

**The Character and Moral Education
in the University: A case of
Citizenship Education in Korea**

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The Character and Moral Education in the University: A case of Citizenship Education in Korea

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< Abstract >

It is the growing concern that university education should commit itself into citizenship education by promoting students' character, morality and civic responsibility. Universities can no longer remain as intact ivory towers because they have already advanced deep into mass education. It, however, is not easy for universities to turn their attention to such mission because it is quite a new challenge.

Some scholars have used a term like 'college effects' to refer to the human development or maturity as a result of college education. According to the college effects studies, college effects are variable to the kinds and the quality of life experience in the campus. Some experiences promote human maturity while some do not.

College effects on civic maturity were reviewed in terms of theory and program results to gauge the possibility of the program into practice especially in the Korean situation. Three types of programs were viewed as possible options: Strengthening activated environment of academism, Applying professional ethics training program and Reforming university governance structure and management.

1. Rising question about the role of university

The function of the university education has changed over times. At one time, people regarded the university as an ivory tower, a hall of learning, or institute for bringing up scholars of proud loneliness. But nowadays, many people do not find such a university desirable and such universities have not in fact survived well.

As a result of such secularization, tensions and conflicts have arisen in universities between two groups of different orientations: one adheres to the traditional idea of the university as an ivory tower, and the other to the need of mass education. This divergence over where the function of the university ought to lie and what the role of the university ought to be continues even now among the constituents of colleges and universities: administrators, professors, students, and general public.

Most universities have adapted to the changing demands of students and society.

They all claim to provide career development and training. For instance in Korea today, it is quite rare to find a university without banners advertising preparation classes for the TOEFL and TOEIC nation-wide examination, and official job information system. It has become universally accepted that the university is a preparation institute for employment.

Granted it is needed for most students to find a job upon graduation. But finding a job should be a natural by-product of having attended the university, and can't be the sole aim of the university education. By '*narrow careerism*' coined by a scholar (Ehrlich, 2000, p iii), he tried to mean a type of university education devoted primarily to helping the student find a job. This '*narrow careerism*' has been a trend in Korean universities over recent decades.

More and more, people have raised serious questions about universities' role (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Kim, Moon, Huh,1999). Hartle, one of the most influential scholars in the area, posed in earnest a question about the university education. In his book, *Assessment in Higher Education* (1985), he stressed that each university should be responsible for its own role, and emphasized the function and efficiency of the university. According to his close examination on universities, he did not find them satisfactory.

It is quite often in the U.S. that universities are criticized of their lack of concerns and practices on such roles. Bloom (1987) insists that higher education institutions should be blamed for a ruined American democracy and the desolated spirit of the young. In his famous book, *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987), he analyzed how American universities lead their students to be weak, exhausted and confused.

Levine (1987) points to the same problems in his book, *When Dreams and Heroes Died* (1987), he insists that American universities are helpless- that though alive in spirit until the 1960's, they have since been getting buried under me-ism, privatism and materialism.

Derek Bok, former president of Harvard University, was very emphatic about the university's role as smithy to recover American mind. His smithy meant more a training place for sound minds and democratic characters than a place of knowledge comprehension and expertise development in their major study areas.

So, since the beginning of 1980, American universities have bolstered their courses in liberal arts and humanities and reorganized faculty structures in order to form a

core curriculum, which could be called "a curriculum reform movement" for the development of character education in the university environment.

The numerous studies and experiences like these in the U.S. may well incite Korean universities to make changes toward the directions, because their current situation is similar to that of the universities in the U.S.

The most striking similarity between universities of the US and Korea is that they have been too much lopsided toward career preparation instead of character and moral education, that is, bringing up cultured citizenship. Before a student learns of the knowledge and technical skills in his/her major study field, he/she should be taught to be a responsible citizen. The universities in both countries have traditionally ignored such role until recently.

In fact, universities have done nothing about overcoming the confusion and the distortion of spiritual and moral values in the young generation as shown in "X" or "new" generation. The only things they did were just to worry about and sigh rather than to take any educational measures to resolve the matter.

For example, it is common to find on university campuses in Korea that students act against campus rules. It is never rare to witness small fights, for instance, over parking among campus people. Public orders and rules are never more respected and observed on campuses than in other environment.

Universities have faltered in square deal and attack on the matter but preferred easy compromise just to avoid student's collective appeals and sit-ins. Under such easy compromise, students are more encouraged to behave disorderly and become more defiant against public rules, without relevant intervention from universities.

What if students would graduate with such defiance? They would not hesitate in dealing something in ways they please and defy civic responsibility. That is why many CEOs in large companies in Korea used to talk about that "universities should forge character first, instead of knowledge and technical skills".

In sum, universities in Korea are now confronting new demand from general publics including business people for reorienting teaching practices from career training/development to character and moral education for responsible democratic citizens. Universities are at the turning point now and asked to turn their attention more to building up character and morality for responsible citizenship.

In this paper, citizenship education in colleges and universities will be addressed in terms of its theoretical background, possibility, existing examples and strategy with Korean situation in mind. It is hoped that this paper will set a ground for colleges and universities to consider citizenship education important and worthwhile to try in their campuses.

2. The possibility of citizenship education in the university

Many scholars in education became interested in the effects of college education (hereafter, "college effect"), and tried to confirm positive evidences that college education makes difference something useful in students. Some differences in the knowledge of one's major course are sure to be found upon graduating. However, what about such things like humanity, morality, and civic responsibility? Could any positive changes be also expected in them?

What has happened in students over the 4 years spent in colleges and universities? There are two classical researches published already to check for college effects in the U.S.

The first one is H. Bowen's study (1978). His study had applied pretty reliable methods of study but its results were very disappointing to the researcher, because it showed quite low effect (slight) of college education in 24-measured items of expected behavior changes.

The second one is Astin's study (1978) in which 200,000 students were participated and taken for scrutiny in about 300 universities participated. The results of the study seemed to indicate that the "college education is not closely related to increasing a sense of humanity". Statistically speaking, the effect was less than 1% in influence that students' humanity change over 4 years (from entrance to graduation at college and universities).

The above two studies seem to reveal the effects of college education over humanity, morality and civic responsibility to be near zero.

At the end of 1980's, several studies have emerged with mixed findings of the above two studies. Some educational scholars have begun to reveal an effect of university education. For example, Rest and Deemer (1986) examined types and intensities of college experience of students from entrance to graduation, then analyzed

the results in terms of development, education and psychology. The results of the study conducted over 20 years could be summarized as below:

(1) 4-year college experience contributes much to increase the ability of moral judgment, measured by Kohlberg's measure, showing that 50% of the recorded change could be regarded as a result of the university-education experiences. The 50% should be regarded as surprising amount because it also proved only 1% difference between males and females in moral judgment ability.

(2) Moral development measure by the DIT of college graduates was much higher than that of high school graduates and college dropouts, and has shown more steady and consistent increase of moral judgmental ability. The factors related to university education made up 38% of the total variance the DIT has incurred.

(3) The university students who have sincere participation in study and research offered at the campus proved to achieve higher development in morality than the less sincere participation group.

Rest and Deemer's study (1986) has shown at least that university education could work efficiently to affect moral development. The authors are critical of the results and conclusion of the studies of Bowen and Astin, which failed to prove positive the university education's effect.

College effects on humanity, morality and civic responsibility are quite complicated and mixed to get solid conclusion. But recent researches tend more and more to yield positive and promising results (Ehrlich, 2000; Pascarella, 2001; Peterson, 2001).

3. What promotes college effects?

Several studies are sure to provide support for university education as an efficient means for developing humanity, moral character and citizenship responsibility. Then, which experiences promote such development during university education? In reply to this question, there are two lines of research:

1) Studies using checklist methods

After gathering more than 10 categories of students' activities frequently seen on a campus life, a checklist was set up to find the characteristics of each student's activity. It was to see the relationship of the frequency of an activity to its supposedly resulting developmental aspects. For instance, students who have high frequency of travel may

develop high level of civic responsibility and humanity.

The checklist usually consists of club activity, academic participation, popularity among peers, interpersonal relations among genders and housing type (dorm or not). Of course, GPA, personality types, sports activities, SES, and number of friends are also included.

There have been more than 10 studies using this checklist method so far. But unfortunately most of the studies have failed to single out any one or two powerful and strong factors out of many. Thus, it seems reasonable to conclude that any specific and solid type of activity in campus life is directly related to or only accountable for the development of humanity, morality and civic citizenship.

2) Studies using orientation types

Instead of using the checklist stated above, Rest and his colleagues (1986) classified the quality of students' experience by characteristics of general orientation or directivity. For example, they used some concepts of "educational orientation" (EO) and "continued intellectual stimulation"(CIS) as classifying indicators for qualities of students' experiences.

Students with high EO tend to study hard, enjoy studying, are concentrated on intellectual/abstract/ideological activities, and are surrounded by friends with high EO. Student with high CIS tend to seek for continuous intellectual stimulation, and like to be in such environment. Their study were surely successful to show that students with high EO and CIS during university education tend to achieve higher morality than those with lower EO and CIS.

Details of the research could be summarized as follows:

(a) General intellectual stimulation is a very important factor in developing morality. General conditions and whole environments are more important rather than any specific stimuli.

(b) The characteristics of broad environment in which college students experience with a wide range of connections is more important than with any specific person, event or occasion.

(c) The effects of university education on moral development proved not to be different among study areas (student's majoring areas) and more importantly among universities. High educational orientation (EO) and continued high intellectual

stimulus(CIS) were the most influential factors.

4. The programs for citizenship education in the university

Rest (1985, 1986) reviewed about 50 educational programs implemented for character and moral education in colleges and universities, and examined how efficient they were. He categorized the programs into several types based on their similarities and analyzed their effectiveness using meta-analysis. In general, its results indicate that most of the programs tend to bring some positive effect on increasing civic responsibility.

Based on Rest's study, three types of educational programs will be summarized for its respective distinctiveness: lecture & discussion type, Professional ethics training type and 'university as a whole' type.

(1) "Lecture and Discussion" program

This program (Boyd, 1976) aims to promote change in the student's thought by targeting the selfish (or egoistic) and relativistic views that could hamper the growth of conventional moral judgment ability. The program was held for 60 students at Harvard University for 1 week per academic term, and is preceded by a single lecture and discussion session per week over 11 weeks.

The lectures were given in a family-like atmosphere, showing how a student might be confused morally and then showing how to resolve the problem morally. In the discussion session, interaction among students was facilitated by focusing on easily disputed questions, and student were encouraged to talk about what they thought of the lecture, the books they read and the moral dilemma exposed to them by other students and/or teacher.

First, teachers ask their students how to resolve the dilemma, and then, why the choice seems good. Boyd used the dilemma as a means to look into the reasoning residing in the student's judgment when faced with a contradictory thought, making it in relation to some personal matter, or utilizing some public view.

His educational strategy was that a student can develop through recognition and reorganization (when thrown off balance) of his own existing reasoning structure. Boyd also showed the importance of required reading for the students during his program of 11 weeks

(2) "Professional Ethics Training" Program

Rest and Bebeau (1992) created an ethics-training program for the students of the dentistry college at the University of Minnesota. The objective of this program was to promote moral judgmental ability of participating students since the program was based on the Kohlberg and Rest's theory of moral development and education. Through this program, students can be prepared for unexpected dental accidents or events that may need moral or ethical decisions. Through such pre-exercise or rehearsal of moral decision making, participants can grow the strength and ability of making more mature moral judgments.

The program idea is simple. A group of 30 students are shown a filmstrip or video or a story containing a moral dilemma familiar with dental treatment setting. And they are asked to comment on the dilemma situation, discuss both sides of the dilemma, take a side and justify his choice. During the discussion, many resource persons are invited to attend and participate, including practicing dentists, retired dentists, patients, and professors. Generally offered as an optional course for juniors or seniors, it is held for 2-3 hours a week for a semester(16 weeks). Grades are given on a 'pass/fail' basis for 3 credits.

Since 1982, this program has been widely supported by the dentistry college as a R&D model project for bio-ethics training program and its effect has been proven in several studies. It has therefore become a famous model program for professional ethics training at colleges and universities. The program idea is likely to expand to the similar professional schools for colleges of medicine, nursing, law and/or education.

(3) 'University as a whole' program

In early 1970s, the University of California at Irvine started an ambitious endeavor called "Sierra Study Program"(1975-1978), to examine whether their university education makes any difference in growing and developing their students' human development, for example, morality, ego/self and psychological maturity, citizenship responsibility, etc. Their interests lay in the whole university environment or ecology not in a specific area or course, in real life situation not in hypothetical one and in long term period (1-4 years) not in short term period.

This program has first begun with the freshmen of about 1970 and lasted until their graduation at the University of California at Irvine. Participants (freshmen) in the program stayed in a dormitory in Sierra, and a student assistant with high grades stayed

there to aid the freshmen and teacher (professor). The participants (or trainees) were asked about political preferences, parents' jobs and education levels, SAT scores and expectations in public life, etc and also was tested on moral judgment level, ego/self-development level, personality inventory, mental health, etc.

In sum, the result has shown some similarities and dissimilarities: Similarities in intellectual ability, expectation to public life and psychological character and dissimilarities in parents' job, educational level, educational and professional desire level. Their levels of moral judgment ability and ego/self-development were 'conventional'.

In the "Sierra Study Program," participants attend as members of a group including 30 freshmen, a student assistant and a teacher and involve in one or several optional programs out of 11 curricula offered by the university research team.

The assistant who is usually a year senior with good grades to the participant lives in the same residential area as the freshmen's, contacts them frequently and plays the roles of peer, advisor, assistant teacher, participant-observer, and friend, etc. The teacher arranges details for the class, sets a task, and lets the participants assume and conduct their responsibility.

From Fall to Spring semester, the teacher plays various roles. In the fall term, the teacher should set clearly a task and help the students to have the necessary experiences for self-assertion training, socialization, gender role, and making plans for life and its course. The teacher also acts as psychologist and supplies educational experience to teach the students in the areas of knowledge and technology.

In the spring term, the teacher encourages the students to think about problems related to their study. The teacher also makes small groups composed of an assistant, a sophomore, and 8 freshmen, and lets them involve in discussions and active interaction, necessary to develop personal relationship skills.

The Sierra study program consists of 11 units or curricula arranged for completion, according to a systematic order. The teacher can use all 11 programs or choose one of them as he feels necessary.

The Sierra study program was originally conducted in longitudinal research design. That is, the developmental change of the participants (students) through the educational processes of 4 years has been systematically evaluated with scientific instruments on moral reasoning, ego/self-development, gender role, and expectation of

public life, etc.

The results of the study show that the participants have exhibit much more positive changes in moral reasoning, ego/self development and the ability of understanding others than non-participants. It is therefore reasonable to say that the Sierra study program is an effective college educational program for promoting humanity, character, morality and civic responsibility for students.

5. Now, what can we do?

(1) Korean situation

Unlike in elementary and secondary schools, character and moral education including civic education in tertiary institutions (colleges and universities) are rarely visible in Korea. In recent years, two attempts were made to draw the attention of university administrators to the topic of "citizenship education in colleges and university".

The first one is the national conference on the character education in the university held at the Seoul National University in 1995. The second one is the international symposium on the morality education at colleges in the 21st century held at the Wonkwang University in 2001.

Despite such endeavors, administrators and faculty in the university in Korea are still indifferent to, show a nonchalant air to, and even negative reaction to the issue: what on earth are you talking about?

Such reaction is understandable, recollecting the heartbreaking and shameful history that the once military government of President Park (1962-1979 in power) forced all colleges and universities to offer and teach "Korean National Ethics"(KNE) course as a requirement for graduation with the beautiful cause of bringing up democratic citizenship, patriotism and zeal for the unification of north-south Korea.

For the end, the government established a new department of KNE at the college of education in Seoul National University in 1973 to bring up teachers for the KNE education at the level of elementary, secondary and tertiary education including university faculty. Later the KNE education expanded from undergraduate program(BA) to graduate program (MA and Ed.D.) and to other national universities outside Seoul metropolitan area and to other private universities.

But the KNE education was not always fully welcomed by the university

constituents (students, faculty and administrators and also general public). It has frequently been criticized of its double face: making use of democratic citizenship and patriotism to tame college students who were at the time the sole antagonists against the military power. The KNE education survived well until the fall of President Park(1980) and, in the long run, has been down-sized with the decrease of military power in government(1986).

The KNE education still exists up to now but with the changed name of "Ethics Education". Although they still offer the KNE course as an elective (not as a requirement), their principal objective is not to prescribe ethics education toward college students but to grow up teachers for ethics in secondary schools. Sharp eyes are on circumscribing their roles only in teacher education and on preventing them from teaching so-called KNE in the university.

With this backdrop, it is understandable that the claim of character, moral and citizenship education reminds some people of the return of the old KNE education. As long as such dubious people exist around college and university among students, faculty, administrators and general public, the turning of university education toward responsible citizenship will take substantial time.

Democratic citizenship education always sounds good to some people but not to some people with some heart-breaking experience in history. Korea is the case. It is, therefore, needed to keep that in mind when discussions begin on the citizenship education in college and university.

(2) Strategy for character, moral and citizenship education

The starting point or situation for character, moral and citizenship education is quite different among universities and countries according to their respective history and environment. The Korean situation differs from those of the US or Japan and the situation of the Seoul National University also differs from those of the University of Pennsylvania or Kyoto University, for example.

In this respect, the strategy for such education should be setup with the consideration of specific details of the situation. Three basic strategies will be discussed with keeping the Korean situation in mind: the double meaning and dubious eyes on the citizenship education in the university.

(a) Strengthening "Activated Environment of Academism"

We should establish and strengthen the atmosphere surrounding universities, which facilitates humanity and moral development through changing the organization and environment of them. As seen in Rest's study (1986), the effectiveness of a university education is determined by the environment of the general characteristics of its culture rather than by some concrete experiences.

Then, what matters is the kind or the character of such atmosphere. Which atmosphere facilitates such human development most? How can it be defined operationally?

In Rest's study, there are two types of atmosphere through which positive human developments were facilitated: Educational orientation (EO) and Continued Intellectual Simulation (CIS). Their character in common is epitomized as "activated environment of academism."

Korean colleges and universities in general are far away from such activated environment of academism. A study has shown it well. The study by Samsung Corporation (1992) once classified Korean college students into four types according to B. Clark's classification. As shown below, Type 2 students constitute the activated environment of academism. The more there are the type 2 students, the nearer the university climate is to "activated environment of academism."

Type 1: Students focusing on job/employment.

Type 2: Students focusing on culture/pure academism.

Type 3: Students being critical/participating actively in social issues.

Type 4: Students having not decided yet which way to go

The result of the study (Rest, 1992) revealed that Type 1 students were 31.3%, Type 2 were 20.8%, Type 3 were 14.8%, and Type 4 were 33.7% out of the total sample (100%). Based on the result that Type 2 students were only 20.8%, it is difficult to say that the Korean universities are full of "activated environment of academism. In other words, Korean universities are only 20.8% full of activated academism.

We should encourage academic activities of students and it must have number one priority in school management. Students who excel in academic work and faculty who help them achieve most should be honored and rewarded. If necessary, organizational systems should be reformed for the end. It is because the students with zeal for learning culture and zeal for academic learning will achieve higher quality of human development

in the long run

(b) Applying "Professional Ethics Training Program"

We should think of the possibility that professional schools of medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, nursing, education and law teach their prospective professionals beforehand about the moral principles or codes of conduct needed in the profession in near future. The schools could offer a course of "professional ethics" which give 3 or more credits after completion, as mentioned before in Rest and Bebeau's research (1986).

As Korean society goes deep into the age of information-technology, crimes committed by highly educated people increase and are so complicated that only experts in the area could understand and solve. It therefore is important to raise up conscientious and morally sensitive doctors, dentists, nurses, pharmacists, teachers and lawyers, before they go into their respective professions.

The success story of professional ethics curriculum of the dentistry school at the University of Minnesota is surely worth being bench marked. The effects of such professional ethics training in higher education will have influence greater on students because they will begin to work in the profession immediately after graduation than on the elementary and secondary students who have to wait far more years before entering the professions.

Moon (1999) applied the professional ethics program into the medical school of the Seoul National University in south Korea during 1998-2000. His 6-month intervention program was designed to increase moral judgmental ability of medical students based on the theory of Kohlberg's and Rest's theory. The program was proved to have positive effects on moral development and has been used by many medical students who are interested in bio-ethics and ethical training by way of on and off-line (<http://moral.snu.ac.kr>). It surely opens a window for Korean university to try professional ethical training program in their professional schools like law, medical, nursing, education, business and veterinary schools.

It, however, is not easy to introduce and settle down the program into regular curriculum base, because the program may not go well with the ivory tower concept of a university or college, despite the big value of the professional ethical training program.

(c) Reforming "University Governance Structure and management"

As John Dewey said, students learn by doing. Democracy is learned most in a

school when democracy works in it. Democracy is not the contents of knowledge and faith but a way of life and surviving. What if there is no democracy in school? Then, students will lose the opportunity to live in democracy and end up with less or non-democratic citizenship.

Although Korean universities have achieved many democratic climate and systems since 1980's, there still exist many undemocratic and bureaucratic practices and systems. For example, it is necessary and desirable for a university to be democratic so that the participation in university management is open wide to all university constituents.

Not a single university in Korea seems to be free of this issue. Even the most prestigious university in Korea, the Seoul National University, has serious troubles with the issue among its constituents, leading to frequent students' takeover of the president's office.

The students justified the takeover by accusing the university authority of not providing relevant information and documents they had asked for and, as a result, letting them steal the material, breaking into an archive and cabinets. In fact, students violated not only school ordinance but also criminal law. But no students felt sorry and guilty. They even look pompous and victorious.

Unless university organizational systems are democratized and open to all, people who ask for democracy strongly may end in violation of law. As for students, they do not have any route to participate in university administration. The current school ordinance circumscribes them within students' matters.

But what about tuition hike? As university administrators regard tuition hike as their sole authority, it may seem none of student's business. But students do not think so. Since there are no formal systematic way for students to reflect their opinion onto the tuition policy, most of them feel frustrated and end in giving up, and only few bravely protest and end in violation of law.

Therefore, it is needed to reform university organization and convention to be open to all university constituents including students, and allow and encourage them to participate actively in overall university matters. By participating in democratic processes of the university, students learn to be responsible democratic citizens. It goes without saying that such reform planning itself should begin with the participation of

students.

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