

## Study on the Satisfaction Factors of College Selection for International Students and Pre-educated Local Education Center Students

Sun Young, Chang, Tae Hoon, Yoon\*

Korea National University of Transportation, Namseoul University\*  
sychch@gmail.com, yoonth10@naver.com\*

### Abstract

*As the attracting foreign student has become a very important strategy, detailed researches on their college selection and their satisfaction with college life are needed. Especially it is necessary to distinguish ordinary international students and those who take classes in Local Education Centers (LEC) before coming to Korea. The central purpose of this study is to identify how the two types of students differ in their perception of college selection factors and what factors affect their satisfaction with college life. A total of 186 international students participated in the study. It was found that the most important college selection factor of the pre-educated LEC students was 'obtaining academic ability through online classes and transfer of credit hours'. Second, these students reported that the two influential factors for their satisfaction with college life were 'quality of education' and 'cultural experience program'. Third, it was found that the major college selection factors influencing ordinary international students' college life satisfaction were 'expertise of faculty', 'transfer of credit through curriculum links', and 'recommendation from teachers at home country'. Fourth, the major factors affecting the pre-educated LEC students' satisfaction with college life were 'KSL classes at LE's', 'expertise of faculty', and 'financial aid system'.*

**Keywords:** International students, Ordinary international students, Local Education Centers (LEC), College selection factors, Satisfaction with college life, Attract foreign students

### 1. Introduction

With the decreasing number of student population, colleges in Korea have faced with the unavoidable challenge of restructuring, and it has become an indispensable alternative to attract students from foreign countries, in particular, Asian countries. The growing number of international students attending at Korean colleges can be a token of the ever-changing trend. According to Ministry of Education [1], the number of foreign degree-seeking students, graduate and undergraduate, at accredited colleges including cyber universities and two-year colleges is 142,205, which is a big increase from 55,739 as of 2015.

All the colleges are trying every effort to attract prospective students from foreign countries. Their strategies are now considered one of the most important elements to survive the intense competition among colleges. Many researchers have tried to identify the effective strategies that would get international students admitted. As one of the common strategies, many colleges have established Local Education Centers (LEC, henceforth)

---

Manuscript received: April 23, 2019 / revised: May 14, 2019 / Accepted: May 27, 2019

Corresponding Author: T. H. Yoon

Tel:+82-41-580-2770, Fax: +82-41-582-2290

Global Management School, Namseoul University, Cheonan, Korea

mostly in big cities in Asian countries. The LEC's, then, can be used as a base camp to attract international students. They offer classes in KSL (Korean as a second language), counseling and information demanded by prospective students. The classes can even be transferred for regular credit hours once the students get admitted to a degree track. These students will be called 'pre-educated LEC students' in contrast to 'ordinary students' who directly apply and get admitted to Korean colleges. It was reported that running local education centers abroad would help those students better adjust to the new environment, academic and physical, in Korea [2].

The types of international students have been diversifying as the number of international students keeps growing. All the international students might come to Korea with the same goal of achieving academic degrees. However, these international students would come from different needs and distinct backgrounds. Some previous researchers examined their college selection factors [3] and the differences in selection of colleges between short-term exchange students and degree students [4].

Considering the positive results of analysis of academic performance and adaptation of college life such pre-educated LEC students in many previous researches, it should be helpful to identify how they select colleges and how much they are satisfied with their lives in Korea. Further researches might focus on more detailed needs and desires of this type of students, assuming they might have different demands from ordinary international students.

The current research attempts to identify the differences between the two groups of students in their selection of colleges and in their satisfaction with college lives in Korea. The results of the analysis are expected to shed lights on colleges' strategy to attract international students.

For the purpose of the research, the following questions were arranged for analysis.

First, how do the two types of international students differ in their selection of colleges? Second, how do the two groups differ in the factors of their satisfaction with college life? Third, what are the college selections factors affecting ordinary international students' satisfaction with college life? Fourth, what are the college selections factors affecting pre-educated LEC students' satisfaction with college life?

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1 Strategies for Attracting International Students and Their Satisfaction with College Life**

Korean government announced the so-called 'Study Korea 2020 Project (2013~2020)' in 2012 with the goal of attracting 200,000 international students [1]. The strategy of globalization in higher education includes students' movement of both directions: Korean students' going abroad and international students coming to Korea. The current transition from selecting students for admission to attracting students in higher education market has let all the colleges arrange a planned strategy to attract international students [5]. The concept of studying abroad is now perceived as receiving students as well as sending students abroad [6]. In particular, another reason for the intense competition in attracting international students would be that the world-wide evaluation and ranking of colleges takes the number of international students as an important evaluation index.

International students' satisfaction with their lives and education should be considered as a very important factor in attracting international students. The previous researches viewed their satisfaction with their college life mostly on the basis of their academic performance, but a variety of other physical and psychological elements should be considered: an individual's concept of self, mental health, and the relationship between an individual and circumstances [7]. Thus, one can gain satisfaction from college life by interacting with other environments, having amicable relationship with professors and other students, maintaining mental and physical health and, of course, achieving his academic goals as well [8].

Ha [9] analyzed the effect of a set of factors faculty, classes, facilities and administrative support on the international students' satisfaction with education. It is very natural that systematic education of Korean as a second language is a crucial factor for keeping their dropout rate low. KSL education in one's home country focuses on necessary and indispensable content required for college life in Korea and it can clearly help one

get easily adjusted to the new environment. The content of KSL education in Korea, in contrast, should focus on their major fields [10].

## **2.2 College Selection Factors**

The liquidity of international students can be explained by a dichotomy of Push factors and Pull factors. The latter might include employment opportunities, better living environments, political and religious freedom, better education and medical benefits, safety, and economy. It was claimed that one's country of studying abroad is often determined if the push factors of his or her home country coincide with the pull factors of other countries [11]. McMahon performed a research on the international students from 18 developing countries studying in developed countries between 1960 and 1970, and reported that the economy level and the economic relationship between one's home country and the study-abroad country, interest in aid to a foreign country, the cultural relationship, scholarships and other financial aids (quoted from Mazzarol and Soutar [12]).

Song [4] analyzed the college determination factors depending on the types of study-abroad, which can be classified into short-term exchange and regular degree track students. She found that the regular degree-track students put more values on such factors as academic reputation, faculty, curriculum, financial aid, living cost, promotional materials, employment after college, graduate school after graduation, and cultural environment. There was no statistically significant difference between the two types in such areas as English classes, website information, recommendation from acquaintances, convenience facilities, and dormitories.

Song [4], in the analysis of college determination factors, also took their home countries as another variable and classified her research subjects into a set of regions including Asia, Europe, America and Oceania. She reported that the students from America and Oceania considered the professor factor—reputation of researches and faculty members—more important than others, while financial aid and living cost are given more consideration by those from Asia. The category of promotional materials and cultural environment are considered important by those from America and Oceania, whereas employment and possibility to go on to graduate school are important factors for Asian students.

Yoon [13], in turn, extracted 4 major factors for college selection for Chinese students taking classes in LEC's located in China: information and employment network, educational infrastructure on campus, major field learning environment and possibility to find employment in Korea.

## **3. Study Method**

### **3.1 Study Subject**

The current research conducted a survey to a group of 186 international students attending at A University. The subjects can be classified into two subgroups: a group of 105 ordinary international students and another group of 81 pre-educated LEC students, who had experienced KSL classes and some Korean culture as well. A survey based on a 5-point scale was conducted between December 2016 and January 2017. Their general characteristics are found below in Table 1.

**Table 1. General Characteristics of Research Participants**

Classification	Gender		
	Male	Female	Total
Ordinary international students	43	62	105
Pre-educated LEC students	33	48	81
Total	76	110	186

### 3.2 Study Tools

The survey was conducted with a set of 13 items for college selection and another set of 20 items for satisfaction with college life. The measurement items were adopted from Kim [14], Kim [15] and Koo [16]. The set of extracted items were examined and finalized by a group of experts: a professor, an administrator and three teachers in charge of international students at A University. The factors under discussion are illustrated below in the Tables 2.

**Table 2. Contents of Survey**

Items	No.	Content
College selection factors	1	professionalism in curriculum
	2	expertise of faculty
	3	advantage in seeking employment in Korea
	4	advantage in seeking employment at home country
	5	campus facilities (classrooms, dorms)
	6	financial aid from college
	7	transfer of credit hours through curriculum links (classes at home country and online classes)
	8	KSL classes at LEC
	9	pre-education & training through online classes
	10	expertise in KSL education
	11	recommendation from teachers at home country
	12	recommendation from family & friends
	13	acquisition of information through media
Satisfaction with college life	1	obtaining information on colleges
	2	admission services
	3	orientation programs for freshmen
	4	curriculum of main programs
	5	quality of education
	6	teaching methods
	7	facilities(for classes)
	8	library facilities
	9	facilities(labs & offices)
	10	consulting and counseling for internationals
	11	convenience of housing
	12	meals on campus
	13	scholarships

14	KSL program
15	kindness of staff for internationals
16	easiness in acquiring visas
17	connectivity for employment
18	cultural experience programs
19	obtaining information for academic affairs
20	mentoring programs

### 3.3 Data Analysis

A t-test was performed to analyze inter-group differences in their responses. Also, a regression analysis was conducted to identify what factors of college selection would affect the subjects' satisfaction with college life. The statistical program of SPSS 25 was utilized for a series of analysis.

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Differences in Perception of College Selection Factors

A t-test was performed in order to identify the differences of the two groups—ordinary students and pre-educated LEC students—in their perception of college selection factors.

It was found that the two groups did not exhibit significant differences in 12 of the 13 factors. The only factor showing difference was ‘pre-education through online classes’, which perhaps indicates that the LEC students hope to take online classes in both liberal arts and their major fields in addition to classes in Korean as a second language and Korean culture. To satisfy their needs, it should be desirable to offer a wider variety of online classes and also to enable them to transfer those classes for credit hours for a degree. The mean values for each item and the differences between the two groups are illustrated below in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Analysis of Group Perception Difference in University Selection Factor Importance**

Item	Group	Mean	SD	t
1	ordinary	3.75	.825	-3.725
	pre-educated LEC	4.20	.802	
2	ordinary	3.78	.828	-3.423
	pre-educated LEC	4.20	.833	
3	ordinary	3.71	.803	-2.946
	pre-educated LEC	4.08	.883	
4	ordinary	3.76	.798	-2.991
	pre-educated LEC	4.11	.795	
5	ordinary	3.75	.780	-3.992
	pre-educated LEC	4.21	.754	
6	ordinary	4.18	4.184	-.146
	pre-educated LEC	4.25	.767	

7	ordinary	3.60	.812	-4.999
	pre-educated LEC	4.19	.760	
8	ordinary	3.57	.804	-5.126
	pre-educated LEC	4.19	.792	
9	ordinary	3.65	.908	-4.677*
	pre-educated LEC	4.21	.720	
10	ordinary	3.71	.864	-5.555
	pre-educated LEC	4.40	.769	
11	ordinary	3.95	3.123	-.068
	pre-educated LEC	3.98	.961	
12	ordinary	3.44	.863	-.387
	pre-educated LEC	3.49	.976	
13	ordinary	3.44	.974	.193
	pre-educated LEC	3.41	.985	

\* $p < .05$ 

#### 4.2 Differences in perception of college life satisfaction

Another topic under discussion is the differences between ordinary international students and pre-educated LEC internationals in their satisfaction with college lives. Another t-test was performed to identify the issue.

It was found that the two groups did not exhibit any significant difference in 18 of the 20 items. The other two items were 'quality of education' and 'cultural experience program', in which the group of pre-educated LEC students perceived more importance than that of ordinary international students. The perceived values of the two groups in each measurement item are illustrated below in Table 4.

**Table 4. The Analysis of Group Perception Difference in University Life Satisfaction**

Item	Group	Mean	SD	t
1	ordinary	3.51	.861	-2.813
	pre-educated LEC	3.92	.887	
2	ordinary	3.81	3.10	-.425
	pre-educated LEC	4.00	.74	
3	ordinary	3.56	.76	-2.948
	pre-educated LEC	3.98	.89	
4	ordinary	3.81	3.09	-.775
	pre-educated LEC	4.16	.76	
5	ordinary	3.65	.66	-5.258*
	pre-educated LEC	4.34	.80	
6	ordinary	3.54	.69	-5.895

7	pre-educated LEC	4.26	.70	-4.608
	ordinary	3.72	.68	
8	pre-educated LEC	4.27	.67	-4.461
	ordinary	3.70	.65	
9	pre-educated LEC	4.24	.77	-3.720
	ordinary	3.67	.70	
10	pre-educated LEC	4.16	.84	-5.340
	ordinary	3.41	.84	
11	pre-educated LEC	4.22	.91	-3.934
	ordinary	3.44	1.33	
12	pre-educated LEC	4.25	.72	-6.928
	ordinary	3.13	1.09	
13	pre-educated LEC	4.36	.85	-7.051
	ordinary	3.31	.80	
14	pre-educated LEC	4.30	.81	-6.509
	ordinary	3.41	.82	
15	pre-educated LEC	4.34	.83	-5.762
	ordinary	3.45	.82	
16	pre-educated LEC	4.25	.69	-5.528
	ordinary	3.52	.71	
17	pre-educated LEC	4.22	.75	-5.620
	ordinary	3.38	.79	
18	pre-educated LEC	4.15	.74	-5.920*
	ordinary	3.31	.87	
19	pre-educated LEC	4.08	.67	-1.556
	ordinary	3.55	2.10	
20	pre-educated LEC	4.04	.73	-2.180
	ordinary	3.50	2.11	
	pre-educated LEC	4.18	.75	
	ordinary			

\*  $p < .05$

#### 4.3 Major college selection factors of pre-educated LEC students affecting their satisfaction with college life

To extract the major factors affecting pre-educated LEC students' satisfaction with college life, the same format of regression analysis was performed with the 13 major college determination factors as independent variables and the mean values of their satisfaction as the dependent variable

The mean of this group's perception of the factors of college life satisfaction was obtained at 4.24 out of 5 (SD=.61). The regression analysis extracted 3 models, whose Pearson  $r$ s were .583, .666, .712, which might

be considered high to some extent. Their R Square values, in turn, were .340, .443, .507, respectively, explaining 34.0%, 44.3%, 50.7%, of the subjects' satisfaction with college life. The F values of the regression line were 25.770, 19.511, 16.471 and the values of Sig. F Change for the three models were all .000, which clearly indicates the appropriateness of the regression models. Also, the residual by Durbin-Watson test was 1.867, which supports the goodness-of-fit of the regression model. The regression formula for the optimal model is as follows:

Satisfaction with college life =  $1.069 + .298(\text{KSL education via LEC's}) + .243(\text{expertise of faculty}) + .233(\text{financial aid from colleges})$

The most important factors in ordinary international students' selection of colleges were 'KSL education at overseas LEC's' followed by 'expertise of faculty' and 'financial aid from colleges'.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

With the dichotomy of ordinary international students and pre-educated LEC students, the present research aimed to analyze the differences between the two groups in two aspects—their perception of college selection factors and their satisfaction with college life—and to identify what factors affect their satisfaction with college life. The results of research can be summarized as follows.

First, it was found that both groups perceived all the 13 factors as important when they select colleges. One thing to note is that the pre-educated LEC students' perceived importance of 'acquisition of academic competence through online classes and transfer of credit hours' is greater than that of ordinary international students. Such a result might support Woo [10] claim that international students with Korean proficiency would have more demand on practical training in their major fields. These pre-educated students, however, seem to hope for online classes at home before study abroad.

Second, it was also found that both groups showed a similar level of perceived importance of most of the 20 measurement items for their satisfaction with college life except that the pre-educate LEC students' perceived importance of the items called 'quality of education' and 'cultural experience program'. This result is in the same line with Song's [4] report that the international students are, with their long-term need for a degree, keenly interested in the faculty factor.

Third, the most important factor of college selection affecting their college life satisfaction was 'expertise of the faculty in their major fields' followed by 'transfer of credit hours through curriculum links' and 'recommendation from local teachers and professors'.

Fourth, it was found that the most influential college selection factor affecting their satisfaction with college life was 'KSL classes in LECs overseas' followed by 'expertise of faculty' and 'financial aid from colleges'.

Based on these research results, we can come to the following conclusions.

First, in preparing strategies for attracting international students, it is necessary to take different needs of different types of students into consideration. The presence or absence of pre-education experience at LEC's should be an important factor.

Second, the pre-educated LEC students answered that the quality of education and cultural experience programs are relatively more important, which might call for higher quality and better organized education programs. Also, it should be noted that the expertise of faculty were perceived important by both groups.

Third, those with experience of pre-education at LEC's should be offered more opportunities for a variety of online courses before starting a journey to a degree, which would enhance their satisfaction with college life. Many scholars including Kim [15] also suggested online KSL education classes as an effective method to prepare international students for their academic career. This research found that pre-educated LEC students demand more than merely Korean language training at their home countries: they want online classes dealing with other topics than just language proficiency.

Fourth, it should be emphasized that expertise of faculty members and financial aid would help attract pre-educated LEC students, who value the qualitative aspect of educational environment. As reported in Kim, Woo



and Lee [17], such elements as financial aid, living environments, and support for social adjustment and employment are key factors for attracting international students. The expertise of faculty was also mentioned as a very important feature in Song [4]. These findings are expected to help colleges better arrange strategic plans to establish and run LEC's overseas, and secure high-quality faculty members.

Fifth, it might be suggested that transfer of credit hours through links of curriculum and recommendations of local teachers should be actively utilized as well as the expertise of faculty. Choi and Jang [18] also noted that the academic curriculum should reflect the needs of international students.

These research results and conclusions are expected to help colleges in Korea arrange plans to attract international students and well adjust to their academic careers in Korea.

## Reference

- [1] Ministry of Education, Attracting 200,000 foreign students by 2020. *Ministry of Education Press Release*, 29th Oct. 2012.
- [2] S. Y. Chang, T. H. Yoon, "A study on the comparison of the Korean language ability, future plan, selection factor of the university, satisfaction of education service between the foreign students from international base center and general foreign students," *The Korean Journal of Educational Methodology Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, pp. 329-347, Sept 2015.
- [3] T. H. Yoon, "Analysis of university selection factors of foreign students," *The Korea Journal of Sport*, Vol.15, No.3, pp. 181-188. Sept 2017.
- [4] Y. Song, Study of factors affecting international students' choices regarding their university. Master Thesis. Korea University, Korea, 2013.
- [5] D. B. Kwon, Y. J. Oh, H. M. Park, J. J. Son, and S. H. Song, "An exploring study on determining factors for college student's degree of educational satisfaction," *The Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 40, No. 3, pp. 181-202, 2002.
- [6] S. Y. Park, International students; International student recruitment policy; Study-abroad; Internationalization of higher education, Doctoral Thesis. Seoul National University, Korea, 2009.
- [7] Y. J. Lee, The relation between character strengths and school adjustment in adolescents. Master Thesis. Youngnam University, Korea, 2010.
- [8] O. Kim, "A structural equation model of coping with acculturative stress and college adaption among international students in Korea," *Multicultural Education Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 3, pp. 109-131, Sept 2015.
- [9] H. J. Ha, Analysis of influencing factors on educational satisfaction of foreign students. Master Thesis. Korea University, Korea, 2012.
- [10] C. H. Woo, "The future of strategy attracting foreign students in abroad," *Language & Information society*, Vol.14, pp. 75-95, May 2011.
- [11] B. S. Lee, S. W. Park, "A study on different factors affecting decisions of international exchange students in colleges: Focusing on college students from Korea and China," *Korean Journal of Comparative Education*, Vol. 22, No.5, pp. 57-77, Dec 2012.
- [12] T. Mazzarol, G. Soutar, Push-pull factors influencing international student destination choice, *Discussion paper 0105 published by Centre for Entrepreneurial Management and Innovation (CEMI)*, 2001.
- [13] T. H. Yoon, "Analysis of university selection factors of foreign students," *The Korea Journal of Sport*, Vol.15, No.3, pp. 181-188. Sept 2017.
- [14] S. T. Kim, Review of foreign student attracting policy-focusing on the Study Korea project-policy for expanding foreign Student 2005 Attractiveness-, *Korea Research Institute for Vocational Education & Training Issue Paper*, 2005-03, 2005.
- [15] S. M. Kim, Ways to assist foreign students for successful adaption to university life. Master Thesis. Kyunghee University, Korea, 2010.
- [16] J. Koo, Policy and Case Study of Attracting Foreign Students in China: Focusing on University, Economic Society for Humanities and Social Studies, Chinese Comprehensive Research, *Cooperative Research*

*Series*, 14-69-05, 2014.

- [17] H. N. Kim, H. S. Woo, S. and H. Lee, "A comparative study on Korean-Chinese-Japanese international students' attraction policy," *Asian Journal of Education*, Vol. 17, No.4, pp. 311-337, Dec 2016.
- [18] S. H. Choi, K. W. Jang, "Needs analysis in university curriculum for international students," *Journal of Education & Culture*, Vol. 24, No. 2, pp. 615-640, April 2018.