Korea brings open source to 10,000 schools

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The project, dubbed the New Education Information System (NEIS), is built on a Korean-developed version of Linux which already services 190 schools in the heart of capital city Seoul.

Jin Ko Hyun, president of the Korea IT Industry Promotion Agency (KIPA), which is behind the project, said it has taken schools two years to pilot Buyeo, the Korean version of Linux.

Hyun told silicon.com: "The information will be transferred from school to school when a student moves and when they enter university. The next phase is to make that nationwide. The pilot project was built on Linux."

Hyun added the move was not a deliberate attempt to snub Microsoft but to help the country develop more of its own software: "There's no hostility towards Microsoft. We did this first because of security issues and budgetary concerns.

"The third reason is local support - most applications will be our own developments. If we get the software vendors to do this, where will be the local support? This means local vendors will be given the chance to support their schools."

KIPA is pushing hard to make Linux more readily available to companies in Korea. By 2010 it wants 40 per cent of servers to be run on the open source operating system.

Hyun said Korea was working closely with the Chinese and the Japanese to create an Asian version of Linux that would read any program from the three countries: "The government has dispatched Linux as a preferred platform. The open source movement is very strong here - we have a separate dedicated group working on it."

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