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Policies to Attract High Quality Foreign Students into Korea

Sung Joon PAIK (KDI School)

High quality manpower is a prerequisite to maintain and further improve national competitiveness. As a strategy for acquiring talents, Korea has attempted to attract and retain high quality foreign students by implementing several policies like 'Study Korea 2020', 'International Education Quality Assurance System', and the ease of visa restrictions for employment and job search. Several ministries including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Employment and Labor, and Ministry of Health and Welfare have participated in the process of improving the policies related. However, the total number of foreign students tends to decrease since 2012. Masters' and Ph.D. programs in national strategic areas of science and technology lack competent students. These facts imply that Korea needs more practical policy approach which is based on the collaboration between higher education institutions and enterprises along with administrative and financial support by the government. After analyzing the current status of foreign students and the government's policies implemented to attract high quality foreign students with their limitations, this paper suggests that the government needs to (i) induce colleges and universities to design and provide diverse internationalized education and research programs that can meet demands from foreign students and countries; (ii) provide systematic employment services to foreign students and opportunities to adapt themselves to organizational culture; (iii) promote private companies' recruitment of foreign graduates; and (iv) increase the budget to provide higher level of financial aids to foreign students, especially in strategic areas.

- Key words: foreign student recruitment, Study Korea, International Education Quality Assurance System, higher education, internationalized education program, national competitiveness

I. Introduction

High quality manpower is a prerequisite to maintain and further improve national competitiveness. Due to the lowest fertility rate and fast aging, Korea is expecting rapid decrease in economically active labor and college & university students as well. The structure of the Korean economy has rapidly transformed from labor/capital-intensive one to technology/knowledge-based one. Globalization has made it integral for a country to have well-functioning international networks with other countries. These changes in the policy environment emphasize the importance of the policies to attract foreign students and utilize them for national development.

As a strategy for acquiring high quality talents, many advanced countries have attempted to change their policies for attracting foreign students. Countries like U.S., Canada, and Japan have expanded their policy scope towards employing high quality manpower required in major industries by providing active support to the employment and settlement of foreign graduates. It has been long since the U.S. operated professional VISA program like H1-B and E-5 in addition to the teaching assistant and research assistant programs to attract high quality international talents. To solve the problem of the shortage of advanced level brains with masters' degree or higher degree, Japan has implemented a comprehensive policies to attract foreign talents through the collaboration of Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare, Ministry of Justice, and Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry since 2009 and Prime Minister Abe plans to attract 300,000 foreign students by 2020.¹ U.K. announced a 'five year strategy to attract foreign students' during the Blair administration and now issues post-study work visa. Australia and Canada adopted similar policies.² Singapore started 'the Global Schoolhouse Project' in 2006, to attract foreign students, world class universities, and foreign capital by making Singapore education hub.³ Qatar, Arab Emirates, Malaysia, and Hong Kong have implemented similar strategy.⁴ These examples show that advanced countries have been very active on attracting high quality foreign students and policies for this purpose are implemented with systematic linkage to policies of education, immigration, and employment and labor.

What about Korea's policies to attract foreign students? Korea's policy also has the similar pattern of changes as advanced countries mentioned above experienced. In the past, the government supported the Korean students' study in advanced countries by providing

¹ <http://www.universityworldnews.com/article.php?story=20140129160918747> (Nov. 27, 2015)

² Uhm, Mi-Jung et al(2012). Current status of foreign students in the fields of science and technology and policies for attracting foreign students. STEPI. pp. 15-44; Cho, Ga-Won(2013). Policies and strategies for attracting foreign professionals. Science and Technology Policy. pp. 149-151; Min, Gui-Sik et al(2014). Policy for attracting and supporting foreign students. NIIED. pp.8-68.

³ Knight, Jane(2011). Education Hubs: A Fad, A Brand, an Innovation? Journal of Studies in International Education. 15(3). pp. 226-227.

⁴ [Http://registraism.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/defining-education-hubs/](http://registraism.wordpress.com/2013/04/17/defining-education-hubs/)

scholarship. This policy contributed to supplying brains needed for Korea's development, while it resulted in the problem of brain drain. As the world has become globalized, the focus is changed to providing scholarship to foreign students to attract more of them and encouraging employment in Korea after completing the study. Recently the Korean government put more emphasis on inducing foreign students through several policies such as the 'Global Korea Scholarship Project', international student career fair, and employment visa program.

Have the Korea's policies to attract and utilize foreign students been successful? Is the Korea's capacity of attracting foreign students better than that of our competitors? While the number of foreign students increased rapidly since 2000 until 2011, after 2011 it has decreased slightly. In terms of the supply of masters' and Ph.D. program students and the employment and settlement of foreign graduates, we cannot see any significant improvements.⁵

Considering the problem mentioned above, this paper first introduces key factors to be considered as logical bases when the government design foreign student recruitment policies. By using these factors as reference criteria, this paper analyzes the current status of foreign students in Korea by magnitude, country of origin, and type, and reviews the government's policies implemented recently to attract and retain high quality foreign students and their limitations. Based on these discussions it suggests future policy directions the governments, higher education institutions and private firms need to discuss together

⁵ For this, see chapter III.

II. Logic for Foreign Students Recruitment Policy

Students in home country decide to study abroad when they expect higher future earnings, employment opportunities, job status, and prestige from studying in a foreign country. They will select a country and higher education institution where their financial and non-financial benefits can be maximized. Student's decision on the selection of the country and institution will be made based on differences in the costs of education and the returns to investment between host and home countries, and other types of costs like migration and non-financial costs.⁶ If the government knows key factors that affect student's decision on where to study, it can develop right policy measures.

To design and implement effective policies for foreign student recruitment, the government and higher education institutions need to consider several key factors that affect foreign student's decision on destination countries and institutions. Rosa Becker and Renze Kolster(2012) conducted a comprehensive review study on the topic and listed key 'push' factors and 'pull' factors. Key push factors include the unavailability of higher education and R&D, low quality and reputation of higher education and R&D in home country, high recognition and value of foreign degrees in home country's market, and value of domestic college degree in domestic market. From the perspective of hosting country, pull factors have more practical meaning for designing policies to attract and retain high quality foreign students. Becker and Kolster categorized pull factors into 2 groups of country and institution as shown in table 1.⁷

It is necessary to know which factors are more important. It depends on the level and type of study that a student pursue (e.g., B.A., Master's, and Ph.D. degree) and on his/her country of origin. A host country needs to collect and analyze relevant data during the implementation period of policies to identify right sets of factors according to target groups and programs. In principle, a host country needs to design policies that can maximize the capitalization on key factors in which that country has the strengths. For the key factors in which the host country does not have advantage yet, it can launch new policies to build these key factors.

In the next chapter, this paper will review the current foreign student recruitment policies of Korea by using these key 'pull' factors as a reference point to check the appropriateness of the policies in terms of target and tools.

⁶ Chevalier, Arnaud(2014). *How to attract foreign students*. IZA World of Labor. <http://wol.iza.org/articles/how-to-attract-foreign-students.pdf> (Nov. 27, 2015)

⁷ Becker, Rosa and Renze Kolster(2012). *International Student Recruitment: policies and developments in selected countries*. Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education. p.p.12-14.

<Table 1> Key factors of foreign students' decisions on destination countries and institutions

| For Decisions on Destination Country | For Decision on Higher Education Institutions |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The availability of information on the country and its higher education institutions (existing cultural, economic, educational, historical, linguistic, religious, strategic linkages and active promotion or recruitment policies) - The quality and reputation of education in the country and the level of academic freedom - Mutual recognition of degrees/qualifications - Cost of higher education and living in the country (tuition, availability of financial aid, travel expenses, living costs) - Safety level within the country (crime rate, racial discrimination) - Internationalization of a country (number of foreign students, availability and diversity of international programs, stringency of immigration policies) - The living, study and work environment of a country (climate, research facilities, employment and immigration opportunities/regulations during and after study, demographic change) - Social and geographical linkage (friends/ relatives living or studying in the same country, geographical proximity) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Knowledge and awareness of an institution among students - The quality and reputation of the institution and its education and research - Recognition of degree or other qualifications by the host institution and country of origin and a high marketability of the degree/qualification - Cost of higher education - Nature of governance and administrative procedures of a higher education institution - Safety within the institution - The level of internationalization of an institution (number of international students and staff, and the availability and diversity of international programs) - The living, study, and work environment of an institution (ambiance, study room, on-campus employment opportunities during and after the study, and the quality of ICT and research facilities) - Social and geographical links |

Source: Becker, Rosa and Renze Kolster(2012). International Student Recruitment: policies and developments in selected countries. Netherlands organization for international cooperation in higher education. p.p.12-14

III. Policies to Attract Foreign Students into Korea

1. Current Status of Foreign Students

While the number of foreign students increased consistently from 2003 until 2011, it tends to slightly decrease since 2012, as described in [Figure 1]. As of April 2014, the total number of foreign students is 84,891. Out of them, the number of foreign students in regular degree programs is 53,636(63.2%), while that of language course students is 18,543(21.8%) and that of foreign students in other programs is 12,712(15.0%). As of 2012, U.S. attracted the largest number of foreign students. 18% of all foreign students studied in the U.S. After the U.S., U.K., France, Australia, and Germany attracted 11.0%, 7%, 6%, and 5%, respectively. The proportion of foreign students in Korea was 1.4%, which was lower than 3.5% in Japan and 2.2% in China.⁸ Considering that global network is a crucial factor for national competitiveness, Korea needs to take more active policy actions.

With respect to the number of foreign students in Korea, as shown in Table 2, the majority of students came from Asia. The number of the Chinese students is the largest, 50,336(59.3%), followed by Japan (3,958/4.7%), Mongolia (3,126/3.7%), Viet Nam (3,181/3.7%), U.S.(3,104/3.7%) and Taiwan(1,873/2.2%). This fact implies that Korea needs to diversify and expand the targets towards other regions and countries than Asia and China.

Table 3 shows the numbers and the composition ratios of foreign students by type of financial support. As of 2014, the number of self-supported students is the largest, 73,138(86.2%), followed by the inviting university-supported students(6,890/8.1%), Korean Government-supported students(2,701/3.2%), and origin country-supported students(1,120/1.3%). For the past 3 years, the composition ratios remained without significant change, which indicates that the relatively high level of demands for the study in Korea remained consistently, although skewed to China. This fact implies that the Korean government can encourage foreign students' voluntary influx through improving the quality of education and research programs and providing foreign students-friendly settlement and employment environment.

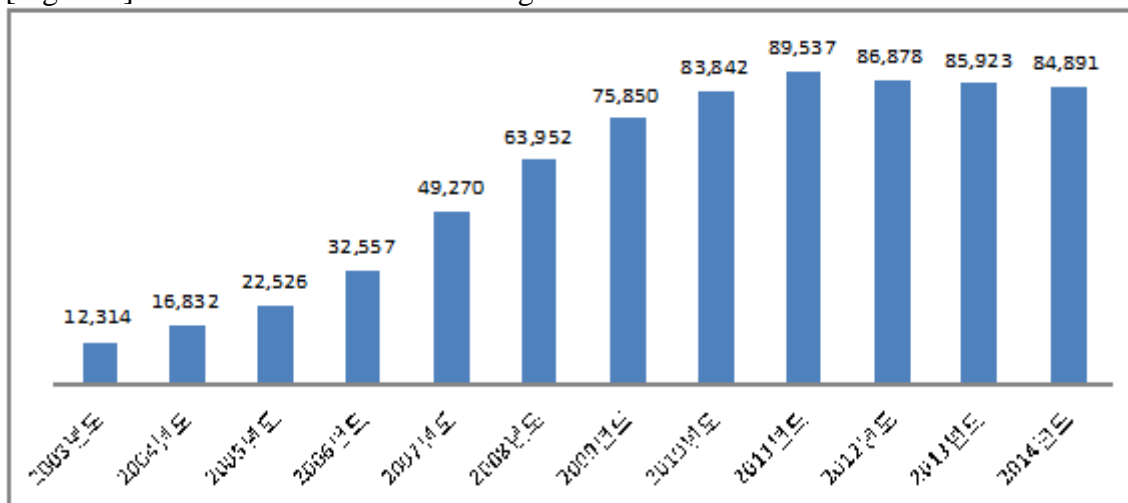
Decrease in the number of foreign students in Korea indicates that although Korea experienced the quantitative expansion of international higher education market, the quality of education provided by the Korean colleges and universities did not improve at the same rate. According to the survey results of Uhm et al.(2012)⁹, foreign master and Ph.D. program students in 18 universities thought the competitiveness of education and research of universities and professors in Korea to be lower than other countries like U.S., Europe, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, Singapore, Canada, and China, while the administrative

⁸ <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx> (Nov. 27, 2015)

⁹ Uhm, Mi-Jung et al.(2012). Current status of foreign students in the fields of science and technology and policies for attracting foreign students. STEPI.

institutions such as visa process was relatively excellent compared to these countries. In a study that compared Korea and Japan based on the results of the survey done to Chinese students, Kim(2011) found that Chinese students thought higher education of Japan is better in the specialty of major study areas, lecture quality, and evaluation system.¹⁰ The proportion of Chinese students who responded positively about having a job in Japan after graduation was 3 times higher than that in Korea.¹¹ This indicates that the Japanese companies are more open to foreigners. Both studies found that the possibility of foreign students' employment and settlement in Korea is lower than in other countries.¹²

[Figure 1] Trends in the number of foreign students in Korea



Source: Ministry of Education(2014.11). Current status of foreign students in Korea.

<Table 2> Number of Foreign Students by Region

| Region | Language Course | Regular Degree Program | Other Programs | Total(persons, %) |
|---------------|-----------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Asia | 16,284 | 48,031 | 8,914 | 73,229(86.3) |
| Africa | 335 | 1,380 | 75 | 1,790(2.1) |
| Oceania | 95 | 248 | 82 | 425(0.5) |
| North America | 543 | 2,577 | 1,060 | 4,180(4.9) |
| South America | 241 | 395 | 269 | 905(1.1) |
| Europe | 1,045 | 1,005 | 2,312 | 4,362(5.1) |
| Total | 18,543 | 53,636 | 12,712 | 84,891(100.0) |

Source: Ministry of Education(2014.11). Current status of foreign students in Korea.

¹⁰ Pull factor: quality of higher education

¹¹ Kim, Woo-Jong(2011). A Comparative Study on Policies of Korea and Japan to Attract Chinese Students. Korea International Trade Association.

¹² Pull factor: work environment in a host country

<Table 3> Number of Foreign Students by Type of Financial Support

| Type of Financial Support | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|-------------------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| Self-Supported | 73,321(84.4) | 73,420(85.4) | 73,133(86.2) |
| Korean Government-Supported | 2,944(3.4) | 2,799(3.3) | 2,701(3.2) |
| Inviting University-Supported | 8,207(9.4) | 7,136(8.3) | 6,890(8.1) |
| Origin Country-Supported | 610(0.7) | 896(1.0) | 1,042(1.3) |
| Others | 1,796(2.1) | 1,672(1.9) | 1,120(1.3) |
| Total | 86,878(100.0) | 85,923(100.0) | 84,891(100.0) |

Source: Ministry of Education(2014.11). Current status of foreign students in Korea.

Statistics and studies reviewed above imply that Korea needs to strengthen the competitiveness of higher education to provide high quality education and research programs to foreign students in diverse areas of study and also to promote the employment of foreign students in Korea after graduation.

2. Policies to Attract Foreign Students

Since 2000, the Korean government has implemented several policies to attract high quality foreign students such as ‘Global Korea Scholarship Program’, ‘Study Korea 2020 Project’, ‘International Education Quality Assurance System(IEQAS)’, strategic policy to attract foreign students and support their settlement, and visa program to promote the employment and business start-up of foreigners who graduated from colleges and universities in Korea. Main purpose of these policies is to encourage foreign students to decide to study in Korea and also to support their study and employment and settlement in Korea.

2.1. Global Korea Scholarship Program

Since its inception in 1967, the Korean government’s Global Korea Scholarship Program(GKS) provided financial aid to around 100 foreign students and since 2008 increased the number of beneficiaries substantially to 400-600 students per year¹³. In 2012, the Korean government invited around 3,000 foreign students and 1,435 foreign students graduated in that year. In 2013 Ministry of Education, Science and Technology increased the budget for the GKS Program(about 55 million U.S.\$) and the number of foreign students invited(827 per year), considering the positive effect of foreign students on the Korea’s foreign policy and the expansion of the Korean Wave. In addition, the government set a plan to increase the budget for the GKS program up to 100 billion KW(91 million US\$) and the number of students invited up to 1,000 by 2015 and to further increase the budget to 200 billion KW(182 million US\$) by 2020 to make more foreign students pro-Koreans and utilize them to invite more foreign students. This plan includes a long-term goal of establishing the

¹³ Number of foreign students new selected annually

official GKS fund.¹⁴ Park Geun-Hye administration implements a plan to increase the number of foreign students invited annually to 1,000 by 2017 and attempts to link foreign student recruitment policy to manpower supply through a pilot project of selecting foreign junior college students in occupation-related areas.

Overall the policy to attract foreign students has two main objectives: (i) to encourage foreign students to study in Korea and get employed after graduation and settle down in Korea and (ii) to establish strong international network with graduates after returning to their home country. GKS Program is expected to make meaningful contribution to the second objective. In that sense, the constant increase in the budget for GKS can be justified.¹⁵ In order to enhance the effectiveness of the GKS Program, it is recommended to diversify and expand target countries and regions and to invite foreign students in strategic areas for national economic development.

2.2. Study Korea 2020 Project('13-'20)¹⁶

Study Korea 2020 Project is now at its third stage of implementation.¹⁷ Main objective of the third stage Study Korea Project is to increase the number of foreign students up to 200,000 and to utilize them for Korea's foreign policy and economic development. This third stage project attempts to enhance the brand value of Korea's higher education by shifting the focus of the Study Korea Project from quantitative expansion to qualitative management of foreign students. To improve the quality of foreign student's management, the government made a comprehensive system of 'studyinkorea' (www.studyinkorea.or.kr) strengthened through linking with the visa system of the Ministry of Justice and actively uses it to provide information on study in Korea and to attract foreign students.¹⁸ Specifically the government provides detailed information on areas of study, professors, dormitories, the Korean language course, scholarship, and university characteristics so that anyone can easily prepare study in Korea. In addition the government tries to provide various cultural programs for the smooth communication between foreign students and the Korean society. The government also tries to improve living environment like dorm and health insurance by establishing a global exchange center that supports dormitories and complex cultural spaces.¹⁹

¹⁴ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology(2012.12). 'Attract 200,000 of foreign students by 2020' (press release).

¹⁵ Pull factor: cost of higher education

¹⁶ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology(2012.12). 'Attract 200,000 of foreign students by 2020' (press release).

¹⁷ First stage(2005-2008) and second stage(2008-2012)

¹⁸ Pull factor: availability of information on the country and higher education

¹⁹ Pull factor: living environment of a host country

In line with a series of these policies, the government is planning to open a new institute called 'Korea Institute for Promoting International Education' by transform the existing National Institute for International Education as a government-funded organization. The government also tries to encourage cooperation between Korea Education Centers and Korea Cultural Service offices in foreign countries to provide more information on the study in Korea and attract foreign students. If the government should succeed in achieving the objective of attracting 200,000 students by 2020, the proportion of foreign students in each of higher education institutes will increase from 2.0% in 2009 to 5.4% in 2020 so that colleges and universities in Korea can have internationalized campus. The government expects that the increase in the number of foreign students and their working in Korea will be helpful to open new global market.

As discussed above, Study Korea 2020 Project has diverse components of information system, professional management institute, and collaboration mechanism with related Ministries. From the perspective of the comprehensiveness of the policy, this project has its own strength. It is required to implement the project in a consistent way.

2.3. International Education Quality Assurance System

International Quality Assurance System(IEQAS) is introduced to minimize the side effect due to excessive competition among higher education institutions and to enhance the brand image of Korea's higher education in 2011.²⁰ IEQAS aims to provide foreign students with high quality education and support services by leading foreign students to higher education institutions that satisfy the quality standards set by the government for attracting and managing foreign students.²¹

In 2014 Ministry of Education and Ministry of Justice selected 37 new colleges and universities as accredited institutions and limited visa-issues in 4 institutions that did not meet the standards. As of 2014, the number of colleges and universities accredited is 83.²² Colleges and universities accredited by IEQAS are introduced as credible institutions that admit high quality applicants and provide quality management services to students in the official websites of the Korean embassy and Ministry of Education. Foreign students who apply to accredited higher education institutions that have less than 1% of illegal stay are exempt from financial affidavit requirement in the review for D-2 visa²³. They also have advantage of getting extra points in selecting beneficiaries of Global Korea Scholarship.

²⁰ Pull factor: quality of higher education

²¹ Ministry of Education, Science and Technology(2011)

²² Ministry of Education(2014.2.16). Results of 2014 IEQAS Evaluation (press release).

²³ Visa for overseas study

While IEQAS has been criticized for too many indicators for evaluating management capacity of higher education institution compared to indicators for education capacity,²⁴ it also has been evaluated to have positive effect on making higher education institutions understand the importance of foreign student management and take actions to enhance registration rate of medical insurance and the Korean language proficiency²⁵.

2.4. Strategy to Attract Foreign Students and Support Their Settlement

The Korean government announced ‘strategy to attract foreign students and support their settlement’ to provide the whole process services from entering Korea to employment in 2014. This strategy is designed to solve major problems that Korea experienced while implementing the first and second stage Study Korea Projects(2005-2008, 2008-2012), Global Korea Scholarship Program(1967-) and Higher Education Internationalization policies. As pointed out in the introduction, the number of foreign students tends to decrease since 2012 although it increased before. Some foreign students failed to adapt themselves to the Korean environment and to study and expressed their emotion of anti-Korea. Thus the government introduced a new strategy that covers the entire sequence of foreign student’s life from the application to higher education institution to employment and settlement²⁶.

As a part of the Study Korea Project, this strategy has 3 specific action plans: (i) ‘acceleration of attracting foreign students’ that includes enhancing the autonomy of IEQAS-accredited colleges and universities, international ‘Study Korea’ fair tailored to specific needs of foreign students, strengthening the role of the Korea Education Centers, and making the Campus Asia Project as a major brand of Korea’s higher education system²⁷; (ii) ‘provision of support to study and life in Korea’ that includes re-establishing the Korean language standards according to student’s needs, mandatory registration of medical insurance, and increase of the work-study hours²⁸; and (iii) ‘improvement of employment services’ that includes employment fair for foreign students, increase of visa issues for longer stay in Korea, information service linked to domestic and international companies, and strengthening the functions of searching for jobs and workers in Contact Korea system²⁹.

More emphasis needs to be put on policies to support employment of foreign students after their graduation, because employment opportunity has a great effect on foreign student’s decision to study in Korea. While large number of foreign students wanted to work in Korea,

²⁴ Lee, Kwan-Sik(2012). *Evaluation Criteria and Elements of the International Education Quality Assurance System*. Language and Culture 8(2).

²⁵ Pull factor: living and study environment of a host country

²⁶ Pull factor: living and work environment and internationalization of a host country

²⁷ Pull factor: mutual recognition of degrees

²⁸ Pull factor: living, study and work environment of a host country

²⁹ Pull factor: work environment and availability of information on a host country

according to Huh et al(2010), only very limited number of them could have chances of getting employed.³⁰ To increase the employment of foreign students, it is required to induce private enterprises' active cooperation along with the provision of job information and career guidance³¹.

2.5. Increase in visa issues for employment and business start-up of foreign students

In February 2015 Ministry of Justice loosened the conditions required for the employment, job-search activities, and business start-up of foreigners who graduated from higher education institutions in Korea in order to promote high quality foreigners' employment and business start-up in Korea.³²

2.5.1. Loosening conditions required to get employment visa(E-7) and job search visa(D-10)

Before 2015 in order for foreigners who graduated from higher education institutions in Korea to get E-7 visa to be employed in Korea, following conditions needed to be met: (i) for BA degree holders, their major should be related to the occupation of employment; and (ii) for associate BA degree holders, they should have national technical qualifications or their GPA be above 3.0 in addition to the condition for BA holders. These conditions are no longer applied.³³

To get D-10 visa to stay in Korea for job search, associate BA degree holders should have GPA above 3.0 or national technical qualifications, while BA degree holders whose GPA was below 3.0 needed a recommendation by their advisor. These conditions were abolished. Duration of staying for job search of them also is extended from 1 year to 2 years.³⁴

2.5.2. Loosening conditions required to get trade and business visa(D-9)

In the past the government issued D-9 visa to foreigners who introduced foreign investment more than 300 million KW based on the Foreign Exchange Law or Foreign Investment Promotion Act and managed a profit-making company. In the new policy the government issues D-9 visa to foreign graduates who have D-2 visa or D-10 visa and want to establish and run a profit-making company in Korea.³⁵

³⁰ Huh, Jae-Jun et al.(2010). Characteristics of Foreign Students and Policy Tasks. KLI. p.135.

³¹ Pull factor: work environment of a host country

³² Ministry of Justice(2015.2). Expansion of visa-issues for employment and business start-up of foreigners who graduated from higher education institutions in Korea(press release).

³³ Pull factor: work environment of a host country

³⁴ Pull factor: work environment of a host country

³⁵ Pull factor: work environment of a host country

2.5.3. Loosening conditions required to get permanent residence permit

In the past the government granted permanent residence permit to foreigners who had BA degrees or above in strategic areas like IT, Nano, digital electronics, transportation and mechanics, environment and energy, new material, bio, and technology management, worked in Korea for more than 3 years and earned higher than GDP per capita. In the new policy, target area is expanded to the whole science and engineering fields for BA degree holders. For MA degree holders conditions for major is abolished.³⁶

This policy to ease the conditions required to issue visas related to employment can be expected to have positive effect not only on increasing foreign students' opportunities of employment and starting their own business in Korea, but also on attracting high quality foreign students into Korea. The government needs to collect and analyze data on the changes of foreign students' employment, business start-ups, job search, and application to permanent residence permit before and after new policy.

3. General Assessment

Government policies to attract foreign students discussed above are summarized in Table 4. Primary goal of these policies is to attract more high quality foreign students and retain them. It would be too early to identify problems of these policies through scientific evaluations because most of them are relatively new.

However, it is noted that the foreign student recruitment policies of Korea has dealt with most of key factors listed in table 1 such as the availability of information, quality of education, internationalization of a country, living/study and work environment, and mutual recognition of degree.

It can be also noticed that compared to the past the government policies to attract foreign students have been designed and approached in a comprehensive manner. In other words, the government tries to cover the whole process of the study in Korea from the preparation of foreign students for the study in Korea to their employment and settlement in Korea and to the establishment of international network with foreign graduates. For this, information service system(www.studyinkorea.or.kr), global scholarship program, International Education Quality Assurance System, employment service provision, and expansion of target groups for E-7, D-10, D-9, and permanent residence permit have been introduced. To pursue the comprehensive policy coverage from preparation to employment, the Korean government took an integrated approach by which several ministries including Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Employment and Labor, and Ministry of Health and Welfare participated in designing and implementing policies of

³⁶ Pull factor: work and living environment of a host country

attracting and retaining foreign students.

Some limitations are found. Most of the government policies are focused on the quantitative expansion of foreign students and general services to them. The qualitative approach to respond to fundamental demand for the quality study in Korea from foreign students does not seem to be considered and materialized as much as required. International Education Quality Assurance System deals with only management of foreign students. In addition, not every major actor has played its role. For example, private enterprises do not seem to be active in hiring and utilizing foreign graduates. In-depth discussion is required among universities, enterprises and governments to design more effective policies that have direct and significant impact on education, research, employment and settlement.

<Table 4> Key Policies to Attract Foreign Students

| | Objective | Outcome | Future Plan |
|--|--|--|---|
| Global Korea Scholarship Program(1967 -) | To invite more foreign students into Korea, make them pro-Korean and establish strong international network with graduates after returning to their home country | Invited around 4,000 foreign students in total in 2012 | Increase the number of new foreign students coming to Korea up to 1,000 per year |
| Study Korea 2020 Project(2013-2020) | To increase the number of foreign students up to 200,000 by 2020 and utilize them for foreign policy and economic development | Implementation by stage – 1 st (2005-2008) and 2 nd (2008-2012) Operating portal system for the Project | Establish ‘Korea Institute for International Education’ and ‘Global Exchange Center’ |
| International Education Quality Assurance System(2011 -) | To enhance the brand image of Korea’ higher education | 83 higher education institutions accredited as of 2014 | Provide differential administrative and financial services to foreign students in accredited institutions |
| Strategy to Attract Foreign Students and Support Their Settlement | To provide support from entering to Korea to employment and settlement | Implementation of 3 action plans – attracting foreign students, providing support for study and life in Korea, and enhancing employment services | Implement action plans in a constant manner |
| Increase in visa issues for employment and business start-up of foreign students | To make Korean labor market foreign students-friendly to increase employment and settlement of foreigners | Ease of conditions required to get E-7, D-10, D-9 and permanent residence permit in 2015 | Check necessity of further loosening |

IV. Directions for Improving Policies to Attract Foreign Students

With respect to the policy issue of attracting high quality foreign students into Korea, the government can be faced with two challenges: attracting foreign students and designing policies that can identify high quality foreign students with high prospects of success and induce them to stay in Korea. Both challenges are not easy to tackle. Compared to English-speaking advanced countries, Korea has a disadvantage of selecting foreign students from a smaller pool due to language barrier, fewer job opportunities in the labor market, and unfamiliar cultural atmospheres. This implies that Korea first needs to increase the number of colleges and universities that provide quality education and research programs and thus can attract foreign students. Korea also needs to build policy environment to retain foreign talents, for example, by allowing foreign graduates to work after graduation with expanding employment visa, providing financial incentives to foreigners who start their own business, and increasing permanent residence permit.

Korea has continuously designed and implemented various policies to attract high quality foreign students since the mid 2000s. Recent stagnation in the number of foreign students indicates that Korea needs more practical policy approach which can meet foreign students' diverse demands for quality education and research programs that can be connected to employment through the collaboration between higher education institutions and enterprises.

Based on the discussions on the logic of foreign student recruitment policy and the analysis of the current foreign student recruitment policies of Korea, this paper suggests the governments, higher education institutions and private firms discuss following points together.

First, it is integral to develop and provide global education and research programs that can meet demands from foreign students and countries. The most critical factor for attracting high quality foreign students is the competitiveness of higher education institution's education and research programs. To enhance the competitiveness of higher education institutions, Korea has implemented several big national policies like 'University & College Education Capacity Strengthening Project,' 'Advancement in College Education,' 'Brain Korea 21,' 'Brain Korea 21+,' 'World Class University,' and 'University & College Specialization Policy.' Policies for the internationalization of higher education also are designed and implemented to improve the quality of university/college education and research.

Although the government made efforts to improve the quality of Korea's higher education, Korea has not achieved meaningful results from the perspective of attracting high quality foreign students and utilizing them for the sustainable development of Korea in the future. This implies that the government and colleges and universities need to make different approach. Policies to attract foreign students assume that higher education institutions in Korea provide global education programs. Thus it is required to check to what extent colleges and universities are well prepared to provide internationalized curriculum and programs and

to make curriculum internationalized as much as can be.³⁷

In addition to the development and implementation of global education programs, it is necessary to increase core courses taught in English and Chinese. It is also a pre-requisite to form foreigner-friendly cultural and working environment in colleges and universities, companies, and society. These policies are expected to contribute to attracting more foreign students and diversifying target countries and regions.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide systematic employment services to foreign students and opportunities to adapt themselves to organizational culture. With respect to the employment services, local governments and private companies lack the information services for employment of foreign students, while central government and higher education institutions have institutionalized mechanism. It can be attempted to provide specific and accurate information on occupation, company, number of jobs available, duration of employment, and wage through the connection and coordination mechanism among central and local governments, associations by occupation and councils by industry.

In addition, it would be effective for making employment environment more foreign students friendly to improve and expand the 'pair-internship program' in which foreign students and Korean students work as a team. It is also required for higher education institutions to provide the Korean language courses tailored to the level of foreign students, which is expected to be practically effective in attracting foreign students who hesitate to study in Korea because of the language problem, improving their study performance, and promoting employment in the Korean companies.

Third, the governments need to actively implement policies that promote private companies' recruitment of foreign students. Employment of foreign students in hosting countries has positive effects on attracting high quality students in those countries. Large portion of foreign students want to work in Korea after graduation. The importance of expanding the market in a globalized world grows. Considering these, it can be an effective strategy for private enterprises to hire and utilize foreign students, because foreign students know the culture of both Korea and their home country and understand Korea's corporate culture through living in Korea. It is recommended for the government to first identify best practice cases and to disseminate these in collaboration with private sector.

Fourth, it is necessary for the government to pursue pro-active financial aid policy that provides higher level of scholarship including living expenses. Recently Korea has experienced slight decrease in the number of foreign students. As of 2014 the proportion of self-supported foreign students is 86.2% which is very high. These facts imply that if the

³⁷ Paik, Sung Joon(2014). *Internationalization of Higher Education in Korea*. New Direction for Human Capital Policy in Korea. KDI. pp.324-325.

government should increase the financial aid budget for strategic areas in science and technology, then it could expect the number of self-supported foreign students to increase in these areas. Currently the government supports expenses for living and settlement through programs to provide financial aids to outperforming foreign students and foreign students exchange program.³⁸ It is recommended to expand these programs.

As the number of the Korean students of graduate schools in science and technology fields has decreased, demands for high quality foreign students in the Masters' and Ph.D. programs has increased. However, it is individual professor's responsibility to guarantee most of tuition and living expenses of foreign students.³⁹ To recruit high quality foreign students in a sustainable and consistent way, it is required to increase the budget for scholarship and other types of financial aids in the masters' and Ph.D. programs of strategic areas along with the selection of strategic areas for national development.

³⁸ <http://www.niied.go.kr/contents.do?contentsNo=43&menuNo=286> (2015.7.2)

³⁹ Uhm, Mi-Jung et al.(2012). Current status of foreign students in the fields of science and technology and policies for attracting foreign students. STEPI. pp.55-58.

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