

Continuing the Quest for Excellence

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- ◇ 필자는 美國의 著名한 高等教育 專門家로서 韓國의 高等敎
- ◇ 育改革프로그램 개발과정에서 1971~73년 사이 文敎部의
- ◇ 諮問役으로 활동했었고, 그 후에도 여러 차례 우리 나라에
- ◇ 서 개최한 高等敎育관계 國際세미나에 發表者로 참여하는
- ◇ 등 우리 나라 大學敎育 發展에 크게 기여한 바 있다. 이번
- ◇ 에 本協議會의 발족에 깊은 관심을 가지고 高等教育의 秀
- ◇ 越性 追求問題를 본 협의회의 役割과 發展 方向에 관련지
- ◇ 어서 寄稿해 주었다. <編輯者 註> ◇

There is danger in probing the future with too short a stick. Excellence takes time.

<Edgar Dale>

The organization of the Korean Council for University Education in the spring of 1982 provides direct evidence that the Republic of Korea is continuing its thrust to upgrade the quality of higher education. This action and subsequent on-going efforts of the KCUE represent a logical extension of the Higher Education Reform Program for quality control initiated more than a decade ago. This writer served as a consultant for the Ministry of Education on this project under a USAID contract which extended from 1971 to 1973 with subsequent short-term services in 1974, 1975 and 1977.

Initially based on conferences in each province of Korea about local needs for postsecondary education, representatives of both secondary and higher education, government officials, leaders of business and industry and interested citizens produced an impressive array of desirable programs, policies and services by colleges and universities. Subsequent deliberation by MOE and Project staff evolved into a statement on "Basic Directions for Reform of Higher Education." Further studies were undertaken by advisory task forces under leadership of the MOE Educational Policy Council and findings of the IBRD Education Sector study in 1971-72.

In the midst of such developments, the problems and pressures of Korean higher education moved to a multinational arena. Cosponsored by the MOE and Yonsei University, the October 1972 international conference on *Innovation in Higher Education* attracted more than 1,200 participants, many from foreign countries. This writer presented a paper on "The Role of Government in Educational Reform of Higher Education." Many leaders

from Korean colleges and universities also contributed papers about higher education innovations in their own institutions or comparative studies with an international perspective.

The Korean Higher Education Reform Project, drawing upon its own national priorities plus evidences provided by the 1972 international conference, invited colleges and universities to participate as pilot institutions. Such colleges and universities were expected to introduce internal curricular and other reforms within their own institutions. An eleven-member Evaluation Committee which screened applications for Pilot status identified ten colleges and universities with specific programs eligible for inclusion in the initial class of Pilot institutions. The MOE granted these colleges and universities increased autonomy to evaluate and deal with problems as they arose, such that they could be considered for application to other higher education institutions.

Pressures of ever increasing enrollments during the 1970's brought need for new programs to meet emerging manpower requirements involving preparation in higher education. Such pressures created serious problems in light of existing conditions including limited institutional facilities, financial resources and specialized faculty with which to respond to these demands. Pressures sometimes took precedence over innovative and qualitative improvement but support for increasing the number of pilot colleges with new applications to varied fields of study continued during the balance of the 1970's.

In October 1979 a second international conference was held in Daegu carrying the theme *The Pursuit of Excellence in Higher Education* and cosponsored by the MOE and Keimyung University. Scholars and conference participants from all over the world came to join their Korean counterparts in discussing this important theme and updating higher education developments within their own countries. The writer was invited to participate in this conference and discussed the topic, "Accreditation of Higher Education in the United States: Implications for Korea." This topic had been identified for serious scrutiny during early stages of the Reform Project. Other topics involved country reports on higher education developments by participants from both Korea and abroad. Major themes explored included the "Role of the University in Technological Society," the applications of "Educational Technology" to higher education, the "Promotion of Teaching-Learning," "Teaching and Class Activity," the "Academic Environment." Each of these themes involved related topics for presentation, discussion and deliberation. Among these presentations was a most scholarly paper by Dr. Chung, Bom Mo, President of Chungbuk National University "On the Development of Academic Excellence" a topic directly related to this writer's present statement, "Continuing the Quest for Excellence," for publication in the Foreigner's Column of KCUE's bimonthly edition of *Higher Education*.

THE KOREAN COUNCIL FOR UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

Within this historical framework which represents the author's experiences with Korean higher education, the KCUE provides continuity to the "Quest for Excellence." With membership of all 110 four-year colleges and universities, public and private, KCUE represents a strong bridge from which to look beyond present structure and status of higher education to its future development and thrust toward a level of higher education to which the Republic of Korea can aspire in its quest for excellence. KCUE provides a direct link from quality already attained by colleges and universities, maintaining the best

of the past, and using its joint cooperative organizational leadership to introduce new policies and practices which help set national priorities for higher education to meet problems and pressures of coming years.

The Council's leadership carries direct ties with the Ministry of Education which cannot be taken lightly for they legitimate its goals, programs and activities. These ties also provide a general governmental endorsement and legitimation of its undertakings.

At the same time the KCUE cannot possibly aspire to excellence as a superior entity by itself without complementary endorsement, aspiration and implementation by each of its 110 member-institutions. These colleges and universities will properly differ in their own structures, goals, purposes and programs even as they collectively provide an overall network for higher education in the nation as a whole. Individual colleges and universities must thus participate somewhat selectively as programs and activities reflect current and evolving roles from which they contribute to postsecondary education for the national good.

Some institutions will carry a limited role involving undergraduate programs only in certain specific fields or program areas. Others will combine undergraduate with graduate program offerings and provide a balanced mixture of teaching, research and service, much of which will extend beyond instruction to fields of agriculture, industry, government and many professional specialties. Leadership for the Republic can emerge from both types of institutions even as they represent institutional differences in support, programs, student clientele and geographic location. Changes in technological development for society at large will also have differing impacts and consequences upon individual institutions yet ties to the UCEA and society as a whole may well require specification of some priorities over others in both goals and accomplishments. Within such differing circumstances some institutions will gain while others lose status in their contributions to higher education as they confront the realities of increasing or decreasing enrollments, competition for highly qualified faculty, changing financial support, new versus aging facilities and positive or negative reputations among members of the public at large.

All institutions cannot possibly aspire to the same kinds of excellence nor equal acceptability among prospective students who seek college educations from different geographic settings and limited awareness of what may or may not be available to them. Fortunately individual differences exist among both students and institutions of higher learning such that quality education can be attained by students even in mediocre colleges and qualitative difference in programs which these institutions offer to students. Learning too is an individual matter which comes best when self-energized under supportive conditions within institutions. Individual students seldom have the opportunity to sample the wide upper range of excellent formal and informal settings within the colleges which they attend. Such listing includes their faculty advisers, professors, facilities and services which may be available within the colleges or universities which they attend. Hopefully conditions will exist under which students will be able to adjust their changing aspirations for programs and services in such a way that they provide a better fit even as goals change during college years and future careers more clearly recognize what is likely to be available and in demand in the ever evolving market place for their future services.

The accomplishments of KCUE thus become dependent on how well the individual member colleges and universities are able to meet the Council's objectives and activities as "the authorized agency for establishing autonomous policies and practices in higher

education." At the same time the Council must lead its member institutions and secure their support for new and continuing programs and activities as they advance their joint yet pervasive "Quest for Excellence," a quest which must be identified and interpreted under ever changing conditions and circumstances.

The Council can only gain recognition and strength as it is able to pursue autonomy and quality education by "making appropriate proposals and recommendations to the government" with solid support of member institutions. Its ability to generate leadership and confidence of member institutions will depend heavily on ability to communicate among themselves and with the MOE. Such emergent leadership for Korean higher education must always be alert to new ideas and provide full deliberation of priorities which can be maintained or shifted in light of changes in the economy, national priorities for manpower, shifting societal expectations and future changes in the composition and educational qualifications of students who seek entrance to colleges or universities.

ACTIVITIES OF KCUE

In light of KCUE's objectives some comments about the Council's current activities may well be desirable even if constricted by the writer's limited awareness of current conditions in Korean higher education. Such comments are selective and not intended to reflect priorities of any sort.

The emphasis on research on problems and issues of higher education appears most attractive. Too often research is defined in terms of subject matter and need to probe the frontiers of knowledge within specialty fields. This approach pays less attention to the need for research in higher education itself as a worthy area for evaluation, planning and policy making. This type of research, whether institutional or interinstitutional, needs to attain legitimacy as new issues and problems demand serious scrutiny. Such studies were highlighted during early years of the Higher Education Reform Project with institutional support from the MOE. Some efforts have evolved into MOE-financed leaves for faculty and administrators to continue graduate study programs on an international scale as well as within and among existing universities which emphasize strong research-based programs. Evaluation and research are also needed on the management of academic programs, systems of faculty retention and promotion, and curricular reform.

Screening and guidance programs for prospective college students become important functions in practically all countries. This acquires special attention in Korea where colleges and universities in or near Seoul tend to gain more public recognition and priority for students than do those in outside provinces. The Educational Testing Service in the United States recently indicated involvement in projects under development throughout the world including Brazil, the People's Republic of China, Japan, Korea and the Philippines. This agency, the College Entrance Examination Board, and the American College Testing Program have expertise which might be tapped in dealing with matters inherent in screening and guidance at both undergraduate and graduate levels.

Finance and accounting systems become more complex as enrollments mount but experience in the United States and other countries indicates that retrenchment constitutes a more serious problem than expansion. A different set of difficulties evolves and tends to exacerbate and strain relationships between public and private higher education institutions as both increasingly compete for non-governmental support. Uncertainties about funding

also complicate systems of finance and accounting as well as formulation and implementation of budgetting practices.

The problems inherent in development and practice for transfer of students from one institution to another deserves special attention by the Council. This is particularly true due to the exceedingly limited use of transfer in Korea. In this regard the Council should seriously also consider possibilities of transfer from less than four-year colleges and universities, possibly experimenting a bit with joint utilization of facilities in neighboring institutions offering collegiate or strong secondary-level programs. In the United States this has involved initially experimental colleges which admit students only after successful completion of two-year or lower-division programs to four-year upper-division colleges or to institutions which admit and provide only upper level baccalaureate and master's programs. Similar recognition at the graduate level could easily involve transfer of M.A. students to doctoral programs in other universities.

The possibilities of further exploration of a voluntary system of accreditation based on institutional self-study and evaluation plus some procedure for review by competent outside teams of evaluators may still be worthy of consideration by KCUE. Some kind of an autonomus agency would appear to have potential for serving this function particularly if it carried KCUE and MOE endorsement and served semi-governmental review functions recognized by both educators and the public at large. Whether a single agency could serve this function for overall institutional recognition and separate professional accrediting programs seems unlikely. Modifications would undoubtedly be involved but institutionally oriented agencies would tend, in this writer's view, to have most priority for initial practice and implementation.

Publication of the bimonthly *Higher Education* by KCUE deserves high praise as a needed undertaking. Usefulness will be determined by this journal's contents as they pertain to matters of Council concern and those of the leadership within member colleges and universities as well as governmental and other interested persons. In the future an additional newsletter highlighting KCUE's program and activities may deserve serious attention depending upon the extent to which *Higher Education* restricts itself to policy and research-based articles or seeks to serve Council functions.

The plan for joining with the American Association of State Colleges and Universities in conducting international seminars on higher education appears to be a worthy continuation of the two International Seminars on Higher Education of 1972 and 1979 cosponsored by the MOE with Yonsei University and Keimyung University respectively. Such a tie could introduce a broader spectrum of participants from the United States for the one held in Washington, D.C. and should have similar potential for the Seoul-based seminar. The international seminars of 1972 and 1979 provided a global approach which ought not to be lost in the future however since they reflected Korea's leadership image.

PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE

This writer considers his invitation to write this article for the Foreigner's Column of the Eighth Volume of *Higher Education* to be a rare privilege. This is partially related to his previous ties with the MOE as consultant for the Korean Higher Education Reform Project in the early 1970's but is also associated with contacts made with individual Koreans within and outside the MOE who were involved or otherwise associated with

that project. Close personal and lasting friendships developed with educators in MOE and in colleges and universities since most campuses were visited in all parts of the country. Continuity of the Reform Project much longer than usual for innovative actions of that type provides testimony that what was initially identified to represent problems and issues were in themselves noteworthy. International seminars escalated innovations to a world-wide base and brought credit to Korean leadership in higher education.

The updating of progress in Korean higher education by the establishment and operation of the Korean Council for University Education thus provides welcome news of further progress made in the last two years. The structure and objectives of KCUE provide upward continuity of goals set and progress made during the last decade or so. The inclusion of all 110 four-year colleges and universities, public and private, for collective and cooperative action can only be interpreted as a desirable step upward in preparation for the future of Korean higher education. KCUE's tie to the Ministry of Education is regarded as a plus since it provides liaison and an official avenue for making proposals and recommendations for governmental action.

The various activities and programs of the Council reflect concern about special issues and problems worthy of joint exploration and consensus based on research findings and the Korean process of deliberation. Much time and effort will be required particularly as conditions change not only in education but throughout the country as a whole. An adaptable frame of mind could ease difficult problems and provide reasonable solutions.

"Continuing the Quest for Excellence," the title given this contribution for the Foreigner's Column, expresses well the broad framework within which the Council will apply its energies to Korean higher education. The motto of Edgar Dale is directly relevant "There is danger in probing the future with too short a stick. Excellence takes time."

We dare not underestimate what future developments will expect of us. Though excellence is sought it comes in many different packages, some seemingly small and others very large, in keeping with what we try to accomplish. Excellence tends to be illusive and pervasive, not always uniformly recognized by those who observe the painful processes involved. The Council appears to understand what is required and is moving in a right direction for the benefit of all higher education. Commendation and high praise to the Council is definitely in order during this second year of its existence. Good health and long life for the Council become proper wishes in Korean and Oriental tradition. *

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