

Article

Research on Mongolian Students Studying in Taiwan

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Abstract: Due to the blows like internationalization and the declining birth rate, the higher education market in Taiwan has faced an escalation. Accordingly, the domestic universities and institutes have been focusing on international student enrollment policy to settle the issue of not achieving the target enrollment for new students. Thus, the internationalization of higher education encounters a challenge to identify whether the Taiwan universities and institutes can enroll international students by using various ways and provide the international students, who are interested in enrollment in Taiwan universities, with the comprehensive concept and understanding of Taiwan education system and the educational attributes. The internationalization of higher education in Taiwan has been expanding year by year, and the number of international students in Taiwan has reached 127 000, of which 1600 were Mongolian students as of 2018. In connection with the continuous increase in the number of international students, the researches on international students have also become significant. However, the research on Mongolian students studying in Taiwan is relatively few. We have studied the factors, which influence Mongolian students' choice in studying in Taiwan, besides studying how they adjust to their new life when they first study abroad. In our research, we have used the qualitative research method as the main research method and the methods like a case study and focus group interview in a detailed manner. We have chosen 24 samples from the Mongolian students, who were attending undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate programs in Taiwan in 2019. We carried out the research in the scope of the below-mentioned four objectives: to identify the factors that influenced Mongolian students to choose Taiwan; to identify which channels and possibilities they have used in their enrollment in Taiwan universities; to learn how Mongolian students adapt to their new lives in Taiwan; to suggest substantial recommendations for universities and educational institutes that are interested in enrolling students from Mongolia as international students.

Keywords: Mongolia, Higher education, Pull-push theory, International student adjustment

1. Introduction

1.1 Research Background and Motivation

The number of international students in Taiwan has increased by 5536 and reached 126997 as of 2018. And 61970 of them are pursuing academic degrees. This number has increased by 6054 students or 2.8 times. It is a significantly higher number than the last year's count of international students pursuing academic degrees. The number of international students, who are not pursuing academic degrees (exchange students, students of language training classes) reached 65027 that year. This is the number decreased by 518 compared to the same period of the previous year. (Ministry of Education, 2018). This quantitative index represents the enhanced reputation of the Taiwan education system.

About 140000 Mongolian citizens were residing abroad as of 2017, and 26000 of them were students, of which 8000 were students studying in the People's Republic of China. In 2018, the number of students studying in the Republic of China reached 9000. (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2019). One of the reasons to choose mainland China as the place to continue their study is the Chinese language. Taiwan has 26 Chinese language training centers, and a total of 28399 international students attended these language training centers in 2018. (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education of Taiwan, 2019). Besides having a rich tradition in Chinese teaching methods, the language training centers in Taiwan offer both traditional and simplified versions of written Chinese characters. That attribute of teaching Chinese becomes a reason for choosing Taiwan as a place to continue their study. Moreover, Taiwan is one of the countries that occupy leading titles in the information technology sector. We live in an information technology era. Mongolia also faces the challenges of keeping pace with this trend and changes to improve its competitive skills. But, the advanced technological development in Taiwan is a new market for Mongolia. Thus, it is important to

advertise the concept that says “Taiwan is the country which could be compared to the mainland of China in terms of learning environment and resources” concerning the higher education in Taiwan to increase the number of Mongolian students who are to study in Taiwan. In doing so, we need to thoroughly understand and know the Mongolian students’ reason for studying and their new lives in Taiwan, by conducting a study among the Mongolian students studying in Taiwan.

According to our data, while 33 students studied in Taiwan from Mongolia in 2004, this number increased up to 1155 (not including the exchange students and students of language training classes) in 2019. (Department of Statistics, Ministry of Education of Taiwan, 2019). This research will focus on the process of internationalization, enrollment and student learning, and student learning outcomes.

It is inevitably required to develop online platforms where university enrollments are advertised, by providing the international students with more down-to-earth advice and preparing specialists who aim to manage international enrollment instead of just focusing on programs. Moreover, it is required to change the international enrollment procedure and include the language preparation course, which suits the needs of students in that country, in the curriculum by carefully studying the education system of the country.

2. Literature review

2.1 Introduction of Mongolia

Mongolia is a landlocked country, which is bordered by the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China, connecting Asia and Europe. Mongolia has a population of 3.29 million (as of 2020), with specific features in terms of politics and economics. The average population growth is 1.9%, and 64.2% of the population is youth under 35. Moreover, 30.46% (967896 persons) of the total population are children aged 0-14, 63.17% (2007430 persons) are adults aged 15-59, and 6.37% (202573 persons) are elders aged 60 and above. It is situated on high plateaus with an average altitude of 1.580 m above sea level, covering an area of 1,56 million square kilometers. It is the world’s most sparsely populated nation, where a population density is 2 persons per square/kilometers. The population density in Ulaanbaatar city is 311 persons per square/kilometers. 46% of the total population lives in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. While the khalkh are the dominant ethnic group in Mongolia, covering 58% of the population, 4.3% is khazakh and about 10% is other ethnic groups. Since the dominant ethnic group is khalkh, the Mongolian language based on the khalkh dialect is the de facto national language of Mongolia. The steppe vegetation of Mongolia is composed of four regions, namely: forest steppes, steppe zone, desert steppes, and the desert zone. While Mongolia’s winter is long and harsh, the summer is short and hot. The climate in Mongolia is unstable, and there are significant temperature variations. The average temperature during the months from November to March is minus and during the months from January to February ranges around -20°C. On the contrary, the temperature in summer is higher in the Gobi regions, ranging around +40°C and +35°C in Ulaanbaatar city. The extreme continental climate with long, cold winters and short, hot summers adversely affect the people’s socio-economic lives. As almost the half of territory is permafrost, the construction sector and mining industry encounter various complications and difficulties. The amount of annual precipitation is low with about 250-300ml nearby the Altai Mountain range and 70-150ml in the Gobi region, the lowest amount of annual precipitation. (Mongolian Institute for Educational Research, 2019).

46% of the total population lives in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Totally 411.4 thousand households were counted, of which 22.2% live in a ger, Mongolian traditional dwelling, 77.3% live in brick houses, and 0.5% live in other types of residential accommodations. (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2020). This data fully shows that the people of Mongolia have become urbanized individuals. Moreover, Ulaanbaatar city is called the youth’s city. Because it is one of the citizens with the youngest population, with about 65% of its residents being younger than 35 years old. As the Mongolian people have been living in a large steppe area for several hundred years, their space perception is different from that of the people who live in densely populated areas. Accordingly, some Mongolian people, who visit these countries for the first time, sometimes tend to suffer emotional and physical shock such as shortness of breath, feeling airless, and feeling tightness.

Mongolian cuisine mainly consists of dairy products, mutton, beef, flour, wheat, and rice. Their food practice is directly related to their experiences in cold and dry climates during the period of ¾ of a year. Since they do not consider meals with no meat meals, they do not easily get adjusted to (accustomed to) meatless meals and vegetarian dishes. About 123 million heads of cattle are used for food a year throughout year. One-day meat consumption of a Mongolian person is 265 grams (the international standard is 90 grams). In foreign countries, mutton and beef are more expensive than other types of meat, and Mongolian people don’t get adjusted to eating pork and chicken every day. Thus, Mongolian students sometimes face the problem of getting adjusted to foreign cuisine.

2.2 *The Common Personalities of Mongolian People*

Purev (2020) demonstrates that a Mongolian person is diffident, friendly, noble-minded, helpful, hospitable, careful and kind, and protects and respects nature and animals. Moreover, according to his conclusion, a Mongolian person is decisive, high-spirited, intelligent, smart, able to think fast, far-sighted, curious and respects intelligence and knowledge.

Enkhtuvshin, Sumiya and et al (2015) have written that Mongolian people maintain friendly communication with each other, hospitable to foreigners, showing kindness, empathy and patience. Besides being long-sighted, curious, trustful, and simple-hearted, Mongolian people are exciting, unsuspecting, passive, and not punctual. Moreover, Mongolian people consider the personalities such as honesty and loyalty as important, being humane, sympathetic, kind, and discerning. They easily get adjusted to a new environment and are loyal to their friendship.

According to Zayadelger et al (2016), Mongolian people vastly esteem equality. Thus, Mongolian parents consider every child must be equally educated. They respect teachers and educators as they consider a person's success depends on his efforts and teacher's instruction since everyone has the same intellect. Moreover, Mongolian people cannot easily promote team working as they don't like hierarchal structure.

2.3 *The Education Sector in Mongolia*

Mongolia has followed the socialist path under the influence of the Soviet Republic for many years. It had greatly influenced the education sector, and the traces of Russian schooling can be seen in the current education system of Mongolia and the teaching methods of the school teachers and educators. After the revolution in 1990, Mongolia has irrevocably embarked upon the road of democracy and has made a lot of changes in its social structure. Besides the concerning authorities in the education sector have been endeavoring to bring its education quality into world standard by carrying out many reforms in the education sector step by step.

History and evolution of public education from 1990 up to the present date:

1. 1995-2004 – phase of developing the formal development policy and strategy, creating a legal environment, and reforming the compulsory education system;
2. 2005-2015 – phase of confirming the public education system by integrating the curriculums and teaching methods in the scope of program “Sustainable development -10 years”;
3. 2016- up to the present: phase of making the public education the baseline education system for sustainable development;

The goals of the education of Mongolia are to developmental, moral, and physical abilities, and to instill a sense of humanity and independence in learning, working, and sustaining life. The education system of Mongolia shall include formal and informal institutions and consist of pre-school, primary, secondary, vocation education, and higher education. The citizen of Mongolia shall have the duty to obtain basic education. The education system consists of pre-school education (4 years), basic education (primary school 4 years + secondary school 5 years = 9 years), complete secondary education (primary school 4 years + secondary school 5 years + high school 3 years), vocational education and higher education. (Mongolian law on Education)

Under the “Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision -2030”, the Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia developed and has been implementing the below-mentioned 5 objectives for promoting the knowledge-based society and a skillful Mongolian person in conformity with the education sector master plan to prepare “A skillful Mongolian”:

1. Ensure that every child is enrolled at pre-school education facilities, meeting the standard requirements and providing the basis for learning the Mongolian language and culture.
2. Improve the general education system to the international benchmark levels to educate Mongolian citizens and ensure the impartation of quality education.
3. Improve vocational education and training system conjunct with development priorities, and equip the graduates with strong professional skills.
4. Advance the tertiary education system to meet sustainable development goals, and improve the lifelong education system.
5. Ensure the coordination and coherence of science and industry, and develop a knowledge-based society. UNESCO , 2019)

The policy on equal access to education for pre-school children has been successfully implemented year by year, and the percentage of enrollment at pre-school education facilities reached 79.8% in 2018. Following the increased enrollment at pre-school education facilities, the percentage of enrollment at primary schools has reached 97.9%, of which 70.5% of them were children who attended pre-school education facilities. Also, the incidence of school dropout was substantially decreased. These are the factors that positively influenced pre-school education. (Ministry of Education and Science of Mongolia, 2019)

Table 1. Calculation of growth rate of school children in the education sector of Mongolia 2018-2030

	Education level		2018	2019	2020	2025	2030
1	Pre-school		318422	312447	308213	324655	313729
			Growth rate	-2%	-3%	2%	-1%
2	Compulsory education	Primary school	341257	358321	371142	389702	403922
			Growth rate	5%	9%	14%	18%
		Secondary school	321538	338884	363849	502163	550554
			Growth rate	5%	13%	56%	71%
3	Higher education		190539	189219	185184	189079	277345
			Growth rate	-1%	-3%	-1%	46%
4	Vocational education		38526	38257	38497	45438	54527
			Growth rate	-1%	0%	18%	42%

Source: Asian Development Bank (2019), *the Education sector of Mongolia*

The government expenditure on the education sector of Mongolia is reported at about 5% of GDP that is equal to 15.3% of the total budget of the country. Although the government expenditure on education does not reach the internationally accepted benchmark of 20 percent of the country's total budget, applied by the Global Partnership for Education), it is approximate to the amount of the government expenditure on education of other highly developed countries. The budget for the education sector of Mongolia is allocated as follows: 46% on general education, 23% on pre-school education, 9% on higher education, 4% on vocational education, and 18% on education sector management. (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019).

2.3.1 Higher Education

It is stated in the Mongolian law on Education that the goal of higher education of Mongolia is to impart in-depth knowledge and higher education to the citizens in conformity with the fundamental principles of education and international standard and attitude, based on state policy on education.

A university entrant should, not only, have a complete secondary education certificate, but also, pass the required entrance examinations organized throughout the country. The general entrance examination included the core subjects which are Mongolian language, mathematics, social science, Mongolian history, English, Russian, chemistry, physics, biology, and geography. The examinations of all core subjects are organized in two parts: 1st level (compulsory level) and 2nd level (elective level). While all students choose their exams depending on the area of study of their choice, it has become mandatory for every student to take the Mongolian language examination. The General Entrance Examination is organized once a year. The certificate containing the score of the General Entrance Examination is valid for 2 years 6 months. (Mongolian law on education).

As a result of Mongolia's transition to a democratic society and market economy from a socialist system after the revolution of 1990, the government grants permission to establish private universities and institutes. Accordingly, many private universities and institutes were established like mushrooms after a rain, and the number of universities and institutes became 185 in 2002. Due to education policy reform, merging universities, and financial problems (bankruptcy, etc.,) this number has decreased gradually and became 94 in 2020. Now, 77.7% of the universities and institutes in Mongolia are private universities, 19.1% are state-owned universities and 3.2% are branches of foreign universities. While the number of students was about 90 000 in 2002, this number has increased up to 157 600 in 2019 by 1.7 times. About 70% of the general school graduates enroll the universities and institutes. (National Statistics Office of Mongolia, 2019).

In the academic year of 2020-2021, 88 universities and colleges provide academic programs in Mongolia, and 37 of them (42.1%) were research –training –vocational education schools, 45 of them (51.1%) were universities with academic training programs, and 3 of them (3.4%) were branches of foreign universities. And 65 of the universities (73.9%) are private universities, 20 of them (22.7%) are state-owned, and 3 of them (3.4%) are public (religious) schools. 79 of the universities of Mongolia are in Ulaanbaatar city and 9 of them are in the local areas.

While the number of university students was 148400 in the academic year of 2019-2020, the number was decreased by 1100 and became 147300 in the academic year of 2020-2021. While 130100 of the students (88.4%) are studying at the research-based universities, 16800 of them (11.4%) are studying at the universities with academic training programs, and 100 of them (0.1%) are

studying at the colleges, and 200 of them (0.2%) are studying at the branch schools of foreign universities in Ulaanbaatar city. In terms of property type, 76800 students (52.2%) are studying at state-owned universities, 63500 (43.1%) students are studying at private universities, and 6900 (4.7%) students are studying at public or religious universities. 138200 of the total students of Mongolia (93.9%) are studying in Ulaanbaatar city and 9100 (6.1%) students are studying in the local areas.

While 17600 students enrolled in the universities in the academic year of 2019-2020, 25200 students enrolled in the universities in the academic year of 2020-2021, and the number of new students was increased by 7600 (43.3%). 15800 (62.9%) of new students are female students.

The number of universities per 10000 persons is 5 times higher than that of the Russian Federation, 5.4 times that of Japan, and 15 times that of Turkey. In the Global Competitiveness Report 2016-2017, the Mongolian universities were ranked at 38 out of 138 countries in terms of percentage of acquiring higher education, and at 40th in terms of quality of scientific subject classes. While Mongolia scored 3.5 in the 2007-2009 Global Competitiveness Report in terms of competitiveness of higher education and vocational education graduates, one of 12 parameters of competitiveness titles, going down from 3.8 scores. The score was increased by 0.1-0.3 during 2010-2016 and became 4.6 in 2017.

Mongolians esteem intelligence and education from ancient times and every parent aims to make their children well-educated and intelligent individuals. Unfortunately, the quality of education provided by domestic universities has been declining in recent years. Though the country has 88 universities and institutes, the graduates of these universities are disqualified in the human resources market in greater number. Thus, the youth tend to aim to study in a foreign country for acquiring internationally recognized quality education owing to their loss of confidence in the country's education system, especially the higher education system.

In the recent decade, Mongolian youths tend to choose Taiwan as a place to continue their study. They consider that higher education in Taiwan is more qualified, affordable, internationally recognized, and welcoming international students.

2.4 The Choice of Mongolian Students Studying Abroad

According to the population census of 2020, a total of 122301 persons have been studying and residing abroad. While 41827 of them (34.2%) have been studying in foreign countries like India, the Russian Federation, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Australia, Germany, and Ireland, 46.7% of people residing abroad left their motherland for studying abroad.

Table 2. The number of Mongolian people, studying and residing abroad, the countries and regions where they study and reside, and the percentage of students

	Country of study	Region	Number of Mongolian citizens residing in the country	Number of students	Percentage
1	South Korea	Asia	39982	11075	26.4%
2	The United States America	America	19170	7093	17%
3	Japan	Asia	8772	4307	10.3%
4	Kazakhstan	Asia	7218	1551	3.7%
5	Czech	Europe	5997	1175	2.8%
6	Australia	Australia	5538	2353	5.6%
7	The People's Republic of China	Asia	5146	3190	7.6%
8	Germany	Europe	3972	1652	4%
9	Sweden	Europe	3951	948	2.3%

Table 2. cont.

10	France	Europe	3102	844	2%
11	Russian Federation	Europe	2814	1784	4.3%
12	Turkey	Asia -Europe	2716	877	2.1%
13	Austria	Europe	1676	610	1.5%
14	Switzerland	Europe	1469	460	1.1%
15	The UK	Europe	1466	485	1.16%
16	Hungary	Europe	1341	454	1.1%
17	Canada	America	1283	450	1.1% (1.076)
18	India	Asia	744	614	1.5%
19	Poland	Europe	654	193	0.5%
20	Ireland	Europe	643	259	0.6%
21	Taiwan ¹	Asia		645	1.5%
	Others		4647	790	1.9%
	Total		122301	41827	34.2%

Source: National Statistics Office of Mongolia (2020), 2020 the Population and Housing Census of Mongolia

2.5 Pull-push Theory

Mazzarol, Soutar (2002) pointed out that the global pattern of international student mobility can be explained by "push-pull" factors that encourage students to study abroad. The "push" factor operates within a student's home region and drives a student's decision to study internationally. The "pull" factor operates within the host country to make the country more attractive to international students. Moreover, their research discovered that there are six factors that affect students' choice of host country: the first is the overall level of knowledge and awareness of the host country in the student's home country, which is related to the overall availability of information in the home country and the ease with which students can obtain information impact related. This includes the destination's reputation for educational quality and recognition of qualifications in the student's home country as part of this factor. The second factor was the level of personal referrals the study destination received from parents, relatives, friends and others before making a final decision. The third factor concerns costs, including costs, living costs, travel costs and social costs (eg crime, safety and racial discrimination). The fourth factor is the environment, which is related to perceptions of the natural climate and way of life in the host country. The fifth factor is geographic proximity, which is related to the geographic (and temporal) proximity of the host country to the student's home country. The final factor is social connection, which is related to whether the student has family or friends living in the destination country and whether family and friends have studied there before.

The push-pull theory explains the feasibility of Taiwan recruiting students from Southeast Asian countries. Lee and Tan (1984) divided the factors that affect international students studying abroad summarized as the motherland factors, that is, the motherland encourages international students to study abroad and the country that accepts international students. Zhang and Yu (1999) addressed that the driving factors that affect a country's overseas study include economic factors (such as national income, bilateral trade import and export trade volume), educational factors (scholarship opportunities, low opportunities for higher education, education systems similarity between motherland and host country), destination to host country, political factors (such as being colonized by other countries, diplomatic countries, member of international organizations), language factors, etc.; and the pulling factors of the countries attracting international students include educational factors (such as scholarships, insurance, learning environment, language remediation chance), study abroad policy (the host has an open attitude and generous scholarships), living environment

¹ This number was not stated in the 2020 Population and Housing Census of Mongolia, and the data concerning the Mongolian students studying in Taiwan in the academic year of 2020-2021 is sourced from the report of the Department of Statistics of the Ministry of Education of Taiwan.

(public security, transportation, convenience of life), economic factors (the host country has a low cost of studying abroad and a high enrollment rate in higher education), political factors (political stability and diplomatic relations of the host country), historical and cultural factors (colonial rule, cultural similarity).

In conclusion, generally, the push factors are related to the limit of learning opportunities, lower quality of education, and poor reputation of the universities in the home country. In contrast, the pull factors, such as scholarship programs, good reputation and recognition of the universities, language environment, public security, insurance, living cost, etc., proceed from the host country.

2.6 *The Adjustment Challenges of International Students*

According to Akanwa et al (2015), international students studying in highly developed countries like the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia, faces common challenges such as cultural differences, language barriers, adaptation to environmental conditions, difficulties in getting medical services, the difference in lecturers' teaching methods, finding apartments for rent, restricted access to social welfare, and homesickness.

Dina, Lyle, Catherine (2021) deemed international students are important capital to universities, enhancing the recruitment of international students is a way of forming a distinctive and multicultural look for schools. Therefore, school leaders need to contribute more assistance to those students who need to be encouraged to achieve personal and academic success. The research also demonstrates sojourners' problems such as intercommunication, language, life experience and new lifestyle could create more pressure for one's adjustment in the host country.

Academically, due to differences in the educational system of the host countries, foreign students need to spend some time understanding it, particularly in terms of selecting courses, understanding curriculum, credit system, and scoring system (Mesidor and Sly, 2016). Besides, international students experience adjusting to teaching methods of teachers, choosing classes, course load (e.g., 9 to 18 credits). Academic adaptation may influence the students' psychological situation; thus, foreign student offices of universities should pay more attention to helping the students cope with it (Li, Wang, Liu, Xu and Cui, 2018). Furthermore, Wang (2018)'s research displayed the students from overseas contribute much effort to grasp diverse teaching styles. In a way of adjusting it, they could gain better language skills, any kind of learning skills and self-regulation skills.

Townsend, Poh et al (2008) concluded that the challenges like language barrier and cultural difference cause problems to international students in maintaining social relationships with other international students. This, in turn, influences the social, cultural, and psychological adjustment of the international students. Luo, Wu, Fang and Nelson (2019) 's study revealed low language skills can lead to more study problems and make students feel stressed. Generally, students with lower level of language take more time to adapt in the host country; also, it is shown distinctively in social relation.

A prolonged duration of stay in the host country can impact international students adversely; notwithstanding, either adaptation to a new place and homesickness develop one's personal growth effectively, if the student deal with it (Shafaei, Nejati, Razak, 2018).

Aldawsari, Adams, Grimes and Kohn (2018) considered the students, who are well-educated in the intercultural field, adapt to the host country swiftly. The study also has mentioned detailed components of perception of interculturality well-educated students, for example, students with adequate comprehensive knowledge of culture and ethnic groups, world outlook, history, and politics. Gündüz and Alakbarov (2019) indicated overcoming adjustment process of the students from abroad depends on a sense of safeness, engagement in social interactions, being guided in any difficulties, and having a close relationship with teachers. Oyeniyia, Smith, Watson and Nelson (2021) concluded process of absorbing a new culture demands a period of time and a hard struggle from international students. Thus, it is much helpful to adjust to a new culture if schools support the comprehensive system, which includes psychological and intercorrelation assistance. Additionally, higher education institutues may offer many adaptation programs for internatioal students, nevertheless, the staffs working for these programs also should study the ethnic differences, not just international student should study or adapt to host country (Mesidore, Sly, 2016). Chou, Roberts, Ching (2012) emphasized the importance of training and preparing the lecturers and school staff concerning the matters related to international students although the education sector of Taiwan shows great efforts to increase the number of international students. Pare and Tsay (2014) considered Taiwan's educational challenge is to expansion of globalization and systematically improve the domestic students' understanding about globalization. Improving physical enviroment for international student is rather easy task compared to building ethnic friendly enviroment.

There are number of adjustment problems for international students adressed in this literature review. These problems are cultural barrier, language barrier, academical adjustment, homesickness, and social relations. The higher education institutions should resolve these problems with policies to improve socia-cultural enviroment, programs to reassure the distincting features of education system and language barriers, as well as train the staffs for globalization.

3. Results

In our research, we have used the qualitative research method as the main research method and the methods like a case study and focus group interview in a detailed manner.

3.1. The Research Structure

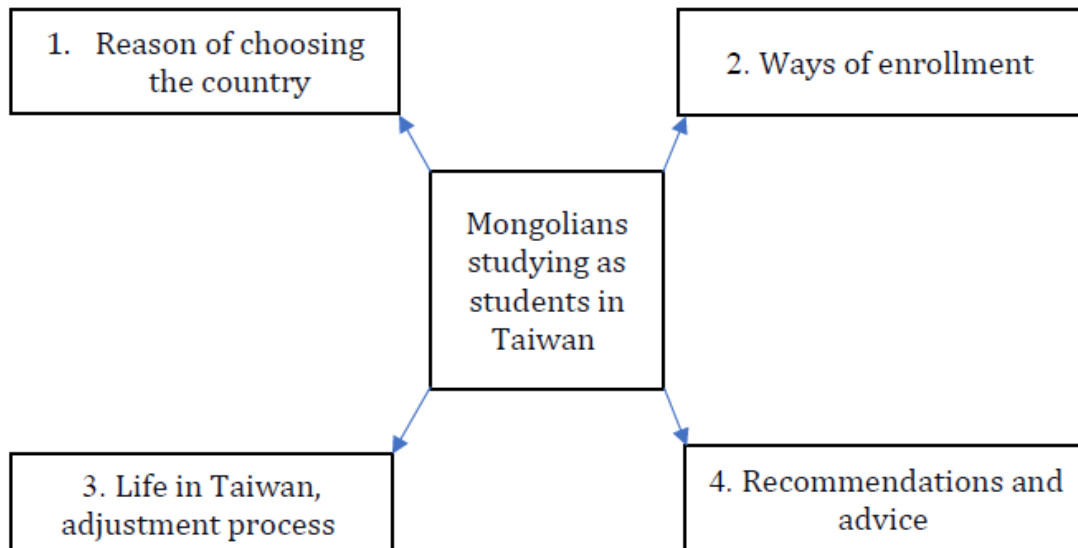


Figure 1. Research structure

3.2. Research Participants

The research was carried out in two places: the southern and the northern part of Taiwan. The northern part was conducted in September 2019, and the southern part was held in December 2019. Totally 24 international students have participated in the research, of which 6 were studying in the northern part and 18 were studying in the southern part. The research participants were the international students, who were studying at the National Taiwan University, National Cheng-Chi University, National Taiwan University of Science and Technology, National Cheng Kung University, National Sun Yat-sen University, Chang Jung Christian University, Ming Chuan University, National Formosa University, I-Shou University, Tainan University of Technology, Nan Hua University, and Da-Yeh University.

Since the number of Mongolian students studying in Taiwan was fewer and their schools located sparsely, we have conducted an in-depth interview with the students by visiting the “Naadam” festival organized in Tainan City by the students in Taiwan on the 7th December 2019. About 50 students attended the festival. We have sent a request for an in-depth interview to the students through online channels like Facebook and emails 7 days ago before the festival event, and 18 students agreed to give an in-depth interview. During the interview, we used a cell phone recording device and a laptop and made a note. Since a member of the research team was a Mongolian person, the in-depth interview was conducted in the Mongolian language. After the in-depth interview, the interview recorded in the recording device and notebook was converted into written form, and translated from Mongolian to English. Then, the written interview and dialogue were reviewed by a Chinese researcher, who can speak Mongolian fluently, for making the interview accurateness confirmed. Finally, we have analyzed by using Microsoft Word-Text Coding, an analyzing tool of the qualitative research.

3.3. Research Tools – Interview Questions

3.3.1 Before Arriving in Taiwan:

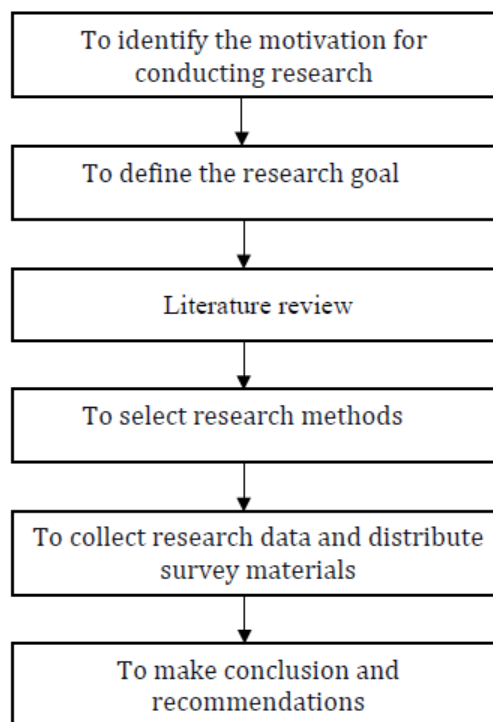
1. Why did you choose Taiwan as a place to study?
2. Which information did you base when you choose the school or university?
3. Whom did you consult with when choosing the school? (parents, teachers, friends ...)
4. Which information did you most consider when you choose a school?

5. What was your imagination concerning the learning environment in Taiwan?
6. Did you choose your school (university) with the help of an education agency? If yes, how well did the information provided by the education agency meet the reality?
7. What was the reason for choosing the education agency?

3.3.2 Life after Arriving in Taiwan

1. Have you ever loved apart from your family members? Have you ever lived away from your home for one month or more?
2. Do you have any difficulties in getting adjusted to the new changes around you? If yes, don't you get adjusted to the learning environment, residential environment, or new food?
3. How are you disciplined? How do you develop your self-discipline?
4. Do you have still a problem that you cannot resolve up to the present?

3.4 Research Process



3.5 Method of Sorting out and Analyzing the Research Data

We have assigned a code name to all of 28 participants by using the English alphabet letters A-R. When making a data analysis in the research, we have used the method of typological analysis. The typological analysis involves the classification of observations in terms of their attributes on multiple variables. (Lisa M. Given, 2008). After analyzing each text by using Microsoft Word-Text Coding, we have classified the different concepts and integrated the relevant data.

4. The Result

The research result section consists of two main parts “Reason of studying in Taiwan, the process of choosing”, and “The life after arriving in Taiwan”, and subparts such as education quality, tuition fees, scholarship, suggestions from family members, and friends, the education agency, geographical location, enrollment, visa application, residential environment, homesickness, learning process, living expenses, making friends, and cultural difference.

4.1 Reason for Studying in Taiwan, the Process of Choosing

While the reasons for choosing Taiwan as a place to continue their study include the factors such as the education quality, the opportunity of learning two foreign languages, the possibility of being awarded a scholarship, and affordable tuition fees, the factors that influenced the process of their choosing were the suggestions from the friends, advice from education agency, geographical location, enrollment process, and visa application process.

4.1.1 Education Quality

During the in-depth interview, most of the students, who participated in the research, broached the subject of education quality. According to them, the quality of education in Taiwan was relatively better than that of Mongolia. The reasons for their quality education were the abundant academic and technical resources of the education sector in Taiwan. But Mongolia cannot keep pace with the global current trend as it lacks such facilities. Four participants had studied in other highly developed countries before. And they responded that the education system of Taiwan was much similar to that of the highly developed countries like the USA and Germany, and the lecturers' teaching method and attitudes such as genuine caring and kindness, willingness to share knowledge, sincere sensitivity to the students' diversity, and a motivation to provide a meaningful learning experience for all students were worthwhile. These attributes made their choice more valuable and worthy.

18 participants chose Taiwan as they had been aware of Taiwan's internationally recognized quality education as a result of their careful exploration of the Taiwan education system. The participants classified the factors that promote the quality of education as follows:

a) Training resources

The research participants considered that the technical facilities, tools, training resources, and lecturers' professional skills were the factors improving the quality of education.

b) Internationalization

The research participants considered that one of the criteria that define the quality of higher education was internationalization. Thus, all the participants checked whether their university documents are internationally recognized or not.

4.1.2 Tuition Fees

6 participants were students who were studying on their expenses. According to them, they had realized that though the tuition fees of Taiwan universities were relatively affordable, the quality of education which the Taiwan universities offer were of good quality and more valuable, while the learning environment was almost similar to that of universities in highly developed countries, namely, in the USA and Europe.

4.1.3 Scholarship

The most famous scholarships available at the Taiwan universities are the Ministry of Education Taiwan Scholarship Program and the Ministry of Education Huayu (Mandarin) Enrichment Program. Though these scholarships are awarded to relatively fewer applicants compared with that of Mainland China, the Taiwan universities also offer university scholarships to their students. The amount of university scholarship is less than the amount of government scholarship.

4.1.4 Suggestions from Family Members and Friends

The parents, friends, and relatives' suggestions, opinions, and recommendations play an important role in choosing the university. The participants responded that they had made the final decision after carefully investigating and exploring the reality of the place, where they were going to study, from the friends and people, who had studied in that place, while actively studying the education system of the country.

4.1.5 The Education Agent Guide

Commonly, Mongolian students use an education agency when they study abroad. At first, the education agencies used to recommend educational institutions in America and Europe, they started to recommend the Asian universities in consideration of

qualified higher education in Asian countries. However, in Mongolia, there are relatively few education agencies that recommend only Taiwan universities. While five participants arrived in Taiwan through the education agencies, three of them expressed that they were unsatisfied with the services provided by the education agencies.

4.1.6 Location

Though the distance between Mongolia and Taiwan is not close, it is relatively closer compared with other countries. The students fly to Taiwan by transiting through Beijing, Hong Kong, and Seoul. Since they spend less time on the transit process, Taiwan is a reasonable choice in terms of distance.

4.1.7 Enrollment and Visa Application

For a student, who manages registration and enrollment processes, it is not a complication to apply for a university. They responded that the registration process of Taiwan universities was clear and audible with no complicated requirements. Also, the visa application process was not complicated as the visa applications to other countries. In general, the Taiwan representative office was welcoming and open to Mongolians.

4.1.8 Frequently Asked Questions

During the in-depth interview with the students, it was observed that the students enrolled with only the private universities that organized the enrollment and registration in Mongolia since the public universities of Taiwan do not send their admission representatives to Mongolia. Moreover, most of the high school graduates of Mongolia want to continue their study abroad, especially in countries where the university tuition fees were cheaper than that of universities in America and Europe. The Taiwan universities meet their requirements and the possibility of learning two languages (English and Chinese languages) attracts Mongolian students. However, the students face the below-mentioned common problems in reality after they arrive in Taiwan. As follows:

1. Some Mongolian students choose universities based in isolated places due to their failure in thoroughly studying the school and school campus. It also affects the comfort in their lives.
2. Some Mongolian students cannot continue their studies due to poor learning and the language barrier.
3. In some cases, some students were forced to leave the university after arriving in Taiwan due to their unawareness of the necessary registration process and other requirements of the university.
4. Some students criticize that Taiwan universities focus on providing theoretical knowledge and neglect providing practical knowledge

4.2 *Life after Arriving in Taiwan*

4.2.1 Residential Environment

International students face the common challenge of not getting adjusted to foods and drinks. At Taiwan university dormitories, the students are prohibited to cook. According to the research participants, it causes difficulties for Mongolian students. Since the Mongolian food culture and Taiwan food culture are completely different, the Mongolian students studying in Taiwan want to cook themselves. Though they want to prepare and cook their meal at their places, it is prohibited under university regulations. They also emphasized that not only Mongolian students but also other international students, who came from different countries, prefer cooking their meals themselves. Moreover, the research participants told that the cost of living is different in the northern, central, and southern parts of Taiwan. Especially, it is much higher in Taipei, the capital city of Taiwan. The cost of renting an apartment, transportation cost, and food cost are relatively higher in Taipei than those in central and southern parts of Taiwan. Although the international students can feel the urban lifestyle in Taipei city, the costs are much higher. Thus, some of the research participants told that they had chosen other cities and regions.

During the in-depth interview, the students told that they got easily adjusted to the school campus and school environment as they were safe, healthy, and clean though they sometimes face challenges concerning the climate and food.

In terms of the residential environment, the research participants specified the problems such as the hot close atmosphere, food, insects, and the small and narrow rooms. Moreover, they expressed their willingness to be provided the possibility of preparing and cooking meals in their dormitory rooms, repairing and improving the worn-out student dormitory, and ensuring the efficiency of insect poisoning.

4.2.2 Homesickness

Homesickness is one of the common challenges that every international student faces. If an international student cannot overcome this challenge of homesickness, he might experience psychological and physiological challenges that may lead to a university dropout. As a result of this research, we consider it is required to establish the International Student Advice and Guidance Center that focuses on the psychological problems of international students.

Most of the research participants responded that an effective way to overcome the challenge of homesickness is to get mixed up with people and maintain the social relationship. Maintaining an effective social relationship, especially the face to face communication with people was the most important medicine. Thus, the research participants were expressing their desire to wish that the universities would prepare the university lecturers and staff so that they could assist the international students to overcome such psychological problems.

4.2.3 Learning

In most cases, the problems that occurred during their study were caused by their poor language skills. 12 of 24 students didn't completely understand their classes at first. Since they didn't understand the classes, they face difficulties in doing their homework. Fortunately, they told that, the lecturer's patience and willingness to understand the challenges that international students face helped them overcome this difficulty. Moreover, the research participants were pointing out that the university lecturers' attitude towards their work and willingness to care, assist and support the students helped international students to resolve various problems that occurred in their learning.

In most cases, during the first and second quarters of an academic year, most international students face the challenge of the language barrier. And the students were willing to be provided the possibility of getting adjusted to their new lives in a new country, the possibility and the time of promoting their nonpartisan learning and being offered psychological advice and guidance.

4.2.4 Finance

Though the cost of living in Taiwan was lower than that of highly developed countries, it is higher than that of Mongolia. When choosing Taiwan as the place to continue their study, Mongolian students considered this aspect and preferred the possibility of working to support their new life in Taiwan. But, in reality, it is almost impossible to work and hard to find work in the cities in the central and southern parts of Taiwan.

Thus, Mongolian students face the challenge of money and finance. Though they are willing to work, they cannot find work due to the language barrier. Indeed, the financial pressure has become the biggest challenge in their new life in Taiwan.

4.2.5 Confraternity

Mongolian students said that making friends with Taiwanese people is not easy as they do not become friends with foreign people, keeping their distance. However, making friends with other international students is relatively easy. And so, they become friends with other international students, they said.

They also stated that Mongolians were friendly people who easily become friends with others, and friendship was one way to get adjusted to a foreign country.

4.2.6 Cultural Difference

Taiwan is a part of the Chinese nation. In addition, it is a unique country that contains Japanese culture and Western culture. Even the Mongolian students observed such unique attributes and cultural differences after arriving in Taiwan. And they said that they had not faced any cultural conflict when expressing their impressions. That is an example of Mongolian people's attitude and openness towards foreign culture.

The research participants also mentioned that the Taiwanese people's language culture, the code of conduct, respectful manner, perspective towards tourism, internationalization, and attitude towards money were different from those of Mongolian people.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The Research Results

We have studied the life experience of 24 Mongolian students studying and residing in Taiwan by using an in-depth interview method. Accordingly, we have analyzed that the factors influencing Mongolian students' choice include the education quality,

affordable tuition fees, scholarship programs, recommendations from the parents and friends, advice and guidance from the education agency, geographical location, university enrollment process, and easiness of visa application process. The majority of the research participants emphasized the factors such as internationally recognized quality education, internationalization, affordable tuition fees, and many possibilities of being awarded scholarships during the in-depth interview. Moreover, some external factors like the recommendations from friends and advice from the education agency influenced their choice.

Besides, they face the below-mentioned challenges in terms of the residential environment as follows: unfamiliar residential environment, unpleasant climate and atmosphere, the complete difference in foods, ineffective insect poisoning, too small dormitory room (in some cases), a regulation that prohibits cooking in the dormitory room, homesickness, loneliness, unsafe feelings, difficulties in understanding the classes and doing homework owing to the language barrier, financial pressure, cost of living, impossibility of finding work in the suburban areas, making friends with other international students instead of Taiwan people, cultural difference and so on.

5.2 Research limitations

We could not cover all Mongolian students studying in Taiwan. That is the limitation of this research.

5.3 Recommendations and Advice Based on the Research Result

Recently, Mongolian students have stated that Taiwan education solely focuses on theory instead of combining theory and practice. Accordingly, the students lack systemized practical knowledge. Thus, the higher education institutions need to improve the education and training quality as soon as possible and improve the technical resources and capacities to attract international students, providing the students with the possibility of promoting their actual competencies and skills. Plus, if they coordinate the major subjects with the personal development attributes, the training program would meet the needs and requirements of the students. Accordingly, the research team offers the below-mentioned recommendations:

1. The universities should avoid enrolling as many students as possible from Mongolia without providing detailed information about the school and its curriculum. Instead, they should provide the interested students with a complete understanding of the study and residential environments through a third party in Mongolia so that the students would have sufficient time to study, think and make their final decision. As a result, the international students would not face a challenge in learning after arriving in Taiwan.
2. It is important to advertise the opportunities of studying in Taiwan to specifically high school graduates so that they could explore and study the Taiwan universities as early as possible to make a valuable decision in their lives. Moreover, the universities should introduce possible life experiences in Taiwan instead of just advertising the schools.
3. If the Taiwan universities establish a team (facility or center) that provides necessary advice and guidance to only Mongolian students, it would be easier to enroll Mongolian students in greater numbers.
4. The international Student Departments of the Taiwan universities should carry out cross-culture studies, and provide the international students studying in Taiwan with necessary advice and guidance in consideration of their study result so that each student would be satisfied as an individual.

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