Chapter 48
Anonymous Online Learning in Korea and Integrating Anonymous Learning Elements

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores anonymous online learning as a tool to overcome specific teaching and learning issues within Korean post-secondary institutions. The chapter utilizes a survey of a small group of ESL students at a single Korean university to better understand student preferences and opinions about non-traditional learning options and opportunities in Korea. While many students in Korea have not been exposed to online learning, the students surveyed expressed interest in learning online and they were especially interested in collaborative learning opportunities. As more online classes and online learning opportunities start to become available in South Korea, this study explores anonymous online learning as an effective tool to overcome some significant and distinct teaching and learning challenges at Korean post-secondary institutions. The anonymous online learning suggestions and approaches in the paper can be implemented within fully online courses and blended classes but they can also be used as stand-alone online components of traditional face to face and ESL courses.

INTRODUCTION

Technology is no longer a sidebar in higher education. Today it is a critical component of teaching and learning in any program and across all program delivery modalities. Students utilize tablets, smart phones, and laptops throughout class and they move seamlessly between their devices. Wi-Fi enabled classrooms are now norm and poor or intermittent Wi-Fi is a sure way to draw the ire of students and faculty alike. These technology and smart device proliferations are forcing educators to rethink teaching techniques and to look for new and interesting ways to further integrate technology supported learning into their courses and programs.

Online forums and online submissions have changed how students interact with each other and how students interact with the instructor. These technologies have driven changes in student to instructor and student to student interactions can be used to an educator's advantage. These advantages are more evident when the changes are combined with accessibility to the unlimited information on internet to better facilitate student learning and to promote and enhance authentic learning experiences. Although Korea is viewed as a highly-evolved, technology driven economy and country it is both interesting and unfortunate that Korea has not taken advantage of the vast array of technology tools available in online learning. Korea is well behind the United States and other developed countries such as Australia and New Zealand in supporting and encouraging the proliferation of technology across the curriculum.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

South Korea has a rich and deep history. The country has strong early influences from China dating back to the Gojoseon Kingdom as late as 300 BC (Daehwan, 2003). During the Goryeo Dynasty, from 918 to 1392 AD, Buddhism was the dominant religion, but as the dynasty fell, Confucianism started to become more prominent and blended with previously dominant Buddhist beliefs eventually creating Neo-Confucianism (Daehwan, 2003; Koh, 2003). The succession of the Joseon dynasty, from 1392 to 1910 AD, saw the rise of King Sejong who favored Confucianism and helped place its roots in Korea through his focus on education and scholarships (Koh, 2003; Weidman & Park, 2000). The Gukjagam, the highest educational institution built during the Goryeo Dynasty, was enhanced, relocated to modern day Seoul, and renamed the Sungkyunkwan (Lee & Yi, 2002; Weidman & Park, 2000). The Sungkyunkwan became the most important center for training Confucian scholars who were also political and cultural leaders. King Sejong also introduced Hangul, Korea's current language. With the introduction of Hangul, literacy in Korea rose and so did Confucian beliefs which ultimately shaped the language to include hierarchical language and placed importance on Confucian based relationships (Daehwan, 2003; Koh, 2003; Weidman & Park, 2000; Zhang, Lin Nonaka, & Beom, 2005).

The Confucian influence led to teacher centered classrooms that provide little room for students to participate in discussion with classmates or the teacher because of the relationships that are emphasized by Confucian teachings (Bang & Kim, 2016; Daehwan, 2003; Zhang, Lin Nonaka, & Beom, 2005). There is little praise given along with frequent scolding (Bang & Kim, 2016). This criticism of the students in conjunction with the hierarchical relationships built into the classroom through the language and social norms has caused students to abhor school (Bang & Kim, 2016; Joen & Kim, 2012; Yun, Kim, & Kim, 2009).

Korea's traditional mindset and feelings of needing to hold onto past ideas directly conflicts with their advanced information communication technology infrastructure (Geert Hofstede, 2017). In the past, Korea lacked online courses, but with the creation of K-MOOC, Korea is rapidly developing online courses to better utilize the advancements made through their ICT infrastructure (K-MOOC, 2017). This new emerging method of educational instruction in South Korea provides new opportunities for educators to provide greater motivation and participation from their students compared to traditional classes (Warschauer, 1995, Zheng & Warschauer, 2015).

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