An Analysis of Universities' Interactions with Government and Industry by Using the Triple Helix Model

I. Introduction

Changes in the global economy toward globalisation and the knowledge–based economy have increased the consideration that universities are important actors in the construction of regional innovative infrastructure and the promotion of regional innovation system (Braczyk, et al., 1998). In much literature concerning regional innovative development, universities are viewed as an important part of the regional innovation infrastructure.

Government policy is seen to play a significant role in regional innovation system building and in supporting universities' engagement in it (Cooke and Morgan, 1998; DTI/DfEE, 2001). In
particular, in South Korea, the new government launched in 2003, has implemented new UIC (University–Industry Cooperation) policy as a way for regional innovative development, and it places regional universities at the centre of the policy. Moreover, the policy assumes that regional universities are a critical catalyst to regional innovative development and they actively interact with industry in response to the policy programmes.

However, it seems that there is the gap between the conceptual framework of regional innovative development concerning universities’ role and the actual interactions of universities in regional innovation process. Even though there is a considerable amount of accumulated knowledge in universities’ engagement in their territorial development, there is a lack of a critical perspective and even less micro-analytical work. Most of the work is focused on the normative role of universities’ engagement in their communities (Chartterton and Goddard, 2000; Sutz, 1997; Lundvall, 2002) rather than critically examining how universities engage in practice. There are some recent exceptions with a critical perspective viewing universities’ role, but these lack a micro-analytic basis in analysing universities’ interactions with other stakeholders (Kitagawa, 2004; Gunasekara, 2004). In order to promote micro-analytic method in examining the dynamic interactions inside regional innovation system, this research applies to the Triple Helix Model.

With the above consideration, key question to be examined is: In what ways, and to what extent, have regional universities responded and interacted to government policies to promote innovation-based regional development? This paper locates this question against current UIC policy and universities’ response to it in South Korea, particularly by the selection of four regional universities in Gyeongsangbuk-do Province and Daegu City.

II. Research Regions and UIC Policy in Korea

1. Universities in Daegu and Gyeongbuk Regions

The two research areas (Daegu City and Gyeongsangbuk-do Province) are upper-level local governments, located in south-eastern area of South Korea. There are twenty-three universities including twenty-one general universities and two industrial universities. In Gyeongbuk, there are nineteen universities (including two national universities) and two Industrial universities (including one national), and there are 174,097 total registered students in 2004. However, in Daegu, there are just two universities including a national university. The reason why a comparatively small