
On the British Education System and The State Schools in Cambridge (V)

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In the preceding essay, we have seen the typical College system, supervision, lectures and many societies in Cambridge University. Once more the main points will be outlined in this essay, and then "Degree" system will be devoted only passing attention to, and lastly the Polytechnics and some other kinds of training will be mentioned in the third chapter.

In order to enter Cambridge University, a student must first apply to a college and become a member of the university through the college. The colleges are not connected with any particular study and are governed by twenty to thirty 'Fellows.' Each Fellow of a college is 'tutor,' often called a don. He teaches his own subject to these students in his college who are studying it, and is responsible for their progress. Each student goes to see his tutor once or twice every week to discuss his work. The advantage of this system is that students and their tutors can contact personally, I think. Cambridge University, like Oxford, is a federation of colleges. The University arranges the courses, the lectures, and the examinations, and awards the degrees. Most dons give one or two lectures a week which students from any college can attend. No lectures are compulsory and tutors usually advise their students which lectures they should go to. Each college has its own separate living quarters, its own dining hall and its own chapel.

Now I will tell you about the general exterior of a college. Each college "usually consists of one or more quadrangles, squares of building the windows of which look inwards on an open court covered by grass. There are no corridors. Each outside door leads from the court to a staircase. On each floor there are rooms on either side of it. Double doors lead to each set of rooms. If the outer one is left open it means you are willing to receive visitors. When both doors are closed it warns the passer-by that the occupant wishes to remain undisturbed."¹

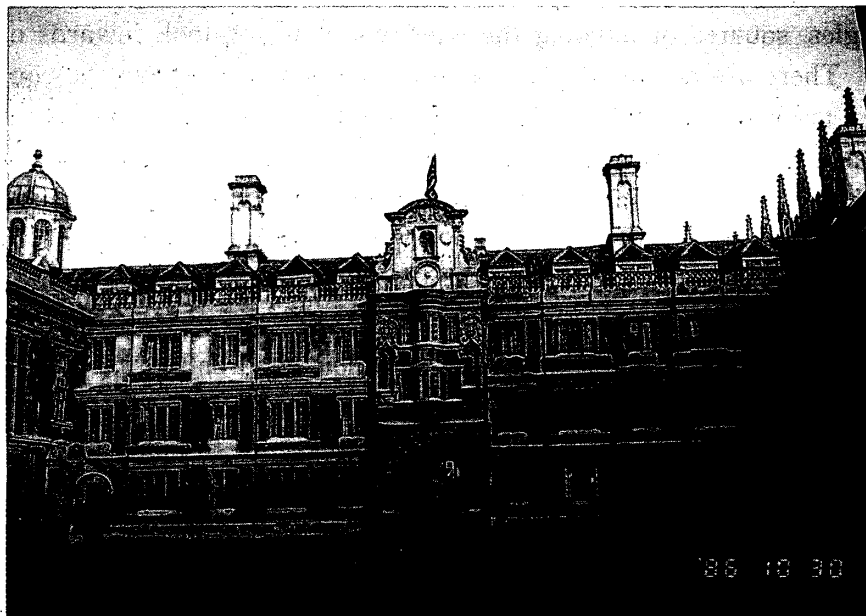
Here I will add one more thing; the average Japanese people may assume that Oxford and Cambridge are private universities and that the students must be a member of the aristocracy to be able to enter there. In fact this is not the case, though many students in Oxbridge are from public schools which cost the parents a lot of money to send their children there. In England all universities, with one exception (the University of Buckingham), are national. "The student's fees are paid by the government, and in addition each student receives a grant to help meet his living costs; the amount of the grant varies in accordance with the parents' income. The minimum grant, to which all students are entitled regardless of how rich their parents are, is about £450; the maximum grant a student could receive is about £1,550 a year. Since most British students do not live at home while they are at university some of this will normally go towards the cost of accommodation (the

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grants for students living in London are somewhat higher), although students can also apply for rent rebates, extra money from the government to help pay for their room rent, and in this again the individual financial circumstances of the applicant are assessed.”² In this way, Oxford and Cambridge are not private universities, and a student there will get a government grant like other university students in Britain. But it is also true that both universities are exceedingly well endowed due to their long majestic histories.

Lastly I will devote only passing attention to “Degree,” which is the award made by a university to a student upon successful completion of an extensive course of academic study. There are three levels of degree. M.C. Mobbs also explains it rather minutely;³

(1) The *Bachelor's Degree*, such as B.A., B.Sc., which is also known as a *first degree*. It is awarded after a minimum of three years' study on a taught course. Most universities award a B.A. or B.Sc. according to whether the student studied an Arts or a Science subject. However, at Cambridge all first degrees are B.A. The name of some Bachelor degrees at certain universities may include an indication of the subject concerned, e.g. B.Sc. (Econ.); B.Ed.; B.Mus. A student studying for a first degree is called an *undergraduate*; when he is awarded a degree, he *graduates*, and is known as a *graduate*, which may either mean in general terms that he has a first degree, or more specifically that he holds a first degree awarded by a particular university (e.g. *Cambridge graduate*). There are 4 grades, known as *classes*, of Bachelor Degree: *First, Upper Second, Lower Second, Third*. Another distinction in first degrees is between *Honours* and *Ordinary* degree, the former being awarded after intensive study of a fairly narrow subject area (possibly involving two subjects in a *Joint Honours*



Clare College, Cambridge. A Cambridge college court.

degree), the latter being for a broader course of study. Someone who studies for a *higher degree* (cf. (2) and (3) below) is called a *postgraduate*.

(2) The *Master's Degree*, e.g. M.A., M.Sc. There are various paths to a Master's Degree: a taught course, research, or a mixture of the two. It involves one or two year's study. At Cambridge the M.A. degree is something peculiar to that university: all Cambridge graduates are entitled to become M.A. three years after graduating and on payment of a fee. The Cambridge Master's Degree obtained by studying is called M. Phil. Yet another anomaly is found in the older universities of Scotland, e.g. Edinburgh and Glasgow, where M.A. is the name of the first degree awarded to students graduating in an Arts subjects. (Science students receive a B.Sc.).

(3) The *Doctor's Degree*, or *Doctorate*, i.e. Ph.D. This is awarded exclusively after detailed and original research work in a subject. The candidate for a Ph.D. presents a *thesis* and undergoes an oral examination.

An award conferred by a university for a course of study less academic than that for a degree is a *diploma* or *certificate*. This is obtained as a result of studying for one year or less on a vocationally- oriented course (e.g. Postgraduate Certificate in Education).



Bridge of Sighs, St. John's College, Cambridge.

So far I have mentioned the universities in Britain, especially the University of Cambridge. The

University is located in a thriving city. Cambridge is the capital city of Cambridgeshire with the population of about 110,000 people, and is a quiet and beautiful university town where there is the University in the centre. I shall never forget many places, such as many colleges with the chapels and courts, the Botanic Garden, the walk along the bank of the River Cam and punting on the river, the Combination Room in the Old Schools where the members of Regent House gather, the University Library with many rare books, and the lectures and parties held by Professor Brewer, Master of Emmanuel College at that time and the Japanese Society of Visiting Scholars in the Humanities, and the party by Dr. Hurbertson, President of Hughes Hall then, and some friendly and comfortable parties by other English people with whom my family became acquainted in Cambridge through my wife, my children and me. When Faustus, in *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus* by Christopher Marlowe who was graduated from Corpus Christi College in Cambridge, closes his life, he curses his alma mater saying, "O, would I have never seen Wittenberg, never read book!"⁴ but I will finish this chapter, saying "It was very fortunate for me to have seen Cambridge, and read books."

III. The Polytechnics and Some Other Kinds of Training

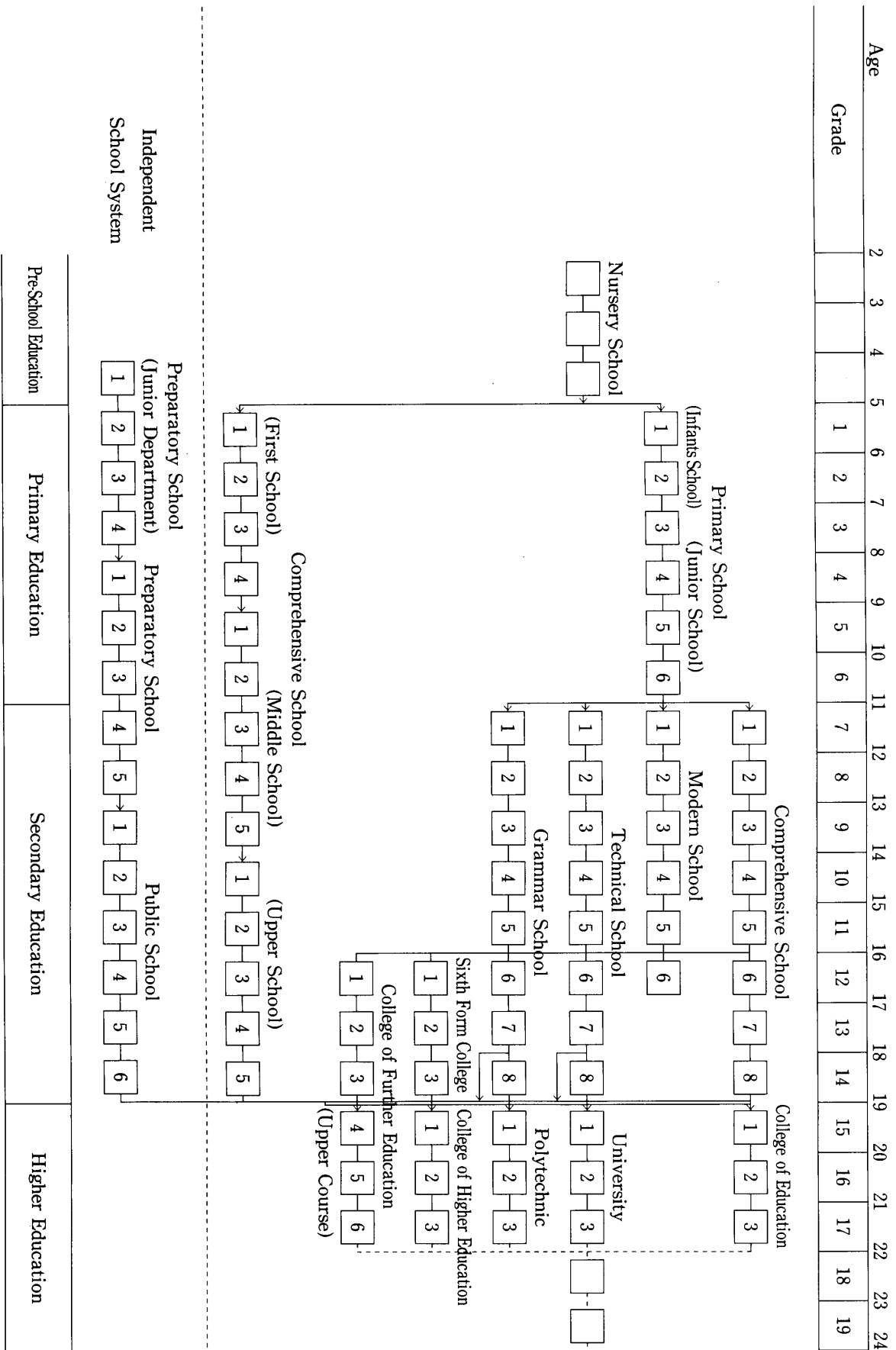
As many people wanted to study for a degree after 1945, even the building of new universities did not solve the problem. For that reason, in certain areas of the country existing Colleges of Technology and other Further Education Colleges were combined to form polytechnics. "There are now 30 of them, and they offer courses in the full range of subjects, from Engineering to Art. "The Council of National Academic Awards (CNA A) supervises polytechnic examinations and makes sure that a high standard is maintained in all polytechnics. Usually a polytechnic student obtains a CNA A degree—B.A.(CNA A)"⁵

Some people do not go to a university although they get the required A Levels. If one of them decides to train to be a teacher, he must begin a four year course at a College of Education which leads to a B.Ed.(Bachelor of Education) degree.

Here I will add one more case. A girl wants to be a nurse. She is still at school, and is taking 'O' Level and 'A' Levels. She hopes to become a student nurse in a hospital when she is eighteen. There she will learn theory and practice, and after three years and after passing her essential exams, she will be able to qualify as an SRN (State Registered Nurse).

Now I have mentioned Further Education, the Universities, the Polytechnics and others. In the preceding essay (Vol. II) with the same title as this one, I mentioned the British compulsory education system, especially concerning LEA (Local Education Authority) school. So I have finished mentioning a general outline of the British education system. Lastly I will finish this essay adding on the next page the General Chart of the British School System whose idea and chart I borrowed from *Encyclopedia of World Education* and put into English.⁶ About the school and colleges in Cambridge where my three children attended, I will talk on another occasion.

The General Chart of the British School System



NOTES

- 1 . H.P. Rickman, *British Universities* (Nan'un-Do, Ltd., Tokyo, 1987), pp.16-17.
- 2 . Gideon B.C. Franklin, *Oxbridge for the Japanese* ed. by John Newman, *British Youth; Messages from Cambridge* (New Current International, Ltd., Tokyo, 1985), pp.2-3.
- 3 . Michael C. Mobbs, *Universities Observed; Portraits of Four British Universities from a Historical Perspective* (Seibido, Ltd., Tokyo, 1982), pp.97-98.
- 4 . *The Tragical History of Doctor Faustus*, ed. by F.S. Boas (Methuen, 1932), V. ii. 46-47.
- 5 . *Life in Britain*, ed. by H.F. Brookes & C.E. Fraenkel, (Kinseido, Ltd., Tokyo, 1985), p.19.
- 6 . See *Encyclopedia of World Education*, ed. by Ikuo Arai & others (Gyosei, Ltd., Tokyo, 1980), p. 25.