

# A New “Atrium”

Keynote Speech delivered at Open Learning Campus Korea Launch  
June 24, 2016

Dong Yeon Kim, President, Ajou University

*Previously held positions:*

*Minister of Prime Minister's Office*

*Vice Minister, Ministry of Strategy and Finance*

*Project Manager and Public Sector Specialist, World Bank Institute (secondment)*

There is a special place between the first and second floor of the World Bank Headquarters in Washington, D.C., called “the Atrium.” It’s often called MC Atrium. At the Atrium, you can meet with your colleagues or visitors to enjoy afternoon coffee or tea in a cozy setting. Indeed, the Atrium was my favorite place when I worked at the World Bank more than 10 years ago. I liked its free and easy atmosphere – I could discuss any issue and openly share ideas and information with others. To be honest, even when meeting with high-level delegations from the World Bank’s member countries, I enjoyed the communication at the Atrium more than the meeting room discussions.

One day I had a meeting at the Atrium with my project team members from WBI, PREM and regional offices, as well as outside consultants including Dr. Allen Schick, a well-known professor at the University of Maryland. They all had

extensive experience in knowledge-sharing in the area of public finance. At the meeting, I asked them a question. It was a question that had been on my mind for a long time while implementing various projects for member countries.

*“What is the key indicator for the success of our project for member countries?”*

I suggested that they not “say” or “discuss” their answer. Instead, I gave each person a post-it note and asked them to write their answer on it. It was the best way I could think of to prevent cheating even among such esteemed specialists. Do you know what happened? To my surprise, they all gave basically the same answer although there were slight differences in expression.

*“Changes in mindset and behaviors.”*

While I was at the World Bank, I went on a number of project missions to the member countries in Asia, Latin America and Europe. Whether it was Vietnam, Laos, Mongolia, El Salvador, Turkey or Greece, the place where I implemented the project was simply another form of that Atrium. As long as I could exchange ideas and information, engage in knowledge-sharing and discuss my thoughts openly, all of those places served as a stimulating Atrium, just like my favorite place in the World Bank Headquarters. This way of thinking truly contributed to

the success of many of my projects.

We are here today to celebrate the Korea launch of another form of “Atrium” – the Open Learning Campus (OLC). We can call it a “Cyber Atrium” that is armed with advanced technologies and an innovative learning experience. The OLC will allow people to have easy access to the great sources of knowledge on global development. People will enjoy sharing their ideas and experiences in the Cyber Atrium, and can learn anytime, anywhere. As a former World Bank staff member who worked mainly on knowledge-sharing and policy consultation, I am very excited about this Cyber Atrium and see it as a remarkable milestone for the World Bank Group. From the bottom of my heart, I would like to extend my congratulations on the Korea launch of the OLC!

Let me share once again the lesson that I learned from the post-it notes of my World Bank team members. For the success of any reform effort, we should bring changes in people’s mindset and behaviors. Of course, through its innovative learning platform, OLC will provide proven solutions to development challenges and share knowledge on global development more effectively. However, that’s not enough to bring meaningful changes in the mindset and behaviors of people in diverse countries. While sharing knowledge and common values, OLC must

also embody a country-specific, culture-reflected approach in its learning platform at the same time. We have learned the importance of taking this double approach through many World Bank projects, and it is still a valid lesson to this day. Certainly, it is a critical task for the OLC to make sure that this double approach is fully embodied in all its learning content and within the platform. You know this more than anyone else, and I am confident, based on the World Bank's track record and my own experiences, that OLC will wisely tackle this challenge.

Looking back, I cannot express just how influential my experience at the World Bank was throughout my 32 years of public service and 2 years as a university president. I was able to build my capacity to better understand others and diverse cultures, engage in more meaningful communication, and solve problems through collaboration. To a certain degree, this was possible because of the unique role of the Atrium, whether it was the one in the Headquarters or those in the member countries, which allow people to share information and ideas and to discuss any issue freely. I firmly believe the Cyber Atrium, OLC will offer a similar or even much better experience, and bring us one step closer to achieving the World Bank's twin goals – ending poverty and building shared prosperity. Eventually, more people will contribute to making a better world.

Let me close by extending a special thanks to all of those involved in the launch of the Cyber Atrium, OLC. It's hard to believe that I can still enjoy the benefits of the Atrium even 15 years after leaving the World Bank. Thank you very much.