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〔学位授与機構研究紀要〕

The Development and Significance of
External Degrees in the United
Kingdom: A Historian's View

イギリスにおける学外学位制度の発展とその意義——歴史家の視点から——

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THE DEVELOPMENT AND SIGNIFICANCE OF EXTERNAL DEGREES IN THE UNITED KINGDOM: A HISTORIAN'S VIEW

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Recent research sponsored by the Higher Education Funding Council for England has shown that the intake of students to universities in England remains startlingly biased towards the rich, even at the end of the Twentieth Century. Whilst the wealthiest quarter of young people have roughly a fifty percent chance of entering university, the poorest quarter have only an eleven percent chance of pursuing the same route.¹⁾ Why is it that educational opportunity in England remains disproportionately rationed, despite successive efforts to make the universities more accessible to the poor and the working classes over a long period of time? This paper argues that one significant reason for this is the particular ways by which the universities have expanded their catchment during the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: it seeks to show that the English models of external examination, federalism and top-down validation have resulted in significantly more young people having the chance to gain degrees but that this has been achieved at a considerable social and economic cost.

Although in Europe universities have been established for several hundred years, the English case is quite distinctive. At the start of the Nineteenth century, unlike most countries in Europe, there were only two universities in England, Cambridge and Oxford. By the middle of the Nineteenth century there were four, since Durham and London had been established. But the growing industrial cities of the north had no universities and the first industrial revolution took place in the absence of a developed education system. The exploitation of iron and coal and the application of steam engines did not necessitate a sophisticated educational infrastructure and initially none appeared. There were many working within the new industries who saw too much education as a bad thing. A basic education which would instil orderliness, discipline and obedience and which would generate a tractable labour force was thought generally to be enough and, in the elementary school system of

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the early nineteenth century, that was largely what emerged. All this may seem a long time ago, but it is important to stress for those unfamiliar with the English case that the deep reservations which developed during these years about over-education have, even to this day, not entirely died out and remain a small but significant element in the debate on popular education in Britain.

But since the early 1850s, when the department of Science and Art was set up, there has been consistent pressure for the expansion and development of higher education in England.²⁾ It has been strongest at periods of economic expansion. What some have called the second industrial revolution, from about 1860 to 1914, resulted in a sudden growth of the university sector. The development of new industries and new modes of production, such as the electrical, chemical, engineering, machine tool, cycle and motor car industries, all of which appeared during these years, necessitated a far better trained labour force. The result was that some of the pioneer industrialists, Mason in Birmingham, Firth in Sheffield, Nussey in Leeds set up university colleges which by the beginning of the Twentieth Century developed into full blown universities in their own right. This process went on until the First World War. During the depression of the inter-War years there was a lull, although one or two new university colleges were set up at places such as Hull, Leicester and Swansea. But when the economic growth of the Post-Second World War years took off, during the 1950s and 1960s the pace of educational expansion quickened again. Between about 1950 and 1973 Britain's third industrial revolution took place. This time the growth was primarily in the service sector. This development of the tertiary sector of the economy meant a quick growth of the professions, and society looked to the universities to provide the growing numbers of doctors, architects, teachers and managers. Now the demand was so great that expansion took on several forms. First, the new university movement, secondly, the upgrading of technical colleges and of teacher training colleges, which were rechristened colleges of education. This expansion was confirmed by the 1963 Robbins Report, which called for a place at university to be made available to every young person with appropriate qualifications. Since the reformed school system was generating far larger numbers of six formers and the numbers passing the new Advanced level examinations, which young people sat at 18 years of age, were increasing year by year, it very quickly became apparent that this expansion was insufficient, and the Labour Government of the 1960s announced that further growth of higher education would be through a binary system, with thirty more colleges of technology being redesignated as Polytechnics in 1970. The degrees offered by these Polytechnics were to be validated

by the CNAA (Council for National Academic Awards), about which I will say more later. This body became one of the key agencies for expansion, with what were essentially external examination routes offering the polytechnics the chance to establish their own academic credentials. Also, the Open University was set up, enabling large numbers of students to receive much of their degree teaching through television and radio. The overlap between what was being offered by the universities and the polytechnics, together with the problems of maintaining two separate funding systems for institutions which were effectively performing similar functions led in 1992 to the upgrading of the polytechnics which were recognised as universities in their own right. The award of the power to confer their own degrees which went with this decision meant that this became the most recent example in Britain of external examining leading to the full recognition of the colleges concerned.

This account of the pattern of expansion, suggesting a close linkage between economic change and the development of the universities, raises interesting speculations about the nature of the expansion of higher education during the next few years. The Dearing Report which will appear in the summer of 1997 will undoubtedly be one significant pointer towards the next phase of expansion, but it seems inevitable that the next stage of university expansion in England, as elsewhere, must necessarily reflect and respond to the rise of a global economy, the information revolution which is currently underway, and the new lifestyles and cultural mores which flow from them. This account also emphasises the extent to which the universities of modern Britain have responded to repeated demands for expansion of student numbers by themselves growing in size and by proliferation. There are today rather more than 100 recognised universities in Britain and this stark contrast with the situation which obtained at the start of the Nineteenth Century says much about the extent to which growth has been through the addition of new institutions rather than the expansion of those already in existence. One very important element facilitating growth and expansion has been a tendency to seek external access routes to higher education for those social groups excluded from the universities. It is the purpose of this paper to briefly review the development of these external routes and to say something about their social, political and historical significance.

The University of London is as good a starting point as any.³⁾ Here, almost by accident, from the outset, external examinations became the device which first allowed two contrasting rival colleges to be subsumed in a single university institution, and then became used, without the process ever having been clearly

foreseen by any of the participants, as the mechanism by which a model of university teaching was extended to other parts of the United Kingdom and eventually worldwide. In 1836 two colleges, Kings College, which was an Anglican foundation, and University College, known popularly as the godless institution in Gower Street, were both brought under the control of the new University of London whose sole function was to examine. This arrangement survived until 1900 when it was extended and enabled the University of London to become probably the world's largest degree awarding institution during the first half of the 20th century. It is worth pausing to reflect on what was happening here. Although the University of London was partly modelled on Oxford and Cambridge where separate colleges were all constituent members of the University, what developed at London was quite different, because at London teaching was divorced from examining. The colleges were responsible for teaching: the university for examining. This was a model of federalism which was to be widely copied both in Britain and around the world.⁴⁾ If we look at the Victoria University which developed at the end of the 19th century in the North of England, which was also federal, at the plans for a Midlands University based on Birmingham during the 1890s, at the Federal University of Wales which developed in the second half of the 19th century and even at the federal universities which have developed in North America such as the University of California comprising campuses as much as 2000 miles apart, all of these draw their inspiration in part from what had happened at London. Implicit in the model of the University of London is the view that there must be an arbiter of standards and that the arbiter should be the university itself.

Examining was the fetish of the Victorians (just as it may come to be seen of the English in the 1990s!), and, at almost exactly the moment that the Northcote-Trevelyan Report recommended the use of examinations for entry to the civil service, thus ending a tradition of patronage and substituting for it something far more recognisably modern, the Science and Art Department was established in South Kensington to disseminate the virtue of examining across the kingdom as a whole, and particularly in the secondary schools, technical colleges and schools of art which were beginning to spring up across England and Wales.

Founded in 1853 the Department of Science and Art was never considered to be a university institution. It was under the control of the Education Department and was financially responsible to the Privy Council. However, as the result of the work of a series of administrators, most notably Lyon Playfair, Henry Cole and John Donnelly, the Science and Art Department provided funding for the examination

of science in a large number of regional colleges. A few of these went on to become universities, most notably Exeter, where the School of Art by entering its students for science and art examinations, steadily moved towards university status. Similarly at Reading it was the examination of art classes from 1860 which led to the foundation of a university and the development of science and art at Southampton from 1871 onwards in the Hartley Institute also proved to be the origins of a new university foundation. Thus the second model that we can draw from Victorian England of external examination is one which took place completely outside of the university sector but which, under pressure for the recognition of the status of courses, evolved into a university system in its own right. The Science and Art Department ended work in 1899 but is a very significant second example.

Another increasingly popular device to expand post-school education which developed in Britain was the correspondence college. By the end on the Nineteenth Century there were several such colleges at work, Skerrys College, Edinburgh; Foulks Lynch Correspondence tuition service in London; the University Correspondence College in Cambridge, founded in 1887 and preparing students for University of London external degrees; and Wolsey Hall, Oxford, which began work as the Diploma Correspondence College in 1894.⁵⁾ Such correspondence courses developed enormously during the Second World War, as members of the armed services sought to gain qualifications they were otherwise likely to miss. For two groups in particular, these devices were of special significance; first many prisoners of war were given access to degree courses while imprisoned through correspondence programmes. After the War, similar arrangements were made for merchant seamen to gain qualifications through postal courses.⁶⁾ For them the College of the Sea, a branch of the Seafarers Education Service, was founded.

What marks out both of the periods of economic expansion which I have identified (the late-Nineteenth Century and the period following the Second World war) was the stark fact that, try as planners might to meet the expanding demand for access to secondary and higher education, that demand repeatedly outstripped the capacity of successive governments to provide. It was this fact, linked to a particular sense of social and moral purpose, which led a few enthusiasts within the universities of Oxford and Cambridge to establish what at first were called extension lectures by which enthusiastic tutors visited different parts of the kingdom to lecture to groups of industrial and commercial workers who otherwise would have no chance of a university education of any kind. Begun by James Stewart of the University of Cambridge in 1869, with a series of lectures in the North of England, extension lectures

quickly spread to the University of Oxford and encouraged young tutors in both universities who had a social conscience to devote some of their time to travelling to the industrial north to provide university lectures to popular audiences during the evenings. This was only made possible by the new railway system and some commentators have suggested that this was little more than a device to enable Oxford and Cambridge to appear to be attracting a far wider catchment without radically altering what was actually going on within the universities; in brief, preserving their social exclusiveness whilst appearing to do just the opposite.⁷⁾ Whatever the rights and wrongs of that argument the outcome is very clear. On the one hand this system of extension lecturing proved to be the origins of the Workers Education Movement of the first half of the 20th century. The WEA which was founded in 1903 was derived directly from university extension classes. Beyond this it is possible to show that one or two of the extension centres that were set up away from Oxford and Cambridge did themselves ultimately become the nucleus of universities. The University of Nottingham began as an extension centre and the inspiration for the University of Keele also lay with the extension movement. These are perhaps the two most notable examples.

It is important not to overlook the role of the new civic or Redbrick universities, as they became called, in all of this. There are two important points to make in the context of this paper. First, several of these new colleges, during the period that they were identified as university colleges and before they gained degree awarding powers, did much of their teaching at below degree level. Those courses which did aspire to degree award were, as often as not, validated in the first instance by the University of London. So for example in 1893 when the first detailed returns were made to the Department of Education at Birmingham there were 700 students in total but only 14 of them were awarded degrees in the year, all of them external degrees from the University of London. Much the same was happening in other parts of the country. In the same year there were 13 graduates from Bristol, 13 from Leeds and 17 from Nottingham. Only Manchester which had been founded for a longer period had a decent number of graduates, 123. All of these university colleges were using the University of London to award external degrees as the route by which they built towards full university status at the end of the 19th century.⁸⁾

The beginnings of the Post-Second world war phase of expansion were signalled by a broadening of the remit of the University Grants committee in 1946. This was the period when planning reached its zenith, in many aspects of social life. The welfare state was refined by Clement Attlee's Post-War Labour government, town

planning and housing became the province of the planners and so did the provision of education. The expansion of schooling during these years became little less than a military campaign: the drive to provide decent schools and better buildings to cater for the population growth of the fifties and sixties was masterminded by those who, only a few years before, had been overseeing military operations. The planned universities of this Post-War era had several characteristics which are of significance in this context. They were all relatively small. They all involved a rejection of the idea of federalism since they were all given the power to award their own degrees from the outset. The first of them, Keele, which took its first students in 1950, was overseen by Oxford, Birmingham and Manchester for its first 12 years, but this pale reflection of a federal system only emphasised the lack of confidence of the founders of the first postwar new university. All of the others were given the promise of high status by being given the power to award their own degrees right from the start.

Not only was a status hierarchy of universities clearly established in this way during the fifties and sixties, but the relatively low status of technological study was also confirmed, first in a series of Reports (Percy, 1945; Barlow, 1946), and then by the establishment of the Council for National Technological Awards in 1956⁹⁾. The idea that technological education was not the sort of thing which should take place in a university was very fashionable, and in 1950 the National Advisory Council for Education in Industry and Commerce called for a Royal College of Technologists which would become the major awarding body for technological courses in higher education. In 1955 the National council for Technological Awards was set up (it also soon became known popularly as the Hives Council after its chairman). This could award Diplomas in Technology, but not degrees, a condition which reflected the status of higher technological education at that time but which also worked to stereotype external awards as being of relatively low status. All of the courses which this Council validated involved time spent in industry, being what became known as sandwich courses, so a further outcome was that vocational education also continued to be seen as relatively low grade. It was this body which awarded external qualifications to the 24 colleges recognised as Colleges of Advanced Technology in 1956.¹⁰⁾

In 1963 the Robbins Report recommended that this body should be upgraded, given the power to award degrees externally and rechristened the Council for National Academic Awards. Within a few years this had replaced the University of London as the largest single degree awarding body in the United Kingdom. It kept alive and developed the British tradition of enabling expansion and diversification through

external validation, but now the role of the CNAA was to validate what was done within the colleges rather than take full and direct responsibility for its examination. Much of the work of CNAA was concerned with the recognition of new courses and the modification of existing ones rather than their examination. The role of the external agency was inexorably changing as the shift towards quality assurance got under way, although this term was not in common usage in this context at that time.

In retrospect, I would argue, the CNAA was significant for several other reasons. First, it came into existence at a historical moment when there was considerable ferment and change in higher education in the United Kingdom. In a situation in which many were frightened by the prospect of uncontrolled growth and there was still a strong sense of social and academic hierarchy, the device of using an agency such as the CNAA had the effect of allowing both expansion and proliferation, thus meeting the aspirations of a growing number of people who wished their children to go through full time higher education, but, at the same time, it guaranteed the position of pre-existing institutions which were marked out by the power to award their own qualifications. In this way the strong sense of hierarchy within higher education was preserved during a time of fast growth.

It thus became possible for the Labour Government of the 1960s to exploit the opportunity to bring the Post-Robbins expansion of higher education under control by using the CNAA as the validating body for the new Polytechnics which were announced by Antony Crosland in his 1965 Woolwich speech. The Polytechnics started work in 1970 (they were in reality all previously local colleges of technology) and soon many of them incorporated their local college of education as the teacher training institutions ran for cover in the difficult economic circumstances of the early 1970s. The external validation provided by the CNAA enabled all of these changes to take place in as orderly a fashion as was possible without a complete restructuring of the existing university system. Many of the examiners and assessors appointed by the CNAA were academics working in these established universities, so their influence led to what was going on in these new polytechnics looking increasingly like established practice within the universities. In this way the external role of the CNAA was undoubtedly an important catalyst by which the two halves of this new binary system (the universities on one side and the polytechnics on the other) moved closer together over a twenty year period, resulting eventually in the distinction between the two being abandoned when, in 1992, the government upgraded the polytechnics to university status and so, at a stroke, doubled the number of

universities in the United Kingdom.

The question of whether the use of this device of external validation to facilitate the growth of the system was in its overall impact democratic is a difficult and complex one to tangle with. On the one hand the guarantee which it provided of strong similarity, even identity between courses in differing institutions did undoubtedly introduce an element of fairness by which students could feel assured that, following similar courses, and drawing from the same supporting literature and textbooks, they were being fairly judged by widely agreed and accepted common standards at the end of their courses. Many employers used the criteria of the same class of degree from any recognised institution when appointing new staff. But, underlying this was, first, the fact that the old universities were still seen as preeminent. Differing funding systems pretty well ensured that the lecturing staff in the polytechnics had far less chance of pursuing their own research, so that on either side of the binary divide the distinction became increasingly one of teaching institutions set against research institutions. Also, the very fact of being able to award their own degrees, which only those universities established by royal charter could do, was one of the marks of high status. Thus, my conclusion is, that, effective as it was, the particular model of external validation which was used in Britain from the mid-1960s was unable to break down the strong sense of a social hierarchy in higher education. The fact that particular kinds of school and particular social groups continued to send their children to particular institutions only heightened this phenomenon.

A rather different safety valve allowing for further expansion of the higher education system in the United Kingdom was the Open University. This too was devised by the 1960s Labour Government as a final, some would say desperate attempt to enable expansion of the universities. Some of its planners, such as Jenny Lee, were themselves familiar with and products of the old university extension system which had led to the establishment of the WEA in the early Twentieth Century. The new university of the air they set up used TV, radio and correspondence courses to develop a cost efficient system capable of considerable expansion. The elements of the course most resembling traditional university studies were the summer schools at which tutors from existing universities were employed during their own vacations to provide tutoring and pastoral support to students unfamiliar with the demands of university teaching. It is relevant here because one clear result of the Open University's work was that universities generally were offered a model of distance teaching which was cost-effective, guaranteed standards and generated a large

number of graduates.¹¹⁾

More recently, the determination of the government during the 1980s to widen educational opportunity meant the several new agencies were set up to bring this about, and these tended to experiment with one or other version of open learning. First the Manpower Services Commission, then the Training Commission, then the Training Agency and finally the Training Enterprise and Education Directorate within the Department of Employment, all developed new initiatives to broaden post-school educational opportunity. For the most part they seem to have become producers of learning resources rather than providers in their own right, but no account of developments in higher education can overlook these initiatives.¹²⁾

Thus, in summary, the British model of university expansion as perceived by a historian is a very complex one. It has proceeded in fits and starts and has been achieved through a variety of methods. From the outset, the proliferation of institutions took place alongside a contrasting practice of using external examining as the key to expansion and greater access to higher education. During the Twentieth Century, external assessment, as it had been practised by the University of London, was replaced by external validation, as practised by the CNAA. But, at the same time the upgrading of preexisting institutions of a different kind proved yet another way of catering for growing demand, as did the models of distance teaching made possible by correspondence courses, and the Open University. In recent years there has been some attempt to tidy up the rather chaotic jumble which developed from a period of swift expansion of various kinds. The new Higher Education Funding Council for England is clearly one attempt to bring order to this scene. Unfortunately, there is yet another complication in store. In recent years many institutions have been using the device of franchising courses as yet another way to achieve expansion and to hold on to market share in terms of student numbers. A growing number of universities are using local colleges to teach their first year courses, using them as the access route to their own established degree courses. It seems that the Dearing Report, due to be published in July 1997, may well recommend that this becomes the new, fashionable way of ensuring continuing expansion into the Twenty First Century. Perhaps the one enduring lesson we can learn from the British case is that, if a nation allows its system of higher education to develop in as complex a way as has been the case in Britain, then it is unlikely that any government policy can guarantee future coherence. The techniques used to expand the British system of higher education have varied over time, and seem likely to continue to do so.¹³⁾ But the outcome has been a system of higher education within which established

hierarchies have never been seriously challenged and many of the less desirable characteristics of the system, inherited from the past, such as social exclusiveness, have been allowed to persist to the very end of the Twentieth Century. The British case may provide a model for other societies, but it also offers a warning.

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イギリスにおける学外学位制度の発展とその意義—歴史家の視点から—

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大学の門戸開放と拡大を求める圧力は、イギリスにおいても過去一世紀半にわたって常に存在してきた。圧力はもちろん、社会・経済の変化によってもたらされたものであった。そして、そうした圧力に対処するため、さまざまな措置が講じられてきたが、本論文はロンドン大学、科学技芸局、市民大学、大学補助金委員会（UGC）、全国技術資格認定協会（CNTA）、全国学位授与機構（CNAA）、ポリテクニク、オープン・ユニヴァーシティなど、これまで学外学位の認定・授与に関わってきた諸機関の活動・役割に焦点をあてて学外学位制度の発展を概観し、合わせてその歴史的意義を探ろうとしたものである。

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