

An exploratory approach to enhancing the social responsibility and publicness of higher education institutions: Suggestions for strengthening the publicness of Korean Universities

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The aim of the study is to provide recommendations for bolstering the social responsibility and publicness of higher education institutions in Korea. This study seeks for the concept of publicness in higher education into the three types: the publicness of universities through official and open management; the publicness of universities as public goods through open accessibility; the publicness of universities through contribution to the public interest. In view of the conceptual aspects of higher education pertaining to public interest, such as future society, regional balance, equal opportunity, and its realistic aspect of competitiveness, a more nuanced strategic approach is essential for restructuring the higher education system. In this context, distinct strategies and methods for the restructuring of national and public universities, private universities, and networked universities should be clearly defined, enabling targeted decision-making and focused implementation.

Keywords: *higher education institution, publicness, future society, regional balance, equal opportunity*

Introduction

Given the role and function of universities today, it is often unclear whether they belong to a private domain owned by founders or boards, or if they are part of the public domain as social public goods contributing to universal education. Especially in South Korea (hereinafter “Kores”) where over 80% of higher education institutions are private universities, there are often doubts about their public status, especially in the face of various legal cases related to private university corruption and incompetence. This indicates a significant gap between societal expectations of a university’s publicness and its practical role.

The concept of publicness in higher education is approached from various perspectives. Publicness is generally viewed from the perspectives of: official actions, serving the general public as public goods or pursuing public interest, and openness to the public. So (2003) and Na (2002) have further elaborated on these perspectives in greater detail as follows.

So Young-jin defines publicness as: the entirety of the acts carried out by the state, government, or public institutions; meaning “the public” applicable universally to a large group of people; official cases where acting entities extend beyond the government to broader social activities; pursuing public interest, relating to accessibility to public goods, and openness to the public (So, 2003). Meanwhile, Na Byeong-hyeon defines publicness as “official and related to the state, common to everyone, and open to all (Na, 2002, as cited in Shin, 2018).

Nixon (2010), in “Higher Education and the Public Good,” presents the meaning of publicness boiled down to two principles in the public domain, drawing on Arendt’s (1998) argumentation. First, everything possessing the nature of publicness in the public domain must be open for all members of society to see and hear. This is a concept encompassing transparency and openness of public institutions in managing their systems and extending to societal inclusivity. Second, publicness involves sharing public goods, which are the products of public labor, through social relations (in-between), implying that higher education institutions, as social public goods, should be shared with society members. This means more opportunities for broader public access to higher education institutions.

In light of these general concepts of publicness, Lim (2012) proposes three perspectives on the publicness of higher education: 1) Guarantee of the right to education for all citizens, i.e., securing the publicness of higher education by realizing universal education through the expansion of opportunities to access universities; 2) Management of higher education by public entities such as the state, i.e., publicizing the management of universities as public goods to enhance their social responsibility and publicness; 3) Entire or partial public funding of higher education, i.e., enhancing the publicness of higher education by increased assumption of the burden of costs through public resources. As

such, the publicness of higher education is related to the public responsibility of the state to ensure citizens' right to education (Shin, 2018). However, in this discussion, it is necessary to emphasize not only the official responsibility of the state towards universities but also the social responsibility (accessibility & public interest) universities owe to society.

This study seeks to apply this general approach by categorizing the concept of publicness in higher education into the three types: the publicness of universities through official and open management; the publicness of universities as public goods through open accessibility; the publicness of universities through contribution to the public interest. The aim of this analysis is to provide recommendations for bolstering the social responsibility and publicness of higher education institutions in Korea.

Conceptual approach to the publicness of higher education

The publicness of universities through official & open management

Publicness in universities, achieved through official and open management, refers to the transparent operation of universities as public goods, supported and managed officially. Public funding allows public institutions to assume a significant portion of the responsibility for university operations. This ensures both the openness of university management and the democratic governance of universities, thereby guaranteeing their publicness. When evaluating the publicness of universities in this context, Korea is found to be on the lower end of the spectrum. This is evident when examining the size and proportion of public support (publicly funded education expenses) invested in higher education, as well as the ratio of private universities among all higher education institutions and the number of students attending these private universities.

Korea is one of the countries with the lowest ratio of public investment in higher education among OECD members. As of 2022, the OECD average per-student public education expenditure is USD 17,559 PPP. Korea's per-student public education expenditure is only USD 11,287 PPP, accounting for 64.3% of the OECD average. Moreover, only 38.3% of the per-student public education expenditure in higher education in Korea comes from public sources, with the remaining 61.7% covered by private funding. This stands in stark contrast to the OECD average, where public funding accounts for 66%. This disparity indicates that the realization of university publicness through official and open management in Korea is still lacking (OECD, Education at a Glance, 2022).

Alongside this inadequacy of public funding of higher education, another major factor that undermines the publicness of Korean universities is the higher education system's excessive reliance on private institutions. As of 2023, Korea has a total of 426 higher education institutions, with about 3.1 million students enrolled. Out of these, 193 are four-year universities, and 153 of them are private, representing 79.3% of all four-year universities. Furthermore, 77.2% of students in four-year universities are enrolled in

private institutions. This heavy skew towards private universities in Korea's higher education system presents challenges in advocating for increased publicness within this framework (Korean Educational Development Institute, Higher Education Statistics).

The limited public investment for enhancing university publicness makes it realistically difficult to ensure transparency and democracy in the operations and governance structures of universities. Indeed, the drive towards corporatization by some national universities, as well as the recurrent issues of mismanagement and incompetence in private universities that frequently become social concerns, can be attributed to the government or public institutions' failure to contribute sufficiently or fulfill their responsibilities in managing university operations.

The publicness of universities as public goods through open accessibility

The notion that universities are social public goods implies the realization of the concept of "the public," which should be universally applicable to a large number of people or guarantee equality in terms of access opportunities (Nixon, 2010). In other words, the publicness of higher education implies that it should be something common to or shared among as many people as possible (Na, 2002; Arendt, 1998), embracing the principle of equal opportunity in access to universities and the principle that universities, as public goods, should be socially shared. Once these principles of equality and sharing are violated, a vicious cycle sets in where differences in regions or family backgrounds and characteristics eventually lead to differences in educational outcomes. Higher education should fulfill a public role in helping learners overcome background differences and contribute to their lives as autonomous democratic citizens (Nixon, 2010).

To ensure the publicness of access opportunities to universities, universities must be open to a broad public. However, in the rigidly stratified environment of higher education in Korea, achieving such openness and accessibility is highly challenging. Some may argue that selecting and placing students based on academic performance in university admissions does not undermine the publicness of universities. However, the current performance-based university entrance system will inevitably remain a factor undermining the publicness of universities unless it overcomes the social criticism about its distorted evaluation system prioritizing selection over growth, knowledge over competence, competition over learning, and standardization over individualization (Kim et al., 2014).

While it is inevitable for universities, as specialized higher education institutions, to implement a selective admissions system, they are not intended for universal education. However, the state bears a fundamental responsibility to expand access to higher education for all citizens, tailored to their unique abilities and interests, in readiness for a society oriented towards lifelong learning. The primary function of universities is not merely "selection" but rather "education." When universities place excessive emphasis on attracting top talents through competitive admission strategies rather than nurturing

exceptional individuals through their educational programs, they are abandoning their fundamental values and responsibilities.

Meanwhile, the global surge of neoliberal education since the 1990s has also had a profound impact on infringing upon the publicness of universities. Neoliberalism, which began around the 1980s in the UK and the USA, quickly established itself as a new economic and social order. It aimed at enhancing efficiency in the operation of organizations, including states, grounded in principles of autonomy and competition. This emphasis of neoliberalism on maximizing individual freedom and the principles of free market competition has extended not only to the economic and social realms but also to the realm of education, resulting in the marketization of education and the expansion of elitist education based on competitive principles.

The marketization of education involves the privatization, commodification, and commercialization of public education (Lim et al., 2015; Nixon, 2010). In Korean society, the privatization of public education, especially in higher education, has been normalized even before the neoliberal influence, reflecting a Korea-specific context that permits autonomy in establishing and operating schools in the private sector. However, it is worth noting that the marketization of higher education has been intensified due to the accelerated commodification and commercialization under the influence of neoliberalism. In Korea, commodification of education is rampant with educational activities or programs in universities being treated like market products, selected according to the abilities of educational consumers, much like economic goods. Consequently, students, as educational consumers, now choose the quality of education based on their economic means, rather than academic capability. For instance, in Korean society, gaining admission to prestigious universities often requires extensive private education. The cost and availability of such education are largely determined by family economic power, which can be seen as a clear manifestation of the commodification of education.

Additionally, the commercialization of higher education impedes universities from fulfilling their social responsibilities. Public educational institutions are increasingly assessed and evaluated as if they were economic entities, focusing on profit generation efficiency and prioritizing outputs over inputs. This shift towards commercialization is accelerating in higher education. In this environment, university life is often overshadowed by a view of students merely as sources of revenue (tuition fees). A marked focus on managerial efficiency, characterized by cost-cutting and maximizing operational efficiency, is leading to a decline in the quality of education. This situation prompts growing concerns and debates over the essence of universities.

The publicness of universities through contribution to the public interest

As institutions of higher education, universities are expected to contribute to both economic and social development. In Korean society, their role has been particularly

crucial in fueling the economic growth of the industrial era. Reflecting this importance, numerous advanced countries are investing substantial public resources into higher education to adapt to impending societal changes, as indicated by the emergence of the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” (Schwab, 2016) and the advent of “Capitalism 4.0” (Kaletsky, 2010).

Throughout the industrial society era, the concept of public interest that universities should contribute to has been mainly confined to social functions and roles for national-level development and national integration. However, the earlier nation-centric concept of public interest is progressively evolving to emphasize contributions to balanced regional and local development as well as regional innovation (Jang, 2016). As a result, movements advocating for societal change and reform, such as decentralization, balanced national development, the era of localization, and regional innovation, have gained momentum. This shift has spurred initiatives that highlight the synergy between regions and education, such as the establishment of learning regions, lifelong learning cities, regional human resource development programs, and local and community education networks (Seong, 2004).

The relationship between local communities and lifelong education has certainly long been emphasized. Traditionally, lifelong education, deeply rooted in local communities as the very foundations of our lives, can be considered community education in its original form. However, the current interplay between lifelong education and local communities presents nuances that differ from the past. While the primary focus of lifelong education has traditionally been on individual learner achievements, economic development, and national integration, contemporary community learning in local societies prioritizes building communities through learning and addressing local issues. Consequently, the nature of the educational content varies. Lifelong education typically concentrates on acquiring specific knowledge or skills, whereas community-based learning prioritizes gaining knowledge and skills pertinent to local communities, thereby directly contributing to local development and problem-solving. This approach resonates with Nixon’s (2010) argument and is in line with the fundamental goal of higher education to foster cosmopolitan citizenship, bridging local and global communities under the concept of “universities for all.”

Discussions and policies for enhancing the publicness of higher education

Strategies for enhancing the publicness of higher education

As previously discussed, this study outlines the publicness of higher education from several perspectives: the expansion of official and open management of university operations, the necessity for universities to evolve into public goods through open accessibility, and the role of universities in contributing to the public interest. This

conceptual framework provides insights into potential methods and approaches for enhancing the publicness of higher education.

Lim (2016) suggests three strategies of enhancing the publicness of higher education. The first strategy involves expanding government financial support, which would include establishing a legal framework for this support, broadening the scale of public funding, and introducing a system where the government assumes responsibility for private universities. The second strategy focuses on strengthening the public management and oversight of private universities. This could be achieved through revising the Private School Act, implementing measures to enhance corporate accountability, and enforcing more stringent management and supervision by government agencies. The third strategy emphasizes the need for intensifying internal management and supervision within universities, calling for the institutionalization of autonomous entities such as faculty, staff, and student councils, alongside the democratization of university governance structures.

Lim (2012) puts forward two primary strategies for reinforcing the publicness of higher education. Firstly, he stresses the need to enhance public management. Considering that higher education is an integral part of public education in Korea, as reflected in legal provisions such as Article 31(1) of the Constitution (equal right to education), Article 2 (principle of education), and Article 9 (school education) of the Framework Act on Education, its publicness must be maintained through official management measures. Secondly, Lim notes that one key indicator of higher education's publicness is the extent of its public funding. According to this criterion, the level of publicness in Korea's higher education is relatively low, which highlights the need to adopt the principle of "public funding of educational expenses" as part of this public management approach.

To effectively reinforce the publicness of universities, it is essential to consider the following three implementation strategies, derived from the three concepts identified in this study: 1) Expanding public support funded by the government and public sectors; 2) Strengthening the social responsibility of universities as public goods by enhancing accessibility; and 3) Boosting the responsibility of universities towards public interest, focusing on national future and local community development. Accordingly, an overview of the existing higher education policies aimed at expanding university publicness is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Existing policies and discussions for expanding the publicness of universities

Category	Policies and Discussions
The publicness of universities through official and open management (public support for and management of universities)	- Strengthening and nurturing national and public universities - Promoting publicized or government-dependent private universities - Special purpose funding projects (e.g., ACE, CK, CORE, LINC) - Private School Innovation Plans (e.g., operation of Private Education Innovation Committee) - Basic competence assessment of universities
The publicness of universities as public goods through open accessibility (equal opportunity of access)	- Improvement of university admission system - Discussions on joint admission system - Strategies for building an integrated university network - Expansion of adult education opportunities offered by universities as lifelong education institutions
The publicness of universities through contribution to the public interest (universities' social responsibility)	- Development of regional hub universities - Support for campus town initiatives - Local industry-academia cooperation projects - Strategies to strengthen higher education in preparation for future society (e.g., the Fourth Industrial Revolution).

Strategies for strengthening national and public universities

Discussions on restructuring the higher education system, encompassing national and public universities as well as publicized private universities, have been continuously evolving since the 2000s. Following the announcement of the National University Cooperation and Openness Plan in 2001, a consistent flow of proposals for higher education system reform has emerged from academia, the political arena, and the educational sector. This persistent discourse highlights an undeniable trend of societal demand for change and innovation within the higher education system.

Among these discussions on higher education system restructuring, a relatively recent proposal, which was outlined in the policy research of the Seoul Metropolitan Office of Education (Lim et al., 2015), is grounded in the 2012 unified plan agreed upon by education movement organizations. This proposal's essence includes establishing an integrated network predominantly featuring national and public universities, transitioning general private universities to publicized private universities, and transforming private vocational colleges into publicized private vocational colleges. Such a comprehensive restructuring is designed to revolutionize the hierarchical structure of universities and

solidify their publicness.

According to the proposed restructuring plan, national and public universities would be consolidated into a nationally integrated network, and publicized private universities into regionally integrated networks. The aim is for the majority of private universities, with the exception of some independent institutions, to transition into publicized entities. After the transition to publicized status, private specialized colleges would also form a specialized college network. Under this system, high school graduates would be guided to select their universities or vocational/specialized colleges within their respective nationally or regionally integrated networks, or enter their selected independent private institutions.

Promotion of publicized private universities

As defined by international organizations such as the OECD, publicized private universities refer to institutions where the state contributes more than half of the major educational funding. These universities should ensure the publicness and transparency of their operations and enhance their social responsibility in educational activities.

Applying these international standards and definitions to the Korean context, a publicized private university can be conceptually defined as “an institution that covers more than half of its main operating costs with public funds from the national or local governments and ensures the publicness and transparency of its operations by improving its governance structure, while enhancing its social engagement and contributions in academic operations, encompassing education, research, and admissions, to fulfill its social responsibilities.”

The objectives of promoting publicized private universities are to strengthen their publicness and enhance their social responsibilities. The issues of corruption and incompetence in private universities have frequently emerged as societal issues shared by all citizens, not just limited to the higher education sector. Moreover, in the era of population decline, the demand for change and reform in private universities has become a societal issue that requires intervention from the government and public sector, going beyond individual institutions. The promotion of publicized private universities is a policy discourse aimed at expanding public support for private institutions and thereby ensuring their publicness.

To qualify as a publicized private university, an institution must submit a proposal that meets mandatory criteria focused on ensuring its public character. This proposal should also include requirements for educational advancement aimed at enhancing efficiency, which will be subject to thorough review.

Strategies to innovate private universities and to enhance their publicness

The social perception of the governance structure and behavior led by the foundations and boards of private universities has not been positive. Frequent issues of corruption and incompetence in private universities have led to a continuous societal demand for a structural reform. As Park (2018) points out, the problems in the governance of private universities include the decision-making structure dominated by the board of directors, issues with the status and authority of the university council, limitations of arbitrary bodies like student councils, staff councils, and faculty councils, and the limitations of the university audit function.

Currently, most private school boards (as per Article 16 of the Private School Act) hold a monopoly over crucial decision-making areas in university operations, including finance, personnel, and regulations. This monopoly hinders the democratic participation of internal members and transparency in university management. As a result, there is a growing call to restrict the functions and roles of these private school boards to merely supporting and nurturing universities and to enhance the qualifications of board members.

The strengthening of the university council, an official body within higher education institutions, is essential to counter the board of directors' monopoly and to ensure transparency and democratic participation in university operations. The Higher Education Act already mandates the establishment of these councils and defines their authority, necessitating their implementation in both private and public universities and calling for an enhancement of their roles. However, further refinement is required. Specifically, it is necessary to clearly define and broaden the scope of their advisory and decision-making functions. Such enhancements would significantly elevate their influence and effectiveness within the university governance framework.

To ensure the democratic functioning of private universities, it is also of crucial importance to guarantee the participation of both internal and external members in the decision-making process. However, at many universities, faculty councils, staff councils, and student councils exist as informal bodies, which restricts their official involvement. Consequently, there is a growing call for the formal recognition and legalization of these internal bodies to strengthen their role in university governance.

Directions for restructuring higher education to enhance publicness

The current society's demand for restructuring the higher education system extends beyond merely fortifying the official roles and responsibilities towards universities. It also encompasses ensuring the publicness of universities as social public goods. This restructuring is not just about enhancing the operational efficiency of individual institutions; it involves broadening the publicness of universities as public goods and

amplifying their contribution to the future and development of local communities. From this perspective, the publicness of universities should be understood as preparing for the future of our society and education system. In light of this understanding, the contemporary social demands for restructuring the higher education system can be outlined in three key areas.

The first area of focus is future education. In the era of a “population cliff,” the decline in the school-age population is placing external pressure on the need to restructure the higher education system. Projections indicate that within the next decade, many universities may face an existential crisis due to student recruitment challenges. Given this scenario, it is imperative to explore changes and improvements in preparation for the future society, be it through restructuring or enhancing the quality of universities. Additionally, contemporary discussions about the future, such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution and Capitalism 4.0, suggest that Korea’s traditional industrial-era higher education system is no longer viable. Consequently, there is an urgent need to reinforce the social role and responsibility of universities in contributing to the development of a sustainable future society and in fostering civic competencies.

The second area of focus is regional balance. The current global trend towards globalization or a cosmopolitan era paradoxically highlights the importance of localization, including balanced regional development, urban regeneration, and revitalization of local communities, as means to achieve internationalization. However, Korea’s experience of the economic development to attain an industrialized society has taught a crucial lesson: the nation’s growth is unsustainable if regional stability collapses. This has led to the realization that true globalization must be preceded by localization. Also, from the social experience that weakening social capital, e.g., local communities, jeopardizes the sustainable development of the entire society, they have been putting much effort into creating a structure of “virtuous cycle” of the regional ecosystem. In this context, universities in regions are expected to contribute to building social capital for local communities and to serve as hubs of collective intelligence for the sustainable development of regional ecosystems. Ultimately, regional universities must undergo a transformation to become higher education institutions deeply integrated with their respective regions, focusing on collaboration and contributing to local community development.

The third area of focus is equal opportunity. In Korea, the university admission system significantly impacts primary and secondary public education. The current system limits access to higher education due to its hierarchical structure, the need for private tutoring for entrance exams, and high education costs. To ensure broader access to higher education and achieve equal opportunity, universities need to initiate changes in their undergraduate and postgraduate admission processes, as well as in their educational and graduation protocols. Additionally, as society transitions to lifelong learning, access to university education should expand beyond traditionally aged students to include individuals from

diverse age groups, social backgrounds, and professional experiences. Whereas universities have previously emphasized attracting talented students through admissions, the focus should shift towards enhancing the quality of education, thereby cultivating outstanding individuals from varied backgrounds.

In view of the conceptual aspects of higher education pertaining to public interest, such as future education regional balance, and equal opportunity, and its realistic aspect of competitiveness, a more nuanced strategic approach is essential for restructuring the higher education system. In this context, distinct strategies and methods for the restructuring of national and public universities, private universities, and networked universities should be clearly defined, enabling targeted decision-making and focused implementation. Specifically, national and public universities should concentrate on enhancing foundational academic disciplines and research capabilities, preparing for the future needs of society. Private universities, on the other hand, should aim to transform into institutions more closely aligned with regional development goals. Additionally, fostering solidarity and collaboration among universities is crucial, with an emphasis on widening access for a diverse range of learners and citizens, thereby positioning higher education institutions as hubs of lifelong learning (public goods).

Table 2. Strategies for restructuring the higher education system

	Future education	Regional balance	Equal opportunity
National & public universities	- Strengthening future education in preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution - Enhancing basic academic disciplines and research capabilities of hub national universities - Developing and providing focused support for specialized research institutes at each hub national university - Expanding the national university faculty and research personnel	- Strengthening the role of national universities for regional balanced development - Strengthening industry-academia cooperation in the region	- Fostering local community talent and stabilizing employment - Introducing non-major admission and the admission guarantee system
Private universities	- Preparing for the era of demographic cliff Structural reform for local private universities to - Promoting publicized private universities - Pressing ahead with the private university governance reform	- Industry-academia linkage and cooperation plans for regional balanced development - Cooperation with Local Governments - Cultivating regional hub universities - Promoting locally based employment and startup - Strengthening partnerships with universities for the regional ecosystem and community	- Activating adult re-education and vocational training to implement a lifelong learning society

University networks	- Sharing human and physical infrastructure of regional universities through regional networks of major subjects - Building education platform - Building education big data	- Creation of campus towns - Supporting university students' employment and startup clubs - Utilizing university facilities and infrastructure in the local community	- Improving degree and credit system (including nano-majors) for a lifelong learning society - Strengthening community citizen education - Exploring a joint operation system of graduate schools and similar initiatives - Operating common liberal arts and degree courses
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Public support for national and public universities need to have a clear purpose of fostering higher education institutions that contribute to society by laying the foundation for research power and basic academic disciplines, enabling them to play a pivotal role in future education. As many advanced countries are concentrating their strategic investments in higher education in preparation for the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Korea also needs to focus the research power of national universities on strategic industries and technological areas in preparation for future society. For this purpose, it is necessary to transform the organization of existing hub research institutes to focus on national and public universities, and to improve research personnel, infrastructure, and environment. Securing faculty members is essential for strengthening the research capabilities and basic academic areas of national and public universities. In the current situation where improvements to the existing national and public university innovation support projects are being pursued, it is necessary to invest public funds intensively for the expansion of national and public university faculty.

When it comes to private universities, many find themselves at a crossroads of survival due to the difficulty in attracting new students in the age of demographic cliff, societal demands for improvements in the quality of education and democratization of governance, and financial difficulties. Therefore, when utilizing the public support to be obtained or expanded in the future, these private universities will have to concentrate their efforts on enhancing their social responsibility and publicness, setting up self-sustaining survival strategies, and acquiring resilience through interaction with local communities in their capacity as regional universities. In this context, it is imperative to recognize the role and function of regional universities as social capital in local communities and create conditions and environments that contribute to the development of local communities and the sustainable development of universities. To fulfil these objectives, it is necessary to develop projects and programs that strengthen industry-academia linkage and cooperation

towards regional balanced development, cultivate regional leading universities, and enhance partnerships for coexistence with regional ecosystems and communities.

By forming networks or alliances among universities, higher education institutions should reinforce their roles as public goods, thereby improving their accessibility to a wider public and learners within the framework of lifelong learning centers. In the era of a lifelong learning society, the traditional notion of an appropriate school age is progressively becoming obsolete. Higher education institutions must actively engage in ongoing educational activities aimed at local residents, addressing their career aspirations, cultural enrichment, or civic engagement, thereby serving as platforms for lifelong learning. In Korea, the educational standards and environments of universities, particularly those in provincial areas, often fall short of national benchmarks. A key solution to this issue is fostering collaboration among universities. Sharing limited educational facilities, research infrastructure, and faculty resources would enable them to offer higher-quality educational services. To facilitate this, universities within specific regions or hubs should collaborate to create shared undergraduate and postgraduate programs, enriching the learning experience for local community members with superior lectures and research facilities. Additionally, a system enabling learners to attend classes from various institutions or professors based on their educational objectives and preferences, and facilitating the exchange of learning experiences and academic credits, is essential.

Higher education institutions ought to establish partnerships with local communities by offering a variety of programs aimed at cultural enrichment and civic participation, which necessitates public support. Moreover, their function as an organization for vocational education or re-education in a lifelong learning society must be reinforced. Many universities have recently opened "nano" majors within their vocational education curricula to enhance individuals' professional expertise. Establishing a cohesive system among regional universities would enable learners to access a broad and intensive range of educational experiences, tailored to meet their specific educational requirements.

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