

British Tutorials and Japanese Seminars: Approaches to Students' Development in Historical Perspective

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INTRODUCTION

I am going to discuss which teaching methods have been used in particular countries as a means of students' development through education. In this research, I will focus on British tutorials and Japanese seminars in their higher education, and will try to discover why these types of education have been pursued from a historical perspective.

In Japanese higher education, seminars and lectures are the main teaching methods; where teachers always teach, and students do not counter the teacher's way of thinking. There is an atmosphere in which refuting a teacher's way of thinking means refuting the teacher's personality. Seminar style teaching was originally introduced through the influence of German universities in the 19th century, starting in Kyoto Imperial University (Today's Kyoto University).

On the other hand, in British higher education, the tutorial is one of the important ways of instruction to encourage and cultivate independent learning and research, especially at traditional universities, mainly at Oxbridge. Tutorials are a student-centred small group learning practice. It greatly differs from passive learning. Through the interaction between the tutor and the students, there is encouragement to create new ideas and foster students' independent thinking. Through this process, both the tutor and the students can enhance and deepen their thoughts.

This is the modern perception of the tutorial, but there was an era in which memorization of knowledge was required, and also required deference to tutors. That is to say, in the past, British tutorials were quite similar to current Japanese seminars. Why did British tutorials change to the modern style of fostering students' independent thinking? Why is learning in Japanese higher education focused on memorizing what the teacher has said, without challenge from students?

When we think about the difference from a historical point of view, you will see that the educational reform in the 19th century was the key for both countries. In the 19th century, academic research at German universities expanded considerably, and Germany became a Mecca for scientific research (Narisada, 2005, p. 79). How did these powerful 19th century German universities influence Japanese and UK higher education?

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF TUTORIALS IN UK

The Oxford tutorial today obliges students to think, reach a view and support their arguments using evidence. Students can discuss areas they don't understand with their tutor (Bailey, 1962, p. 273). The questions from the tutor do not always have a fixed answer. Tutors teach using the Socratic method and try to discuss the conclusion in students' essays handed in every week, and deepen their understanding and modify it in some cases.

In the 20th century, however, some tutors still practised 'phase two' of the Socratic method, in which the tutor simply lectured and only paused to ask students if they agreed. This 'phase two' of the Socratic method was presented by Plato in his later life. His method still started in discussion with another person, but he gave up the step by step questioning and simply droned on page after page. Occasionally he paused to ask the student if he agreed, but all the student was allowed to say was 'How not, O Socrates?' No essay could ever contain the extreme ingenuities or insights, and his questioning did not lend students to see the errors of their essays (Fox, 2001, pp. 55-56). So here, the student was required to be obedient to the tutor.

There is a big difference in this from 'phase one' of the Socratic method which goes back to what might be 'basics' and leads his young student obliquely by questions and answers until the student's confusion and contradictions are exposed and the working definition turns out to be unworkable (p. 54). This is the general picture of the Socratic method of teaching. There was, however, some merit for students in 'phase two' of the Socratic method. When starting a new and alien subject, forced on students by a syllabus, they are actually glad of a solid body of information, most of which is knowledge (p. 57).

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE TUTORIAL INSIDE OXBRIDGE

At the beginning of the 19th century, tutors conducted catechetical small-group teaching in the tutors' rooms. There, the tutor asked students questions to confirm their memorization about the text's content. The important point here is that students could answer the questions from the tutor, but they couldn't ask questions or demand further explanation from the tutor. The word 'catechism' has religious origin, and is connected with the church's authorized doctrine. This catechetical small-group teaching was in order to teach the set texts accurately. In short, catechetical small-group teaching had a purpose to control the freedom of teaching and learning (Curthoys, 2006, pp. 9-10).

Around the turn of the 19th century, the honours degree was introduced to motivate students. In the earlier stages of the introduction of the honours degree, the tutors' goal was to impart their knowledge onto the students, and let them pass the examinations with as high a mark as possible; not to deepen the students' understanding through discussion (Funakawa, 2000, pp. 109-110).

In the 1830s, the invention of printing meant that the honours degree examination was changed from an interview to a paper-based one, and the catechetical small-group teaching no longer met the needs for required higher level of knowledge.

To provide a higher level of accurate knowledge, a new one-to-one style teaching was developed outside the university by private tutors. These tutors dedicated themselves to teach academically, and guided students. Through this teaching by

private tutors, one-to-one personal contact between the tutor and the student through learning was realized for the first time (pp. 22-23, p.115). The style of private tutors took the place of the catechetical small-group teaching at official education of universities during the 1850s to the 1860s.

Also, there was the introduction of science subjects to the universities around 1850. The Oxford Commission, reporting in 1852, recommended 'a centralised university run predominantly by professors and faculties, with a much higher emphasis on research, on the Scottish/German model' (Goldman, 2005, p. 23). Oxford's dons feared that technological education would lessen the spell of Newman's lectures, Pattison's essays and Jowett's teaching (Halsey, 1994, p. 588). After lengthy discussions and great deliberation, science subjects were introduced to Oxbridge.

That is to say, the technology-based-courses, such as science, first established themselves in the civic colleges in Scotland and London, and spread later to Oxford and Cambridge, becoming an integral part of the university curriculum (p. 589). Tutors and students were required to have the skills for the 'creation of new knowledge' and 'independent thought', and individual tutorials using the Socratic method became popular in the late 19th century.

THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF SEMINARS IN JAPAN

It is often said that the Japanese higher education system is heavily influenced by German seminars. This is only partially true. According to Ushiogi (1997), the first experimental introduction of German seminars was at Kyoto Imperial University in 1900. A new professor at the College of Law, Yoshihito Takane, after graduating from Tokyo Imperial University and studying abroad at a German university, was the leader who introduced a new way of teaching at Kyoto University. Although Kyoto University was the second imperial university, it did not want to be the second best university in Japan. It experimented and found its way as a competitive university to the first established Tokyo University.

At that time, the teaching method at Tokyo University was mainly through lectures influenced by French universities, and for exams, students needed to memorize every word that the professor had told them. It was to some extent, very effective because many of the graduates from Tokyo University had become bureaucrats. In Kyoto University however, new professors tried to keep away from the traditional Tokyo University style of teaching, and searched for a new way, drawing on their experience of German seminars.

As a result, seminars were established in 1900 at the Law College of Kyoto University, reducing the time of lectures. Writing thesis became the requirement for undergraduate students in order to graduate. Another change at Kyoto University was the fulfilment of library and easier access to it for students; it was a very different situation at Tokyo University at that time. By doing so, the Law College of Kyoto University asked students to 'research through free discussion'. In short, there was conflict between two ways of thinking in education for students' development; one was to expect students' active learning, the other was to cram as much knowledge as possible into students.

Although the seminar teaching was effective in encouraging students' independent thinking, Kyoto University became to be exposed the pressure of taking traditional lecture-oriented teaching methods, because the number of graduates who succeeded in

becoming bureaucrats were quite low compared to the one of Tokyo University. After seven years of experiment with seminars, the leader of this reform, Yoshihito Takane, resigned from his professorate chair, and Kyoto University became to place lectures as the main teaching methods. However, the seminar style and writing graduating thesis remained as the influence of German model.

Kyoto University has remained faithful to its principle of academic freedom, which is considered to have been created through the introduction of German seminars. The university has a characteristic emphasis on research rather than educating future government officials. Its academic style is characterized by free-thinking, self-reliance and dialogue. Among its alumni, the university counts seven Nobel Prize laureates in fundamental natural science fields.

Thus far, I have been talking about the British and Japanese higher education systems in the 19th century. Now I would like to look at what was happening in German universities in the 19th century.

GERMAN UNIVERSITIES IN THE 19TH CENTURY

As I discussed above, German universities were very influential in the 19th century to other countries' higher education. But what were they like? What was the actual situation of German universities in the 19th century? What type of education was pursued there, and how was the students' academic development fostered?

Berlin University was founded in 1810, and has played a central role in German higher education and scientific research (Miyasaka, 2005, pp. 1, 3). In the establishment of Berlin University, Humboldt's idea of a university was embodied. The significant and influential essence of its idea that were attractive to other countries higher education was 'the unity of research and education'.

The researchers assigned to science academies and research institutes at Berlin University had the right to give lectures from the beginning of their academic careers, so young researchers, who stood at the forefront of research, were able to carry out research education at the university. Due to this, the education and research at the university was lively and provided a dynamically rapid university development (p. 6).

For both teachers and students, being loyal to one's own intellectual pursuits raised the idea of 'academic freedom' up high, and the various powers and authorities outside the universities had the maximum respect for the universities and for the concept of 'academic freedom'. That kind of 'idea of a university' or 'the unity of research and education' coupled with the competitive environment that existed between universities everywhere in Germany, led to the considerable expansion of academic research within German universities throughout the 19th century, and Germany became a Mecca for scientific research (Narisada, 2005, p. 79). The Humboldt idea was exported all over the world, and was utilised as the basis or model whenever a modern university was founded or equipped in areas other than Europe (p. 80).

In German higher education, the unity of research and education was pursued. However, there is a suggestion that the unity of research and education was fulfilled neither in German seminars nor in Japanese seminars, but in British tutorials. As the backgrounds of this explanation are the traditional strong feelings to education of students in UK higher education, and the power of Oxbridge.

Sometimes when a country has strong influence from other countries, it often leads to the rediscovery of their own education. For example in the case of the 19th

century British universities, they would have thought how they could research in the UK without following the German way. The influence of other countries could be used as a resource or inspiration, but actually, its own traditional religion or culture would remain much stronger and deeper, although the surface seems to be influenced and changed a lot.

It might be the same in the case with Japan. At the time of 'westernisation' in the Meiji era, the Japanese tried to introduce Western systems, but at the same time the universities are also modelled on the institutions of higher education under the ancient system of centralised administration established under the constitutional form of government; based on that of China (Hata, 2005, p. 53). So here, one can also see the trial of Japan to rediscover its own tradition with dating back to the ancient time to find out its cultural origin.

CONCLUSION

In this research, I looked at what types of education were pursued in the UK, Germany and Japan to foster students' individual, intellectual development. In the past, it might be enough for a university to raise each country's ideal person. However, today, with demands to have international competency, competitiveness and a global perspective, how can universities develop individuals?

In Japanese higher education, it may be true to say that we became rich as a country because we have traditionally focused on research. However, has this research-oriented way of teaching been successful in giving students a feeling of accomplishment or fulfilment in learning? Have we developed the students' ability to think for themselves and discuss with others?

One of the clues in the education for students' development lies in British tutorials. In them, students acquire and use their social skills such as personal thinking, the way to argue one's own opinion, and how to communicate with other people through tutorial experiences, even after graduating from the universities.

Under the present university financial regime, more public funds are being applied to the support of research than to teaching, which has historically placed much emphasis on the instruction of undergraduates (Goldman, 2005, p. 31). The pressures of exam are increasing as well, and at some tutorials, tutors mostly give exam tips. It raises the question as to how should tutors interpret what they already know about? If the tutors' role is to only give knowledge, then why not do it through the internet? Tutorials have more meaning than that. In Oxford, research means discussing ideas. Tutors also start at a beginner's level, pretending to be innocent sometimes. In order to do so, both tutors and students can learn together, discussing the same texts. Education does not need to be one way from teachers to students. Tutors are more like facilitators who know how to relate their knowledge to students approachable.

Universities need to not only transmit existing knowledge, but also offer face-to-face teaching including discussion for students' development. If I say a university education is not only the transmitting of knowledge, some people would say, 'that is why academic freedom is important'. Then what is academic freedom? Is it just leaving students to study by themselves? How can we support students' independent thinking and personal development?

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