (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). This can be expressed even though Austria can be described as one of the countries that have conservatively preserved and obsessed with titles inside the hierarchy.

Korean universities have lectures with compulsory attendance. The lectures tend to be more instructor-centered, in that instructors usually explain the issues and subsequently students prepare their assignments. However, compulsory attendance has largely been more flexible for undergraduate students than for graduate students. Based on personal experience as a graduate student, it can be stated that team spirit develops rapidly among students – developing a sense of belonging on a hierarchical level – in the same age group, and is a key factor in getting presentations and class activities done on time. Due to the distinctive form of collectivism in Korean society, students prefer to join larger groups since they have long enjoyed social affiliations, e.g., the affiliation to family. In such an environment the dependence of individuals on each other is high and therefore the members of a particular group also have to be loyal to each other. Accordingly, groups can gain insight into the different issues faster than individuals, thus they also have more information; and can find errors more effectively. Loyalty however also means that the members have to comply with groupthink, thus, the decision-making process may become extraordinarily time-consuming and members may be afraid to share their own ideas, thus creativity is largely discouraged.

Austrian society is moderately individualistic, having one of the lowest values for the power-distance dimension, underscoring the expectation of equality among one another with confirmation lying in the fact that the Austrian middle class is large with students treating teachers as equal parties (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Austrian society is more

egalitarian and less hierarchical. Instructors do not take all the initiatives and will not be treated as gurus, but rather as experts who ought to share knowledge and truth objectively. Consequently, students may not give the appropriate level of respect when they criticize their instructors and professors as they are emotionally affected. Eventually, this type of public criticism may potentially lead to confrontations that are excessively problematic to handle.

Current higher education and recent reforms

The rate of enrolment in tertiary education has been rising rapidly worldwide. The expansion of higher education can be illustrated by both Korean and by Austrian statistics. In Korea the actual number of enrolled students increased from 11,358 in 1950 to 3.5 million in 2002 (Kim & Lee, 2006). The number of students in Korean tertiary education is 3,728,802 with a foreigner proportion of 1.62%, thus by relative number there are 60,589 individuals of which the vast majority come from neighboring China (Cesi, 2012:a). If the historical data from 2000 – showing only a ratio of 0.2% – is compared to the data of 2012, a sharp increase in terms of foreign students can be observed. The country has one of the fastest expansion rates among the OECD countries (OECD, 2011:b). Therefore, the authors believe that Korea is on the right track of internationalization as it has become more and more attractive for foreign students, who are then able to contribute to the fame and ranking of the particular universities. Austria still lags behind when a comparison is drawn with other OECD countries, which is as well represented by the statistics (OECD, 2011:a). The number of students was around 20,000 in 1950, having reached 255,000 in 2009 (Hofer & Kronberger, 2012). The current number of students is 360,495 with a foreign-student proportion of 22.63%, thus accounting for 81,578 foreign students of whom most come from other EU countries (Stat, 2012:b). As the population in Austria is also respectively much smaller, the gap between the historical and recent numbers is obviously not as high as it is in Korea.

The eligibility to study at the tertiary level substantially differs between Austria and Korea. For the case of Austria, all high school students have basically been eligible to continue their studies at any higher education institution after successful completion of their final examinations at an Austrian high school. An exception is however constituted by the numerus clausus in a limited number of faculties, e.g., medical and psychology faculties. They introduced numerus clausus through admission processes and restrictions (Pechar, 2007). The obvious difference, between the Austrian 'school-leaving examination' (Abitur or Reifeprüfung) and the American SAT (standardized examination) – also the equivalent of the CSAT (College Scholastic Ability Test) in Korea, is that the Austrian examination has not been standardized as of yet. It currently provides the only basis for general eligibility. The institution of general eligibility is highly controversial since the selection happens at the stage of entering the secondary education system and this leads to an unconditional discontinuance of lifelong learning at any research university. Moreover, the examinations that allow students to study at higher education institutes have a formidable variance in terms of requirements, set independently by each school. As a result of the expansion of the high school system in Austria, the policy makers had to face the dilemma either to enable tertiary institutions to introduce an entrance exam or to raise the difficulty levels of the examinations during a so called introductory phase of studies. Due to the issue of sensitivity, politicians chose the latter. Consequently, students still have the eligibility to study, but then they have to deal with 'knock-out examinations'. Pechar argues that the system misuses

the scarce resources of universities – allocated by the government – and it might be a deferral of decision (Pechar, 2007).

The general eligibility rule was inspected by several scholars (e.g., Pechar 2007; Schneeberger & Petanovitsch, 2010) and according to their conclusion it has never reached its goal, i.e. to significantly support the students from socially disadvantaged environments and as a result to increase their demographic ratio at the respective universities. According to the University Report 2011 the majority of students stem from households in which parents belong to the white-collar class, while only 8% of students had fathers belonging to the blue-collar class – this number was merely 4.1% in the year 2002 (FMSR, 2011). This highlights the artifact of early selection in scholastic education once again.

For a while Austrian policy makers have not only shirked their responsibility to take any actions which comply with the Bologna Process and the ERASMUS program, they have also tried to control the quantitative influx of students from other EU countries by the implementation of the quota system. This system was partially rejected by the European Commission that revealed that Austria is not the only EU country with a positive balance of student inflow. The rejection referred to the Austrian method in that it restricted the number of incoming students who were eligible to study in Austria to those with conclusively proof that they had been accepted to study at the tertiary level in their homelands (Hackl, 2007). The Austrian policy makers had to widen the general eligibility rule for studying at the tertiary level and apply it to youth from all other EU countries.

In Korea, the government controls the quotas for universities. Koreans can be considered as being education-addicted since the country has nearly reached a 100% enrolment rate at the tertiary level. However, the number of students entering university is restricted by the standardized Collegiate Scholastic Aptitude Test (CSAT) as well as by university entrance exam (Sushi) results. Therefore, the actual number may not alter considerably from year- to year. By passing the examinations of the highest ranked universities, e.g., SKY universities (Seoul National University, Korea University and Yonsei University), students secure their career by entering any of the universities covered in the acronym (Choi et al., 2011).

The typical problems of Austrian universities can be traced back to the beginning period of higher education expansion. They face high dropout ratios, insufficient financing by the Austrian government and extended study periods due to a high percentage of fulltime working students. The general language of education has remained German, while the most utilized language in the business and technology sectors is English. The dropout ratio at some universities has reached approximately 80%, certainly leading to social, organizational and economic tensions, causing universities to have to develop quality management in order to comply with the regulations of school accreditation systems (BMWF, 2009). The average dropout ratio decreased, but nonetheless remained high with an approximate value of 20% between the years 2004 and 2007¹ (Unger et al., 2009).

Korean universities are not usually confronted with these problems even though the medium of the majority of lectures remain Korean in the case of undergraduate degrees. It is actually vital

¹ The statistics only refer to those who started their studies between 2004 and 2006, excluding all others who still (dis-)continued their studies from other scholastic years.

since most of the students (over 98%) are Korean. The average dropout (or discontinuance rate) is far less than it is in Austria, with the numbers being at 4.1% for the case of universities and 7.8% at junior colleges (Cesi, 2012:b).

Through the standardization of higher education and through the implementation of the Bologna Process, Austria has also introduced the credit system in which the students' performance – the actual workload within a certain timeframe – can be measured. The idea completely hinders the Humboldtian model which is willing to give time for developing ideas and for explorative activities, but also backs the mobility of students within the EU. Consequently, students may gain not only knowledge at the university level but also the experience of confronting and dealing with diverse cultural contexts. The Bologna Process may also contribute to shorten the study period and to positively guide the students' orientations.

Korea has a standardized system of higher education with modules or stages that are also very similar to the recently implemented stages in Austria. The first module comprises the general bachelor's degree in that students only have to accumulate a certain number of credits; the second module consists of master's degree programs, and beyond credit-completion they also have to write 'a thesis'; and the third stage is the 'doctoral dissertation' including passing 'viva voce' to defend their dissertation. The policy makers also introduced the Academic Credit Bank System (ACBS) in 1998 – which approves experience and qualifications from places other than the system higher education (KEDI, 2007). The universities have more autonomy referring to credits and do not necessarily link the credits to the workload (ASEM, 2011). Unfortunately many universities do not recognize ACBS and rather implement their own systems, thus they cripple the standardization of the credit system. Hence students are required to complete their credits at one university and may not be able to utilize the credits acquired at another university. ACBS has been introduced to back the modular system and to make higher education less rigid by giving a second chance to those who could not enter the tertiary education system by passing the CSAT or those who were filtered out. A potential shortfall of the system is that students have no right to transfer between domestic universities. This however supports the specialization and diversification of universities and helps them in maintaining their respective fame in the various rankings they participate in.

Even though foreigners are welcome in Austria, the principal medium of lectures remains German and this restricts the number of potential foreign faculty members (Oezkan, 2010). On the contrary, there is a high tendency in Korea to hire foreign faculty from a wide assortment countries, thus foreign teaching and research personnel who have already gained a reputation are increasingly invited to work in Korea (McNeill, 2011:b).

Lessons offered by the development of Korean higher education

i. Eligibility

There are several lessons, which can be learnt in discovering the most optimal way of improving the system of higher education in Austria. The tight control used through the implementation of the CSAT by the Korean government does not allow students to postpone decisions regarding their futures and thus reduces the human capital and investments. On the contrary, in the Austrian system students could remain for prolonged periods without exhibiting optimal levels

of performance. Since a standard level is for the most part afforded to each student in Korea, so long as they attend classes, submit basic assignments, and attend required tests, they do not have the problem of having backbreaking assigned tasks requiring excessively long periods of time to complete, as is the case for university students in Austria. Perhaps a complete overhaul of Austria's tertiary education system along Bologna lines, (but avoiding the disastrous German response to squeeze the content of the former 5 year "Diplom" into the new 3 year Bachelors degree) and a national university entrance exam such as CSAT may lead to a reduced dropout rate at the postsecondary level.

ii. Financing Tertiary Education

For a long time the financing of tertiary education has been regarded as a public good in Austria, i.e, the financial source was the state and is still the primary source today (Pechar, 2007). A fundamental problem when it comes to Austrian universities that they serve as mass universities and they are still incapable of providing the necessary facilities due to their underfinanced state / as they receive no sufficient finances from the state (Brugner, 2009). The situation is extensively aggravated by excessive registration quotas at faculties which have insufficient number of faculty members, but provide excellent career opportunities. Additionally, there are faculties which have a large number of faculty members, but offer a medium- or even low-level career opportunities. An optimization of educational expenses, e.g. the introduction of tuition fees, could certainly change the atmosphere at the universities. Albeit the introduction of proportionally adequate tuition fees would lead to mass protests across the Austrian society – since the essential finances would inevitably have to be covered by students themselves as the government has other significant financial concerns on its hands and has attempted to back out of providing more funds (Bayrhammer, 2011). Thus, the trigger mechanism for transforming the system of higher education or at least the indispensable introduction of tuition fees is the continuously tightening federal budget. Most recently there have been open discussions about the (re-) implementation of tuition fees in Austria that could be levied independently by each university without the need of an amount fixed by the federal government. Nevertheless, students worry that the above-described problems with the high dropout rates would remain unsolved, and similarly learning itself would be unattainable by youth from all social levels (Schwarz, 2012).

The reforms during the first decade of 21st century led to protests by the opponents of the Bologna Process and of tuition fees. Students occupied universities to uncover publicly the miserable state on universities and to oppose tuition fees that were believed not to flow into the university but into the state budget. However, Austria's tuition fees are incomparably low in an international context, after their introduction the dropout ratio and the number of freshmen decreased sharply (Petersen, 2006). Noticeably, this cleaning effect usually does not last forever. As a side effect, the related transfer costs to support the equal opportunities within the society exploded. Eventually the tuition fee – however still exists – has to be paid by only those students who cannot finish their studies within the regular period plus two more semesters. This example shows that the policy makers do not consequently handle the problems in the education sector, but apparently they lack a framework that would coordinate reforms (Pechar, 2010).

At the universities in Korea students have to pay for their own tuition fees but conversely enjoy well-equipped universities with designated libraries and large campuses with sports fields open round the clock (Marginson, 2011). Korean parents usually pay tuition fees by virtue of family ties. The rising tuition fees cause huge financial liability for educated children and consequently the parental expectations are also high. The dependence on each other – also collectivism and priority attached to familial relations – and also leads to high levels of respect towards elders (Kim & Woo, 2009 and Walker, 2009).

iii. Over-privatization

The education-related expenditure in Korea is extremely high – with approximately 8% of the GDP, including both private and public spending – in contrast to many other countries, e.g. Austria with 6% (OECD, 2012). Korea has one of the lowest public and – at the same time – one of the highest private expenditures on tertiary education. This reveals that private spending with 73.9% is 40% higher than that of the average OECD country (OECD, 2011:b).

A tendency for privatization is not only a phenomenon observable in Asian countries, but also in the Western world, e.g., in Europe via the introduction of both the Bologna Process and the Lisbon Process. There are principally two ways to privatize in the education sector. On the one hand, there are institutions or enterprises which may supply the tuition fees of individuals or the cost of the entire educational institution. On the other hand, individuals come up with the costs of education for other individuals.

In Korea, the second approach is the dominant as family members typically pay children's private educational costs. The Korean government was not able (or willing) to push for education as a 'public good' and was simultaneously confronted by a huge hunger for education by the nation in the post-war era. The expansion could not be absorbed by national universities which became the most selective universities in Korea. These national universities have not been financed merely by the government, but by the individuals whose contributions account for more than one-third of the national university budgets on average. To ease the pain of the families, the current government has set several steps to cap the rising private contribution rate for education and also to lower tuition fees – eventually by half² (Jones & Urasawa, 2012). Additionally, the government introduced a subsidized public loan scheme in order to delay the effective payment of tuition fees.

iv. Internationalization

If Austrian universities want to attract foreign students with higher qualifications, the monolingual (mainly German) lectures might have to be converted into bilingual ones, as many Korean universities are already offering. Additionally, since Austrian universities are mass universities, they tend to restrict teaching methods to the basic forms, such as instructor-centered teaching with more self-study units. Moreover, they restrict admission by adopting so

² Half-price tuition may result in an irreversible situation since tertiary institutions would have to face a decrease in the quality of education; in an intensified rising number of students; in the mismatch between required skills and supplied tertiary education; and having to provide a much higher proportion of their budget.

called 'knockout examinations' to be able to survive from finances dedicated by the government to the tertiary education (Bollenberger, 2011 and Pechar, 2007). Pechar (2007) argues that admission levels can be regulated either through an enrolment examination – that is politically hard to introduce – or through developing hard-to-pass examinations for the respective majors. Consequently, universities they fail to provide quality education to students throughout the first phase of their undergraduate studies, however, they make them reconsider whether they would continue or drop out. Students can repeat examinations 4-5 times, offering them a multitude of opportunities to continue their studies, so as to avoid dropping out. Nonetheless, this may all lead to longer than expected study periods. Essentially, this can lead to an average study period of over 10 years, and perhaps to a loss in educational quality as well as an unnecessary burden on the national education budget. This seems to be solved by now as the Bologna lines were implemented and was designated to solve the problem of "long-term" studies ('Langzeitstudium' or 'der ewige Student').

v. Mentoring

In Austria, student mentoring and tutoring, as an individualized and time-consuming activity, has not been offered to students. According to tradition, students had to organize their time and were left to their own resources. This fact has also contributed to the extended period of their studies. The policy makers recently attempted to agree with universities to intensify the tutoring in order to decrease the dropout ratio (Pasternack et al., 2005).

Quite to the contrary, teaching personnel in the Korean education system can be perceived as being beneficial for those from disadvantaged backgrounds. Education policies also help to equalize the chances of entering a university even from disadvantaged family environments (OECD, 2011:b). As per Confucian tradition, instructors not only support students in their studies, but also in non-academic situations – as the author of this section has experienced. Students contact professors regularly as they require support and coaching 24/7³. As students receive professor's phone numbers, they select their professors as contacts on their installed smartphone applications, which enable them to communicate with their professors at any time during the course of their studies. Accordingly, students contact the professors not only to arrange meetings with them, but they also ask direct questions referring to particular lectures.

The Lessons TESL Ontario Could Learn from S. Korean EFL, in a Tertiary Context

English Language Ownership

As it applies to this section of the paper, if ownership of the English language could be attributed to any one country, ironically it may well be England that could lay such ownership to the new *lingua franca*. Ironical in a sense because a Global language owned by one country that came to adopt English in an early form, during the invasion by Northern Germanic tribes from present day Denmark - the Angles, the Saxons and the Jutes (Chadwick, 2010:85-110) - runs contrary to elementary logic. More importantly, it is ironic in the sense that in a globalized community, laying ownership to English by even a group of countries i.e. where English is the first official language, it would be next to impossible to truly consider English as a global language.

³ 24/7 refers to the term '24 hours a day and 7 days a week', thus nonstop.

English language ownership occurs, for instance, when learners are limited access to non-standardized forms and are exposed mainly to a specific variety, categorized by a particular dialect; lexicon; syntax, claimed to be that which is characteristic of a certain region or nation. Essentially, by exposing learners to only one single variety, in an attempt to strengthen non-tangible ownership of that spoken and written form by a proclaimed right of nativity, undeniably language ownership of that variety is born.

It is worth mentioning at this point that ownership of a language is quite reasonably unattributable to only countries where English is the first official language. That is, a “birth right paradigm” of “constructing language ownership exclusively in terms of the notion of mother tongue is ... problematic because it oversimplifies the relationship between language, power, and identity with [the following] widespread assumptions” (Parmegiani, 2008):

- 1) Language ownership is determined by birth
- 2) A person’s identity is rooted only in his or her mother tongue...
- 3) Native speakers of a language have a better command of this language than non-native speakers in any communicative situation (Parmegiani, 2008)

Effectively, displaying any sign of ownership, when it comes to the English language, is a misguided step, since it is built on injudicious assumptions like the ones exemplified above.

Notwithstanding, the Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB, 2012) were set up in Canada in an apparent attempt by Canadian ESL providers to lay such ownership, at least to the Canadian variety. The question that needs to be answered here as a result is: Should ESL be taught for the sole purpose of being used in a particular country, or should it be taught for worldwide use, given that English is a global language?

The Korean Example

While it is evident that in Canada, English as a foreign language is taught as a means of helping foreign students study in the medium of English, the same is true for all students studying in South Korean universities, especially in SKY universities, where more than a third of the undergraduate courses are taught in the medium of English. Therefore, Korean university students learn English for academic purposes, with the same goal as those in Canada, aiming to learn more effectively in English mediated academic contexts.

Envisaging, for instance, that South Koreans were hiring only Americans to teach EFL at Korean universities, it would undoubtedly raise international criticism from a broad range of countries where English is the first official language, i.e. Canada. As a matter of fact, certain protectionist practices related to the lack of foreign faculty and students at Korean universities have been brought up in past research (Jambor, 2010:a), however, over the past few years Korea has come a long way in addressing these issues, in part through the successful implementation of the 2nd Phase of the Brain Korea 21 Project (MEST, 2012), with a principle purpose of attracting qualified foreign faculty to top Korean universities. Yet when Canadian ESL providers set up blatant protectionist measures, in an evident attempt to keep out all the ESL teachers who have presumably failed to fully grasp the Canadian Language Benchmarks, little disapproval is voiced

from any nation. For this reason, and with the relative absence of such protectionism within South Korean universities - at the very least in the context of EFL - South Korean EFL providers can boldly state that they have a viable blueprint in terms of EFL in a globalized context.

While it is a fact that EFL teachers, from countries where English is one of the official languages - but not the main official language, are barred by Korean Immigration Services (but not by the universities themselves) from gaining work visas (Jambor, 2010:b), the fact that Korean EFL providers openly welcome teachers from Australia, the UK, South Africa, New Zealand, the USA and Canada, it is increasingly evident that South Korean EFL is on a desired path of reform. In point of fact, there has been a recent push by top Korean universities to improve their international statuses and rankings (McNeill, 2011:a&b). Thus, providing a grand design that Canadian ESL providers could truly take a great deal from (not a complete sentence). What is more, if universities in Ontario aim to keep their current Times Higher Education (THE) World University Rankings (THE, 2012), they must be more concerned about their collective international outlook as well as their overall reputation as they are both indicators in the THE University Rankings Methodology (THE-MET, 2012).

Though some question the validity of THE and QS world rankings methodologies, the ranking systems themselves are nonetheless the preeminent yardsticks by which universities are measured in the international arena of higher education. So much so in fact that,

despite the shortcomings [of the rankings], they have become a formidable influence on higher education. [That is to say], higher education leaders believe that benefits flow directly from doing well in [the] rankings, while a 'poor' showing can lead to a reduction in funding or status or both. [Effectively] rankings can help maintain and build institutional position and reputation [as a whole].

(Hazelkorn, 2013)

All things taken into consideration, it would be imprudent for university administrators to disregard rankings based on drumbeating opposition from skeptics, given the weight such rankings carry in terms of international reputation and academic standing.

Moreover, factors concerning internationalization are taken into account in the establishment of the QS World University Rankings (QS, 2012). In view of that, protectionist measures in university ESL environments might in time prove to be counterproductive in the respect of a particular university's international ranking.

Beyond Canadianism

While the Canadian Language Benchmarks point to a national predicament, in recent times, TESL Ontario has driven Ontario ESL providers far beyond the state of Canadianism, a form of Canadian linguistic nationalism which includes 'lexical and grammatical Canadianism' (Hamilton, 1997), into an era of what the authors term 'extreme linguistic regionalism'.

That is to say, any ESL teacher teaching in government funded projects, including university ESL environments, is robustly required to have attained his/her TESL certificate from a TESL Ontario approved institution, with the exception of Saskatchewan, (TESL-REG, 2012). For

the most part, those who have attained Master's degrees from non-TESL Ontario approved universities need to go through a strenuous and relatively expensive accreditation process which in part requires candidates to take practical teaching seminars at any one particular institution accredited by TESL Ontario. Moreover, TESL Ontario accredited training institutions, in general, are reluctant to offer the practicum portions of the certification courses separate from the scheduled accreditation courses, thus, a significant number of candidates take the courses half-heartedly from beginning to end. Others give up and are forced to change their careers altogether. Paradoxically, it is CERTESL, out of Saskatchewan and not out of Ontario, which has the 'Practicum Additional Hours Module' readily available for students who are in need of additional practicum hours (CERTESL, 2012). At the very least, TESL Ontario should make the practicum programs more widely available for those in need of additional practicum hours so that they could gain TESL Ontario certification.

On the whole, having to retrain can be extremely discouraging for candidates who have already spent tens of thousands of dollars and a number of years in graduate schools attaining Master's degrees in TES/FL or Applied Linguistics. What is more, having years and even decades of practical international experience in ELT is given only marginal consideration by TESL Ontario.

For the most part, even those with Master's degrees in TES/FL or applied linguistics from highly acclaimed universities are prevented from gaining accreditation without having to go through the strenuous accreditation process of TESL Ontario.

Discussion

What is of most concern is that certain training courses offered by TESL Ontario accredited institutions run for mere weeks as opposed to years spent in a Master's degree program, yet the latter is nonetheless held to a lower standard by TESL Ontario. For instance, the full-time TESL Ontario accredited certificate program offered by the Canadian Centre for Language and Cultural Studies runs for a mere 16 weeks (CCLCS, 2012).

MacPherson, Kouritzin & Kim (2005) argue that the professionalization of the ESL field in Canada makes the field less accessible; however, unwarranted protectionism is not the recommended method for ESL providers in Ontario to achieve this end. Essentially, the length and global quality of training programs should play more of an important role in this regard.

On the whole, TESL Ontario accredited certificate programs are viewed as being superior by Ontario ESL providers because, in their view, any practicum which is taught outside of Canada would fail to allow for a Canadian Language Benchmark context.

Contrary to the Canadian example, departments teaching English as a foreign language, at South Korean universities, have a multinational workforce (Korea, 2011) that offers English as a global language as opposed to a particular variety 'owned' by one single nation. While pay discrepancies still exist when it comes to the international workforce at South Korean universities (Jambor, 2009), Korean universities are on a desired path in terms of setting the standard in abolishing protectionism in the framework of EFL. All things taken into consideration, the international TES/FL⁴ community has very important lessons to take from this. Perhaps most

⁴ TES/FL - Teaching English as a Second/Foreign Language

⁷ Surrender Value – The overall scholastic significance and informative potential

importantly, that there needs to be an absence of protectionist values in a truly global context of ES/FL.

Limitations

Taken as a whole, the *unsatisfactory surrender value*⁷ of the overall comparative analysis, made against the system of Korean higher education in the scope of this paper, lies in the fact that only two countries, Austria and Canada, are utilized as examples. Effectively, it would be crucial that the Korean tertiary education system is compared to those in a larger number of countries, in order for the research to yield a more reliable analytical outcome.

On the whole, further research is needed, with more systems of higher education analyzed, utilizing a single or various comparative frameworks, for the hypothesis to have a much higher surrender value.

Conclusion

Employing the comparative framework to draw a comparison of Austrian and South Korean tertiary education with the focus on the transition, privatization, eligibility and mentoring, in addition to utilizing an empirical comparison to contrast the policies and practices of both ESL and EFL educators in tertiary environments situated in Ontario Canada and South Korea, the paper highlights key areas in which international universities could learn from the South Korean example.

In general, when it comes to the Canadian example, not only are Canadian universities engaging in misguided hiring practices, essentially holding the Canadian variety of English at arm's length from other varieties, and making this a reasonable ground for hiring primarily those who have attained their degrees in a Canadian Language Benchmark context, the minimum time requirements and course loads for some of the Ontario TESL recognized training programs fall well short of those attained in highly esteemed universities outside of this context. Consequently, one must embrace the Ontario standard with a measure of skepticism, since it too can fall short of established standards in other English as a first language nations/regions.

In terms of the Austrian example, the overall picture shows that the policy makers have attempted to avoid unpopular actions postponing the extremely desired prominent reforms in higher education. Policy makers have continuously emphasized that equal opportunities from the poor to the rich should be available, but a closer look at the situation reveals that the selection starts early and the chance is not given the second or third time again. Even though the largest business universities of the European Union could move into newly built facilities, students in most universities face the problem of not having urgently needed faculty, staff and equipment in general.

On the whole, with their relatively short histories, modern South Korean universities have had numerous technical hitches in learning and taking from European and American models. Nevertheless, Korean universities have successfully taken and built on praiseworthy examples, while filtering out the impractical ones, and devised a unique and successful approach to tertiary

education, which can now act as a noteworthy example for universities worldwide, in especially the areas highlighted in this paper.

The resultant overall hypothesis of the two sections states that it is time for universities in the rest of the world, especially those in Ontario and Austria, to take from the successful blueprints of Korean universities, as they have efficiently and successfully put into practice the lessons they themselves have learned, in particular during the last few decades. Nonetheless, it should be taken with a measure of skepticism, since it is significantly challenging to adopt administrative strategies, curriculums, etc., modelled on foreign institutions, without due consideration for the dissimilarities in cultures and long standing indigenous ideologies

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to gratefully acknowledge the support granted by Kwangwoon University and Korea University.

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