

**Syngnan H. Kim (Ed.),
A Perspective of the Future Development
of Distance Higher Education in Korea.**

Seoul: Korea Air and Correspondence University, 1987

Faculty and administrators in distance education institutions have much to learn from the observations of those from beyond the pale. In this volume, four academics from traditional Korean universities focus on the strengths and weaknesses of the Korean Air and Correspondence University. In blunt and remarkably open responses, faculty from KACU discuss the reality of working in an innovative open distance university. This dialogue, the proceedings of the Fourth Symposium on Distance Education, is much needed. It demonstrates the need for innovation and the need for distance open universities to persist in their efforts to innovate.

In his article, "A Perspective of the Future Development of Distance Higher Education in Korea," Lee Yung Duck highlights the strengths of open distance higher education that are often ignored. Lee forces us to reconsider the relationship between open higher education, media, and the self-learning adult. Too often practitioners undervalue the ideal of the adult learner who wishes to pursue a higher education free of the barriers which hinder study at traditional universities or colleges: entrance requirements, residency, classroom schedules, mediated face-to-face instruction. To Lee, the importance of open and distance higher education is precisely the anti-thesis of traditional higher education: the adult student (committed to androgogy); integrated multi-media and self-instructional courses (print, broadcast, mixed media); the freedom to study when one is able; the democratic potential of open learning.

Lee does not underestimate the problems associated with the administration of an open and distance higher learning institution. But these difficulties should be placed in perspective. The high drop-out ratio experienced by many distance and open universities and colleges needs to be examined in relationship to the potential democratization of higher education made possible through these institutions. The "failure" of students to complete their studies (one course or a program) must be analysed more critically. Did the institution "fail" by providing insufficient support for the student (counselling, etc.) or an inadequately designed course for self-instruction? Or, did the student actually obtain what it was that he/she desired from that particular course? Lee does not provide answers to these questions, but he does demand that faculty and administrators take another look at our ideals and institutional mandates.

On a more practical level, Yoo In Jong (''Curriculum Operation and Faculty Development''), Park Sung Soo (''Distance Higher Education and Service for Students''), and Lee Tae Wuk (''Introduction of New Technology — Computer Assisted Instruction'') develop the issues and problems introduced by Lee.

Yoo notes that the open admissions policy of KACU created a student body much more heterogeneous than those of traditional Korean universities and this has complicated curriculum development and teaching processes. Yoo criticizes KACU for its efforts to copy the curricula of traditional institutions (content and programs). Instead, curricula should be responsive to student needs and aspirations which may not be met by traditional programs. Curricula need to reflect the peculiarities of distance teaching methods: good instructional design, print and broadcast media.

The development of curriculum determines to a great extent the demands placed on faculty development. From Yoo's perspective, faculty in distance open universities should be recruited for qualities other than subject matter expertise — i.e., a commitment to the principles of adult education and lifelong learning and an understanding of the principles of distance education methods (print and broadcast media) and instructional systems design. Also, Yoo asserts that faculty in distance open universities should not be constrained by traditional disciplines but should be grouped in more or less fluid interdisciplinary groups (advice that corresponds with his view of curriculum as more interdisciplinary and reflective of the social needs of students and not the reification of traditional disciplines and programs).

In his comments, Kim Pan Yung agrees with much of Yoo's advice in relation to faculty development and curriculum development. He does, however, and I think rightly, argue that curriculum development, if more interdisciplinary, risks undermining the academic standard of the institution. (This remark must be understood in light of Kim's and Yoo's statements that distance education courses are academically less rigorous than traditional courses. This remark underestimates both the quality of more distance education courses and the ability of students enrolled in distance education institutions.) Faculty development at distance education institutions should be different from that at traditional institutions. Faculty development at distance open universities should focus on the peculiar attributes of these institutions: adult education, distance pedagogy, instructional systems design, media and teaching, as well as frequent revisiting of the mandate of these institutions.

Park Sung Soo (''Distance Higher Education and Service for Students'') contrasts traditional ''elitist'' institutions' underemphasis of counselling services with the distance teaching institution's need for extensive services for a diverse population of adult learners. Park urges the institution to focus on the disparate needs of individual students rather than confine counselling and guidance activities to administrative expedience. Moreover, he demands more research

into the effectiveness of counselling styles at post-secondary, and particularly distance teaching, institutions. The requirements of adult students are quite different from those of the student entering a residential institution straight out of high school. The central problem encountered by post-secondary counselling services, one exacerbated by the open distance university — is accessibility. For distance learners, constrained by distance and time, counselling services need to reach beyond the walls of the institution and the traditional workday. These services need to be situated in the regional centres as well as in the central office and professionals, not administrators or academics, should be charged with the delivery of services.

In his critique, Lee Byung Ho agrees that services for students in distance higher education should focus on the "intellectual aspect of personal development." Lee, however, argued that "mid-adult" students, KACU's students, who return to higher education after an interruption of some years, have needs quite distinct from other post-secondary students, particularly with study and life skills. Lee emphasized KACU's efforts to extend these services of students through regional centres, correspondence, and the telephone.

Finally, Lee Tae Wuk addresses the issue of new technology and distance education — "Computer Assisted Instruction." After reviewing some developments in the application of technology to education, Lee focused on the advantages of CAI: motivation for students (more appropriate interaction that is available in the classroom environment), adaptability to a variety of teaching strategies, and individualization of instruction. While noting the disadvantage of cost, Lee views CAI as potentially important for improving the interaction between student, instructor, and course content. Kwak Duk Hoon, in his response to Lee Tae Wuk, while graciously skeptical of technological solutions to educational problems, concedes the potential of computer-assisted instruction in the distance teaching environment as well as the potential of other more common technologies — audio cassettes, radio and television, and video-cassettes. Lee and Kwak agree that technology needs to be "subservient to educational goals and the objectives of instruction.;" These contributions, potentially the most fascinating for this reader, were disappointing in their lack of substantive content related to the application of technology to distance education.

The issues confronting distance higher education in Korea, as outlined in this and earlier conference proceedings, are not dissimilar to those encountered in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia. The distressing component of these proceedings is that each institution appears to be reinventing the wheel and does not appear to learn from the experience of other institutions. While this is perhaps inevitable, more frank interchange of opinion and experience, as demonstrated in this volume, should assist distance educators to improve their services to students.

There are two disadvantages with the volume and both, I am convinced, arise from the difficulty of translation. The first problem is substantive. Often the papers and responses appear to be superficial and overly polite. Undoubtedly the debate in sessions outlined real substantive issues but these are not always (especially in the article on technology and distance learning) explicated in the papers. The second difficulty is the editing. While I acknowledge that the preparation and editing of a volume in a foreign language (in this case English) inevitably leads to errors in grammar and spelling, the frequency of these errors in this volume unfortunately detracts from the quality of the discussion of issues.

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