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Participants listen to Nidhi Agrawal speak at the second K-Campus Network Event held on Friday at the JoongAng Ilbo building in western Seoul.

Korean firms keen on unique skills of foreigners

Entertainment sector providing openings for overseas workers

BY LEE TAE-HEE

"Companies hire foreigners because we are different and have new ideas," said Nidhi Agrawal, an artist signed under Wave Entertainment. "If I tried to be like one of the Koreans, why would they find the value in hiring me?"

"So being myself, being open and bringing a bit of the 'Indianness' was helpful for my career."

Agrawal started her career in Korea by working for a startup company, but now focuses on her career as a TV personality and YouTuber.

Just like how Agrawal landed a career in Korea, over 100 international students also interested in working in the entertainment industry gathered at the JoongAng Ilbo building on Friday for the second K-campus Networking Event.

K-campus, launched in February, is a brand by the Korea JoongAng Daily that creates content helping international students navigate their life in Korea.

During the event on Friday, Kim Hyeon-seok, head of YG Entertainment's HR team, also attended to explain how foreigners can land a job in Korea's entertainment industry.



Kim Hyeon-seok, head of YG Entertainment's HR team, gives tips on landing a job in Korean entertainment to the audience.

With K-pop getting global recognition, many entertainment companies are looking to hire international talent that can help them target fans abroad. YG Entertainment is also one of them, having foreign employees in many departments.

"Companies look for not only a good attitude from new recruits in entry-level positions, but also creative ideas," said Kim.

"Companies want the new and in-



Nidhi Agrawal shares her experience and tips on life as an entertainer of a foreign nationality in the Korean television industry.

novative ideas that only new recruits can have and that's why for the entertainment industry, jobs in production tend to have a lot of entry-level job openings."

Kim added it is important to keep an eye on specific companies that job seekers want to join, as entertainment companies tend to open positions out of the blue.

"Most entertainment companies in Korea don't do regular hirings like



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A student asks a question after listening to the speakers during the event.

conglomerates and their big-scale annual hirings," said Kim.

"A lot of them will open positions only when there is the need, because the industry changes very fast and the skillsets the company needs constantly change too."

Korean proficiency was one of the frequently asked questions by students attending the event, with many wondering how fluent they need to be.

"Working in Korea, the majority of the people you will work with are Koreans, so Korean skills are crucial to communicate with them," said Kim. "You will need at least basic Korean to get a job in an entertainment company here."

"Of course, entertainment companies with overseas branches will use English in those branches, but Korean will be the main language that's used in Korea."

But Korean isn't the only skillset international job seekers need to have. With many foreigners previously studying in Korea and already graduating as fluent speakers, candidates need additional factors that make them stand out.

"Korea has around 2 million foreigners, and even if 1 percent can talk in Korean, you have big competition and many of them want to be on TV and YouTube," said Agrawal. "So in this competition, if you want to be the

one that stands out you need to give them something special."

Agrawal also introduced opportunities for foreigners to work as artists in the entertainment industry. Wave Entertainment, which she is currently under, is a company founded by Tyler Rasch and Julian Quintart. Apart from the majority of the signed artists being non-Koreans — six out of the total seven — the entertainment agency aims to achieve transparency.

"The entertainment industry in Korea is mostly based on communication," said Agrawal. "If somebody has a job for you, they call the manager, but we wanted to have more transparency."

Rather than agencies deciding what shows the artists go on, all bookings for Wave Entertainment are made through Wave Entertainment's website. Artists are the ones who get to choose which shows they want to star in and which they don't, with details such as fees all made open.

"We are currently trying to make the booking system a bit better right now because it's a new system that we never had in the industry," said Agrawal. "That's why we thought we might need more time before we accept new artists, and we will be able to start accepting artists here and there maybe by the end of the year."

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Learn more about student life in Korea on the K-campus website



Egypt's Academy of Arts seeks to expand partnership with Korea's art schools

BY LEE TAE-HEE

"When young people in Egypt are asked who their favorite band is, a lot of them will choose BTS," Ibrahim Hisham, vice president of the Academy of Arts in Egypt, said. "Korean dramas and movies are also becoming huge, and we are on this trip because we want to know how Korea does this."

As Korea's pop culture becomes mainstream around the globe, Hisham wishes to learn the country's know-how and apply that back to the curriculum back home.

Hisham came to Korea via the Korean Culture and Information Service's K-Fellowship program. The program invites 15 prominent art and culture-related figures to Korea to meet officials and discuss future cooperation, with an aim to introduce Korean culture to the world.

One of the university's focuses is expanding cooperation with Korea National University of Arts (K-Arts), one of its partner institutions. The current partnership allows students at the universities to go on exchange semesters, but the Academy of Arts aims to go beyond.

"K-Arts and Academy of Arts teach various types of arts at one institution, and this isn't something that's common around the world," Hisham said.

"A lot of fine arts universities specialize in teaching a specific field such as film, theater or dance, but [the] education provided by K-Arts and Academy of Arts encompasses a wide field."

"I believe such common characteristics will help to strengthen ties and partnerships with each other."

The Korea JoongAng Daily sat down with Hisham during his visit to Korea, discussing the university's plans to collaborate with Korean culture and entertainment institutions to enrich its education.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Q You've met with officials from K-Arts during your trip. What further partnerships do you envision between the two schools?

A Korean culture and arts are becoming even more popular among Egyptian youth, and we are on this trip because we want to know how that happens. As educators teaching arts, we have the responsibility to find out why such a phenomenon is happening and thoroughly learn about that. We are a partner university of K-Arts, and we plan to continue working with them by exchanging know-how about teaching methodology and other areas.

Being partner universities, Students from K-Arts and the Acade-

my of Arts can study as exchange students at each other's universities. Is there a high demand to study arts in Korea for students in Egypt?

Students in Egypt want to come study in Korea. I am the vice president of the Academy of Arts, but I'm also teaching many courses in media art as a professor. My coming to Korea itself was big news at our school, and a lot of students told me they also wanted to go to Korea. Korea is a country that succeeded in showcasing its culture beyond the obstacles of the language barrier. There are a lot of artistically talented students in Egypt, and I think they can go learn and study in various fields of art.

Your school hosted the Gugak Academy in Egypt last year and taught students traditional Korean instruments. Do you have further plans to hold similar programs?

The Korean Culture Center in Egypt is actively trying to spread Korean culture in Egypt, and the Academy of Arts is constantly communicating with the center. We do hope there will be more opportunities to invite Korean artists and have both countries engage in cultural exchanges.

I also visited a lot of film-related institutions, such as the Korean Academy of Film Arts and the committee for the Bucheon International Fantastic Film Festival. We especially were able



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Ibrahim Hisham, vice president of Academy of Arts, poses for a photo during an interview with the Korea JoongAng Daily.

to find out that officials from the film festival had a lot of interest in introducing Egyptian films to Korea. There was

also interest in not just introducing each others' films to the other country, but also about cultural exchanges.

What specific film-related partnerships do you have in mind?

For example, we could hold a Korean film week in Egypt and create opportunities to introduce Korean film and culture to Egyptians. In terms of education, we could create opportunities for officials to come together and discuss how to develop arts education. Egyptian artists could exchange opinions with Korean artists, influence each other and create synergies.

The Academy of Arts is also part of Egypt's Vision 2030, which aims to achieve sustainable development in all fields, including education. What has the university achieved toward the goal, and what plans do you have?

Vision 2030 is ongoing in Egypt, and the Egyptian Ministry of Culture is doing its best to make that vision come true. We are an educational institute under the ministry and actively working as part of the vision.

We have been expanding our campus and digitizing the way we teach. But our biggest focus is providing high-quality education, allowing our students to graduate after thorough training. Also, we aim to enhance the quality of our education through international partnerships we have with other countries.

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