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

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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.

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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.