

MODULE: 6b) ODL Example: Korea National Open University (KNOU)
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This section contains one of a series of case studies of open and distance learning (ODL) institutions in Asia. The range of ways in which ODL is provided by these institutions provides useful models for other organisations to consider.

EXAMPLE/B: Korea National Open University (KNOU), Seoul.

Organisational Background

1. Rationale of the Institution

Korea National Open University (KNOU) is accredited by the Ministry of Education & Human Resource Development in South Korea. KNOU was established in 1972 by *Presidential Decree 17146*, with five departments annexed to Seoul National University (SNU). It was Korea's first national university for open and distance learning (ODL). Other national and local government laws affect KNOU and its students: the Law of Higher Education which manages the University of the Air as a provider of higher education by ODL, and the Foundation Law of Korea National Open University.

2. Mandates and Roles within the Korea National Educational System

The founding vision of KNOU was as the 'Open University in Lifelong Society'. Today, KNOU's role as an open lifelong educational institution is greater than ever, representing a renewable source of the information and knowledge demanded by the information society. KNOU advocates open learning principles leading to the lifelong learning society of the 21st century under three mandates: *Distance education* specialising in learning methods; *Lifelong Education* that is open to all people, open in time and place, and open to social change; and *Public Education* that promotes lifelong learning opportunities.

Since 1972, KNOU has produced approximately 400,000 graduates, and has a current enrollment of nearly 180,000 students. Students enrolled at KNOU come from all walks of life, from homemakers to lawmakers, teenagers to senior citizens, from Seoul citizens to Jeju islanders. Over 80% of KNOU students also have jobs. Their ages, occupations and regional origins are truly diverse. Once a student joins KNOU, he or she not only obtains knowledge but also interacts with peers from a wide range of backgrounds. Twenty percent of graduates continue their studies at graduate schools, and over. Because they can study at any time and any place of their own choosing, students can pursue a higher academic career while progressing in their social career. KNOU offers 'substitute exams' equivalent to classroom coursework for those who cannot attend classroom lectures. About 1,000 study groups, spanning all regions of the country, encourage students to study together.

3. Organisational Structure

KNOU's organisational structure is based on a presidential system (1 president) and four administrative offices: Academic Affairs, Students Affairs, General Affairs, and Planning Affairs. The academic structure includes four Colleges for undergraduate courses: Liberal Arts, Social Science, Natural Science,

and Education. It also includes a Graduate School with Departments of Public Administration, Business Administration, Home Economics, Computer Science, Nursing, Early Childhood Education, and Lifelong Education. KNOU also has auxiliary institutions, including the Institute of Distance Education, the Digital Media Centre, the Centre for Lifelong Education, the University Library, the Information & Computer Centre, the Centre for In-service Education, KNOU Press, the KNOU weekly newspaper, the Office of Bachelor's Degree Examination Programme for Self-Education, the KNOU Industry-Academic Cooperation Foundation, and the Open University Network (OUN) television station.

In order to provide the students with a convenient educational environment, KNOU also has a network of 14 regional campuses and 35 study centres across Korea. All areas of academic affairs, from admissions to graduation, are carried out in the same manner at all regional campuses. A distinctive educational environment featuring video-conferencing lectures, libraries and tutorial systems enhances the efficiency of study. In addition to formal classes, the regional campuses provide a convenient setting for student-based study groups. With educational and cultural centres for local residents, and venues for special lectures and reading clubs, the campuses also contribute to enriching the life of the local communities.

Academic Programmes

KNOU offers four-year Bachelor's degree and Master's degree programmes ([Table 1](#)).

[Table 1](#). Overview of KNOU academic programmes.

Programme	College	Departments		
Bachelor's Programme	Liberal Arts	Korean Language & Literature	French Language & Literature	
		Chinese Language & Literature	Japanese Language & Literature	
		English Language & Literature		
	Social Sciences	Economics	Media Arts & Sciences	
		International Trade	Public Administration	
		Law	Tourism	
		Management		
	Natural Sciences	Agricultural Sciences	Home Economics	
		Computer Science	Information Statistics	
		Environmental Health	Nursing	
	Educational Science	Culture & Liberal Arts	Education	
		Early Childhood Education		
Master's Programme		Business Administration	Lifelong Education	
		Early Childhood Education	Nursing	
		E-learning	Practical English	
		Information Science	Public Administration	
		Home Economics		

1. Bachelor's programmes

- a) *College of Liberal Arts*. Studies in the liberal arts are a starting point for communication and the first step by which people understand each other. Up-to-date education in literature, languages and culture can develop a person into a global leader with international insight. The College of Liberal Arts includes departments devoted to study of the languages and literature of the Korean, Chinese, English, French and Japanese cultures.
- b) *College of Social Sciences*. The 21st century is an era of boundless competition, and demands creative thinking and professional expertise. To educate talented individuals to meet the needs of the times

and pioneer new knowledge, KNOU has departments of economics, international trade, law, management, media arts & sciences, public administration, and tourism.

- c) *College of Natural Sciences.* KNOU is on the cutting edge in the natural sciences, with departments of agricultural sciences, computer science, environmental health, home economics, information statistics, and nursing.
- d) *College of Educational Sciences.* Education is a long-term policy in Korea, and fostering the next generation provides the foundation for national and social development. KNOU develops future leaders in a world-class educational environment, with ideal values and motivation. It has departments of culture & liberal arts, early childhood education, and education.

2. Master's programmes.

Society has a great need for professionals with leadership and expertise. The Lifelong Graduate School of KNOU produces individuals who will spearhead social change based on time-honoured academic theories and practical competence. The Graduate School has been producing master's degree graduates since 2001. Providing a 100% online education, it offers a high-quality professional education to those who cannot obtain a graduate school education owing to constraints of time and place. The graduate studies departments include business administration, early childhood education, e-learning, information science, home economics, lifelong education, nursing, practical English, and public administration,

Student Profile

The total number of enrolling students of KNOU in April 2007 was 181,622, including 121,581 female students (67.5%), and 58,417 males (32.5%). The age profile of KNOU students is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. KNOU students' profile by age (April 2007).

Age range	Number of students
<20 years old	684
21 - 30 years old	55,558
31 - 40 years old	78,068
41 - 50 years old	36,695
51 - 60 years old	9,353
>60 years old	1,264

The Instructional System

1. Registration

After receiving the registration documents from KNOU, students pay the registration fee through Internet banking and walk-in banks. As of 2007, the registration fee was approx. 320 US dollars per semester.

2. Learning/ course methods

Lectures at KNOU are presented in conventional classrooms, by video-conferencing, the Internet, radio and TV, and via other educational media as appropriate to the course. Support materials include textbooks written by the faculty members of KNOU and other leading universities in Korea. Students also receive audio cassettes, e-books, CDs, VCDs, and MP3s containing videotaped lectures by their professors and other material.

3. Learning Support System

Several support offices at KNOU offer learning support services to KNOU students.

- a) The *Registration office* provides detailed information on all aspects of university life.
- b) The *Students Service Centre* offers academic affairs and registration services, search services (admissions matters, employment sites, advisory sites, etc.), and student life services (issuing of certificates and IDs, counseling services, etc.).
- c) The *Administration Office* provides the students with specific information (university entrance, registration, examinations and academic records, scholarships, etc.).
- d) The *Academic Departments* also provide academic counseling services and information about attending courses, and course content.
- e) The *Libraries*. To support education and research, KNOU operates a Central Library and a network of regional libraries at 14 campuses and 35 study centres. The libraries house books, e-books, and academic databases.
- f) The *Institute of Distance Education (IDE)* is Korea's only research institute specialising in distance education. It has three divisions: distance education research and development, educational technology research, and educational evaluation and counseling (especially psychological counseling services for students).
- g) The *Students' Association* also provides counseling services for registration, maintenance of academic records, academic problems, and adjustment to school, by telephone or personal interview.
- h) The *Tutoring System* uses regional and department tutors to provide students with help in developing self-directed learning plans.

4. Student Assessment

KNOU evaluates the students' learning via an examinations system. During the regular semester, the students are graded on the basis of their performance in mid-term and final evaluations. The mid-term evaluation counts for 30% of the total score, via methods including classroom-lecture exam, classroom-lecture substitute exam, mid-term examination, and/or assignment. The final evaluation counts for 70% of the grade based totally on performance in a final examination. In the case of experiment and apprenticeship courses, evaluation is by a report counting for 100% of the grade.

5. Conclusion

Korea is a leader in the information and communication technology field, and its ICT infrastructure is approaching world-class level. More than 30 million people in Korea have subscribed to the Internet since the opening of the country's commercial service in 1994. Korea shows particular ICT capability with respect to its volume of high-speed Internet subscriptions, currently ranking third in the world after the US and Japan. Based on this infrastructure, the Ministry of Education & Human Resources Development has identified 'e-Learning Korea' as a major brand to represent the country and the Ministry internationally, and has introduced plans to develop this brand image. As a part of the government's plan to curb excessive private education costs, distance education and e-learning have seen particular advancement and promotion in the country in recent years. For Koreans, distance education and e-learning are now more than a mere educational ICT tool. They are considered a major factor that will create a shift in the educational paradigm, and will be a core driving force by which Korea can gain a competitive edge. Since its foundation in 1972, KNOU has been the first and largest distance university in the country. As a leading cyber-education institution, KNOU offers advanced educational media and learner-oriented educational methods to help individuals acquire a higher degree and professional knowledge. As an institution for lifelong education, required in an age of knowledge and information, KNOU has nurtured the new intellectuals that society needs.