

# Happiness and Ethical Values in Higher Education

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## <Abstract>

The purpose of this paper is to discuss relations between happiness and ethical values in higher education, focusing on the need for the university to pursue happiness and ethical values. To examine the paper logically, four research questions are addressed. First, what are general concepts of happiness and ethical values? Second, why higher education pursues happiness? Third, why ethical values in higher education are important in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution era? Last, what are significant factors and norms for building happiness and ethical values in Korean higher education from the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution? To defend the questions, the author uses a descriptive content analysis method, with a cross cultural approach. In addition, to review this paper clearly and limitedly, this article is defined as follows: higher education is limited to current Korean higher education in the 4th Industrial Revolution era; ethical values are confined Korean Confucian values; and happiness is reviewed from the perspectives of western and eastern classical standpoints, particularly, not only Christian Scriptures and Hindu-Buddhist Sacred Books, but also the classical Greek and Chinese thoughts. Based on the research results of this study, the author suggests that happiness and ethical values are important factors and norms to cope with the new emerging industrial revolution age. For future research, it is recommended that this research be broadly undertaken to explore the merits of educational, philosophical, and religious thought in the classics of both worlds.

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\*Key words: higher education, happiness, ethical values, Korean higher education, the Fourth Industrial Revolution, moral education, cross cultural approach

The purpose of this article is to discuss relations between happiness and ethical values in higher education, focusing on the need for the university to pursue happiness and ethical values. To examine the article logically, four research questions are addressed. First, what are general concepts of happiness and ethical values? Second, why higher education pursues happiness? Third, why ethical values in higher education are important in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution era? Last, what are significant factors and norms for building happiness and ethical values in Korean higher education from the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution? To defend the questions, the author uses a descriptive content analysis method, with a cross cultural approach. Additionally, to review this paper clearly and limitedly, this article is defined as follows: higher education is limited to current Korean higher education in the 4th Industrial Revolution era; ethical values are confined Korean Confucian values; and happiness is reviewed from the perspectives of western and eastern classical standpoints, particularly, not only Christian Scriptures and Hindu-Buddhist Sacred Books, but also the classical Greek and Chinese thoughts.

## **The Concepts of Happiness and Ethical Values**

The concepts of happiness are various. Happiness has various definitions and theories. The definitions and theories are different according to the backgrounds of religion, philosophy, thought, and epoch as well as individual, ethnic, culture, and history. In this paper, to find the true fruits of happiness, the author simply intends to review happiness in ancient wisdom from different angles. The paper focuses on the concepts and definitions of happiness from Eastern and Western religious and philosophical perspectives, especially not only Christian Scriptures and Hindu-Buddhist Sacred Books, but also the classical Greek and Chinese thoughts.

With not a few Eastern and Western religious and philosophical great thinkers, a number of contemporary theorists such as philosophers, psychologists, sociologists, economists, and neuroscientists have tried to discuss or argue the concepts and definitions of happiness across cultures and countries (Bruni & Porta, 2016; Diener, 2000; Easterlin, 1995; Haidt, 2006; Klein, 2006; Layard, 2005; Lee, 2008; Lee, 2012; McCready, 2001; McMahan, 2005; Michalos, 2008; Russel, 2005; Schoch, 2006; Seligman, 2002; The Editors of TIME, 2016; White, 2006).

The concept of happiness is various and different according to each individual. Happy mental state is also diverse in accordance with each person's conditions, situation, reflection, feeling, experience, thought, inheritance, spirituality, or overall well-being. In the Merriam Webster dictionary, however, 'happiness is defined as good fortune, prosperity, state of well-being and contentment, joy, a pleasurable or satisfying experience, felicity, and aptness' (Merriam Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com>, retrieved on March 11, 2017). The synonyms of happiness are beatitude, blessedness, bliss, blissfulness, felicity, gladness, joy, nirvana, the Way, and so on. In addition, according to the Wikipedia, "the concept of happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy" (<https://en.wikipedia.org/>, retrieved on March 11, 2017).

From a viewpoint of religion, ancient Hinduism emphasizes the way of reaching 'absolute freedom' (*moksha*) as the highest happiness, and Buddhism puts emphasis upon happiness as *nirvana*, which is a central theme of Buddhist teaching, and which is only achieved by conquering human desire in all forms, whereas Christianity lays stress on happiness as *felicity*, which can only come from a close relationship with God and from Jesus' teaching (Lee, 2012, 105-6).

In terms of classical philosophy, the theory of Laozi's (6th-5th Century B.C.) happiness in ancient Chinese Taoism puts stress on the achievement of the *Tao* (Way) and *Te* (virtue) as the ultimate goal of happiness, while the ancient Greek philosopher, Aristotle in his *Nicomachean Ethics* regards happiness (*eudaimonia*) as the highest end of virtuous life or ultimate goodness (Lee, 2012; Lee, 2017).

Like the concepts of happiness, the concepts of values have various definitions (Geertz, 1973; Rokeach, 1973; Swidler, 1986; Borgatta & Borgatta, 1992; Parry, 1996). The values can be changed by the different concepts in accordance with adding words or terminology. For example, social value is defined as a means of balancing members' needs against the needs of society to maintain and entrance itself (Parsons and Shils, 1951). Cultural value is considered as a combination of values practices in culture (Swidler, 1986). Educational value is concerned with the controls of conduct in school organizations (Bagley, 2008). Individual value is related to the evolution of consciousness (James, 2016). Ethical value is regarded as a moral principle or norm (Shea, 1988; Trevino, 1986). Asiatic value is defined as a catholic or uniform value by some Western theorists who have positive or negative standpoints based on Confucian culture (Lee, 2012). Lastly, Asiatic ethical value is

considered as the ethical value which is related to the traditional Confucian ethics affecting mainly East Asian people's history and culture (Lee, 2017).

## **Why Higher Education Pursues Happiness?**

In this section, the second research question, why higher education pursues happiness, is defended. Supposing that happiness is the ultimate goal of every human being, higher education would be a worthy means or a significant factor for humans to be happy. In this vein, this research question is a meaningful assignment for educators and every individual.

In ancient Greek, two great philosophers, Plato and Aristotle, viewed education as a valuable tool not only to achieve a happy life but also to build an ideal nation. In classical China, two great Confucian thinkers, Confucius and Mencius, considered education as an important means to cultivate moral individual as well as to establish harmonious society. In the author's article, "Educational Thoughts of Aristotle and Confucius," he viewed education as "a significant medium that takes an imperfect human being closer to perfection and to a meaningful existence... as a stepping stone, makes human beings valuable between the spiritual and the practical worlds"(Lee, 2001, p. 162).

From a cross cultural approach, the Eastern people have generally emphasized ethical or spiritual aspects, whereas the Western people have commonly stressed scientific or pragmatic ways. Since the first Industrial Revolution in the 18th century, the Western power and culture based on scientific knowledge and industrial skills have occupied the whole world. Morgan (2016a) mentions that 'the first Industrial Revolution was characterized by steam and water; the second Industrial Revolution was the introduction of electricity to mass produce things; the third Industrial Revolution has been characterized by the internet, communication technologies, and the digitalization of everything; and the fourth Industrial Revolution is the concept of blurring the real world with the technological world' (<https://www.forbes.com> Retrieved on Feb. 19, 2016).

Now, the new era, the 4th Industrial Revolution on the basis of advanced information technology with cyber-physical systems, has approached to the East and the West. According to Klaus Schwab in his book, *The Fourth Industrial Revolution*

(2017), the Fourth Industrial Revolution (FIR) is marked by emerging technology breakthroughs in a number of fields, such as artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, nanotechnology, mobile computing, metadata, the Internet of Things (IoT), 3D printing, materials science, energy storage, quantum computing, and autonomous vehicles. The new emerging technologies improve the efficiency of business and organizations as well as help regenerate the natural environment through better asset management, and they become embedded within societies and the human body (Marr, 2016; Schwab, 2017). Although the FIR will bring amazingly high-technological societies as well as improve the efficiency of business and organizations, the new technologies, as double-edged swords, will threaten jobs and bring serious socio-ethical issues (Marr, 2017; Magyar, 2016). In addition, they can help make our lives easier and healthier, but there is also potential to build harmful weapons or dangerously modify organisms (Magyar, 2016). Thus, the indicators of happiness may not increase in the new information technology era.

Considering the purpose and function of a university, higher education is a center of teaching universal knowledge and technology to up-bring human power and resources having professional knowledge and scientific technology for building a welfare society as well as for developing individual life quality (Lee, 2012). From this standpoint, modern higher education has put an emphasis upon the learning of not only cognitive and universal knowledge but also scientific and pragmatic skills, while university education has disregarded happiness and moral education. Happiness is the ultimate goal of human beings, and moral education is a significant factor to live the ethical life of each individual and society. Thus, with educating the new megatrends technologies and skills, the future university should put an emphasis on happiness and moral education in order to build a harmoniously welfare society and to foster an ethically healthy individual being able to cope with ethical and moral issues or risks occurring in the 4th Industrial Revolution age.

## **Ethical Values and Higher Education in the 4th Industrial Revolution Era**

Why ethical values in higher education are important in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution era? This research question is related to one of significant

issues in moral education. In the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution age, a number of socio-ethical problems or moral issues will be happened in societies and organizations. There is no exception in higher education institutions.

Magyar (2016, 01. 22) in the *Forbes* mentions that we are now entering the 4th Industrial Revolution, and that new emerging technologies such as 3D printing and genetic engineering offer a lot of advantage, but they can also be double-edged swords. Several theorists predict that the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution with technological advances will have a major impact on employment, business, industry, technology, economy, education, humanity, society, and human life (Berman & Jules, 2016; Davis, 2015; Manu, 2015; Marr, 2016; Marr, 2017; Magyar, 2016; Mezied, 2016; Morgan, 2016a; Morgan, 2016b; Pant, 2016; Rose, 2016; Ross, 2017; Sikka, 2016; Sundararajan, 2016; Schwab, 2017).

In terms of employment, the more we mechanize and automate, the more we see jobless growth. It is estimated that between 35 and 50 percent of current jobs will be lost to automation and robots (Marr, 2017). Especially, blue collar type jobs, such as simple, repetitive, mundane, routine, and manufacturing, might be the first places, and then some professionals, such as paralegals, customer service representatives, and diagnosticians, will be at risk (Marr, 2017, 03. 03).

From standpoints of business and industry, many jobs of the above types will be automated and systematized, and then belong to not humans but robots. Thus, robots, machines, and artificial intelligence will become more generalized and widespread. The challenge is to consider economic models to ensure the humans who will do jobs more affordable and enjoyable (Marr, 2017, 03.03). In *The Industries of the Future*, Ross (2017) examines the fields which will most shape our economic future, including robotics, artificial intelligence, genomics, cybercrime, cybersecurity, big data, and the impact of digital technology on money and markets.

In the aspects of technology and economy, as several theorists (Magyar, 2016; Marr, 2016; Schwab 2017) mention, the emerging advanced technology which is seen as a convergence of the physical, digital, and human domains, such as robotics, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, big data, biotechnology, nanotechnology, mobile computing, 3D printing, materials science, energy storage, quantum computing, and autonomous vehicles, will improve the efficiency of business in economy, but will be a significant challenge to current social systems and human lives. In particular, as Manu (2015) asserts, 'Value Creation' and the Internet of

Things (IoT) will change the systems of value delivery and consumption, and the mechanisms by which new value is captured and created in economy. In addition, Arun Sundararajan (2016), an expert on the sharing economy, mentions a new way of organizing economic activity as "crowd-based capitalism" which may replace the traditional corporate-centered model.

From the perspective of higher education, educational policy makers and administrators should focus on emerging technologies and applications like metadata, analytics, blockchain, robotics, artificial intelligence, digital manufacturing, designed thinking, virtual reality, biotechnology, nanotechnology, genomics, mobile computing, the Internet of Things, crowd-funding, crowd-sourcing, autonomous vehicles, and energy storage (Mezied, 2016; Morgan, 2016a; Morgan, 2016b; Pant, 2016). With teaching these megatrends in emerging technologies, new important skills, such as computational thinking for complex problem solving, critical thinking, cognitive flexibility, creative thinking, and judgment and decision making, should be taught (Pant, 2016). Moreover, Pant (2016) emphasizes the following attitude, attributes, and characters such as philanthropy, charity, gratitude, and integrity. Higher education institutions highlight their role in shaping future technology by being the test-beds for innovation and educating future generations (Mezied, 2016).

The author in this paper additionally asserts that higher education institutions should put stress upon ethical values and moral education in order to ethically cope with the emerging fourth industrial revolution as well as to strongly play a change-agent role in the new advanced technology era. The new megatrends in technology and skill will be either challenges or perils in technologically advanced societies.

From viewpoints of humanity and human life, Klaus Schwab (2017), a founder of the World Economic Forum, mentions that humanity is entering the Fourth Industrial Revolution era which affects our lives and reshapes our cultural, economic, social, and human environments. In the new 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution era, ethical concerns and issues relating to use of humanity and human life technologies, such as robotics, artificial intelligence, and biotechnology, are inevitable (Sikka, 2016, <http://www.infosys.com/> Retrieved on April 15, 2017).

Thus, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is considered as the trigger for new norms and ethical values between humanity and technology, and stringent ethical standards or norms are necessary to ensure the successful artificial intelligence (AI) adaptation in human life (Davis, 2015; <http://www.infosys.com/> Retrieved on April 30, 2017). It

is necessary to establish new ethical values and norms worldwide for world peace and prosperity in the 4th Industrial Revolution age. To establish healthy ethical values is important in the midst of the Fourth Industrial Revolution era, because healthy ethical standards or norms in higher education will become change agents for the healthy advanced technology society. Therefore, with highlighting the emerging megatrends technologies and skills, higher education should lay a stress on ethical and moral education in order to manage socio-ethical issues or risks happening in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era.

## **Happiness and Ethical Values in Korean Higher Education: From the Perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution**

In the Fourth Industrial Revolution age, happiness and ethical values are extremely important in South Korean higher education. As the author mentioned in this paper, the reason is that Korean higher education should put an emphasis on happiness and ethical values to cope with ethical and moral issues or risks occurring in the 4th Industrial Revolution era. In particular, higher education in Korea has become a prime mover enhancing the national economic and political development, with emphasis on industrial technology and skill. With new epochal trends of the emerging advanced technologies and skills, Korean universities need new formal and informal education not only on the basis of emerging new technologies and skills, but also on the ground of moral or ethical education suitable for the 4th Industrial Revolution age.

A report (2016) of the Global Schools Leadership Alliance states the following:

- *education is failing to prepare young people for their working future.*
- *young people need to develop right-brain skills (creativity) just as much as left-brain (mathematics and technical) to adapt to the emerging economy.*
- *employers need to take charge of training employees, providing full-time rather than part-time positions, and provide them with adaptive skills in the face of disruptive change.*
- *liquid skills and continuous learning are needed to address future work.*

- *digital tools need to be embraced by educators and employers to let young people teach themselves anything they need to achieve success.*
- *disruptive innovation awareness must be the guiding principle behind education to ensure adaptability to change.*
- *speed and ubiquity of change must be front of mind in the development of all educational strategies.*

\*Cited from: <http://www.schoolsalliance.org/news/2016/2/3/> Retrieved on April 1, 2017).

In addition, the research report of Infosys (2016), *Amplifying Human Potential: Education and Skills for the Fourth Industrial Revolution*, shows the following results and recommendations:

- recognition of the importance of technology*
- concerns over technology skills and confidence*
- technology skills and knowledge surging in emerging markets*
- job opportunity pressure*
- capabilities of existing education systems*
- learning is an existing education system*
- learning is a lifelong journey*
- the need for development of right-brain skills (or 'soft skills')*
- unresolved gender gap in technology skills*
- “Overall, young people are aware that the Fourth Industrial Revolution will usher several disruptive forces in the job market: from the next generation Internet of Things and Big Data, to work environments that will be drastically changed by automation, artificial intelligence, and similar technologies”*

Cited from: <http://www.experienceinfosys.com/humanpotential> Retrieved on April 2, 2017.

With referring to the above two advisory reports, Korean higher education is necessary to consider combining the traditional higher education with the currently increasing trend of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) to cope with the wave of the 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution. The former highlights moral education on the basis of harmoniously socio-political ethical values consistent with the new technology era,

the latter emphasizes new technology skills and knowledge suitable for the 4th Industrial Revolution age. In particular, educational policy makers and administrators should design standard norms and ethics to keep the balances of two sides.

First of all, standard norms and ethics are considered mutual prosperity between traditional higher education and alternative higher education. Educational policy makers and administrators should preferentially consider what the significant factors and norms for building happiness and healthy ethical values in Korean higher education in terms of the Fourth Industrial Revolution age. As Pant (2016) points out, the following factors and norms such as philanthropy, charity, gratitude, and integrity should be stressed in the curricula of moral education. In addition, the following ethical concepts and principles such as human rights, Common Good, humanity, social justice, happiness, and cosmopolitanism should be added in moral education.

Next, the new systems and curricula of higher education should be planned to cope with the emerging advanced technology era. Altering systems and curricula of higher education are more necessary than ever before. As Mezied (2016) describes, with the expansion in networking services nationally and globally, place-based higher education is diminishing, while the MOOCs are increasing more and more popularity. In addition, Korean higher education should consider adapting M. Pant's the 5 pronged strategy to succeed in the Fourth Industrial Age as follows: the MOOC University (to be steered by Central or State/Provincial Governments), the MOLD (Mobile Learning Diversity), the TeacherPreneur (Independent Educator), the SmartParent, and the most important the UberSmart Autonomous Self-directed life-long Learner (Pant, 2016).

The Fourth Industrial Revolution can provide human beings great benefits and serious challenges like a double-edged sword. As Mezied (2016) and Schwab (2017) mention, the 4th Industrial Revolution urges the human to think innovatively or creatively about our socio-economic future, including robotics, artificial intelligence, genomics, big data, manufacturing process, value chain, distribution and customer service processes, cybercrime and cybersecurity, and digital technology. To thrive in this environment, higher education institutions highlight their role in shaping new technology by being motive power for educating future generations and innovation.

In particular, Korean higher education should put a stress on moral norms and ethical values or factors such as philanthropy, charity, gratitude, integrity, human rights, Common Good, humanity, social justice, happiness, and cosmopolitanism to

balance between traditional higher education and emerging industrial technology as well as to cope with ethical and moral issues or risks occurring in the 4th Industrial Revolution era. The new advanced technology should be taught and practiced beneficially, righteously, and ethically for happy human life through moral or ethical education. This technology should not be seriously threatening human beings and human's life, but keep harmonious balance between human beings and machines or technologies.

## **Summary and Conclusion**

The purpose of this study is to discuss relations between happiness and ethical values in higher education, focusing on the necessity for the university to pursue happiness and ethical values. To examine the study systematically, four research questions are addressed. First, what are general concepts of happiness and ethical values? Second, why higher education pursues happiness? Third, why ethical values in higher education are important in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution era? Last, what are significant factors and norms for building happiness and ethical values in Korean higher education from the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution?

This study used a descriptive content analysis method, with a cross cultural approach to defend the research questions. The research results of this paper are summarized as follows:

First, the concept of happiness is various and different according to each individual, religion, and philosophy. In terms of religion, ancient Hinduism views 'absolute freedom' (*moksha*) as the highest happiness, and Buddhism regards *nirvana* as happiness, whereas Christianity considers *felicity* as happiness. From a viewpoint of classical philosophy, Laozi (6th-5th Century B.C.) considers the *Tao* (Way) and *Te* (virtue) as the ultimate goal of happiness, while Aristotle regards *eudaimonia* (happiness) as the highest end of virtuous life or ultimate goodness.

Like the concepts of happiness, the concepts of values have various definitions. The values can be changed by the different concepts in accordance with adding words or terminology. Ethical value is regarded as a moral principle or norm (Shea, 1988; Trevino, 1986). Asiatic ethical value is considered as the ethical value which is related to the traditional Confucian ethics affecting mainly East Asian people's

history and culture.

Second, happiness is the ultimate goal of human beings, and moral education is a significant factor to live the ethical life of an individual and society. With educating the new megatrends technologies and skills, the future university should put an emphasis on happiness and moral education in order to build a harmoniously welfare society and to foster an ethically healthy individual being able to cope with ethical and moral issues or risks occurring in the 4th Industrial Revolution age.

Third, to establish healthy ethical values is important in the midst of the 4th Industrial Revolution era, because healthy ethical standards or norms in higher education will become 'change agents' for the healthy advanced technology society. Thus, with highlighting the emerging megatrends technologies and skills, higher education should lay a stress on ethical and moral education in order to manage socio-ethical issues or risks happening in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era.

Fourth, Korean higher education should put a stress on moral norms and ethical values or factors such as philanthropy, charity, gratitude, integrity, human rights, Common Good, humanity, social justice, happiness, and cosmopolitanism to balance between traditional higher education and emerging industrial technology as well as to cope with ethical and moral issues or risks occurring in the 4th Industrial Revolution era. The new advanced technology should be taught and practiced beneficially, righteously, and ethically for happy human life through moral or ethical education. This technology should not be seriously threatening human beings and human's life, but keep harmonious balance between human beings and machines or technologies.

In conclusion, based on the research results of this study reviewed, the author suggests that happiness and ethical values are important factors and norms to cope with the new emerging industrial revolution age. For future research, it is recommended that this research be broadly undertaken to explore the merits of educational, philosophical, and religious thought in the classics of both worlds. Finally, the researcher asserts that the future society centered on digital, biological, and physical technologies or machines may be happened to risks, confusion, or chaos, unless higher education as a change agent establishes a harmonious and righteous society as well as builds a morally ethical individual.

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### **Acknowledgement**

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