

Articles on the Korea Air and Correspondence University and Related Issues

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This book was published by the Korea Air and Correspondence University through its institute of Lifelong Education in response to recent and numerous requests for information about distance education in Korea. The publication is comprised of a series of seven papers prepared almost entirely by Korean authors and presented at international seminars on distance education between 1983 and 1986. According to the editor, the publication was intended to meet "requests from overseas friends and to promote international cooperation among distance teachers of the world." The seven papers describe the general nature of education in Korea, the status of higher education today, and recent developments related to distance education in Korea. The papers focus largely on the development and current status of distance education in Korea.

The Korean educational system is based on a six-three-three-four year pattern. The first six years of elementary school are free and compulsory and 97% of the elementary school graduates move on to middle school through a lottery-based admission and school assignment policy. Middle schools are expected to be compulsory and free by 1991. The three-year Korean high schools are classified into general high schools, vocational high schools (which provide specialized technical education), and "other" high schools that specialize in such areas as athletics, music, and drama. As for higher education, there are currently 463 institutions: 120 two-year institutions or junior colleges; 135 four-year institutions offering bachelor's degrees; 201 colleges and universities with four-year degree programs, master's and doctoral programs; six open colleges offering both two-year programs and four-year degree programs; and the Korea Air and Correspondence University (KACU) with both two-year programs and four-year degree programs.

Of the seven contributions to this volume, the most helpful paper for those wishing access to a comprehensive review of distance education in Korea is that presented in 1985 by Syngnan H. Kim of the Korea Air and Correspondence University. In the paper, Kim reviews the history and rationale for KACU and provides a comprehensive documentation of KACU graduation

statistics and success rates between 1972 and 1985. In addition, the author presents a cost analysis of KACU to substantiate the claim that KACU delivers higher education at a cost as little as 16 times less than the conventional university in Korea. For those wishing a comprehensive view of the entire higher education picture in Korea, the publication also contains a comprehensive technical report by Chongyul Park et al., first published in 1986 by the Korean Council for University Education in Seoul. The latter, although containing almost no reference to KACU or distance education in Korea, nevertheless occupies nearly half of the entire book. It provides detailed documentation about technical aspects of Korean higher education such as rationale; staff and student characteristics such as academic qualifications, numbers, and age; facility statistics that document the number and types of buildings; teaching and research space; statistics related to the teaching aids and practical teaching equipment used; aspects of management and coordination; the manner in which time is scheduled; the financing of higher education; the inter-relationship among higher education institutions; and the methods used to evaluate Korean higher education.

Clearly, Synghan H. Kim's paper is the major strength of this publication, outstanding in its academic presentation and its discussion of developments outside Korea relevant to distance education in the country. In my judgement, S. Kim's paper best meets the objective for this publication as set out by its editor.

The six other papers in this volume are much more practical and technical in nature, each of which, in isolation from the others, would have no doubt contributed to useful conference and seminar presentations. Indeed, each paper provides informative reading about both the development and current status of distance education in Korea. However, significant redundancy between the seven papers has left the publication with marginal value and, in my opinion, rendered the respective authors a disservice. In addition to significant redundancy between the papers in this publication there are numerous editorial errors of a technical or proofing nature. Some of the errors no doubt originated in translation difficulties from Korean to English. However, other errors of a technical and editorial nature, such as the failure to note the date of the publication or the editor's name, are inexcusable for any publication released for an international readership.

In spite of the marked editorial difficulties, this publication does achieve its objective. For those individuals interested in the nature of Korean distance education, the publication will be informative. Although I have considerable difficulty recommending the purchase of this paperback, the absence of other publications on the subject make it a worthwhile investment

for anyone looking for background information related to distance education and/or higher education in Korea.

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