

DISTANCE EDUCATION SERVICES IN SUKHOTHAI THAMMATHIRAT OPEN UNIVERSITY (STOU) AND KOREA NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY (KNOU)

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ABSTRACT

In a globally engaged institution, academic solutions must take into account student differences arising from different national cultures, different educational backgrounds, dissimilar national teaching practices. This study was conducted to determine the educational model at a distance within the Business program of STOU and KNOU. On the basis of the purpose of the study, the teaching learning management model, operational system, and working support units of both universities were compared and addressed. Major findings and recommendations of the different approaches of teaching and learning were provided.

Keywords: Distance Education Service, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU), Korea National Open University (KNOU)

1. INTRODUCTION

Distance education, also referred interchangeably as distance learning, is not a new instructional phenomenon. Distance learning has undeniably changed the way people are educated. It will continue to change the way business is conducted and it will continue to change the Global market place. Nowadays, the higher education institutions in Thailand have been facing a high competition in the market.

New markets and competitive realities are forcing academic organisations to take the process of tracking, monitoring, and improving operational and organizational performance, in order to meet the growing challenges posted by the students. These challenges have been unmistakable in recent years, as they encompass key performance facets, which shape the relationship between the students and the service operational system.

This study, as part of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) Staff

Exchange Fellowship Program for 2010, is organized and hosted by the Institute of Distance Education (IDE) of Korea National Open University (KNOU) from 23rd August 2010 to 17th September 2010. Thus, the evaluation of current situations helps clarify their relationship with the market and university service system.

In this paper, we will examine the environment and administrative approach in the distance learning system within the Business program of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) and Korea National Open University (KNOU). In addition, this study will identify the benefit from strategic guidelines for developing their teaching learning management model particularly in the field of business administration graduate study, and contribute to enhance their academic collaborations in the future.

2. BACKGROUND OF STOU AND KNOU

2.1. *Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU)*

To extend and distribute more educational opportunities to its people by utilizing limited resources efficiently, the Thai government had established one open university which operated under the long distance teaching/learning system in 1978. The institution was officially established by Royal Charter on September 5th, 1978 under the name of “Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University” and has thus designated September 5th of each year as the commemorative date of the university’s founding. After 2 years of preparation, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) started running its operations on the 1st of December 1980 with 3 faculties. They are the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Educational Studies and the School of Management Science.

Up to now STOU has covered all together 12 faculties as follows:

1. The School of Liberal Arts
2. The School of Educational Studies
3. The School of Management Science
4. The School of Law
5. The School of Health Science
6. The School of Economics
7. The School of Human Ecology
8. The School of Agricultural Extension and Cooperatives
9. The School of Communication Arts
10. The School of Political Science
11. The School of Science and Technology
12. The School of Nursing

Following the success in offering those undergraduate study programs, the STOU finally launched a graduate school to serve the needs of its alumni as well as any university graduates who want to do their advanced academic degrees and their career jobs at the same time. The first graduate program was conducted by the School of Educational Studies in 1998. Until today this level of education has operated effectively in all faculties. Moreover, the grad school has introduced one step higher level programs to

award doctoral degrees in the fields of Education, Management Science and Communication Arts.

In the academic year 2009, STOU enrolled 165,625 undergraduate students and 7,087 graduate students. For the School of Management Science, due to its awareness of the high demand for Master of Business Administration (MBA) programs in Thailand’s market and at the same time the school itself had developed a lot of competencies in distance learning systems since the last 20 years, in the year 2000 the faculty introduced the first “distance learning MBA program” in Thailand. It was then followed by the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program and the Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) program in the year 2004 and 2008 consecutively.

2.2 *Korea National Open University (KNOU)*

Korea National Open University (KNOU) offers many courses such as the undergraduate course, graduate program, part-time enrollment program, non-degree program and bachelor’s degree examination program for self-education.

For undergraduate courses, there are 4 colleges : the College of Liberal Arts, the College of Social Sciences, the College of Natural Sciences, and the College of Educational Sciences.

Firstly, the College of Liberal Arts consists of the Department of Korean Language & Literature, the Department of English Language & Literature, the Department of Chinese Language & Literature, the Department of French Language & Literature and the Secondly, the College of Social Sciences consists of the Department of Law, the Department of Public Administration, the Department of Economics, the Department of Management, the Department of International Trade, the Department of Media Arts & Sciences, and the Department of Tourism.

Thirdly, the College of Natural Sciences consists of the Department of Agricultural Sciences, the Department of Home Economics, the Department of Computer Sciences, the Department of Information Statistics, the Department of Environment Health, and the Department of Nursing.

Fourthly, the College of Educational Sciences consists of the Department of Education, the Department of Early Childhood Education and the Department of Culture & Liberal Arts.

For graduate programs, there are 9 departments:

- 1) The Department of Public Administration
- 2) The Department of Management or Department of Business Administration
- 3) The Department of Home Economics
- 4) The Department of Computer Sciences
- 5) The Department of Nursing
- 6) The Department of Lifelong Education
- 7) The Department of Early Childhood Education
- 8) The Department of E-learning

In the academic year 2009, KNOU had enrolled approximately 183,500 undergraduate students and 1,150 graduate students. The Department of Management in particular has fostered proficient business professionals at the forefront of the 21st century by teaching a combination of theory and practical business knowledge required for the effective operation and management of a company. Graduates pursue a variety of career paths in private and public companies such as CPAs, tax officers or certified labor consultants.

At present the Department of Management also offers a Master's degree program in Business Administration since 2001.

3. RESEARCH ANALYSIS

This study will focus on the teaching learning management model in the business administration graduate study of both universities. The study will cover their master degree operational system. The working units to be studied are the faculty of Management Science at STOU and the Department of Business Administration at KNOU.

Phase 1: Groundwork information survey: (1) gather relevant data and information such as Vision, Mission, and Graduate Level academic

system of the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University; (2) collect relevant data and information such as Vision, Mission, and Graduate Level academic system of the Korea National Open University.

Phase 2: Comparative Study: (1) explore all crucial and relevant information regarding the teaching learning management in the area of business administration at graduate level of Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University; (2) survey all crucial and relevant information regarding the teaching learning management in the area of business administration at graduate level of Korea National Open University; (3) interview academic executives of the Business Administration Graduate School, Korea National Open University.

4. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to individual and societal needs, adhering to the principle of lifelong education and aims to develop the life quality of the general public, it is recommended to upgrade the level of knowledge of those who are already in the workforce and expand the educational opportunities for secondary school graduates. Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) and Korea National Open University (KNOU) have carried out their mission by establishing a distance learning system employing self-instructional packages which enable students to study on their own without having to attend a conventional classroom.

STOU and KNOU operate on a semester basis with each regular semester lasting at least 15 weeks. Each course of KNOU is worth 3 credits (for 1 subject) while each course block of STOU is worth 6 credits (equivalent to 2 subjects).

In addition, both Universities may accomplish more effectively in their mission by:

For STOU

Due to its policy starting in the year of 2012, every course of master degree will be given lectures through e-learning via multimedia. Thus, STOU should prepare the cyber tutor to provide academic guidance and internet lectures and should set up cyber tutor management systems as follows:

- **Tutor evaluation (Midterm and Final evaluations)**
 - ✓ Quantitative evaluation: Reports, student participation, student satisfaction, on-line tutoring activities (Q&A, discussion room, one-on-one counseling, bulletin board, etc.);
 - ✓ Qualitative evaluation: Knowledge (Quality of tutoring and professional knowledge about course), technique (Student management skills and computer utilization skills), attitude (integrity, tolerance);
- **Tutor monitoring: Providing feedback to school after monitoring each tutor in each school.**

For KNOU

KNOU should arrange the practical experience programs for its students prior to graduation by organizing this program in each department. Students are required to participate in this pre -graduation program.

Objectives of the practical experience program are:

- To establish good relationships between students and the university, students and the academic staff and among the students themselves;
- To enable students to appreciate the importance of teamwork, unity and sacrifice for the benefit of others;
- To encourage students to apply the principles and theories learned from their studies into practice;
- To provide students the opportunity to exchange professional experiences & skills;
- To improve student's experiences in the areas of morality and professional ethics.

Tables 1 and 2 summarise the educational management model of the teaching-learning system in STOU and KNOU that were utilized by the data obtained from the survey during 23rd August 2010 to 17th September 2010.

Table 1: A Summary of Teaching Delivery Used in Bachelor's degree

STOU	KNOU
Bachelor's Degree Instructional Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks • Workbooks 	Bachelor's Degree Instructional Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Textbooks • Workbooks
Supplementary Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Radio Programs • Television Programs • Satellite Programs • Computer-Assisted Learning • Audio and Video on Demand • Online Learning • Professional Experience Activities • Tutorials • Video Conferencing Lectures 	Supplementary Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audio Lectures(radio, CDs, and MP3s) • TV Lectures • Satellite Programs • Web Based Instruction(WBI) • Learning on Demand(LOD) • Multimedia Lectures • Non • Classroom Lectures • Video Conferencing Lectures
Examination and evaluation methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular Semester <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No Mid-term Exam • Final Exam (100%) or assignment (20%) + Final Exam (80%) • Make-up Examination (100%) ✓ Summer <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final Exam (100%) 	Examination and evaluation methods <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Regular Semester <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-term Exam (30%) • Final Exam (70%) ✓ Summer/Winter <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer/Winter Exam (100%)
Assessment Grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H = 4.0 • S = 2.3 • U = 0.0 	Assessment Grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A+ = 4.3 • A0= 4.0 • A- = 3.7 • B+ = 3.3 • B0 = 3.0 • B- = 2.7 • C+ = 2.3 • C0 = 2.0 • C- = 1.7 • D+ = 1.3 • D0 = 1.0 • D- = 0.7 • F = 0.0

Table 2: A Summary of Teaching Delivery Used in Master's degree

STOU	KNOU
Master's Degree Instructional Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbooks Study Guide 	Master's Degree Instructional Media <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Textbooks
Admission Screening criteria are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Curriculum vitae with study plan (40 points) ➢ Working experience (30 points) ➢ GPA of undergraduate (20 points) ➢ English proficiency test (10 points) 	Admission Screening criteria are <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ GPA of undergraduate (40 points) ➢ Curriculum vitae with study plan (60 points) ➢ Interview(30 points)
Teaching System Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires a minimum of 2 years study Each course block is worth 6 credits The MBA Program : there are 2 plans under this program <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Plan A: Thesis ➢ Plan B: Independent Study The program requires at least 40 credits 	Teaching System Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> requires a minimum of 2.5 years study Each course is worth 3 credits The MBA Program : there is only 1 plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Thesis The program requires at least 30 credits
Educational Procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Give lecture through Face-to-Face method There are 2 seminars (each lasts 24 hours) for 2 consecutive weekends Each class consists of 15 students 	Educational Procedure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 100% online (Web Based Instruction) Seminar or workshop is possible Each class consists of 60 students
Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Mid-term Exam Course Assignment (40-60%) Final Exam (60-40%) 	Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mid-term Exam Course Assignment Final Exam (Professors are free to design course components and able to score by themselves)
Assessment Grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A = 4.0 B+ = 3.5 B = 3.0 C+ = 2.5 C = 2.0 D = 1.0 F = 0.0 	Assessment Grade <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A+ = 4.5 A0 = 4.0 B+ = 3.5 B0 = 3.0 C+ = 2.5 C0 = 2.0 F = 0.0
Educational Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> STOU Regional Distance Education Centers Provincial Study Centers Special Study Centers Educational Materials Delivery Counseling Information : STOU News, Website ,Call Center, etc. 	Educational Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional Campuses Study Centers N/A KNOU press Tutoring System, Mentoring System Information: KNOU Weekly, Website, Call Center, etc.

Table 2: A Summary of Teaching Delivery Used in Master's degree (cont)

STOU	KNOU
Library Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Service • 10 Regional Services • 80 Provincial Services • 80 STOU Corners 	Library Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Library • 13 regional campuses • 36 study centers

5. CONCLUSION

STOU (Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University) and KNOU (Korea National Open University) offer many study programs such as undergraduate programs, graduate programs and non-degree programs (lifelong education or continuing education programs).

For undergraduate degree program, STOU and KNOU arrange same teaching-learning system: - a course comprising of textbooks, workbooks and 1 medium: MP3 or DVD or CD Multimedia with radio and television programs, tutorials, computer-assisted learning, Audio and Video on Demand, e-Learning as well as Video Conferencing Lectures.

For graduate degree program, STOU and KNOU manage different teaching-learning systems. STOU requires a minimum of two years of study and provides 2 options called Plan A: Thesis and Plan B: Independent Study. For the whole program a student must earn at least 40 credits. Each course block is worth 6 credits. The educational method includes a professor giving face-to-face lectures 2 times per course, and also 2 seminars. Each seminar lasts 24 hours divided between 2 consecutive weekends with 15 students per classroom. In terms of evaluation there is only the final examination plus course assignments in the proportion of 40 - 60% to 60 - 40%.

As its counterpart KNOU requires a minimum of 2.5 years of study and has only 1 plan i.e. Thesis. The program requires at least 30 credits. Each course is worth 3 credits. KNOU uses 100% online (Web Based Instruction) teaching to students without any restrictions on time or place. In some courses there are seminars or workshops in groups of 60 students per class. Regarding evaluation, Professors are free to

design course components and able to score by themselves.

According to the education supporting system, both STOU and KNOU have a good system in this regard. STOU has educational services such as STOU regional distance education centers, provincial study centers, special study centers, educational materials delivery, counseling, information such as STOU news, website, call center, etc. and also facilitates library services at main campus, 10 regional services, 80 provincial services and 80 STOU corners all around the country.

Whereas KNOU has educational services such as regional campuses, study centers, KNOU's press, tutoring systems, information e.g. KNOU's weekly, website, call center, etc. and provides library services at main campus, 13 regional campuses and 36 study centers throughout Korea.

Upon the study it is recommended that both universities accomplish their mission more effectively through these approaches: STOU should prepare the cyber tutor to provide academic guidance and internet lectures along with setting up cyber tutor management systems.

On the other hand, KNOU should arrange the practical experience programs for its students prior to their graduation by organizing the programs in each department. Students should participate in these pre-graduation programs. Main objectives of these practical experience programs are (1) to establish good relationships between students and university, student and academic staff and among the students themselves, and (2) to enable them to apply principles and theories gained from their studies into real world situations.

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