Pattern of Out-of-Class Activities of Korean University Students: Latent Profile Analysis

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Abstract: This study examined how HIP participation patterns differ among students in different Korean universities. Moreover, this study explored whether there is an association between the likelihood of a student belonging to a specific group and their individual characteristics along with their university’s supportive campus environment. This study analyzed the data from the 2019 wave of the Korean-NSSE (National Survey of Student Engagement), and the samples included 12,784 college seniors from 112 institutions. Furthermore, it employed latent profile analysis and multinomial logistic regression. As a result, this research identifies five distinctive HIP participation patterns. Family income and student-faculty interaction levels determine which group a student belongs to. For example, economically disadvantaged students tend to belong to a group with lower participation in study abroad programs. Finally, the supportive campus environment was strongly associated with being a member of actively participating groups compared to being in a less engaged group.

Keywords: high impact practices, pattern, Korean University, latent profile analysis

Introduction

A great educational philosopher, John Dewey (1938), emphasized that students’ diverse experiences are a source of growth and development. He stated that it is the educators’ responsibility to guide students on the path of growth by designing and offering educationally purposeful programs and activities that could enhance the change and growth of children and youth as well as by continuously interacting with them throughout the experiences. These experiences can be largely divided into two categories: regular class-based learning and out-of-class activities, which are termed “extended education.”

Unlike high school, college students have a wide range of educational opportunities and participate in various activities while in college, and these experiences may either be on or off campus. Based on the purpose and focus of activities, researchers classify these experiences as either academic or social experiences. Previous studies have found an intimate relationship between participation in these experiences and institutional commitment, academic persistence, learning outcomes, and socio-emotional development of the students (Tinto, 1993; Pascallera, 1985; Weidman, 1989). Kuh (2008), supported by American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), investigated and classified various cases to identify programs and activities that positively influenced the change and growth of the students. Additionally, he created the term “high impact practices (HIPs)” that involved various programs, including freshman seminars, liberal arts programs, learning communities, intensive writing, collaborative learning projects, undergraduate research, global learning experiences, service learning, internships, and capstone projects (Kuh, 2008).
Meanwhile, educational experiences can also be categorized into two types based on their goals and whether participation is mandatory. The first type is the regular class-based learning, which is required to complete and graduate from a degree program. In this case, students must follow the so-called “curriculum” or “coursework,” which is designed and taught by universities and professors. The other type involves educational programs and activities that students voluntarily attend to satisfy their interests, for their career development, and personal growth. This second type differs from the first in that it is based on a student’s choice, and not on graduation or credit grant conditions.

These out-of-class activities, which are not part of regular classes to develop domain knowledge and skills, are gaining increased popularity among Korean higher education institutions (Kim, 2018). It is believed that they contribute to promoting educational accountability as they actively respond to the increasingly diverse needs of students. In addition, some extended education programs are widely offered to develop students’ core competencies (Baek & Jeong, 2012; Lunenburg, 2010). Recently, out-of-class activities, such as internships and global programs, have often been transformed into regular courses. Finally, increasingly intensified competitions for student recruitment, which is due to a dramatic decrease in the school-age population, has forced universities to provide these attractive programs as a survival strategy.

However, some universities are known for not being active in offering extra-curricular programs, but rather emphasizing more on regular classes that, albeit not substantiated, are considered effective in enhancing employment opportunities (Son, 2021).

Due to declining tuition income associated with a sharp decline in the school-age population, it also seems true that universities impose fiscal austerities to overcome financial hardships. Therefore, it becomes difficult to provide a variety of programs that students want (Unipress, 2021).

Furthermore, the high cost of some programs may limit the participation of low-income students. In addition, it can be challenging for self-sponsored students who have to work in order to pay for tuition and living expenses to attend the programs they want to participate in (Kim, Lee, & Lee, 2007).

Finally, due to limited time, even students without financial challenges may have to face a situation where they have to cautiously choose programs and activities to participate in.

Taken together, there may be significant disparities in student participation in HIPs. Additionally, the difference may appear in students’ choice of activities in which they will invest their time and effort. Finally, these differences can lead to a gap in student outcomes. From the perspective of educational opportunities and equality, therefore, careful analysis of who participates in which programs and appropriate policy efforts to resolve problems, if any, are required. To this end, it is necessary to explore the patterns of students’ participation in extracurricular activities and empirically analyze factors that inhibit or promote students’ participation.

This study’s purpose is twofold. First, the study investigated whether differences exist in the participation pattern in HIPs among different student groups. In this regard, special attention is given to six HIPs: learning community, service learning, study abroad, research with the faculty, culminating experiences, internships, and field experiences. Second, this study examined whether there was a relationship between the HIP participation pattern and the student’s personal background information, such as gender, family income, major, and the level of interaction with the faculty. In addition, the study investigated whether the pattern is