

The 'Foreign English Teacher' A Necessary "Danger" in South Korea

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Introduction

It seems that 'foreign English teachers' play fundamental roles in South Korea as a result of the increased need for Korean children and adults alike to learn the new Global Lingua Franca. Nonetheless, some of the difficulties associated with this recently emerged trend do not go completely unnoticed. While on the one hand Koreans are readily inviting English teachers from countries where English is the first official language, on the other hand they are openly resenting these same teachers for encroaching on their homeland and its longstanding social and family values.

Whilst Koreans desire high quality teachers, claiming that the teachers who come to Korea are paid and treated well, they are nonetheless rather reluctant to pay them wages that a qualified 'western' teacher would earn in his/her homeland. Moreover, instead of blaming Korea Immigration Services for granting work visas to non-qualified individuals and faulting Korean institutions for hiring substandard teachers who have minimal qualifications, Koreans are quick to hold responsible the 'foreign English teacher' for any shortcomings that tend to occur as a direct result of his/her inexperience.

Koreans must start to see that at least part of the blame should be placed on themselves as they are the ones encouragingly inviting the unqualified foreign teacher. That is to say, it is unfair to hire a non-qualified teacher and expect him/her to perform and act professionally especially if both the school and government have opted to stipulate that little professional training and background is needed to become an English teacher in Korea. Aside from a university degree, only a TESOL/TEFL Certification is needed, though a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults is preferred. Often times, Korean schools hire so called teachers with a wide range of majors, many of which are unrelated to education, straight out of university. Therefore, if the teacher is found to be substandard, they turn the tide and blame the foreign teacher instead of taking the blame for not choosing a more suitable candidate in the first place. It is this kind of irony that sometimes qualifies as being grossly preposterous.

What is more, perhaps it is possible to invite only qualified teachers from abroad and still manage to pay them the wages 'foreign teachers' in Korea are regularly being paid these days, however, public schools, private institutions as well as Korean citizens themselves should learn to accept the idea that qualified teachers should not only come from countries where English is the first official language, but also start hiring from countries where English is at least one of the official languages, like India and the Philippines for instance. After all, there are plenty of amply qualified teachers there who are more than willing to work for the pay readily on offer. Perhaps, Koreans first need to get rid of their bias toward 'non-white' teachers before such a simple solution could be effectively implemented.

The Entry Requirements for Foreign English Teachers

For the most part, the majority of 'foreign English teachers' in Korea are permitted to enter the country and attain work on E-2 work Visas; 19,375 of which were issued in 2008 (Table 1). This visa type is the most common for English teachers and it only takes a Bachelors degree in any given field, and in some cases a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), a Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) certification or a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA), each of which can be attained in 4 weeks or less; all of which can hardly be considered as ample qualifications.

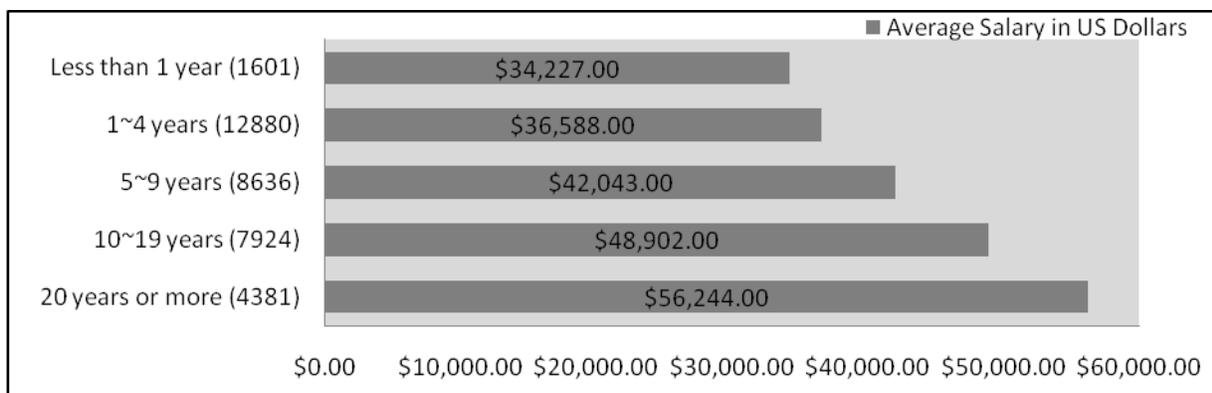
Table 1: The Number of E-2 Visa Holders by Nationality in South Korea from 2005~2008

Nationality	2005	2006	2007	2008
U.S.A.	3,951	5,372	6,989	8,890
Canada	4,598	4,870	5,263	5,029
United Kingdom	975	1,367	1,697	1,673
South Africa	294	451	695	971
Australia	582	679	665	646
New Zealand	630	701	705	643
Ireland	305	332	350	322
Others	1,104	1,229	1,357	1,201
Total	12,439	15,001	17,721	19,375

-Korea Immigration Services- (Wagner, 2009)

There is a quote in an article entitled ‘SOUTH KOREA: Migrant Workers' Rights Clouded by Race, Class’ (by Alex Jong Lee), that reads; “According to a 2007 Canadian government study, S. Korea spends more per capita on English language education than any other nation. Currently, it spends 4.6 billion US dollars on language education abroad and between 2-4 billion dollars domestically” (Lee, 2007). Given these figures, it is evident that there is a great demand in Korea for English teachers, however, the reluctance of the Korean government, public schools and private institutions alike to invite and hire amply-qualified teachers has a multitude of reasons. One of which, as already mentioned, is that the Korea Immigration Services actually grants unqualified teachers E-2 work Visas, not to mention the low hiring standards schools and institutes set for themselves when hiring new teachers. The other main reason is the fact that foreign teacher salaries are low in South Korea when compared to national averages in the ‘English speaking countries’, Korean schools and institutions usually hire from. Namely, the USA, Canada, The U.K., South Africa, Australia, New Zealand and a limited number of other countries. On the whole, teacher salaries in these countries are relatively high when compared to the pay qualified teachers can expect to receive in South Korea. Take the following Figure and Table depicting the average salary scales in the USA as an example:

Figure 1: Median Salary by Years Experience - All K-12 Teachers (United States)



(PayScale, 2009)

Table 1.1 State-By-State Teacher Salaries

State	Starting Salary	Average Salary	10-year increase	Salary Comfort Index
Alabama	\$31,368	\$40,347	28.9%	13
Alaska	\$38,657	\$53,553	7.9%	30
Arizona	\$30,404	\$44,672	37.5%	35
Arkansas	\$28,784	\$42,768	44.8%	11
California	\$35,760	\$59,825	41.6%	44
Colorado	\$35,086	\$44,439	25.7%	12
Connecticut	\$39,259	\$59,304	18.0%	22
Delaware	\$35,854	\$54,264	33.9%	2
Florida	\$33,427	\$43,302	29.9%	26
Georgia	\$34,442	\$48,300	42.1%	3
Hawaii	\$35,816	\$49,292	37.7%	50
Idaho	\$27,500	\$41,150	33.2%	33
Illinois	\$37,500	\$58,686	43.4%	1
Indiana	\$30,844	\$47,255	25.4%	8
Iowa	\$27,284	\$41,083	26.9%	31
Kansas	\$27,840	\$41,467	28.1%	21
Kentucky	\$30,619	\$42,592	28.8%	15
Louisiana	\$31,298	\$40,029	45.4%	20
Maine	\$26,643	\$40,737	23.9%	47
Maryland	\$37,125	\$54,333	32.0%	37
Massachusetts	\$35,421	\$56,369	35.0%	34
Michigan	\$35,557	\$54,739	16.9%	4
Minnesota	\$31,532	\$48,489	31.3%	10
Mississippi	\$28,200	\$40,576	46.5%	19
Missouri	\$29,281	\$40,462	25.2%	16
Montana	\$25,318	\$39,832	35.6%	46
Nebraska	\$29,303	\$40,382	28.2%	17
Nevada	\$27,957	\$44,426	22.8%	45
New Hampshire	\$28,279	\$45,263	26.5%	48
New Jersey	\$38,408	\$58,156	19.3%	36
New Mexico	\$33,730	\$41,637	43.2%	29
New York	\$37,321	\$57,354	19.2%	38
North Carolina	\$27,944	\$43,922	44.4%	23
North Dakota	\$24,872	\$37,764	40.0%	43
Ohio	\$33,671	\$50,314	33.0%	6
Oklahoma	\$29,174	\$38,772	36.5%	18
Oregon	\$33,699	\$50,044	26.0%	14
Pennsylvania	\$34,976	\$54,027	17.2%	5
Rhode Island	\$33,815	\$54,730	31.0%	42
South Carolina	\$28,568	\$43,011	36.0%	24
South Dakota	\$26,111	\$34,709	31.7%	41
Tennessee	\$32,369	\$42,537	28.4%	9
Texas	\$33,775	\$41,744	32.9%	7
Utah	\$26,521	\$40,007	30.8%	39
Vermont	\$26,461	\$46,622	28.5%	49
Virginia	\$33,200	\$43,823	26.0%	25
Washington	\$30,974	\$46,326	22.4%	32
West Virginia	\$26,704	\$38,284	19.1%	40
Wisconsin	\$25,222	\$46,390	21.5%	28
Wyoming	\$31,481	\$43,255	37.0%	27

(Teacher Portal, 2010)

According to the current exchange rate (June 22, 2009) at 1 USD = 1,272.01 KRW (XE.com, 2009), the salary of an average American teacher with less than 1 year experience is 34,227 USD = 43,537,175.93 KRW (Figure 1). Conversely the average beginner salary at Korean schools and institutions ranges in the area of 2,100,000~2,800,000 Won/month or 25,200,000~33,600,000 (Dave's, 2009); that's approximately (USD 21,000-28,000). Even on the state by state comparison (Table 1.1), the North Dakotan beginner salary of \$24,872 is nearly \$5,000 US more than that offered in Korea, per annum, at the entry level. What is more, the mere average salary in North Dakota alone (\$37,764) is nearly \$10,000 US more than the maximum expected salary in Korea. In the states of California and New York the average salaries are approximately \$32,000 more than the Korean maximum, and that's just the average.

It should also be stated that the higher figures, on offer in Korea, are only given to teachers with prior experience and sufficient educational backgrounds. Consequently, at least for the average American teacher, it would be \$8,000 US less in terms of pay in a best case scenario if s/he were to move to South Korea to teach English, but of course there is little guarantee for this scenario to actually take effect. To all intents and purposes, a qualified entry level teacher can expect \$14,000 US less in way of salary in South Korea. A seasoned veteran with 20 years of teaching experience, who would get an average pay of \$56,244 US or 71,685,043 KRW teaching in the US, would in fact only be getting an estimated maximum of a 33,600,000 KRW annual salary, therefore, resulting in a 38,085,043 KRW or \$29,882.393 US expected reduction in salary. That translates to a 53% anticipated yearly pay cut. What seasoned veteran would want to move to the Republic of Korea to take up a teaching position with that kind of pay? So then why are Koreans still so flabbergasted by the lack of qualifications and experience that the 'foreign teachers', they are able to invite to Korea, actually do have?

Table 1.5 English Program in Korea (EPIK) Salary and Benefits

Level	Requirements	Monthly Pay (million KRW)			
		Metropolitan City		Province	
		Busan Incheon	Other Cities	Jeju	Other Provinces
1+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 consecutive years as Level 1 within the renew Provincial Office of Education (POE) 	2.5	2.6	2.6	2.7
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2 years of teaching experience with one of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Master's degree - Teacher's/TEFL/TESOL/CELTA (100+hours) Certificate - Bachelor's degree in Education, English Language/Literature or Linguistics Contract renewal as Level 2+ within the same POE 	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.5
2+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Master's degree in any discipline, with Bachelor's in Education, English Language/Literature or Linguistics Master's degree in Education, English Language/Literature or Linguistics, with Bachelor's in any discipline 1 year of full time teaching experience with on of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Masters degree in any discipline - Techer's/TEFL/TESOL/CELTA(100+hours) Certificate - Bachelor's degree in Education, English Language/Literature or Linguistics Contract renewal as Level 2 within the same POE 	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.3
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teacher's/TEFL/TESOL/CELTA (100+hours) Certificate Bachelor's degree in Education or English Language/Literature One year full time teaching experience with Bachelor's degree in any discipline Master's degree in any discipline At least 1 years TaLK Schololar experience** 	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.2
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelor's degree in any discipline 	1.8	1.9	2.0	2.1

- * “English” includes English Literature, English composition and other English Majors, but not Journalism or English History.
- ** TaLK Scholar experience is considered the equivalent of an ESL certificate, not full time teaching experience.
- * All EPIK teachers receive the same benefits regardless of level.
- * Applicants with a 2 year associate degree or have completed minimum of 2 years university can apply to the TALK program.
- * The amount of Provincial pay varies depending on the location with the POE and the number of schools taught.

(EPIK, 2010)

Even though the Government run *English Program in Korea* (EPIK), the pay scale is not much different than those offered in the job advertisements posted on Dave’s ESL Cafe. As a matter of fact, for entry level graduates with little or no experience, with only a bachelor’s degree at their disposal, the pay is 1,800,000 Won/month. As for a well qualified seasoned and experienced teacher, s/he can only expect a maximum of 2,500,000 Won/month at the entry level and will have the chance to have his/her salary increased to a mere 2,700,000 Won/month only after 2 consecutive years of Level 1 teaching in EPIC (See Table 1.5). That’s a yearly salary range of 21,600,000-32,400,000 Won (approx. \$18,000-27,000 US), from beginner to experienced/resigned teachers respectively. Even beginner teachers from South Dakota, entering EPIK, can expect a salary cut of nearly \$7,000 US a year.

What is more, considering that the number of granted E-2 Visas alone totalled 19,375 in 2008 (Wagner, 2009), it would be even more impossible to fill that quota with qualified teachers, even if we were to include England, Ireland, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa into the equation. T

Teachers in these countries are also paid better than what a ‘foreign teacher’ can expect to be paid in South Korea. In the UK for instance the average salary for teachers was £39,393 or 82,563,121.34 KRW (My Salary, 2008). That’s a 48,963,121 KRW, that is, a 60% anticipated salary cut for the average Brit teacher. In Canada the average teacher’s salary for a qualified teacher with 8 years of experience is \$65,678 CA or 73,081,116 KRW (NL, 2009) (See Table 2). Consequently, a qualified Canadian teacher with relevant experience would have to settle for 54% less if s/he chose South Korea as a place of employment. Note! All conversions were done according to the June 22, 2009 exchange rate (XE, 2009).

Table 2: 2007~2008 Teacher Pay Scale Across Canada (in Canadian Dollars)

Province	Salary	Year
British Columbia (Vancouver Island)	\$72,242	2008
Alberta (Calgary)	\$74,299	2007
Saskatchewan	\$67,293	2007
Manitoba (Winnipeg)	\$74,317	2008
Ontario (Toronto)	\$75,688	2007
Quebec	\$46,341	2007
New Brunswick	\$57,126	2008
Nova Scotia (Halifax)	\$67,277	2007
Prince Edward Island	\$60,269	2008
Newfoundland	\$61,899	2007

(NL, 2009)

Taken as a whole, the salaries given to the average 'foreign English teacher' in South Korea are insufficient if the aim is to acquire qualified teachers, thus Koreans should not be surprised, let alone, revolted by substandard teachers being widespread in Korean public schools and private English Institutions. Essentially, it is up to Korea Immigration Services to improve standards for granting Visas and it is up to schools and institutions to hire more qualified teachers. However, one might expect that it would undoubtedly be a challenge to fill the necessary positions to teach the English hungry Korean society, after all, Koo Young-sun of the Incheon Education Office does admit that there is a "problem in securing foreign teachers" (in Kang, 2009). Perhaps if Korean schools were to offer more money to teachers it may be a possibility, but with schools in Hong Kong and now Middle Eastern counties like The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia paying increasingly higher wages for qualified teachers, it is becoming more and more unfeasible for Korean schools and private institutions to fill all available positions with amply qualified teachers. For that reason, Koreans will simply have to accept the high number of substandard foreign teachers in their homeland. Otherwise, they need to hire qualified teachers from South/South-East Asian countries like India and the Philippines where English is one of the official languages. Surely, teachers from these countries would be happy to work for the pay Korean educational institutions are ready to offer. All in all, a restructuring is needed in the ideologies that shape the Korean English language industry. That is to say, Koreans must either accept the prevalence of substandard 'white teachers' or get used to the idea of being taught by qualified teachers from South/South-East Asia. I must concede however, that Korea University (KU) is a groundbreaker in this respect by hiring an English instructor originally from the Philippines and making her the coordinator of all the 'foreign English teachers' at the Institute of Foreign Language Studies (IFLS) at KU. On the whole, it would be advisable for more schools and institutions to follow suit.

Nonetheless, one of my ex-colleagues, at a Korean university I worked for, on an Exchange Professor Program from the University of Manila constantly complained to me about the disrespect his Korean students exhibited toward him. As a matter of fact, a week before his return from his summer break visit to the Philippines, he suffered a stroke. He was later heard saying that his stroke was likely due to his stress of facing another semester at the university in Korea. I ended up having to cover one of his writing classes because no instructor could be found in time to replace him. As a result of this incidence, the Korean university in Question and the University of Manila brought their exchange professor's program to an abrupt end.

"Bonojit Hussain, a member of the Progressive Students' Union in India" is paraphrased as saying that: *historical factors, such as colonialism, knowledge production, and hegemony have allowed white foreigners to avoid the "migrant worker" label* (in Lee, 2007). For that reason, 'white foreign teachers' are considered to be more highly respected than the 'non-white foreign workers' thus quite conceivably leading to the general Korean view that 'non-whites' are likely to make substandard English teachers. Nur Knolis, a commissioner for the Indonesian national commission on human rights, concurs by saying that:

"Koreans look at even me as a migrant worker. ... The current situation is because the Korean economy is high now - who make them like this? United States. ... It is not fair. Korean people will try to learn from the white but if who come from the poor country, they say: 'You cannot teach us anything.'"

(Kholis in Lee, 2007)

Hussein further states that "if you add the dynamics of class, then I think we should qualify ...[migrant workers] this way: 'working class migrant' and 'elite migrant'. ... 'There is a distinction -all white migrants are elite" (Hussein in Lee, 2007).

What is more, my Indian national colleagues at one of the post secondary institutions I worked at got paid considerably less than the 'white' English teachers who in turn got paid approximately half that of the Koreans. The hierarchy seems to be based on not only race but also nationality considering that another one of our Indian-Canadian colleagues at the same institution was paid the same as the 'white' teachers, which was still less than what the Koreans received but at least not as low as what the Indian nationals were receiving. Moreover, at a famous Korean research institute, not to be named here due to Korean libel laws, pays their amply qualified Indian researchers "considerably less", according to a senior institute administrator, due to their "lesser worth". What this "lesser worth" implies is truly beyond me given that their level of qualifications is the same as that of the Korean researchers at the same research institute, according to the very same administrator.

Taken as a whole, the choice for Koreans is simple: learn to accept substandard 'white/western' teachers or to recognize the value of being taught by 'qualified teachers' of other races from various Asian countries since they are more than willing to work for the pay currently on offer.

Another option would be to hire mainly Korean teachers to teach English, however, as Oh Seok-hwan, an official of the Education Ministry put it, "We need more foreign teachers in this transition period. But on a longer-term perspective, Korean teachers will replace them in the end" (In Kang, 2009). In other words, until the so called 'transition period' is over, foreign teachers are still in high demand.

Bias Toward the 'Foreign English Teacher' in South Korea

It must be said, that even though the biased Korean attitude is more prevalent toward South/South-East Asians than it is toward 'white English teachers', the bias toward all 'foreign English teachers' on the whole still exists, thus, further contributing to the problem of Korean schools and institutions not being able to fill the available positions with amply qualified teachers.

While Korean Immigration has made efforts to put more background, drug and health checks into practice to try and weed out what certain Korean officials would likely call the 'dangerous white' teachers, there is still insufficient improvement in terms of requiring more qualifications for the granting of work visas in order to alleviate the actual problem of not having enough qualified teachers in South Korea. That is, while even public figures advocate that the problem with 'foreign teachers' is the dangerous levels of drug use and crime associated with them, it is actually the lack of qualifications that is the real issue at hand and, for that, only the government is to blame as it could regulate who comes in, based on qualifications.

A South Korean Ministry of Justice official was quoted as saying that "drug use and other criminal activities carried out by foreign English teachers have been a social issue for some time, and have built up to dangerous levels in recent years" (Kerry, 2007) & (Wagner and Koehler, 2009). Yet, the Korean Institute of Criminology stated that "crime rate among foreigners [in 2007] was 1.4% compared with the 3.5% rate among Korean citizens" (Wagner & Koehler, 2009). Moreover, upon examining the chart (Table 3) provided to the Association for Teachers of English in Korea (ATEK) by Benjamin Wagner, Associate Professor of the Law School at Kyunghee University in Seoul, South Korea, it becomes even more evident that the drug use by foreign English Teachers is not in fact at dangerous levels. In essence, as Professor Wagner points out during an interview by the Association for Teachers of English in Korea (ATEK), "only .013% of

foreign English teachers were arrested with drugs in Korea” (Wagner & Koehler, 2009). That hardly constitutes for drug use at the dangerous levels claimed by the Ministry of Justice official in 2007. Moreover, since (according to the above figures) Korean citizens are actually 2.5 times more likely to commit crimes than foreign nationals, it would essentially make the Ministry official’s statement even more groundless.

Table 3:

Drug Arrests of Foreign English Teachers in South Korea (All Visa Types)												
Year	Types of Drugs		Total Arrests	Number of E-2 Visa Holders	The Seven English-Speaking Countries Eligible for the E-2 Visa							
	Cannabis	Others (MDMA)			U.S.A.	Canada	U.K.	Ireland	New Zealand	Australia	South Africa	
2005	12	0	12	12,439	4	6	0	0	2	0	0	
2006	8	0	8	15,001	4	4	0	0	0	0	0	
2007	24	0	24	17,721	8	10	3	0	0	3	0	
2008	12	1	13	19,375	6	5	1	1	0	0	0	

Statistics for 2005 through November 2008 (Supreme Prosecutors’ Office, Narcotics Division); Statistics for E-2 Visa Holders from 2005 through September 2008, (Korea Immigration Service)

(Wagner & Koehler, 2009)

Regardless of these figures, the same Ministry of Justice official said that the supposed dangerous levels of the foreign English teachers’ use of drugs and their indulgence in criminal activities “is why we are implementing changes [in the granting of E-2 Visa] now, [in 2007]” (Kerry, 2007). The changes in effect constitute the implementation of drug tests, HIV tests and criminal background checks for all E-2 VISA holders (Table 4). Although All E-2 VISA holders have to take these tests to gain employment in Korea, teachers who are Korean citizens are exempt from HIV and drug testing at all schools and private institutions. Only public schools require Korean citizens to offer criminal background checks. While I am not against any of the tests and background checks, the Korean government needs to implement these procedures equally across the board for all nationals and Visa types if they are to avoid alienating any foreign English teacher who is amply qualified. After all, those of us who are from the western countries, Korean schools and private Institutions normally hire English teachers from, anticipate equal treatment for all races and nationalities as that has generally become the expected standard back in our home countries.

Table 4: Chart from ATEK - The Various Tests and Checks for Foreign Visa Holders Compared to Korean Citizens:

Requirements for Teachers	Medical Check	HIV Test	Criminal Background Check	Drug Test
E-2 Visa Holders	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Korean Citizens (Public Schools)	Yes	No	Yes	No
Korean Citizens (Hagwons)	No	No	No	No

Mandated by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology for all teachers

(Note! Hagwons are private owned educational institutes)

(ROK Drop, 2009)

Foreign English Teachers are Seen to be Unqualified in Korea

By and large, in recent years, Koreans have developed the general view that the average ‘foreign English teacher’ is unqualified. In fact, Koo Young-sun, supervisor of The Incheon Metropolitan Office of Education (Incheon, the 3rd largest city in Korea) made the following remark of ‘foreign English teachers’: “Speaking English fluently doesn't necessarily mean they can teach English well. Many foreign teachers lack teaching methodology and some of them are not ethically qualified to treat children” (in Kang, 2009).

While foreign English teachers are for the most part less qualified than their Korean counterparts, as a result of slack immigration standards and the insufficient qualification requirements stipulated by Korean schools, it is without a doubt that Koreans must recognize that the kind of alienation outright evident toward foreign English teachers is in fact the very thing that would persuade the amply qualified ‘foreign’ teacher to seek employment in another country. Therefore, if Koreans are to have any likely hope in filling the available teaching positions with amply qualified teachers, they must alleviate all biased treatment of ‘foreigners’ whether it be the implementation of unwarranted E-2 Visa regulations or the demoralizing Korean perception that South/South-East Asian teachers “cannot teach us [Koreans] anything” (Kholis in Lee, 2007). Taken as a whole, there is no more room for bias in South Korea if the aim is to fill the teacher quotas with amply qualified teachers from abroad.

Conclusion

The Korean appetite for English is unmistakable considering the tremendous amounts of money they spend to educate their children in English both domestically and abroad. Therefore, it is without a doubt that ‘foreign English teachers’ in Korea are in serious demand. However, the need for qualified teachers is at an all-time high, therefore, Koreans are hereby advised to rethink their approach with regard to their attitudes and treatment of all ‘foreigners’ in order to entice the qualified teacher, no matter what racial background or nationality, to choose Korea as his/her destination for teaching English.

All things considered, Korean Immigration needs to re-evaluate its approach with regard to the E-2 visa regulations imposed on ‘foreign English teachers’. That is, instead of enforcing stricter regulations based on criminal background checks and drug/HIV tests, it should raise the standards of hiring, strictly based on the levels of qualifications. Moreover, it should grant English teaching visas to qualified teachers from not only countries where English is the first official language but also from other Asian countries where English is one of the main official languages. However, for this change in Visa policy to truly allow for a positive change, Koreans themselves must do away with their biased attitudes toward ‘non-white’ English teachers from South/South-East Asian countries.

In the event that Koreans are unwilling to accept unqualified ‘white’ as well as qualified ‘non-white’ English teachers as legitimate teachers, then they must pay more for the services of the average qualified ‘white’ teacher coming from a country where qualified teachers are paid much higher wages than what Korean schools and private institutions are currently offering. Otherwise, they can simply start hiring more Korean teachers, however, this strategy is currently unfeasible as the education system is still in its transition period, according to an Education Ministry official. Lastly, the final option is for Koreans to keep on sending their children to be educated in countries where English is the first official

language. This however, would prove to be even more expensive for both individuals and the country as a whole in the long run.

More importantly, instead of always placing the blame on 'foreign English teachers', Koreans should learn to accept at least part of the blame since it is they themselves, the schools and institutions as well as Korea Immigration Services, who are responsible for screening people based a wide range of criteria that includes the levels of education teacher candidates have attained.

All in all, changes in visa regulations should not be made based on unsubstantiated claims, but rather they should be made while considering the real issue that not enough qualified teachers are available for Korean children to learn from. Therefore it is up to Korea Immigration Services, the Korean public and private educational institutions to raise the bar with regard to hiring better qualified 'foreign teachers' to teach the newest generations of Koreans.

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