

Higher Education, Change and Development



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- ◇ 이 글은 本協會를 來訪한(1984.7.10) 英國의 高等教育 專門 ◇
- ◇ 家 Ian Waitt 博士가 <大學教育>誌의 發展을 위해 寄稿한 것이 ◇
- ◇ 다. 이 글에서 필자는 英國 高等教育의 發達過程을 略述하고 그 ◇
- ◇ 과정에서 나타난 問題點과 大學間 協議體의 役割에 대해 폭 넓 ◇
- ◇ 게 다루면서 結論으로 우리 나라 高等教育 發展에 있어서 本協 ◇
- ◇ 議會의 機能과 活動을 연관지어 言及하고 있다. …<編輯者 註>… ◇

It is with very great pleasure and with a deep sense of privilege that this article is contributed to *Higher Education*. The thirst for knowledge and remarkable commitment to development which so characterizes Korea provide an unique stimulus to any writer engaged in the study and practice of higher education and its administration. This author is most grateful for the opportunity afforded to consider developments in higher education, and to observe the particular recent initiatives undertaken in Korea in and through the KCUE.

This article will consider in outline developments in the United Kingdom, attempt to define common problems and developments, and then to relate these to the work of the KCUE. It must be stressed however that whatever apparent insights emerge from this brief study can have but general application to the Korean situation. As the nature of any system of education is properly rooted within the culture of its own community so, inevitably, perspectives and models from elsewhere can ultimately be informative only. Undoubtedly, one of the tragedies of the modern educational world has been the inappropriate grafting of elements of specific educational systems upon those of other countries. General approaches, information, and particular techniques are worthy of study and consideration for adapted application. But as any nation's system of education is culturally bound and reflective of social values, so models from elsewhere are precisely that—and must be treated with extreme caution.

Higher education in the UK has a lengthy ancestry. From the departure of the Romans

in the fifth century AD scholarship was maintained through the religious orders and thence the development of the state. The approximation and conflict of Church and State, and the very activity of scholarship itself led to the foundation in medieval times of the great universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The concepts in Britain of academic freedom and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake stem at least from that time. It could also be argued that such concepts are as old as scholarship itself. But a pattern was set. The universities established in the UK in the nineteenth century and their twentieth century followers were and are part of an ancient tradition. That tradition may be seen in the nature of academic accountability: universities are *presumed* to be of excellence and to determine their own standards, subject to external moderation. They seek to preserve independence and to determine their own academic profile. The concept of tenure for academic staff is deeply rooted.

Yet these traditions have been compromised since early in the twentieth century by the universities' need (apart from Oxford and Cambridge) to rely primarily on public funding. To distribute that money, the Universities Grant Committee (UGC) was established. Composed of government appointed academics and educationalists, the UGC was conceived as being a buffer between government and the universities: it distributed government funds and advised government on policy towards the universities. As the universities have become more vulnerable to the restriction of public funding as a consequence of economic issues and policy, so the UGC's buffer position has been seen as being at least threatened, and so through the UGC and other agencies and sources have matters of accountability and evaluation become more sharply focussed. At the heart of the debate are the traditional issues—academic freedom and public accountability—and inextricably intertwined are the issues of social value, culture, and economic and national developmental relevance.

At the other side of what is known in Britain as the “binary line” are the polytechnics and other colleges offering advanced further and higher education. These institutions have in their various ways a history as old as the universities. They developed from the medieval trade guilds, from institutions founded in the eighteenth and nineteenth century to promote the education of the technical and vocational manpower required to express and further the requirements of the industrial revolution and to provide the educated population made necessary to operate and participate in an increasingly democratic political process; and from institutions founded to provide teacher training.

The great Education Act of 1944, approved by all sides of the House of Commons during wartime, laid out the nation's educational aspirations for the development of the country once peace was secured. Although much amended, the Act is still in force. The prime principle of the Act was education for all, according to age, ability, and aptitude. The decades following the war saw great progress towards that end. The zenith of development came during the 1960s. New universities were created. The polytechnics were established. The Robbins Report of 1963 expressed the principle of higher education for all who were qualified for it, and could benefit by it. Students received grants to pay for their tuition and living costs during their time of study. Although many universities provided courses of an applied or vocational nature, the polytechnics were specifically charged with the duty to provide higher education at degree level which was entirely applied or job-related. The Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) was established to ensure that polytechnic and other advanced college degrees were of the same standard and equal value of university degrees.

The came the oil crisis. From 1973 sudden economic recession coincided with political

questioning of education and a fall in the birth rate. There were less governmental resources. Education, at all levels, was asked not only to make provision more efficiently, but the *value* of education – especially higher education—was questioned: how far was, and could, education contribute to national economic growth, and what is its social value? The first target for reduction was the undoubtedly over provided (and in part dubious quality) field of teacher education. Teacher training colleges were closed, upgraded through being merged with universities or polytechnics, or through being diversified into other higher education provision. Here, reduction and change resulted in upgrading and quality increase. The process was skilfully managed: teacher education staff had either rapidly to develop themselves, accept school teaching posts, or leave the service with handsome government financial compensation. The rest of higher education service in Britain largely affected not to notice what had happened to teacher education between 1975 and 1978, and so was largely unprepared for the shock of financial reduction elsewhere in the system which has occurred in the 1980s. As one of the three main advisers to the majority of the teacher education colleges faced by closure, merger and diversification in the 1970s, this author has viewed higher education reaction to the reductions and requirements of the 1980s with some weariness: what was coming was very obvious—but perhaps unwelcome prophesy has never been closely heeded! (It is a somewhat bizarre coincidence that the Rector (president) of the polytechnic in which I work was, when in government, the Minister responsible for the reform of teacher education: it is no coincidence that he has reformed that institution to ensure its continued growth and development despite current restrictions in funding).

While the universities receive funding through the recommendations of the UGC, the polytechnics and colleges are dependent upon the National Advisory Body (NAB). The NAB is headed by a government Minister and in a two tier system with an independent chairman combines government and local authority representation with participation from educationalists and others in the higher education system. Like the UGC, the NAB advises government on its sector's requirements and distributes funding according to determined priorities. Unlike UGC, it has more direct power: to determine the number and type of courses offered in the institutions under its purview, staffing ratios, and, effectively, according to resource weightings, to steer the system as a whole.

There is, of course, much opposition both to the manner of UGC and NAB activity and to particular decisions. It is not the purpose here to dwell on how well or imperfectly either body carries out its tasks but, in noting that both bodies liaise with one another, to consider the issues facing them, government, and the institutions. It will be appreciated that in both cases the UGC and the NAB are organizations of consent, representative of educational interests, and while "buffers" also effect and influence government policy. While the NAB is a new creation, the older UGC has effectively progressively undergone a change in role which, while still bolstered by the greater autonomy of the university system, brings it closer to the NAB in being increasingly perceived as an interventionist force. Should there be such intervention? Given the consumption of national resources by higher education the question is indeed academic: the universities and polytechnics have no option ultimately other than to comply with their paymasters. The institutions must argue their case, influence their buffers, and carry the debate forward publicly and privately.

The heart of the debate lies in the nature of higher education, and its contribution to society. The opening paragraphs of this article will have demonstrated the force of tradition in the UK. The great values of much of the tradition are unarguable: genuine uniform na-

tional—and international—quality of education which admits of different local and regional emphases; common (from 1986 embracing the polytechnics as well) entrance standards, procedures and arrangements; a genuine academic freedom which simultaneously allows both autonomy in academic matters, subject to external examination and/or validation, and the maintenance of overall quality; and an academic community possessing common values concerned with academic rigour as well as freedom of academic expression.

The reverse arguments concerning tradition are the tendency of academics to academism, the pursuit of the arcane, financial profligacy, inattention to the needs of society, and the arrogant assumption that somehow they are untouched by the world outside their institutions but that, whatever they are doing, it is somehow of benefit to society.

These are massive generalizations, to which contradictions will be found in any university or polytechnic department. But the very fact that they can be made is illustrative at least of higher education in Britain having failed coherently to make its case. Yet much of the agonizing which has occurred in British higher education in the 1980s is irrelevant, or self-inflicted.

In 1981 the UGC carried out government policy in the reduction of resources. It did this by effectively closing departments in some universities, reducing funding and student numbers in others, and recommending course closures or mergers elsewhere. How “correct” its decisions were is irrelevant, although not to the institutions directly effected. Course closure or restriction was aimed at the avoidance of wasteful duplication of provision, or to restrict the provision of minority interest courses. The sharp reduction of funding to some universities—however apparently or genuinely unfair—arose from the decision not to “spread equal misery”. That the UGC carried out its tasks imperfectly, and upon a dubious knowledge and evaluatory base is indisputable. But, given less money by government, the task had to be done—and it was done by the academics comprising the UGC.

Since 1981 the UGC has progressed to asking each university 28 questions about its future, the answers received being presumed to be of relevance in its forthcoming policy for further university reform. The common university reaction has been, in various ways, to dispute the questions or their relevance, and often to provide anodyne responses. The 28 questions are not—and nor could they be—models of how to construct a framework for policy development. Perhaps the lesson to draw is that the UGC has failed to secure a consensus from the universities on how to shape the future, and hence is using its power in too interventionist a manner; whereas the universities themselves have failed fully to pick up the challenge of defining their own futures. Since, ultimately, the government and the UGC have greater power than the universities, it is the institutions which are making the greater mistake.

But this observation rests upon a construct of reality. The construct of reality of many universities (i.e., as expressed by staff through senates, as opposed to that of vice chancellors and senior administrators) and their culture conflicts with that of the current government. Government policy is crudely informed by the belief that a falling birth rate means that less education need be proved (the educationalists argue that the resources so released should be redeployed for continuing education and access to education for disadvantaged groups); financially determined in that less national resources means that less money will be spent on education; and much more sophisticatedly, politically doubtful that ever higher expenditure on education leads naturally to more national economic growth.

As it is notoriously difficult, if not impossible, to evaluate (or even define) educational

“outputs”, the latter argument is difficult to assess. It is certainly true that more resources do not necessarily produce higher quality, and that any productive relevance to national needs and growth is not automatic. The heart of the matter in Britain is that the high investment of the 1960s in higher education has not been as productive for the economy as had been hoped—but that very failing is not necessarily because of any large scale educational failure: it is far more likely to have been largely the product of other economic and social forces, a significant proportion of which can be attributed to events outside Britain. Nevertheless, the debate has highlighted matters of efficiency and evaluation. One extreme example of this is the government’s intention, which it may or may not be able to carry into effect, to reform the system of tenure for those university staff to whom it applies. (Tenured staff effectively have a job for life, or very high compensation for its loss).

On the other side of the binary line, the NAB has carried out its reductionist and efficiency policy since 1982 by closing, reducing, or recommending for merger some institutions where their main provision was demonstrably no longer necessary for national needs (primarily nautical studies and, once more, teacher education) but mainly through restricting the number and type of courses which institutions can offer; and by allocating resources according to efficiency criteria, prime upon which is the crude but effective measure of the ratio of the number of staff in an institution to the number of students following courses. Wilder NAB ideas, such as reducing some courses from three to two years’ duration, have foundered; and it has conspicuously, although with limited success, bid for more resources for its sector. Probably because ultimately the polytechnics and colleges are more secure in their appreciation of their goals (applied and vocational higher education) than the universities there has been much less philosophical debate in their sector. If anything; there has been a far greater search for institutional effectiveness and efficiency, while providing education for increasing numbers of students.

What can be drawn from this rough and imperfect summary of some of the current aspects of higher education in the UK of relevance to the KCUE and to Korea? It must first be stressed that the UK system, despite its recent trauma, remains largely homogeneous, is of high uniform national quality and relevance, and by international standards extremely efficient (the standard degree course of three years’ duration compares very favourably with provision elsewhere). The system remains reflective of tradition and culture. The issues are of further efficiency in the use of resources and the manner of that achievement, and the place of education with regard to national development. As the latter is undoubtedly a product of social, economic and political forces impacting upon and informed by education itself(see, for example, Fägerlind and Saha, *Education and National Development*, Pergamon Press, 1983) that issue can be resolved only through consensus and planning by national partnership, (given favourable international economic circumstances) the crucial roles for the UGC and the NAB in Britain are clear. How far they can respond to government, and to carry their institutions with them while also bringing institutional views to government attention is undoubtedly another matter. Curiously, perhaps, for all its recent creation, the KCUE is far better placed to achieve this task in Korea. The homogeneity of Korea, its cultural nature, and its emphasis on partnership provide the KCUE with the means to effect a most complex task. Whether the task can be achieved entirely satisfactorily in Britain is debatable. It certainly cannot be achieved without great difficulty in some of the Western nations; and similarly in many other nations. Lest my readers feel I am

gratuitously overstating a case, let me be quite clear; provided that the universities in Korea work with the KCUE in creating and furthering with government the partnership necessary to achieve the integration of educational, economic, social and political goals which do produce national growth, then the future and relevance of higher education in Korea will not only be secured, but will be one of the genuine engines of national progress. The KCUE is probably the most valuable higher education resource possessed by government and by the universities. The very partnership which its establishment enshrines is undoubtedly the key to future progress: it needs and deserves the unswerving support of every university in the country.

However, as with the NAB and the UGC in Britain, there will be difficult issues to encounter. Where these can be mitigated through institutional understanding and support, so much the better. If they cannot, then interventionist forces will not doubt consider taking the place of consensus. It is clear through the KCUE's designated duties and the activities already undertaken that the means to the furtherance of the essential partnership are analogous to the UK experience of the last decade: maintenance and upgrading of the quality and relevance of provision; rationalization of course provision, and the ensuring of course relevance to particular needs; and increased effectiveness and efficiency in the use of resources.

All of these items can be hurtful to academics and institutions, especially where change is required in teaching and learning strategies and practice.

They challenge entrenched behaviour and attitudes, and require considerable personal change and development. But even to make limited progress necessary to maintain a useful and relevant position in a rapidly changing world, such development is essential. Albeit from an admittedly well established base, and despite many of the issues instanced in this article, the British system has made remarkable progress in relevance and efficiency in the last decade. Some of this has been achieved despite resistance, and certainly not without mistakes.

The UK experiences briefly cited here are offered with this hope: that through those perceptions of relevance to Korea, it can be seen how important the KCUE is for the future of higher education in Korea, and how vital it is that it receives the full support of all the universities. The KCUE in its composition, role and activities is quite unique. There is no other organization in education anywhere quite like it. That uniqueness is a formidable strength, illustrative of its development of a specifically Korean approach - and hence all the more likely to be successful. Given full institutional support, whatever particular difficulties it and higher education in Korea have to encounter, the KCUE has to be regarded not just as a valuable asset—but as a prime means to the securing of higher educational and national development. *