Beyond ‘OK’: Capturing the student wellbeing of Korean international students.

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master

in

Educational Psychology

at Massey University, Albany, New Zealand.

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2015
Abstract

Research on international students in New Zealand has found that they face multiple stressors during their sojourn. Currently there is a lack of research on the student wellbeing of very young international students, particularly research that includes their direct voices. This study explored what wellbeing meant to two Korean international students enrolled in a New Zealand primary school. The photovoice method of data collection was used, where the students took photographs of things in their school environment they felt made an important impact on their wellbeing. The students discussed the importance of these photographs during follow up interviews and a focus group. The themes that emerged were compared to the student wellbeing framework developed by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (Education Review Office, 2013b). This study found that wellbeing for the two participants meant being able to form new relationships in New Zealand while maintaining relationships with family in Korea, communicating effectively in English, having the necessary resources and materials to function well in their class, experiencing nature in their physical space, being physically well, having fun, and retaining access to aspects of their own culture. Practical ways that schools and home stay families can support the wellbeing of international students include providing stimulating learning environments, access to adequate language support, peer-pairing programs to encourage the formation of social networks with host-nationals and providing access cultural foods.
Acknowledgements

To my family, you have my eternal gratitude for reminding me that we are in this life together and that any struggle is lighter if it is shared. A big thank you to my supervisors for their expert wisdom, practical guidance and shared excitement for my small master’s project. To my dear friends who were in the same boat as me this past year, thank you so much for your firm comradery. To my dear friends outside of my course, thank you for listening to me talk about nothing but my research during my honeymoon period and the inevitable cries of frustration that soon followed. Your support, whether it was a simple text of encouragement or the late night rant on Facebook chat, has been vital to my wellbeing. Thank you to the international student’s coordinator and office staff who helped me to jump through hoops and run through courtyards in the organization process. Lastly, I wish to express my heartfelt thanks to the two students who let me into their private pocket of the world. Thank you for offering your voice to my research. I hope your student journey and you yourselves stay well.
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List of Korean words

활발 - 한 (hwal bal han): To be bright and lively.

느끼 - 한 (neuk gi han): The word can be used to describe creamy, rich, oily, greasy foods. It can also be used as the feeling you experience when you do not eat Korean food for a long time.

찌개 (Jjigae): A Korean dish that is similar to a Western stew. There are many different kinds of jjigae, but most will include some type of meat.

김치 찌개 (Kimchi jjigae): Jjigae made with kimchi, which is pickled cabbage seasoned with chili pepper.

부대 찌개 (Budae jjigae): Also known as Army Base Stew, it is a jjigae that originates from the period after the Korean war, where food scarcity meant people to make a jjigae from the surplus food from U.S. military bases. It includes a variety of different ingredients mixed together in a stew.

육개장 (Yukgaejang): A spicy Korean stew made from shredded beef and other ingredients that are simmered for a long time.

닭개장 (Dakgaejang): Yukgaejang made with shredded chicken.