

## Academic Article

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# ACHIEVEMENT AND LEARNING OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM: THE CASE OF A FILIPINO SCHOLARS' ORGANIZATION IN KOREA

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## Abstract

Filipino Scholars in Korea or Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc. (PIKO), as an international academic and non-academic student organization, plays a vital role in the intellectual and social development of Filipino students in South Korea. As a representative organization, it reflects the challenges and experiences of the students in the mentioned country. With various activities initiated in and out of the academe in line with its advocacies, evidently, it affirms the contribution of the students in designing the trends of international education in that country. This participation is not only limited with the students' academics, but it can be clearly seen through their social, cultural and political facets as well, not only in South Korea, but also in the Philippines.

Through PIKO, the lives of international students do not only focus on getting admitted to academic institutions abroad. The organization has an entire study-abroad opportunity for aspiring students leading to the motivation of pursuing an international higher education, being admitted to one's university of preference, experiencing academic, social, and cultural life abroad, completing an academic degree, and eventually returning home. The author examines the narrative of PIKO as an organization, along with numerous social and academic advocacies that influence the organization's vision.

With these, the article aims (a) to extrapolate the nature, purposes, and results of student migration through empirical data gathered from different literatures and studies, (b) to point out the importance of the internationalization of higher education for the improvement of the individual, the country, and the international community, (c) to emphasize the need of support for the international students' culture adaptability mechanism, (d) to define what PIKO is and evaluate how the organization works to help Filipino international students in South Korea, and (e) to provide future researchers, campus administrators, and education specialists a reference to come up with their own academic and non-academic organization design that shall hone the whole aspects of both students and their environment promoting national and international development.

**Keywords:** Filipino Students, Repatriate Scholars, International Education, Student Organization, Study Abroad

## Introduction

To Filipinos, migration is not a new phenomenon. Its roots can be strongly traced as it is embedded in the social, economic, and cultural characteristics of the Philippines. As told in history, Filipinos are nomadic for they have been sailing across the sea. The national status quo has been shaped by this culture of migration. Moreover, Filipinos take chances in foreign lands with variety of political, financial, professional, educational, and other reasons and based on considerations such as target country's culture, campus life, work environment, food preference, weather condition and the like. In other words, Filipinos apparently go abroad.

Furthermore, due to this reason, it is not surprising that Filipinos aim and engage themselves in an international higher education experience to hone themselves for their own individual development, for the national progress, and for the common good of the international community. Therefore, Filipino students really migrate.

## The Nature, Purposes, and Results of Migration

The concept of student migration involves students as migrants as long as they study overseas for more than a year. According to the United Nations:

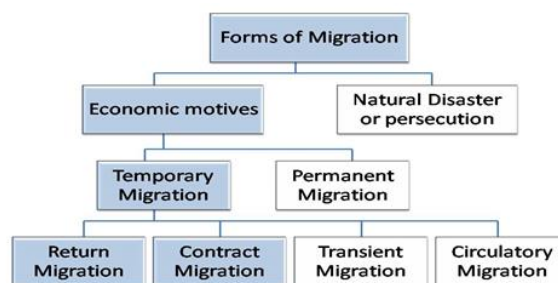
*“A migrant is a person who moves to a country other than his or her own usual residence for a period of at least a year, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. The definition was used to harmonize the reporting of migration trends and all countries adhere to this definition when declaring migration figures.”*

(www.parliament.uk, 2012)

Furthermore, Birjwaard and Wang (2013) argued that considering migration as a contributing factor in “maximizing human capital and/or earnings” makes “return and repetitive migration outcomes of a migration decision.” The motivation to stay abroad for studies or for other reasons is eventually capped by the realization of specific goals achievable either in the host or home country, thus, leading to the decision of going back home to utilize what one has learned.

In addition, Dustman and Weiss (2007) presented a framework particularly classifying migration forms, brought about by economic motives. With categorization, the migration behavior is sub-classified as either temporary or permanent. The concept of return migration is outlined where individuals who migrate return to their home country “by their own choice, often after a significant period abroad.” The authors interpret the return migration phenomenon when migrants return home because “the benefits of staying abroad are lower than the cost.” This is supported by the migrant’s preference consumption in their native country. One highlighted element of the discourse outlines the return to home country when the return of the acquired skills and knowledge is higher at home. Furthermore, the relatively high importance and value being placed on the skills and knowledge of the migrants in the home country eventually leads to their return back home.

To understand further the concept of migration, below is Figure 1. It is the diagrammatical representation of forms of migration.



**Figure 1** Cassarino’s Forms of Migration Model

Based on the diagram presented above, migration can be contextualized into two forms: economic motives and natural disaster or persecution. People migrate to seek better opportunities and pursue economic activities most favorable to them. Failure to achieve economic desires in the current location motivates these individuals to go abroad and fulfill activities that would eventually satisfy their economic needs. The other context represents the decision of individuals who had to move because of the effects of calamities and disasters. With safety as their primary concern, these individuals migrate in order to fulfill security needs.

Economic motives split into two categories: temporary and permanent migration. Foreign students fall under the category temporary migration since they are only expected to stay in the host country for more than a year and eventually return to their home country after fulfilling their academic responsibilities. Permanent migration takes place when an individual decides to permanently settle in the host country even after fulfilling economic desires.

Four migration forms take place under temporary migration. After the temporary stay, an individual could opt to return to his/home country (return migration), temporarily remain in the host country for a definite period of time (contract migration), stay before permanently reaching final destination (transient migration), or frequently move between the home and host countries (circulatory migration).

The perspectives offered by Cassarino (2004) concerning transnationalism and return migration presents empirical analysis in the discourse of students educated abroad. To be particular, transnationalism weaves the channels involving social and economic aspects involving the migrants' host and home countries. Preparation for reintegration at home is manifested by the migrants' 'periodical and regular visits to their home countries.' This is evident with the consistent connection back home, along with the establishment of strong networks. The notion of transnational identities spring, coupling the 'migrants' origins with the identities they acquire in their host countries,' which apparently leads to the individual's development of 'double identity.' One clear thing present in transnationalism is the realization of the individual's needs for adaptation upon going back home, which encompasses reintegration issues in terms of social and professional aspects. Front liners of transnationalism consider migrants as individuals striving to acquire skills and knowledge (resources), and then prepare to go back to their country of origin.

As Filipino graduate students leave the Philippines to pursue graduate studies abroad, they carry with them their personal intentions which include economic motives such as future

career advancement and better opportunities. They are considered as temporary migrants since they only stay for a definite period of time. Return migration takes place as these graduate students decide to go back home and reintegrate in the society. This study focuses on the context of Filipino students who were once temporary migrants because of their international student status, then eventually return to their home country.

Due to the intriguing nature of migration and issues on international education, the growth of interest in the globalization of higher education transparently reflects increased focus on studies related to international education and student mobility across countries. Contemporary landscape of education presses the urgent need to theorize and define international education. The attempt to propose extensive and in-depth approach to address concerns of international students is evident on existing literatures and research inquiries. The wide variety of available literature clearly manifests the strong interest of scholars and experts to contribute to the body of knowledge concerning the field of international education.

Various research inquiries have been conducted by experts and scholars to address concerns regarding the mobility of international students. Topics range from international student experiences, migration, student welfare, among others. Student mobilization plays a critical role in research encompassing internationalization.

## **The Internationalization of Higher Education**

As discussed earlier, Filipino and/or other students migrate because they have multiple personal targets for themselves and consciously or unconsciously, they also aim progress for their home countries and for the international community and one of the prospect solutions is international education. Consequently, the internationalization of higher education is unarguably needed.

Yusoff (2012) affirms the role of the internationalization of higher education as an element towards the transformation of developing countries in the age of globalization. With great hopes of embracing new opportunities and academic pursuits, Filipino students take the challenge of leaving the Philippines for a long time and return after obtaining their graduate degrees. With the influx of foreign students into the Philippines, the number of Filipino students seeking education abroad also continues to grow annually, with drastically growing scholarship programs offered by public and private entities, on top of government scholarship support. Kwon (2013) asserts that the internationalization

of the higher education sector has been on the rise, along with globalization's socio-economic elements. Fostering student mobility among countries has been on the international agenda for several years. This provides the students the opportunity to feel and experience the world right in their very eyes, making foreign students agents of global networks (Bijward & Wang, 2013).

Moreover, the contemporary trends in globalization have pushed students to seek education beyond the borders of their own country. The expansion of their education has opened wider horizons and increased opportunities along with their marketability, brought about by their international degree.

With globalization as a set-up, students who have obtained their degrees internationally have also optimized their marketability, serving as their distinguishing factor at work (Arouca, 2013). The narrative of international students showcases stories of struggles, as they experience the world in their very own eyes. Programs and policies have been established to encourage exposure of students into international setting. Being exposed to the international scene has made them learn new reformed systems and increase knowledge in their countries (Alandejani, 2013). Due to these reasons, as identified by Bijward and Wang (2013), with OECD-sourced information, there is a rapid increase in the number of foreign students over the years. Having these in mind, the international community have been generous to aid financially challenged, but deserving students, Filipino and non-Filipino, to study abroad and South Korea has been part of this endeavor.

Most universities and agencies, both public and private, from developed countries sponsor and support students from developing countries, including the Philippines, to study abroad with high hopes of enhancing their academic competencies and skills. The fields of study vary across disciplines of engineering, sciences, humanities, and social sciences. With strengthened promotion and encouragement, South Korea currently emerge as a host country to Filipino students to study abroad. Now, there are only 601 Filipino students in South Korea (Sazon, 2014). It is a way relatively small number compared to almost 86,000 foreign students in the East Asian country.

Currently, as majority of Filipino scholars complete their graduate degrees in South Korea (and other countries) and return to the Philippines, they are assumed to be qualified agents to work in the academe, for the government or even in the private enterprises. With their background and know-how, these international students are being weighed as critical connection of knowledge and expertise back home.

However, the positive results of studying abroad may be visualized clearly, but the real challenge of these students is staying in a foreign country along with the apprehensions brought by unfamiliar environment in and out of the campus. In other words, the focus is the means, not the end. Having this realized, it seems inevitable that there must be a support group that will address the academic and non-academic needs of the students aside from the universities they are enrolled in and that is the ground on which Filipino Scholars in Korea or Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc. (PIKO) stand. This academic and non-academic student organization aids and hones the cognitive and affective domains of students in South Korea.

Since the nature, the purpose, and the results of student migration are extrapolated and the real focal challenge of being abroad is assumed, the parameters of the discussion can now be set. This article is delimited to the evaluation of PIKO along with the life of the Filipino students in South Korea. With this, the formulation of the study's problem is grounded on the vital need to provide foundation and fundamental venues for future discourse.

Consequently, this discussion aims to answer the following questions: (a) As the official student organization of Filipino students in South Korea, what are the concerns that PIKO commits itself to advocate alongside with the Filipino students' academic duties in the university? (b) How does the organization position itself in various student issues faced not only by Filipino students, but also by foreign students in general? And (c) how does PIKO as the representative student organization reflect the challenges faced by Filipino students in South Korea in terms of social, physical, and even psychological forms that need to be addressed and developed in the future to achieve a pleasant stay abroad?

### **International Students' Experiences and Efforts towards Internationalization**

Stohl (2007) declares that the commitment and contribution of faculty is a distinguishing challenge towards achieving and keeping up with the waves of internationalization. Moreover, it is also recognized that there is a need to exceed the internationalization consciousness when it comes to various teaching facets, research, among others.

With brief chronological accounts of internationalization efforts in the US, Stohl's article also traces the failure of these efforts. He challenges the way stakeholders view internationalization and globalization in the higher education context in terms of teaching, research and university service. The critical issue on funding and budget allocation sees its way as it also embraces demands and

potential promotion of internationalization in the university. To bring out the commitment of the faculty towards internationalization, he further argues that capturing the students' mindset when it comes to 'learning and discovery' would eventually lead to the realization of the 'value of internationalization.'

Return migration policy-making scheme has also been a compelling discourse in Sweden as supported by the drastic increase in the number of Swedes in the medical field who study in Central and Eastern European countries. Polkowski (2013) pictures this episode as a 'wet dream' especially at the peak of increasing shortages for medical practitioners. This is ironically doubled by insufficient research inquiry and literature.

The research, which claims to be unique from existing previous attempts, poses a different approach since individuals who leave from Sweden move to less developed host countries. Generally, the study calls on the Swedish policy-makers and government body to affirm their warm support to returning scholars, highlighting appreciation and gratitude for their return. The author also recommended that much more attention should be given to returning medical student-migrants. Looking at Swedish system (structural factors) could also contribute in addressing this issue, while at the same time adapting to the international setting.

In a paper entitled "Education Policy in the Republic of Korea: Building Block or Stumbling Block?" Lee (2002) stresses the importance of education in pushing for the country's economic progress. It has also been mentioned that there is a need for education to provide the necessary training based on what the market demands. The education system must adjust with the temporal factors which apparently can lead to the contribution and improvement of the economy. The role of the private sector in the education system can be highlighted as one factor which has 'prevented the education system from falling too far behind.'

In a study entitled "Conceptualizing International Education: From International Student to International Study", an attempt was made to shift the focus from international students to international study (Madge, et al., 2014). The inquiry recognizes the involvement of international students in building the knowledge facility, along with their other concerns. It offers a discussion on the role of international students as active instruments in knowledge exchange, allowing succeeding discourse on temporal and spatial perspectives of international education.

The researchers emphasize the vital role of 'de-centering spatial imaginaries' by devising approaches toward geographical multiplicities of international study. Coming up with a strong and



firm foundation of international study, it is concluded that there exists a need to realign research paths and affirm spatial aspects in the higher education realm. Lastly, the authors recognize that there exists 'inequality in global higher education,' which in turn is being challenged, resisted, or replicated. According to the study, mobility and students are both interweaving concepts (the stuff of academic life), which create a link on international study.

In conclusion, it is revealed that the source of information along with the rationale behind the decision of studying in the United States vary across the attributes of international student background. An addition to this the fact that prospective students consider the reputation and ranking performance of their chosen institution, which is especially manifested on East Asian students.

Yusoff (2012) investigates the link between the adjustment of foreign students and social support, self-efficacy, and socio-cultural adjustment. Gathering solid responses from 185 undergraduate foreign students in a public Malaysian university, the multiple linear regression analysis proves that 'support from friends and significant others' entails a positive relation to existing aspects of socio-cultural adjustment. Family support is also found out to be an affirmative factor with cultural empathy.

After taking into careful consideration the factors involved in the transition to higher education lifestyle, the author recognizes the research's vital contribution in assisting current and international students who face challenges concerning their life away from their home country. Furthermore, the research seeks to provide a link on the relationship between social support, self-efficacy, and socio-cultural adjustment, which apparently was inadequately explored as a research inquiry.

Based on the succeeding citations, the following can be synthesized: (a) Education addresses the clamor for national progress for one's home country; (b) the internationalization of higher education produces reservoir of academically and practically competent graduates benefiting one's motherland; (c) over-attachment to the host country negatively affects developed and developing home countries and contributes solely on host country; and (d) family and friend support and one's attitude contributes to an international student's cultural adaptability.

It is universal that education makes one's country progressive in all its aspects and its internalization opens a welcoming avenue to raise the people's standard of living because each individual, who contributes to the reservoir of knowledge, also learns from it. This process of

mutualism promotes innovations in both host and home countries. However, international students must never forget to give equal service to the country that has edified them and from which they come to contribute fairly to both and to avoid brain drain. Moreover, in the process, in order to succeed in this endeavor, students must receive support not only from themselves, but also from their significant others to adapt in the foreign culture brought by the internationalization of higher education. However, significant others may not always be evident in all contexts; therefore, there must be organizations that will support these students across their journey in the foreign lands and PIKO is one.

### **The Stars and a Sun in the Land of the Morning Calm: The Filipino Scholars in Korea, Inc. (Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc.)**

Committed to ‘assist Filipino students settle into their new life in Korea through the sharing of personal experiences and by passing on helpful ‘survival’ tips during various stages of their stay,’ the Filipino Scholars in Korea, Inc. or Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc. ([filipinoscholars.org](http://filipinoscholars.org)) was founded in 2006 with high hopes of encouraging ‘more active participation’ of Filipino members of the academe in activities related to Korean society and culture.

Currently, the members of the organization include exchange students, undergraduate and graduate students, post-doctoral researchers and even visiting professors from various universities all over Korea. From 2014, PIKO has established regional chapters which include Cheonan, Daegu-Gyeongbook, Cheongju, Myeongji University, and Busan to promote the organization’s programs on a local level.

As a non-profit group, the organization supports fellowship and cooperation among Filipino students in Korea along with its role in nurturing Philippine-Korea relations (Lapura, 2014). Though initially instituted as a ‘support group’, it has been active in advocating the welfare and interests of Filipino students in Korea, as well as social issues like multiculturalism.

PIKO has also actively affirmed its role in contributing its share in the Philippine – Korean connection. Primarily instituted to serve as a ‘support group,’ the organization has positioned itself as a prime mover in the promotion of academic and social cooperation among Filipino students and the Korean society in general.

With the unified efforts of the club officers and members, PIKO has developed deeper commitment on academic matters, social issues, and even international advocacies. These concerns

are spearheaded by Filipino students themselves, who go beyond their academic duties and limited resources. With the support of the Philippine Embassy in Seoul and other public and private agencies, various projects and programs have materialized and have been implemented in line with PIKO's commitment.

PIKO conducts general assembly as the academic term starts (Korea Herald, 2012). Through this activity, new Filipino students are welcomed in the community as members of the academic group. Tips on daily and university survival discussions highlight the gathering, with high hopes of helping Filipino students adjust to their student life in Korea. Expected activities are also established and planned during the event.

The organization being the frontrunner group of Filipino students in Korea also conduct art-related programs participated in by the scholars themselves. These individuals, who share common interests, pursue particular projects and programs under the name of the organization.

In 2013, PIKO showcased the skills and expertise of its members as it competed in the Seoul 48-Hour Film Project. The competition is a 'wild and sleepless weekend in which you and a team make a movie – write, shoot, edit and score it – in just 48 hours' ([www.48hourfilm.com](http://www.48hourfilm.com)). Inviting volunteers and interested members, PIKO was able to put up a production group and successfully produced a film for the competition.

Out of impressive film entries from various participating teams, PIKO awarded Best Cinematography to the project entitled "Watching Over" (<http://www.48hourfilm.com>). For a first-timer, the recognition was considered an honor for the entire organization, as it highlighted the consolidated efforts of every concerned member. A total of 58 other teams participated in the said competition.

PIKO has also joined campaigns that uphold multiculturalism in Korea and Korean pop culture. With the use of speeches and presentations, student groups showcased their talents on how to "market Korean food, better use social service networks and expel the notion that 'multiculturalism' mainly includes Southeast Asians" ([www.koreatimes.co.kr](http://www.koreatimes.co.kr))

With the theme "Communicating for a Brighter Future of Korea", the Core Image and Communication Institute (CICI) organized the competition aiming to establish discourses on Korean pop culture and the issue of multiculturalism in Korea. Through the contest, PIKO was able to contribute by providing experiences in Korea, considering their views as perspectives of the country they represent.

In general, PIKO provides competitions hitting two targets – (a) promoting camaraderie as a reinforcement to significant others support for the international students and (b) providing skill development through challenging activities as the host country showcases its culture in context.

### **Integrated Learning: The School and Community Experiences**

It was around April 2013 when North Korea threatened security in the Korean peninsula after the declaration of a ‘state of war.’ PIKO actively provided information on updates and shared situation about Filipinos living in Korea. Particular media channels were utilized by the organization to present information regarding the situation in the country.

At the dawn of the danger of escalating tension between the two Koreas, the Filipino student organization maintained close contact with the Philippine Embassy in Seoul, as it represented the estimated 450 Filipino students who were enrolled in various Korean universities. With this, PIKO coordinated with the students, who urged them to ‘follow the news and remain in contact with them’ ([www.gmanetwork.com](http://www.gmanetwork.com)).

As the catalyst of Filipino students promoting international student welfare in Korea, PIKO has also positioned itself as the ‘international student representative.’ Several projects and activities were implemented, which include the dialogue with the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, a forum on policy development for international students, and sports and culture festival.

In an article entitled “English College Courses Not All They Seem,” the influx of foreign students enrolled in Korean universities was recognized, along with one notable challenge to this phenomenon: English instruction in academic institutions. The report revealed that “English-language instruction was one of the most common causes for complaint among foreign students” ([www.koreanherald.com](http://www.koreanherald.com)).

The issue on language policy and medium of instruction has long been a debate in South Korean education system, with international students being present in the picture. This has been one of the major concerns of PIKO in the past years. In a related study initiated by The Economics Network, it is suggested that institutions of higher learning consider the recruitment of students who are non-native English speakers (UK context), further stressing the need to reflect

on “whether the teaching and learning strategies address the specific study needs of these students.”

To further advance the state of international education in Korea, PIKO held a talk with Kim Jin-hyung of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology ([blog.aseankorea.org](http://blog.aseankorea.org)). Dubbed as “Open Dialogue with MEST: The Need for Quality Consolidation Regarding Internationalization of Higher Education in South Korea,” the meeting aimed to serve as a venue to discuss concerns of international students and “improving the standards of internationalized education in South Korea” ([blog.aseankorea.org](http://blog.aseankorea.org)). PIKO also utilized all effective means available in order to advance the concerns and welfare not just of Filipino students, but of international students in general. The organization, through its student representatives, actively participated in the open forum held at the National Assembly to accommodate talks on the development of policies for international students ([koreajoongangdaily.joins.com](http://koreajoongangdaily.joins.com)).

The meeting which was attended by international students from different countries provided an opportunity to give foreign students a venue to speak up and express their concerns. Among the issues discussed were health insurance and language problems, aside from academic aspects. Along with the international students, academics and policy makers, Saenuri Party lawmaker Kim Choong-hwan also participated in the event hosted by the Korea International Students Support Association and sponsored by the Global Peace Foundation.

In other words, PIKO actively takes part to address the needs of the students in the aspects of security especially in times of political factions and campus issues such as medium of instruction used and the like to make the lives of their members better.

### **From South Korea to the Philippines: Advocacies beyond Borders**

Aside from academic events and meeting, PIKO also advocates multiculturalism, particular with the rising number of Filipino women married to Korean men. Part of the efforts includes introducing various facets of Filipino culture, along with other programs that showcase Filipino spirit. In 2013, the group organized a Filipino-inspired Christmas party at the Philippine Embassy in Seoul ([www.abs-cbnnews.com](http://www.abs-cbnnews.com)). Aside from bringing the Christmas spirit closer to Filipino-Korean children, the celebration also highlighted Filipino values. It was seen as an avenue to “have strong bond with their roots not only for Korea but for the Philippines as well”.

Consequently, a similar party was held in Quezon City, Philippines for the benefit of Filipino-Korean children in the country. PIKO members and alumni, along with Kopino Children Association (KCA) organized the event to “give joy to Kopino children and abandoned children of Koreans to Filipino mothers.” Through gift-giving and party games, PIKO successfully expressed its commitment in helping Kopino children, particularly by pushing collaboration in terms of volunteering. PIKO as an international student organization utilizes its academic affiliation in supporting Kopino children’s interests through education.

Being physically away from their home country did not stop Filipino scholars in Korea from being actively involved in the political affairs of the Philippines. At the height of the multi-billion peso Priority Development Assistance Fund (PDAF) scandal, members of PIKO had the opportunity to meet with Ombudsman Conchita Carpio-Morales during her visit to Seoul on September 1, 2013 ([www.rappler.com](http://www.rappler.com)).

The forum, which was dubbed as “Talakayin Natin: Pork Barrel,” took place as Filipinos in South Korea express the need to know more about the issue. Aside from Filipino students in South Korea, members of the Philippine Engineers Association in Korea (PEAK) and Filipino workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS) also joined the discussion. The discussion has been a part of the Ombudsman’s visit to Korea to participate in an anti-graft and corruption meeting.

The final quarter of 2013 has been a challenging period for the entire Filipino populace as super typhoon Haiyan devastated the southern part of the country. PIKO also initiated ways in order to extend help those who were affected. Filipino students in every Korean university sought help from university employees, professors and students in calling for consolidated efforts in launching events and programs to raise donation and relief collections for the typhoon victims.

The money raised was forwarded to the Philippine Red Cross and the Association of Social and Health Development Advocates. The financial assistance was the result of fundraising programs and activities such as text-messaging drive and relief collection (Kerry, 2013)

Filipino students in Chonbuk National University led the fund-raising activity by selling Peppero sticks on November 11<sup>th</sup>. Through social media platforms and other means, Filipino students, Koreans and other expatriates also contributed their time and efforts to extend a helping hand in forms of donation collection, both in cash and in kind. Not only Filipino students, Filipino professors through the Association of Filipino Educators in Korea (AFEK) and the Philippine Engineers Association of Korea (PEAK), along with factory workers, entertainers and women married

to Korean nationals also mobilized their own lines in putting up various campaigns and schemes to help Filipino typhoon victims.

One particular activity pushed by Filipino scholars was a ‘concert for a cause’ performance by the Korean pop group A-Prince. Through a one-night gathering on November 15, 2013 in Myeongdong, Seoul, the boy group joined hands together with artist Eddie Chun as the guest performer in an event which aimed at helping the Philippine National Red Cross and the Association of Social and Health Development Advocates (ASHDA), a locally-based non-governmental organization.

PIKO has also been visible in several social advocacies, particularly in establishing ties with the Korean local government and organization counterparts. Numerous issues and involvement include cultural exchanges, participation in multicultural activity

PIKO as a student organization has clearly highlighted the existing interrelated maps of international student organizations, international student experience, study abroad programs, along with socio-political aspects involving the host country and the country of origin of the students. This chapter presents how students of the same background and field of experiences could effectively interact and build a strong network which later on aids in adjusting to the new environment and academic pressure.

International students facing numerous and challenging life experiences abroad undergo several dimensions of adjustment and cultural fine-tuning, could seek help from student organizations like PIKO. Based on this chapter’s discussion, it has been affirmed how PIKO has played as a channel in assisting students in building effective cultural adaptation schemes while showcasing their own, encouraging social participation, and professing academic excellence in their respective fields.

With different activities and programs initiated by PIKO, the members of the organization which include Filipino graduate students have gained experiences which eventually helped them survive and succeed their study abroad stay. PIKO has served as a medium not only towards academic advancement, but the organization has also encouraged the students’ active participation in terms of social, political, and psychological endeavors as well.

By establishing alumni network, PIKO has also provided continuous connection with returning scholars. As Filipino graduate students complete their degrees in South Korea, the experiences gained abroad have helped them in their reintegration process, as they assess

the impact of their graduate degrees once they contribute to the Philippine society as members of the Philippine labor market.

## **Conclusions and Recommendations**

As a pioneering approach on the experiences of Filipino students abroad through the narrative of Filipino Scholars in Korea, Inc. (Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc.), the results and findings of this study could be utilized as a contribution to policy-making in drafting rules and regulations involving the education of international students. This could also serve as an embarking strategy in developing programs in order to provide further support the advocacies of Filipino and other scholars abroad.

The existence of the organization Filipino Scholars in Korea, Inc. (Pinoy Iskolars sa Korea, Inc.) in the Korean academic picture has affirmed the imperative role of Filipino students, and foreign students in general, in shaping the future of Korea's international education arena. PIKO as an organization asserts the presence of diversity, as it gathers a variety of experiences, cultures and viewpoints which eventually challenge the active promotion and development of international scholarship through timely social, cultural, and political facets, not only in Korea, but also the Philippines.

PIKO has devised and designed impressive and efficient platforms in strengthening and extending international scholarship from the limited corners of the university to the extended Korean setting they belong during the course of their study. It is also very valuable to give credits to the organization for bridging Korea and the Philippines through initiatives and schemes involving both countries.

The narrative of returning Filipino scholars from South Korea is associated with the desire to help the Philippines. The process towards achieving an international degree involves not only the acquisition of technical and academic skills and knowledge, but also for personal and social advancements that could eventually be enhanced not only for personal gains, but for the returning scholar's family and home country.

The organization Filipino Scholars in Korea, Inc. has proven its potential as an agent which advocates the concerns of Filipino students in South Korea. With the support that it receives from the students, the universities and the concerned Philippine agencies in South Korea, is it expected that the organization could effectively implement its goals and serve its purpose for



the interest of its members and stakeholders. Expanding its efforts regarding alumni networking and maintaining strong collaboration with other related organizations both in the Philippines and South Korea could eventually bring the organization the dynamic and supportive environment it deserves. Strengthening alumni networks and collaborations among Filipino scholars, who have returned home, need to be prioritized in terms of projects and activities.

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