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Management Education and Training in East Asia: China, Japan, and South Korea

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Management education and training in East Asia: China, Japan and South Korea

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Introduction

In this chapter, we look at management education and training in Asia, focusing in particular on three countries, namely the *People's Republic of China*, *Japan* and *South Korea*. All are core economies in East Asia and are major players in the expanding trade and growing wellbeing of that part of the world. We will also refer to a number of Overseas Chinese domains in the region, such as Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan, if only in passing.

East Asia has seen unprecedented rates of economic growth over recent decades, with China leading the pack, although many of the other regional players are now advancing but less rapidly relative to their giant neighbour. Extensive economic, industrial and structural reforms have taken place, nonetheless. Such changes have led to quite different educational and training requirements from those in place in earlier years.

As one *Special Report* noted put it: 'China could overtake America in the next decade. Its economy has grown by an average of more than 10% a year over the past ten years. As the country gets richer and its working-age population starts to shrink, that growth rate is likely to tail off to perhaps 8% soon. For the American economy the calculation assumed an average annual growth rate of 2.5%' (The Economist 2011a).

The countries all differ in terms of their economics, demography and politics. Of the three countries, Japan is currently the richest with a GDP per capita of US\$34,780 in purchasing power parity terms, South Korea comes next at US\$29,010 and China at US\$7,570 (World Bank, 2011).

In demographic terms, China has 1.3 billion people, Japan 127.5 million and South Korea, 48.7 million. Of these, China has 25 percent of its secondary-educated cohort in tertiary-education, Japan 59 percent and South Korea 100 percent. Tertiary education, 'whether or not to an advanced research qualification, normally requires, as a minimum condition of admission, the successful completion of education at the secondary level' (World Bank, 2011).

In terms of its politics, China has long been led by an authoritarian Marxist-Leninist Chinese Communist Party (CCP), Japan is a liberal democracy but for a long time was dominated by only one, business-friendly, political party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and South Korea, which was for many years a military dictatorship, is now governed by the Grand National Party (GNP) which has a parliamentary majority.

In the respective countries, better trained managers have increasingly become *de rigueur*, to cope with the fast globalizing world, as firms seek to keep up with their rivals and enhance competitive advantage. A new breed of international managers is needed, able to manage both at home and abroad, equipped with foreign languages and knowledge of foreign markets and workforces. Since investment in management education and training is only one variable in boosting both micro- and macro- economic performance, however, it is very difficult to evaluate its specific contribution. The number of trained managers, especially top ones, is small vis a vis the aggregate size of the labour-force. Identifying significant statistical relationships is thus a major challenge. Even so, the contribution of education and training should not be underestimated.

Management Education and Training: Background

Business schools and similar institutions in the Asia are now to be found almost everywhere. The fastest expansion of management education and training in the world is now to be found in that region (see Warner and Goodall 2009). In accredited Asia Pacific business schools, there has been a 14.6 percent increase in such enrolment from 2008–09 to 2010–11.

The AACSB International - *The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business* was set up to accredit management education establishments. Only 5 percent of schools worldwide earn its approval, namely 1182, in all. Out of its recent listings (AACSB 2011), the US has 651 member institutions, China has 26, Japan has 6 and South Korea has 22 (of Overseas Chinese ones, Hong Kong has 7, Macao has 1, Taiwan has 27).

In any model of management education and training at the macro-level, the initial drivers are likely to be the modernization process, economic growth and the need for trained managerial personnel. However, such a model has to be seen in the context of its historical, cultural and institutional experience.

A number of major determinants, such as *lateness of entry, nature and pace of industrialization, preindustrial social and cultural norms, socio-political system, social class, as well as social geographical mobility*, amongst others, may help influence the configuration of management education models that take root in a specific cultural and societal context (see Warner 1992:104).

An initial hypothesis might be to predict ‘*convergence*’, for if given industrial societies are becoming more alike, they might choose a common institutional and organizational solution as to how best train their managers. Is this likely to be the case, as the convergence-divergence debate might surmise? Will it be true of Asian economies which appear to have experienced modernization and industrialization, albeit over different timescales? Will their ‘solutions’ be, plus or minus, comparable? Or will they be only ‘soft’ convergence as institutional and organizational transfer only occurs within cultural parameters?

On the face of it, the three Asian economies presented here have much in common. They are all successful players in the respective East Asian markets, they have all had impressive economic growth-paths and they all seek highly educated workforces. They also share, in part, a *Confucian* and *Neo-Confucian* cultural inheritance and its consequences for the development of education and governmental systems (Bol, 2008).

The Chinese Imperial examination system has long had an extensive influence throughout East Asia over the centuries (Elman, 2000). The meritocratic Chinese Imperial examination system for example in addition had important influences elsewhere outside Asia, for instance it was admired by the eighteenth century Enlightenment *philosophes* in Europe and later most significantly shaped the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1857) in the UK on the reform of the Civil Service in British India and later in the United Kingdom. The Chinese may indeed be said to have invented bureaucracy.

It was used as a model by both the *Goryeo* and *Joseon* Dynasties in Korea, too, until the country's annexation by Japan. Japan also used the Chinese Imperial examination system as a template in the *Heian* period but the influence involved only the minor nobility and was

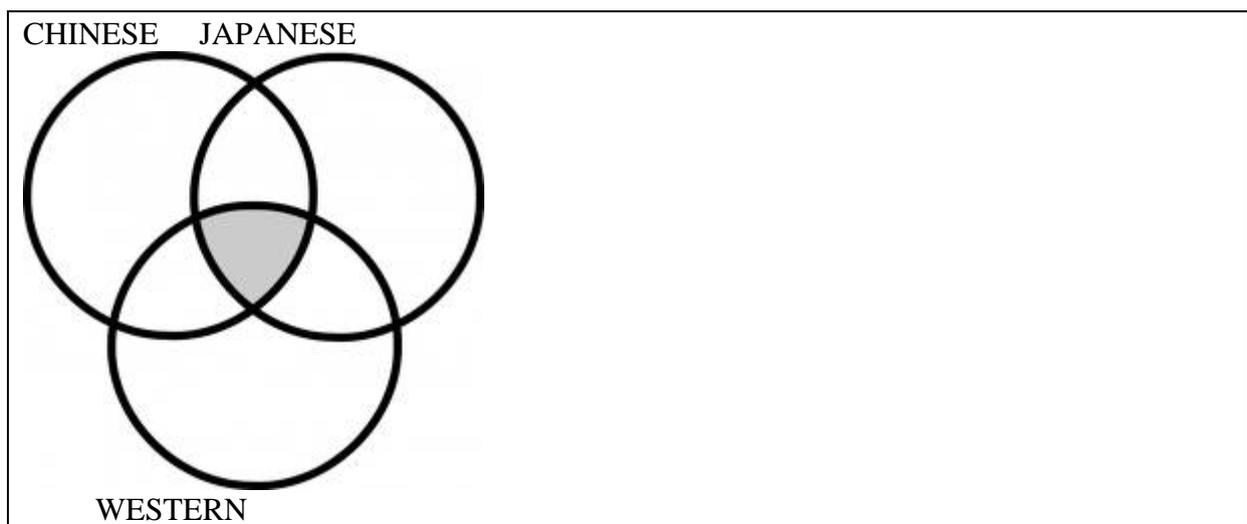
subsequently replaced by the hereditary system during the *Samurai* era. Its contemporary bureaucracy has its roots in these origins.

There are thus precedents for contemporary developments in management education and training, in terms of the notion of highly selective elite schools but with varying degrees of continuity linking past and present. There may of course be ‘family resemblances’ from one country to another them but they may not be exactly alike.

Where the three countries differ is that Japan modernized earlier than the other two after 1868 with the *Meiji* Restoration. In their respective ways, China and South Korea might be described as ‘late developers’ experiencing their significant industrialization in the 1950s. Although China has left its mark on much of East Asia over the many centuries, in recent years the waves of Japanese imperialism led to the export of its institutions to Manchuria in 1905, as well as to Korea after 1910. Even today, there is an organizational legacy in both places. In the north of China, in the Manchurian case, the Japanese enterprise model, which took the form of the lifetime employment ‘golden rice bowl’ system morphed into the later Chinese ‘iron’ variation; similarly, in South Korea, the (*chaebol*) corporations resemble their Japanese counterparts in many ways.

Thus, we find many overlapping influences in trying to make sense of contemporary developments in management education in East Asia. There are, in effect three overlapping influences, namely traditional *Chinese*, later *Japanese* and even later *Western* ones (see Figure 1). Amongst these Chinese influences, Confucianism has of course been central.

Standing back, it is possible to model the respective influences *grosso modo*. We can hypothesize that the later the influence which indeed has been Western, the greater the size of the overlap of the centre of the diagram. We can see from the Venn diagram below, how these overlaps are configured.



China

The People's Republic of China is the first case we examine here in detail. Traditional belief-systems, such as *Confucianism*, have had a continuing influence in the 'Middle Kingdom' for well over a millennium, as we have previously noted, in promoting the study of bureaucracy and organization (see Child and Warner 2003). The philosopher, *Confucius*, 551-479 BC (*Kung Fuzi*) may well be regarded as 'the uncrowned emperor' of China (Ronan 1978:79). His influence has been pervasive over the *longue duree* (see Warner 2011). Although there are other major streams of thought in Chinese thinking, such as the Legalists and the Daoists, the Confucians still retain their niche, even in the 'harmonious society' of today's China (Bell 2008).

The Imperial Civil Service examination was set up in the 6th century AD, inspired by Confucian thought and practice. The elite *Hanlin* Academy, was established in Beijing in the 8th century A.D, produced its last graduates in 1911. This body trained scholars and administrators for over 1300 years (see Warner and Goodall 2009:15). The curriculum was covered the 'Five Studies', namely, military strategy, civil law, revenue and taxation, as well as agriculture and geography, and the Confucian classics. In this format, the examinations were institutionalized to last for many centuries. These examinations are regarded by most historians as the first standardized tests in recorded history which were solely based on merit. They built up a critical mass of qualified individuals with knowledge and skills able to run large offices of state.

After the 1911 Nationalist Revolution, *Sun Yat-sen* established a new selection system for the reformed bureaucracy he was to introduce called the *Examination Yuan*, which had continuities with the older traditional one. It was suspended in the Civil War and Second World War but was revived in 1947 until the Communist takeover in 1949 and is still extant in Taiwan.

The growth of management education and training in modern China has been remarkable since *Deng Xiaoping* introduced his economic reforms in 1978 (see Goodall et al, 2004; Goodall and Warner 2009) not long after *Mao Zedong* died in 1976. The new leader launched the 'Four Modernizations' (*sige xiandaihua*) and 'Open Door' (*kaifang*) policies which were designed to shake up the old command economy system (Child 1994). The reformers wanted to reinvigorate the system with pragmatic, market-led policies. *Deng* famously argued that it does not matter what colour the cat, as long as it catches mice.

He was to achieve this goal with great success over the 1980s. This demarche also had consequences for management education (see Warner 1986; 1992). Previously, management cadres (*ganbu*) as they were known, were trained on Soviet lines, appropriate to the state-owned enterprise (SOE) model taken from the USSR (see Kaple 1994). China had adopted the command economy but with modifications from the Soviet template.

Such industrial firms epitomized the 'iron rice bowl' (*tie fan wan*) model, which more or less institutionalized lifetime employment and a mini-welfare state within the enterprise (Ding et al 2000). It was a model which dominated the Chinese industry from the early 1950s onwards. Although the Sino-Soviet split in 1960 put an end to such close collaboration, the SOE model took a long time to wind down and its accompanying training system limped on until the late 1980s. It took two forms: one, a network of regional training centres for senior

cadres; two, a wide range of in-house management training courses. It was not until the 1990s, that major changes were introduced (See Warner 1995).

Eventually, education and training in the People's Republic was reformed root and branch and was slowly replaced by a more market-oriented initiative. Delegations had sent to the U.S., Western Europe and Japan in the early 1980s to see what might replace it. But the Chinese were reluctant to adopt one single foreign model and wanted to avoid being too dependent on the Americans, so they diversified their mentors. Help was sought from both Western and Eastern countries, although in the end the US business school model prevailed, as adapted 'with Chinese characteristics'.

A major field of innovation was centred on the development of MBA courses in China. The US Government helped to set up an MBA education centre at *Dalian*, in 1984, in the North-East of China, in collaboration with the State University of New York (SUNY) at Buffalo. This step constituted a very useful 'learning experience' for other Chinese side. It was to signal the confirmation that the MBA could be taught in the Chinese context and the relevant materials could be developed which would be meaningful for Chinese managers.

China also looked to Western Europe for assistance. A European Union (EU) initiative, developed through the European Foundation for Management Education and Development (EFMD), resulted in the setting-up of the China EU Management Institute (CEMI) in *Beijing* in 1984. Its philosophy was one of 'action learning', a mixture of theory and practice promoted by its early Directors, namely Professors Max Boisot and John Child. both teachers of management from the United Kingdom, mixing theory with practice. It went on to become the China Europe International Business School (CEIBS) eventually to be moved to a different location in Shanghai, in 1994.

This change in strategy resulted from a mission that the present writer undertook with Professor Edouard Vermeer of Leiden University, on behalf of the EFMD, to seek out a university campus home for CEMI, as it was originally located in a State management education centre in the capital. Six noteworthy Chinese universities were visited and their suitability for hosting the European venture was evaluated. The final recommendation was made by the Vermeer-Warner team. It involved a relocation of facilities from *Beijing* to *Shanghai* so as to improve access to multinational corporations, many more of which were to be found in the latter than the former city. In the end, *Shanghai's Xiaotong* University was selected.

The Vermeer-Warner report recommended that the Beijing-based CEMI be transplanted to a university environment, with a new partner in *Shanghai*. The role of the municipal government there was very encouraging and its support with matching funds clinched the deal. The new institution, CEIBS, has moved house several times in the city since and has ended up in a 'state of the art' campus designed by the famous Chinese-American architect *I.M. Pei*. It is now recognized as the 'number one' in all of Asia, although it only deals with postgraduate management courses. Its mission statement runs as follows: 'To prepare highly competent, internationally oriented managers who are capable of working within the Chinese economic environment while adapting to the forces of business globalization, international competition and international cooperation'.

By 2000, 62 universities in China offered MBA courses, such as *Beijing (Beida)* and *Tsinghua* in the capital, as well as others such as *Nanjing* and so on. By 2004, nearly 90

institutes and schools were offering MBA degrees. By 2011, over 35,000 were registered for MBA courses at 236 universities (China Daily 2011).

As a recent account noted:

‘The programs are set up to offer professional and practical training for experienced managers. Some experts say China's programs need to reduce their focus on theory and improve their practical training. And some students find the expansion of business contacts they make is at least as valuable as their lessons. Whatever the shortcomings, Chinese enterprises have come to value MBAs as they hire management personnel’ (China Daily, 4 November, 2011:24).

As of 2009, the CEIBS alone had graduated over 8,000 MBA and EMBA graduates and completed management training for over 80,000 executives. Additionally, the wide range of undergraduate and business and management courses are now offered in Chinese universities, both famous as well there as less well known. The top universities mentioned above set standards for the others.

The upshot of all this is that China has now trained an impressive core of professional managers, although there is still a shortfall of only of senior executives but even those further down the line. It is evident that they are very rapid rate of economic growth has created a *demand* for highly trained personal across all fields and that all levels and that the system of training has not quite manage to keep up. The *supply* side efficiency is now particularly acute with respect to of skilled workers, as well (see Warner 2009; 2011).

China’s universities are now coming up in the world rankings but only slowly. *Peking University* is now rated at 49th and *Tsinghua* at 71st in the Times Higher top 100 list of 2011; in the FT rankings, *CEIBS* was the only one for Mainland China listed in the Top 100 Global MBA category, at 17th, (with HKUIST at 6th and Macao not at all); in the Eduniversal list, *CEIBS*, *Fudan*, *Tsinghua*, *Peking* and *Shanghai Jiaotong* were entered in the top classification for China; in the Asiaweek one, only *CEIBS* was rated in the top 20 for Asia; and it was the only mainland Chinese one, rated 91th in the ‘Economist’s 100 Top MBAs’ list, with the University of Hong Kong at 36th, HKUIST at 62th, and the Chinese University of HongKong at 88th and no Macao mention (see Times Higher 2011b, FT 2011, Eduniversal, 2011, Asiaweek 2011, Economist 2011b).

Japan

Japan is the second case we examine here. At first, Japan shared the experience of Imperial China in setting up a Confucian model of education and training and we find here similar precedents for contemporary practices. The classical autocratic state required an educated bureaucracy. During the *Taika* Reforms (645 C.E.), Chinese political systems (from the Sui [581–618] and Tang [618–907] dynasties) were imported to establish a legal-political system called the *ritsuryo* system that would last some five centuries and set the scene. The *ritsuryo* government established what they called the *daigakuryo*, a school that trained administrative bureaucrats in the capital. It also established schools in the outlying regions.

Later, both Buddhist, Confucian and Shinto influences co-existed. These precepts centred upon the ruler-subject relationship key to Confucianism, the importance of piety from Buddhism, the disciplines of everyday living and the importance of education. After the *Meiji* Restoration in 1868, Japan moved towards modernizing not only its education system but also its government administration. Although British and American liberal ideas circulated,

French and German statist notions found greater favour in Imperial circles (Education in Japan, 2011).

The evolution of modern management education in Japan has been rather different from that of the Chinese model. It was very slow to adopt the North American business school model. Instead, it proceeded on something similar to German experience, with vocational technical education and engineering degrees as the main influence. After the Second World War, employers were largely uninterested in establishing business schools and the Japanese system remained resilient to the North American model in spite of the US Occupation regime. There was the widely held view that American methods did not suffice and Japan must develop its model based on an emphasis on technical competence. Over 40 per cent of school leavers went to university or college in there were expected to have a higher standard of general education with a strong emphasis on mathematics.

Students who wanted to get on studied the economics or commerce, no management. Those in the elite who went to top universities like *Tokyo* pursued studies in law or engineering. University was seen as providing a rounded education and later company-specific skills could be taught in-house. As Locke and Spender (2011:45) put it; ‘Companies spend much time and money on in-house training, job rotation and multiskilling that impart tacit and explicit learning tailored to the firm’s environment’.

Training programs in house fell into four categories: programmed training, cafeteria -type training, combination of the above and cafeteria-type training with supervisors’ advice.

A major body providing a certification whereas the *Japanese Management Association (JMA)*, the oldest such entity in Japan, said: during the war when the *Nippon Industrial Management Association* and the *Nippon Scientific Management Association* merged in 1942. Its activities include open programmes, in-house training, distance learning, and publications.

The absence of North America- style business schools in Japanese universities is remarkable; there are only a few comparable to the U.S. model, such *Keio University’s*. Although there had been some shifts in recent years, there is still a great deal to do vis a vis interantionalization.

Compared with other Asian countries (including China), Japan produces only a limited number of home-grown MBAs (see Warner and Goodall, 2009:4). The *QS Global Top Business Schools 2009* listing featured only three Japanese schools amongst the 200 schools that constitute the MBA elite in Asia: *Waseda Business School (WBS)*, *International University of Japan (IUJ)* and *Ritsumeikan Asia-Pacific University (APU)* although 78 institutions teach management studies at the graduate level. More and more of these teach the course entirely in English. But one it is clear that there is a dearth of Japanese MBA candidates or practising managers attending Western business schools, whether in Cambridge, England or Cambridge, Mass.

On the other hand, the *Harvard Business School Japan Research Center (JRC)* was established in Tokyo almost a decade ago, in January 2002. Its primary aim is to support HBS faculty research and case-writing activities in that country: ‘Through its activities in Japan, HBS strives to deepen faculty's understanding of and exposure to Japanese management

issues, trends, and practices, as well as developing locally relevant case studies and course materials for use in MBA and Executive Education programs around the world' (HBS, 2010).

Japan's universities do not fair that well in international rankings, such as the Times Higher top 100 list, but *Tokyo University* achieved a reasonable status at 30th place and Kyoto at 52th; no Japanese business school features in the 100 Top Global MBA category in the Financial Times (FT) current management education institution ranking in 2011, or at Masters level [or others] globally or even for Asia; Eduniversal, recently mentioned three business schools in their top ranking for Japan, namely those of the *University of Tokyo*, *Keio* and *Waseda*; and in the Asiaweek list, there are two listed for Japan in their top list, *International University of Japan* and *Waseda* are featured as 13th and 16th; no business school from Japan was to make the top 100 in the 'Economist's 100 Top MBAs (see Times Higher 2011, FT 2011, Eduniversal, 2011, Asiaweek 2011, Economist 2011b).

Accreditation agencies have problems in Asia with the Japanese educational bureaucracy, as the Ministry responsible appears to be reluctant to deal with them.

South Korea

South Korea is the third case we examine here. As in its Chinese neighbour, there was a long tradition of Confucian education which passed on the scholarship, as well as the theory and practice of bureaucracy in the Korean dynasties. This not only influenced the governance of the country but also passed on a legacy of organizational hierarchy to be incorporated in business administration, past and present.

South Korean business is dominated by big formally structured business groups known as the *chaebols*. The word itself means 'business family' or 'monopoly' in the Korean language. Its structure can cover a single large company or several. Each is controlled, managed and/or owned by the family dynasty, generally that of the group's founder. We find giant indigenous MNCs such as *Hyundai*, *LG Group* and *Samsung* are among the biggest and most noteworthy.

After the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, Korea ended up divided into north (into the *Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (DPRK)) and south into the *Republic of Korea* (ROK), with the former under Russian hegemony, with the latter under American military government. A destructive localized war in 1950 ensued, with disastrous consequences. The north consolidated its Soviet-style system, with Russian and Chinese backing. An American-led recovery plan was launched to rebuild the south in 1953.

Many South Koreans went to study in the U.S., and therefore western management practices were adopted there, as adapted to the local cultural environment. Although Westerners perceive corporate culture in Korea as typically Asian and highly collectivistic, the Japanese however see it more as being individualistic, as they do vis a vis the Chinese equivalent. Some commentators see this as 'Dynamic Collectivism' (see Rowley and Bae 2003:193-4).

Management education and training in South Korea has largely been based on U.S. lines, for some decades now. In recent years, its business schools have tried to gain wider recognition in the Asian market. The best known business schools are at public institutions such as the *Seoul National University (SNU)* and *KAIST Business School at Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology*, as well as seven private schools: *Yonsei School of Business (YSB)*

at *Yonsei University*; *Korea University*; *Sejong University*; *Sogang University*; *SungKyunKwan University*; *Hanyang University* and *Ewha Woman's University*. *Yonsei* has been teaching management since 1915. Its Global MBA Program was inaugurated in 1998 as the first English-only one in the country.

A recent commentator argued that: 'South Korea's *Yonsei* University, which touts its expertise in *chaebol*, or the management of family-run enterprises, has offered its services globally. The *chaebol* curriculum reflects the work of well-known American researchers, but the program works only where it reflects indigenous value systems' (Lovett 2011:1).

International rankings of South Korean universities remain very low as they have very few international faculty-members and students and little internationally published research. *Pohang Institute of Science and Technology* achieved 53rd position in the Times Higher 100 list, with *KAIST* at 94th; only one Korean business school featured in the top 100 of the Global MBA FT listings in 2011, however, namely *KAIST* as 99th; in the recent Eduniversal list, *Seoul, Korea, KAIST and Yonsei* are rated as top Korean schools; in Asiaweek, Seoul was listed but low down in Asia rankings; and in the Economist's Top 100 MBA list, *Yonsei* was the only one noted, at 76th (see Times Higher 2011, FT 2011, Eduniversal 2011, Asiaweek 2011, Economist 2011b).

Salaries have been on the low side for many years, compared with other professions. Recently, there has been a determined effort to improve matters, with an attempt to recruit more foreign ones, especially English-speaking ones. As a response to globalization, many Korean universities and business schools are beginning to teach in English. *Yonsei* (YSB) has now embarked on this course of action as noted above, as well as the number of others, such as the *SolBridge Business School* outside the capital, in *Woosong*.

Conclusions

Taking their evolution in sequence, we find that the newer participants in the modernization process seem to have a greater attraction to the North American business school model, namely China and South Korea, in contrast to Japan (see Jenster 2009). Given Japan started *earlier* in its modernization process in the late 19th century, it is understandable that it might not have adopted a particular mode of education and training which was only just emerging at the time in the U.S at the end of the nineteenth century. The *later* development of both South Korea and China perhaps made them more open to what was, by then, well-established Western management education and training modes, namely business schools.

We may conclude that the 'convergence' theory does fully not resolve the issue in this context. Modernization and industrialization do not have the same impact on these countries' systems of management education and training. Neither does the historical legacy point to common outcomes. The cultural resilience of the Japanese system seems to protect it more from exogenous influences compared with the Chinese or South Korean. One irony is that American-style business schools have diffused more widely in communist China than in anti-communist Japan. If 'soft' convergence does occur, it will be likely to do so within cultural parameters but possibly in unexpected ways.

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