

SOUTH KOREAN EXCHANGE SCHOLARSHIPS AS KNOWLEDGE DIPLOMACY INSTRUMENTS

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Despite the knowledge obtained by international students is a crucial component in exchange diplomacy the scholarship programs almost have not been analyzed through the concept of knowledge diplomacy. In this study, the author analyzes South Korea's two major scholarship programs through the lens of knowledge diplomacy. The author finds that both programs successfully function for the dissemination of knowledge about Korea and for the use of knowledge as an asset in relations with developing countries. However, the third context, where knowledge serves as a platform for interaction the programs demonstrate limited efficiency.

Keywords: public diplomacy; knowledge diplomacy; international students; Global Korea Scholarship; KOICA Scholarship program.

ЮЖНОКОРЕЙСКИЕ СТИПЕНДИАЛЬНЫЕ ПРОГРАММЫ ДЛЯ ИНОСТРАННЫХ СТУДЕНТОВ КАК ИНСТРУМЕНТЫ ДИПЛОМАТИИ ЗНАНИЙ

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Несмотря на то, что получаемые иностранными студентами знания являются ключевым компонентом в дипломатии обменов, стипендиальные программы для иностранных студентов практически не рассматривались через призму дипломатии знаний. В данной статье автор анализирует две ключевых южнокорейских стипендиальных программы через концепцию дипломатии знаний. Анализ показал, что обе программы успешно работают в качестве инструментов для распространения знаний о Корее и в качестве активов, помогающих выстраивать отношения с развивающимися странами. При этом знания как платформа для взаимодействия используются в ограниченном формате.

Ключевые слова: общественная дипломатия; дипломатия знаний; иностранные студенты; Global Korea Scholarship; KOICA Scholarship program.

Introduction

South Korea is one of the most active attractors of international students in Asia. According to the government's plan, the number of foreign

students in Korea is expected to rise to 200,000 by 2023 [1]. The Korean government conducts and oversees several scholarship programs that foster the internationalization of higher education. Besides attracting international students these scholarships contribute to promoting the image of Korea and helping its economic promotion abroad by cultivating pro-Korean students as unofficial ambassadors.

However, South Korean major scholarship programs Global Korea Scholarship (GKS) and the Korea International Cooperation Agency Scholarship Program (KOICA SP) have been hardly explored in the context of public diplomacy [2]. Furthermore, neither GKS nor KOICA SP has been analyzed through the lens of the concept of knowledge diplomacy even though this concept is used in policy-related documents [3].

The concept of knowledge diplomacy is rather novel, and its implementation is underexplored. This study contributes to Korean foreign policy studies and the understanding of mechanisms of public diplomacy that are activated by scholarship programs for international students, as well as the understanding of the role of knowledge in these mechanisms.

Methodology

The case study of two scholarships includes analysis of the contents of official documents produced, scholarship program descriptions, and academic papers devoted to knowledge diplomacy and related topics.

In this research, two key exchange programs are analyzed – GKS and KOICA SP. Within both programs international students are invited to Korea, to obtain academic degrees. All expenses including tuition fees, return flights, living expenses are covered by the organizers.

Knowledge diplomacy

Knowledge diplomacy is a relatively new concept that, despite the lack of a settled definition, has been used by both academic specialists and politicians for more than twenty years [4, 5]. To date, there are several interpretations of the term “knowledge diplomacy”.

Michael Patrick Ryan in his book published in 1998 coins the term “knowledge diplomacy”. He defines knowledge diplomacy through state policies aimed at the protection and enforcement of laws protecting intellectual property, in particular the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) [4].

Jane Knight, who is one of the main conceptualists of knowledge diplomacy, underlines that this concept should be considered outside the soft power paradigm, as soft power implies the priority of states’ national interests over universal interests [6]. Knight thus defines knowledge diplomacy within the framework of public diplomacy, which seeks mutual benefits through cooperation, rather than through one country’s desire to dominate another in

higher education and technology. Moreover, unlike Joseph Nye [7] Knight rejects knowledge diplomacy as an instrument of non-violent coercion.

One of South Korea's leading experts on public diplomacy, Kim Tae-hwan, taking a more pragmatic approach to improving the effectiveness of South Korean public diplomacy, construed knowledge diplomacy as a subcategory of public diplomacy of the state. According to him, public diplomacy should use state policies, institutions, and values formulated and accumulated during the historical development of a country as sources of soft power. This information and knowledge can be useful and relevant to countries that want to learn from Korea's experience to develop the country [8].

Knowledge Diplomacy in the Public Diplomacy Master Plan of the Republic of Korea

In 2016, the Korean government passed the Public Diplomacy Act, which defines the further development and functions of public diplomacy as Korea's foreign policy tool. Public diplomacy is defined in the Act as "diplomacy activities through which the State enhances foreign nationals' understanding of and confidence in the Republic of Korea directly or in cooperation with local governments or the private sector through culture, knowledge, policies, etc." [9]. In the official definition of public diplomacy, knowledge is referred to as a channel of cooperation between the State government, local governments, and private companies.

The Act is also important because it defines the planning and execution of public diplomacy. In particular, the Act obliges the executive branch to draw up a five-year master plan (further Master Plan) and to conduct public diplomacy within the framework of that plan. The first plan was prepared at the request of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) by the group of researchers headed by Choi Dong Joo and published by the Sookmyung Women's University in 2017 [10].

In this plan that knowledge diplomacy (Kor. 지식공공외교/지식외교) is mentioned and discussed [10]. Later the knowledge diplomacy was mentioned in ROK's Diplomatic White Paper issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [3].

According to the Master Plan, knowledge diplomacy has five major activity vectors: 1) Promoting interactive and cooperative knowledge diplomacy using Korean knowledge in science, technology, humanities, history, tradition, and development; 2) Creating a global knowledge community by expanding and conducting activities aimed at sharing knowledge between Koreans and foreigners; 3) Promoting Korean studies research projects and facilitating the active exchange of knowledge, including Korean humanities, and promoting the creation of a global knowledge community; 4) Supporting a new generation of experts in Korean studies by

expanding scholarship programs as well as strengthening the financial stability of research projects through private sponsorship; 5) Applying a specialized approach to each country and region.

Although the authors of the plan position knowledge diplomacy within the framework of public diplomacy, the Master Plan does not give the exact meaning of knowledge diplomacy. That notwithstanding, as far as we can see from the activity vectors, knowledge in this plan is used in at least three contexts:

1) Knowledge about Korea. In this context, the state is concerned that the image of Korea, as well as related aspects such as history, culture, traditions, and values, be conveyed correctly to foreign audiences. The state wants to avoid the formation of misconceptions in the eyes of the foreign public.

2) Knowledge as an asset. In this case, knowledge and experience in technology, economic development, humanities, and other fields are assets that Korea can use when interacting with other countries. By using knowledge as an asset, Korea can simultaneously create and maintain its image as an expert in a particular field, which is extremely important in niche diplomacy and can use its knowledge to help other countries in development.

3) Knowledge sharing and knowledge as a platform for interaction. Sharing knowledge with other states is the third context. Here Korea may not act as a mentor or big brother, but rather as a partner. Sharing knowledge and technology is an important context for diplomatic interaction with leading countries in various fields. In this context, Korea can not only provide knowledge but also learn from its partners.

Country Image, Development, and Business

Analyzing the two key scholarship programs in the context of the Master Plan, it is worth noting that they have some similar and different functions and features. Both fellowships are mainly aimed at people from developing countries and countries with economies in transition.¹ KOICA SP does not admit participants from developed economies.

This approach corresponds with the goal of building a global knowledge community because by receiving a high-quality modern higher education in Korea, students are included in the global scientific and professional communities that pursue the goals of solving modern national development problems.

One of the key channels of development diplomacy is official development assistance (ODA) [11]. Korea donates funds to developing

¹Classification based on United Nations' «World Economic Situation and Prospects» report. URL:https://www.un.org/development/desa/dpad/wpcontent/uploads/sites/45/WESP2020_Annex.pdf (date of access: 20.11.2020).

countries through both scholarship programs, paying for tuition and related expenses and these investments serve at least three functions.

First, Korea, as a donor country to the OECD, pledged to reach 0.3% of gross national income (GNI) in 2030 [12]. Failure to meet this target may harm Korea's national image, while the fulfillment of promises and active assistance to developing countries, on the contrary, may improve the image of the country and its affiliated companies in the eyes of the local population [13]. Thus, South Korea's ODA policy is an integral component of public diplomacy that aims to improve Korea's image abroad.

Second, the provision of ODA through educational programs improves the professional and academic skills of developing countries. It is expected that such knowledge and skills will be put into practice, for example, in high-tech industries in the public and private sectors and domestic economic and social policies. Moreover, through education paid for through ODA, Korea is nurturing new teachers and educators who will disseminate what they have learned in Korea in their home countries by working at educational institutions [13].

Third, Korea pursues national interests through ODA to promote the Korean economy in the world. For example, infrastructure projects are sponsored and promoted through ODA, including those carried out by South Korean companies either individually or as part of multinational consortia. Among other things, ODA, particularly through KOICA, sponsors and promotes projects in the areas of public administration (digitalization of management systems), health, trade, agriculture, energy, and others. At the same time, a significant number of projects are implemented by Korean companies. With the help of educational programs, Korea trains not only technical and managerial personnel in the enterprise but also government officials who, by applying their knowledge should contribute to the successful implementation of projects in public organizations, such as the relevant ministries [13].

Imagining Korea Correctly

The Korean government repeatedly stresses in the Act on Public Diplomacy and the Master Plan the importance of providing the correct information about Korea to the foreign public and formulating the right impression about Korea. The concern to provide information for a correct understanding of Korea stems from the fact that Korea is highly dependent on foreign trade, so a positive perception and knowledge of Korea affect trust and economic relations between the countries.

Both fellowship programs fulfill the educational function. In addition to academic disciplines, both programs include Korean language and culture courses. In this way, international students learn more about Korean culture,

history, and values during their time in Korea and become exposed to unique knowledge and experiences. It is worth mentioning that international students can transfer this knowledge to their compatriots and international audiences during their stay in Korea [14] and can also share it after they graduate.

Knowledge as a Sphere of Interaction

Both scholarship programs aim to give students a higher education that they cannot get in their own countries and then put into practice in scientific or professional spheres. Besides, these programs aim to provide international students with the most complete and accurate picture of Korea. The Korean government, while pursuing the aforementioned objectives, is concerned with the broader issues of public diplomacy and knowledge diplomacy, such as the development of an international community united by the knowledge of Korea, which should further promote Korea in the world.

At the same time, these programs almost do not use knowledge as a platform for knowledge sharing; they are designed so that Korea shares its knowledge while foreign students can share their knowledge with Koreans in a limited and unstructured way. Hence there occurs asymmetrical interaction and knowledge-sharing process. This challenge can be addressed through other educational programs aimed at sharing knowledge with already established scientists and academics or by sending South Korean citizens to universities in partner countries. Nevertheless, there is potential for using knowledge as a platform for cooperation and within these two programs.

Practical Recommendations in Program Development

The analysis of the two key fellowship programs through the lens of knowledge diplomacy shows that, in general, both programs fulfill some of the functions of knowledge diplomacy as expressed in the Master Plan, such as developing a deeper and more correct understanding of South Korean culture, history, and values in international students, and creating a new generation of experts who understand Korea and contribute to South Korean economic advancement in the world.

On the other hand, the analysis also shows that there is an unrealized potential that would allow the use of knowledge in all three domains. In other words, international students could be a source of knowledge for Korea, and in this way, there would be knowledge sharing rather than one-sided knowledge absorption by international students.

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