

# University Management in the 21st Century

## — Managing Humanity

In Soo Lee

To the Honorable Chancellor Han Yan-ming of Linyi Normal University, other chancellors and executives, I would like to extend my deep appreciation to all of you of allowing me to address at the "International Forum for University Management."

The title of my address today is "University Management in the 21st Century - Managing Humanity". This issue is one that I have held close to my heart during the last 20 years of university management and I sincerely hope that all of you will furnish me with your insights and advices through out the gathering.

I believe that university accumulates the knowledge of its academic predecessors and delivers current knowledge to the contemporary society through appropriate systems. The ultimate goals of each university differ, but the common mission is that each university itself should have a foundation built on principles.

The purpose of managing a university is to give a positive influence on the society we live in. Thus, a university that stands apart from the community is not a desirable one. A good university has to respond to the needs and wants of the society it is located in. If the soci-

ety requires specialized education, then the university can respond by providing the exact educational solution. However, it needs to practice caution to make sure that the university does not become nothing more than a job of training center.

During my time of managing two universities, the University of Suwon and Suwon Science College, over the last 20 years, I have managed the university with three core principles of human pursuit. These are to seek the Truth, the Good, and the Beauty. I view the Truth of university management to be student-oriented education, to nurture the basic knowledge, to foster one's whole internal growth and a sense of responsibility. The Good is seen as education contributing to local and the national goals. Finally the Beauty as a mandatory instruction on how we can come together as one within the local and international communities that we live in.

### **1. Responding to the Educational Consumers: Education for the Truth**

(1). Education Centering around Students  
Through my management experience, I

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have paid attention to building a university centered on the student needs. I have managed a business enterprise before managing the university. The enterprise management places emphasis on the contentment of its consumers. This yardstick should be applied to the management of a university too. The very existence of the students also calls for the existence of the professors and the administrative staffs of the university.

There is a saying that when planting a tree, that person should foresee the growth of the plant over the next 10 years. We should adopt a similar philosophy towards education, instead of ten years. However, we need to foresee the growth of our students over the next 100 years. This goal of education is premised on "the student first," policy which had been in practice while I was managing the University of Suwon. I have tried to provide the best educational equipment and facilities for the students. I have requested the school personnel to have the spirit of thrift and saving to be able to accommodate this growth.

As a result, the educational instruction and the facilities have improved to the best level, surpassing several leading universities in Korea. The University of Suwon ranked 4th in the area of efficiency in management through the evaluation of universities held by the Ministry of Education in 2005. Such results were made possible owing to the strong will of the administrative body to manage the school centering around the needs of the students on the basis of the spirit of thrift and saving.

## (2) Education of the Basic Sciences

The basic science is not only a basis of every academic research but also an origin of higher learning. Recently it is said that the

popularity of practical skills has brought about a crisis to the basic science field. I believe that the emphasis of the practical skills itself is not practical. This is because in recent years, technologies are getting replaced by other technologies in such a short time span. If colleges put too much emphasis on practical technologies, graduates may not survive social competition. Only those students who have a solid background for fundamental studies can adopt themselves to rapidly changing social environments. In other words, colleges should help students learn how to educate themselves.

Thus, I have made every effort to enhance fundamental studies with the thought that it is the best time to bring up these studies when they are in danger. It is possible only with these fundamental studies to make real the goal to establish a high-tech college of engineering compatible with the Copenhagen Tech in Denmark.

## (3) Education Cultivating Responsibilities

It is regretful to see many people lacking enough social responsibilities in these days. People rarely dare to assume their responsibilities for what they have been doing. As far as I am concerned, this trend can be attributed to the neglect of moral education emphasizing social responsibilities in educational institutes.

We have so many disasters all over the world in these days. Most of them are created by highly educated people who lack moral responsibilities. Thus, I firmly believe that it is very important to educate students so as to be responsible for their words and deeds. Colleges and universities have been the conscience of the society. This agenda can be maintained only through proper moral education in colleges and universities which emphasizes social re-

sponsibilities of the educated.

#### (4) Education Cultivating a Whole Person

The vision and moral attitude of a person are largely established by what he learns and experiences in the college. However, the proper vision and moral attitude cannot be accomplished solely by education. It is the spirits and ideals of the school that can lead students to the right direction to reach their own ideals.

Colleges and universities can suffer from financial problems and consequently, they will depend on external funds. It sometimes forces the school to give up its own academic ideals in order to meet the requirements of the sponsors. Nevertheless, they should keep their own ideals and academic goals to foster a whole person with appropriate vision and moral attitude. They should be independent of and free from their sponsors in order to fulfill these ideals and goals. Otherwise, society would not have the leaders of proper vision and moral attitude. The emphasis on cultivated education at the University of Suwon imbues perspective and moral stance into the students at our campus. Numerous visitors to our campus are impressed by our students' sense of propriety, which reflects the established tradition of our school.

## **2. Contributing to the Community: Education for the Good**

The role of a university lies in promulgating knowledge. Without knowledge, the society stops functioning. The lightning speed with which knowledge grows due to globalization and the increasing economic value of information attests to the central role universities play in our society. University not only creates knowledge but also defines its functioning role.

It provides education to the community residence, creates demand for the goods and services created by local business, and creates knowledge networks between the government and business and the residential community. The process of creation and sharing of the knowledge among the entities bolsters the economic strength of the community. Nonetheless, with the advent of knowledge that based on society, there is a growing need for the university to take on a more leading role in the reform of the local network. Several points are worth mentioning regarding the roles that a leading university must assume.

(1) The university must listen to the needs of the community and modify its role and function if needed and must be ready to create a learning community. In an innovative community network, it plays the important role of basic research, human capital accumulation, technology creation and dissemination and technology transfer to the corporation. Whereas the general role of a university was to enhance the educational level of the mass and provision of scientific research, nowadays with simultaneous progress of globalization and localization, the university is being regarded more as an educational tool in attaining specific economic and social targets.

However, for many universities, the idea of actively communicating with its neighboring community remains outside of its interest and concern. This is a pity since economic activities are increasingly becoming more localized in the face of enhanced capital mobility and loosening of the central government's control. The central government body assumes the political and diplomatic unit role but the local community is at the center of the deci-

sion-making, creation of the legal norm, creation of an identity and representative among its members.

Thus, creation of a learning community through knowledge and technology transfer by the university not only brings economic benefit but also enables the local community to take on an independent and leading role and facilitate the transfer of an autonomous power from the central government.

(2) As the economy and the society becomes more intricate and complex, decentralized planning plays a critical role and there is a growing need for the university to take on a more assertive and central role. One form of participation is the institution of a partnership program. The program enables the participants to raise fund more effectively and also more innovative and practical solutions can be provided for in a timely manner. This change in paradigm requires the universities to change its traditional way of management. Although many higher learning institutions are running technology transfer centers and regional development centers, more effort is needed for the local knowledge based companies to be connected organically with the global network. These require that local participation by the university must be a central mission and no longer a peripheral assignment.

(3) Cultivation of regional industrial clusters, through industry-university partnership, is regarded as a necessary component in economic development policies of many nations. The role of universities in this partnership cannot be over-emphasized.

According to the ICIC/CEO (the Initiative for a Competitive Inner City and CEOs for Cities, 2002) report published in the United States, a university, in service to its commu-

nity, needs to play multiple roles: a buyer, employer, human resource manager, real estate developer, technology incubator, net-worker, service provider, and the defender of the local culture and values. Towards fulfilling these roles, the knowledge base and research capacity of the university should be fully utilized to bridge the gaps among the diverse groups within the community. In this regard, the role as a technology incubator is especially important as the university nourishes the research environment within and provides the technological and managerial assistances to local small and medium sized businesses. Lastly, the university should provide consulting services and social and business network services, so that the university-industry-community partnership can be fully integrated.

### **3. Service to International Community and Humanity: the Beauty of Education**

The university education, I believe, should engender students to form a broad perspective towards the world and the humanity. This type of liberal view on education is significant, as without it the students who are immersed in their narrow major disciplines may not be able to feel and comprehend the enormity of problems facing us. As you are aware, the world is still struggling to deal with regional strife, hunger, pollution, and depleting resources. At this very moment, according to UNESCO, one child is dying every four seconds from war and hunger, eight hundred million people, of which two hundred million are children, go without adequate nourishment, one fifth of the world population, or twelve hundred million people, subsists on a daily earning of less than a dollar, global warming due to over-industrialization is in its dire

course, and the petroleum is expected to be fully depleted in next forty years.

These aforementioned problems and challenges facing us all cannot be solved with a narrow view of a particular academic discipline. Instead, an interdisciplinary approach encompassing science, technology, economics, and politics is needed. Without this new approach, the global problems and challenges will go unsolved.

The generation we are living in and the generations to come in the future shall indeed become a dark period, if different societies, nations, and cultures in the world do not unite to overcome the common obstacles. As we lack a common religion or language, I believe, the universities could be a leading force in the effort to unite us all. To preserve the life on earth and protect environment for the future generations, the universities should not hesitate to take the leadership and provide equal opportunities for higher education to all those people, young and old, who yearns to learn.

Although Korea is now one of the economic powers in the world, it was a rather poor country only thirty years ago. For a country lacking natural resources, the fuel for the Korean economic development was education. In those early years of Korean economic development, many young men and women of Korea received higher education in America and Europe, made possible largely by the generous academic scholarships of the host universities. That is, the most valuable help came from the universities. One Chinese proverb states Think about the source when you drink water. Now

that we have quenched our thirst, we are ready to extend our helping hands to the people in need, to help savor life and conserve environment, and to extend equal opportunity of education to all those who desire to learn.

For the first time in Korea, the University of Suwon and Suwon Science College offer a scholarship, which amounts to 50% of the tuition, and medical insurance to all foreign students, including Chinese students, so that they can concentrate on their study and learning without undue financial uncertainty. As the overseer of the university and college system, I believe that this is a small return for what Korea has received in the past and that we should in no way neglect our duty of helping others in the future.

As university administrators, we all know that it not easy to build a university excelling even in one particular academic field. It is obviously even more difficulty to build a university that deals effectively with all human and global issues. Nonetheless, I believe that it is the genuine responsibility of us university educators to persist in instilling the humanity's highest ideals of truth, goodness, and beauty to our students, so that they themselves will form a grand vision of turning this world into a better place.

Instead of waiting for a future to arrive, let us not forget to take a part in making one, a future that can be as good as the creative minds of the young people in our universities, who will soon head into the world, it would achieve.