

ATTITUDES AND PERCEPTIONS STUDENTS HAVE TOWARD EDUCATION: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS BETWEEN ARMENIAN AND SOUTH KOREAN STUDENTS



Capstone Project
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“In the knowledge economy, academic discussion on higher education development moves its focus from enrollment growth to academic productivity because knowledge is the source of national competitiveness.”

- Jung, *Higher education development in Korea*

Introduction

Knowledge is the source of national competitiveness. Ensuring the nation's competitiveness on the international level requires paying close attention to the education system: setting up a specific agenda tailored to the educational demands of the country, and supervising with utter scrutiny the process of education ensuring its quality and effectiveness.

Gaining education equally depends on both the educator and the student and both players have key roles and this process.

Concentrating on the role of the student, this capstone project tries to find out what attitudes and perceptions Armenian students have about education, which would help to acquire better understanding of the students' needs and create the Armenian student's profile.

Literature Review

Receiving education does not guarantee having jobs in the field of specialization;

The youth in the study indicated that they attend higher education institutions with pleasure, because there they can socialize and make new acquaintances.

- Balasanyan et al. (2016)

- Plagiarism and academic dishonesty are common among Armenian students;
- Only 1 university in Armenia has written policy concerning academic integrity;
- Reasons for academic dishonesty include: low interest towards the programs of study, poor social conditions, gender, availability of resources, modeling the peer behavior, students' awareness of academic writing skills, etc.

- Goroyan et al. (2015)

- Student perceptions on corruption in the Armenian Higher Education System is that corruption at university level is of systemic nature inherent to the imperfection of the education system and that it is an unpunished practice in Armenia.

Literature Review: Why compare with South Korea?

A recent working example of a knowledge economy: in short amount of time the country has undergone advancements of education and economy by developing the education sector.

Education has always been an inseparable part of the Korean society. Looking into the history we would see that Koreans had a separate university (Sungkyunkwan), which was meant to educate the future government officials of the country and those who attended university represented a separate class of nobles (yangbans).

After the end of the Japanese colonization in 1945 78% of the Korean population was illiterate. In 2012, however, South Korea was one of the top 7 performing countries in education based on the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) results together with Canada, Finland, Estonia, Japan, etc.

- Top Performing Countries (2012)

- Education in South Korea went through gradual development under different regimes of government: the government regulations aimed for economic development and on a larger scale the development of the economy and the creation of qualified labor market.

- Jeong and Armer (1994)

- East-Asian rise in education is examined only among the countries which have strong Confucian values. Confucian higher education rests on a long tradition of respect for education and scholarship.

Research Questions

1. What perceptions do Armenian students hold about the education system in Armenia?
2. How did students make their choice of field of study and what influenced it?
3. What are the main differences and similarities between Armenian and South Korean students?

Methodology

Qualitative and quantitative research methods were used:

- Survey with undergraduate students
 - open-ended and close-ended questions about the choice of field of study, continuing education, job prospects, changing the profession, the university experience, the effectiveness of the education sphere, need of reforms and corruption in education sphere, the motivation to learn, etc.
- Interviews with university instructors
 - open-ended questions about experience of teaching outside of Armenia, observations concerning student attitudes: learning behaviors and habits, willingness to learn and motivation, etc.

Data collection on previous research:

- Scholarly articles, reports, researches

Research Findings and Analysis: Survey

- To the question what their choice of field of study is based on, the most common answer was - based on personal interests (mostly female respondents), second most common response was having an in-demand profession (mostly male respondents).
- 91% of the respondents found that there is a need for reforms in the education sphere in Armenia.
- 81% of the respondents think that the education system in Armenia is corrupted, 10% of them think that it is highly corrupted.
- 54% of the survey respondents are not engaged in volunteering activities. 45% indicated that they are engaged in volunteering activities, but most of them noted that the reason for that is to gain experience and certificates for their CVs.
- Only 37% of the surveyed students were satisfied with their field of study and did not intend to change it. However, 75% of the respondents expect to work in their profession.

Research Findings and Analysis: AUA Entering Freshman Student Surveys

- 65-78% of students worked with tutor in the last two years of high school.
- 40-44% of students often used data to understand or examine a real-world problem such as unemployment, environmental issue, public health at high school.
- 55-60% of students often revised writing assignments before submission at high school.

Research Findings and Analysis: Profile of Armenian student

- Armenian female student is hardworking, and the choice of her field of study is based on her interests, while male student is less hardworking, and chose his field of study in order to have an in-demand profession later in life,
- Dissatisfied with the education system,
- Thinks education system is corrupted,
- Does not volunteer, and if does, the aim mainly is to get experience in order to have better CV,
- Dissatisfied with their field of study, however, expect to work in that field,
- Is practice oriented and mainly wants courses that would equip with the necessary skills for job market,
- Is not as self-reliant and individual as students abroad,
- Is dependent on family and friend “community”,
- Lacks clear notion of why wants to learn that specific field,

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