



Imagining Humanities Education for Improving Society and Securing Sustainability

The various evils of neo-liberalism, which have been deepening since the 1990s, have long led Korea to become one of the most divided societies in the world. How can we overcome this crisis of social integration? Of course, as with most social problems, the solution is to modify the system or the actor, or both at the same time. Adjusting the law and system variables alone will not solve the deep-rooted issues of neo-liberalism and various problems in Korean society. In other words, changing the system is not enough. Only when the actors, or citizens, change will society improve.

This study proposes enriching and expanding humanities education as a way to improve the actors variable described above. It is based on the belief that the change in civic consciousness through humanities education may seem slow, but perhaps is a surer path to a sustainable solution.

There are two key characteristics of humanities in contrast to natural or social sciences: One is reflectivity, the other is free expression. The social improvement effect of humanities education

usually occurs when these two core characteristics of humanities are linked to the ‘general social improvement effect,’ driven by quality education. Herein operates the dialectical cycle between human beings and society, which can be summarized into the sentence, "society makes human beings and human beings make society." And it is education that takes the most important intermediary role linking the two.

In this study, we examine the effects of humanities education for achieving social improvement by looking at the "Paideia" and "Humanitas" in the ancient Western world, "artes liberalis" in the Middle Ages and Renaissance in the West, "Discipline" as a study and liberal culture in East Asia, "Bildung" in the Western modern era, and the "Liberal Arts" humanities education movement. Based upon this review we ask the question: What should be the content of humanities education?

At the university level, it is worth taking the "Liberal Arts College" system in the U.S. as a model. LACs usually refer to "universities that award at least half of their degrees to the humanities majors," which usually take two organizational structures in the United States. One is the model where a LAC is run as a single humanities college, such as St. Johns College, and the other is where a LAC operates as an affiliated college with its own autonomy within a university, such as the Columbia College in Columbia University.

Also notable are the university-run humanities education programs which embrace civil society. In the United States, various experiments have been conducted to enhance the public nature of humanities. This attempt is sometimes described as "humanities as social movements." Among them, "Public Humanities" is extensively discussed here. In addition, Humanities education outside the system has its own significance, and it seems that there is no need to look for its models

in the U.S. or other countries. Korea has a long tradition of private education that has created and maintained the tradition of humanities outside the national educational institution. We can build on those rich traditions.

Currently Gyeonggi Province is providing quality humanities education programs for its residents. However, the present study suggests that it can enrich its educational repertoire and social impact by running additional humanities projects like the following: "Creative Humanities," "Emergency Room for Social Humanities," "Reading and Writing the Classics for the Elderly," "Future History Humanities Cafe," "Environmental and Ecological Humanities" and "Technology Criticism and Humanities."

Keyword

social effects of the humanities, reflection, free expression, public humanities, liberal arts college