Current Status and Future Challenges of OpenCourseWare in Korea

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Abstract

The sharing of university course materials by means of OpenCourseWare (OCW) is becoming an increasingly popular movement. Many universities, research institutes, and non-profit organizations in the world have been sharing their learning materials, tools, resources, and methods of implementation by making them available though free access.

In this study, we analyze the current status of OCW movement in Korea and review Korea University’s OCW and KERIS, the Korea Education and research Information Service’s OCW activities in detail. And the past, presence and future of the Korea University OCW with the contents, copyright and access statistics are described.

It also presents future issue on collaboration among domestic and international OCW groups and suggests plans for further development and how to proceed in the future.

Keywords: OpenCourseWare in Korea, the Korea university, Education, G-class, Open Educational Resources

1. Introduction

OpenCourseWare (hereafter, OCW) was initiated by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and allows the public to access open course materials without requiring approval or a sign-up process. OCW removes barriers to access to knowledge. Educational institutions open their course materials to public through the Internet so that educators can use them for their class materials, and learners can enhance their knowledge through self-study with these open sources. In this study, we analyze the current status of OCW activities in Korea and suggest plans for further development and how to proceed in the future. Section 2 review Korea University’s OCW and KERIS. Section 3 focuses on Korea University’s OCW activity in detail, including the background of Korea University’s introduction of OCW, its history from its inception until now, the current status of available materials, and other features related to the OCW contents and property rights. Finally we conclude the paper with future challenges and issues in OCW.

2. Current Status and Example of OCW in Korea

2.1 Current Status of OCW in Korea

Domestically, three universities and one non-profit organization started the OCW movement in 2007, and as of 2010, nine universities and one non-profit organization participate in OCW. Among these nine universities, three universities separately launched websites different from OCW under the name of Open Course. Every Open Course has its own distinctive purposes. For instance, one Open Course might gather and categorize dispersed the lectures of world class scholars into one website and provides Korean subtitles to enhance Korean learners’ understanding, another might target the general public rather than students as learners and share interesting and practical courses for them in the form of movie clips. The number of creative types of Open Course is growing as interest in Open Course Public increases. As Figure 1 shows, domestic universities’ interest in OCW and Open Educational Resources (hereafter, OER) has gradually grown since 2007, and the number of participants in this movement has been steadily increasing.

Figure 1 Number of participants of OCW and/or OER
Figure 2 indicates the total number of available courses from all participating universities by languages – Korean and English. At first, the total number of OCW courses was 55 in 2007; 18 courses in Korean and 37 courses in English, and this has grown to 585 courses, 272 courses in Korean and 313 courses in English, by July 2010.

![Graph showing number of OCW courses by language]

Figure 2 Number of OCW open courses by language

Based on the increase of OCW courses, it is expected that more courses can meet user’s needs.

2.2 Examples of OCW in Korea

2.2.1 Korea University OCW

Since sharing knowledge and education can improve the university’s competitiveness, Korea University joined the Open Course Ware Consortium (OCWC, a global consortium organized by MIT) in March 2007 and launched its own OCW project in September 2007 as the first university in Korea to do so. It also initially joined the Korea OCW Consortium (KOCWC) in April 2008 with Busan University, Seoul National University of Technology and Handong University. In addition, it hosted the first Asian Regional OCW Conference in November 2009.

As of July 2010, Korea University has opened a total of ninety courses, including sixty sets of course materials used for offline classes, fifteen learning portfolios and fifteen special lectures from the Center for Teaching and Learning. And among the sixty sets of course materials, eighteen courses are available in Korean and forty-two courses in English.

2.2.2 Korea Education Research Information Service OCW

The institution that has played a central role in implementing the ministry’s policies is KERIS, the Korea Education and Research Information Service. KERIS has been responsible for Korea’s educational Information & Communication Technology (ICT) development, and KOCW is a service sharing higher education courses and course materials. It is affiliated with domestic and international OER organizations. It started by opening domestic course materials in 2007 and extended its service to international courses such as YouTube, EDU, TED, Research Channel and Lift in 2009. As of July 2010, there are 865 domestic courses, 622 international courses and 42,822 general educational resources (including international materials) available.

The Korean Ministry of Education, Science and Technology saw the importance of supporting OER as a part educational innovation, and in order to empower individual universities to build capacity in open content generation. So KOCW aims to improve the quality of college education by sharing e-learning contents and acquiring educational materials easily by using the power of sharing and expanding lifelong education opportunities for the general public by opening university courses.

It holds a large quantity and diverse fields of course materials provided by not only domestic universities and associated institutions but also international institutions. It also provides its service via Smart Phone and iPhone so users can play video lectures from the KOCW website.

KOCW provides intellectual property rights guidelines for those who are reluctant to open their courses due to intellectual property issue, and a Q&A system where experts can answer as soon as faculty member at the university pose questions. Also, it provides an Open Lab service, a virtual storage for learners to collect and store lectures they need and to create study groups to discuss and share information using open courses.

2.2.3 Other Universities

Sookmyung University started an OCW movement with video lectures by recording its own courses since 2010. Apart from OCW, the university launched a knowledge sharing project, called SNOW. It gathers and categorizes many diverse courses, especially in the form of the lectures of world class scholars, and provides subtitles and transcripts in Korean and in English through subtitling volunteers.

Ulsan University is now undertaking two open course projects – OCW and Open Course. OCW targets students and shares course materials in the form of PDF files used in offline classes at Ulsan University. Open Course, in other hand, focuses on
the general public and selects courses for which they would have practical needs. These courses are shared via video.

Seoul National University operates the SNU OCW movement so that everyone can learn by using online free course materials.

3. Korea University OCW

This Section summarizes three distinctive features of the Korea University OCW (hereafter, KUOCW), which distinguishes it from others, in terms of the contents, copyright issues and access statistics of KUOCW.

3.1 Contents

As regards the current proportion of KUOCW courses as of July 2010, ninety courses are offered, including sixty sets of materials used in offline courses, fifteen Learning Portfolios and fifteen special lectures held by the Center of Teaching and Learning at Korea University (hereafter, KUCTL).

KUOCW is characterized by four types of contents.

First, most of the contents are PDF files which were converted from the lecture slides used in class. They are uploaded on the website with syllabi and lecture materials, being sorted by class.

Second, KUOCW make available Learning Portfolios from students. KUCTL holds annual Learning Portfolio contests, and distinguished portfolios are opened to the public in the form of e-books on the KUOCW website with both student and professor's approval. The learning Portfolio is a type of study note, in which a student clearly summarizes lectures and his/her achievement in a class throughout a semester based on course syllabi. It offers syllabi, lecture notes by week, mid-term and final examination questions and guidance preparation of exams and assignments.

Third, KUOCW offers a special type of content based on an easily accessible platform, known as G-class. KUOCW has sixteen video lectures and forty-four document-based course materials out of a total of sixty courses. G-class is a video lecture system enabling virtual classes by professors overseas. Thus, G-class is being taught by a professor from Korea University and at least one scholar from a university overseas. It provides opportunities for students to listen to lectures of world class scholars in Korea. Figure 3 is the G-class example and it is opened on the KUOCW website.

Since the program was launched in the fall 2007 semester, a total of twenty-eight G-classes have been offered to students as of spring 2010. The number of professors wishing to adopt G-class in their classes is increasing. G-class can be an alternative to solve facilities, human resources and cost problems. G-class software provides recording functions while conducting a class so a professor can make video material easily; thus, it can remove barriers to producing video materials.

Finally, the proportion of KUOCW materials in English is higher than the Korean materials. Korean materials account for only eighteen out of the sets of sixty course materials, in contrast to forty-two for English materials (Figure 4).

This result comes from Korea University's active English lecture policy regarding globalization since 2004 for the purpose of globalization of education. All new faculty members are obliged to conduct classes in English. Currently, approximately 40% of all classes are conducted in foreign languages, including native Anglophone professors' lectures.

3.2 Copyright

Copyright is an important and sensitive issue when institutions or universities start an OCW movement. Many professors are hesitant to participate in opening their course materials due to
this problem. Thus, institutions or universities should have professional staff for dealing with copyright issues and providing consulting and solutions. However, in practice, it is almost impossible to hire such professional staff exclusively for OCW due to limited budgets. To solve this problem, Korea University provides information about Creative Commons, which is a tool providing a simple, standardized method to grant copyright permissions to creative work and possible examples of materials which professors can use without concern for copyrights issues, and suggests how to create materials not in violation of copyright law. In addition, materials are made available after a screening process in the OCW division at CTL of Korea University.

Contents opened through KUOCW are protected by copyright according to the license conditions of Attribution, Non-Commercial and Share Alike as defined by the Creative Commons

3.3 Access Statistics and Analysis

It is important to verify if OCW activity functions effectively on a constant basis. However, it is difficult and even impossible to check every learner’s activities. As an alternative, Korea University monitors the number of visitors on a regular basis.

Figure 5 shows the number of visitors from January to May, 2010. About 1,500 visited KUOCW website per month and the number of visitors has grown steadily up to May. However, it has slightly declined in May, which is the end of the semester and start of summer vacation. Visitors by nation show interesting results. 50% of total visitors are Koreans, but USA, India, Philippines, China, Malaysia, Britain, Australia, and others -more than 137 countries-account for the other 50%.

4. Features and Challenges of OCW in Korea

Throughout the previous sections, the current status of OCW in Korea has been analyzed. Based on this, this section will discuss the futures and challenges of OCW in Korea.

First, although the Korean OCW is a relative newcomer in the OCW field compared to America and Japan, the interests and participating institutions are rapidly growing every year. This indicates that interest in OCW from universities and institutions is increasing and this trend seems to continue. In order to promote the OCW movement in Korea and policy support from the government are necessary for further development of OCW in Korea.

Second, the role of the consortium, i.e., the association of OCW institutions and universities, needs to be extended. Despite the existence of KOCWC (Korea OCW Consortium), its role is limited in comparison with JOCW and the OCW consortiums. To encourage communication and exchange with consortium members and foreign institutions, KOCWC needs to meet the needs of members and to collaborate.

Third, to lower the language barrier, acquiring more materials in English would be helpful to foreign learners. Also, more video lectures are needed, given the positive learning effect of video materials. The G-class system at Korea University would be a solution for this.

Fourth, copyright issues are problematic. Most materials are opened without mentioning license conditions. Therefore, institutions and universities need to solve the copyright problems by studying global OCW copyright management and license conditions, obtain advice from experts and exchange information with other OCW institutions.

Fifth is a matter of feedback. Fundamentally, OCW is a non-interactive activity by simply providing course materials. Thus, it is obvious that feedback from learners is weak and further improvement might be impossible. However, some progress might be possible in using OCW not only as a method of providing materials but as an interactive system, whereby users can study together using OCW materials and create a resulting project in the form of video or document. This still has much room for improvement.

Thus far, this article has examined the current status of OCW in Korea, and features of KUOCW. Although OCW movement in Korea was started in 2007, it is very important to keep this OCW movement continuously moving forward and to discuss common problems and share information domestically and internationally.
References


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