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ARTICLE INFO

Samir Ranjan Chatterjee (2008). Asian managerial assumptions and contemporary managerial concepts: towards an integrated frame of reference. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 6(4)

RELEASED ON

Thursday, 18 December 2008

JOURNAL

"Problems and Perspectives in Management"

FOUNDER

LLC “Consulting Publishing Company “Business Perspectives”



NUMBER OF REFERENCES

0



NUMBER OF FIGURES

0



NUMBER OF TABLES

0

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Asian managerial assumptions and contemporary managerial concepts: towards an integrated frame of reference

Abstract

This paper focuses on the inadequacies of the contemporary managerial precepts originating from the Western contexts. Some serious criticisms of the ideological, theoretical and practical axioms are presented. With the emergence of Asia as an economic springboard, the complementary contributions of a range of ideas and frames originating in Asia are considered. The paper builds a polycontextual managerial frame by attempting to explore the blending of the Western and Eastern ideas.

Keywords: Asian management, Taylorism, Nemawashi, Zaibatsu, Confucianism, Sneha – Sradha.

JEL Classification: M10, M14, M16, M19.

Introduction

Globalization is changing the managerial architecture in corporations around the world. The dynamics of this change process has made it necessary for an urgent reexamination of the dominant concepts and practices of management around the world. A significant contribution of this process may be the rise of a large number of new multinationals from India and China. While the U.S., European and Japanese multinationals tended to spread managerial cultures with their unique administrative heritages, companies around the world harmonized upwards in drawing lessons from them in terms of better working practices, managerial visions, ethics, social and environmental responsibilities. The formidable array of skills of contemporary managerial frames in the areas of market-related strategies, knowledge intensive work performance, innovation and enterprise may not be sufficient as emerging country multinationals begin to dominate the global scene. It is difficult to dispute that most of the global management knowledge today is dominated by European and North-American (ENA) business schools, scholars and practitioners.

This dominance of Western managerial frames and concepts is evidenced through university course curriculums, executive education programs, textbooks, and the authors and their affiliations in leading scholarly management journals. It has been argued that about 100% of the leading management journals are published in ENA countries where acknowledgements of non ENA scholars are so rare. Management journals based in Asia may have significantly higher readership, but are not recognized as top-tier scholarly outlets, and, therefore, publication in such journals does not lead to support and recognition by the national funding bodies as well as university promotion systems in ENA countries. Most of the research in Asia, Latin America and Africa needs to be indigenously contexted in order to be of

value. In spite of their unique contributions they rarely draw attention to the dominant managerial frames. As it has been pointed out, “American-based research on organizations, especially research on behavior within them, has been largely U.S. domestic focused” (Porter, 1996, p. 262). Rigour is defined in terms of the use of quantitative methods and exploration of those variables that are easily quantifiable. The key point of this dominance of the margin is evident in the limitation of influence that research has in the global context. The essential distinction between *analytical* rigour and *descriptive* rigour is of particular relevance in the context of the global domain.

Given the Western hegemony in contemporary managerial paradigms, it is inevitable that other ideas from newly emerging nations will seek to find their voice in the mainstream. The stream of research on culture using the national context as an independent variable, however, uses the same theories and similar empirical measures and the area of comparative and international management are overused in simple replications of existing Western theories. The central underpinning of ‘man’ from the perspective of needs, utilities, satisfaction and preferences leads to a world of ‘managerial hegemony’ with the legitimization of power of managers through the creation and perpetuation of culture, authority patterns, structure, strategies and processes. The question that needs a voice in challenging this domination is: Is the positivistic and scientific method relevant to the study of management from a global perspective?

This paper is an extension of the author’s earlier publication in this area and it seeks to generate more exploration in global forums (like the Tenth Conference of the Society for Global Business and Economic Development (SGBED), August 2007, Kyoto, Japan). Search for managerial precepts that were relevant to multiple settings will continue and scholars from Asia have a particularly important role to play (Chatterjee, 2007).

1. Roots of Western managerial assumption

The first victory of modern management method was signaled by Frederic Winslow Taylor in 1899 with his well known "Pig iron question". The successful raising of individual worker productivity to 45.75 tons of pig iron from 12.5 tons at a wage of \$1.85 per day at the Bethlehem Steel Company heralded the birth of contemporary management. Taylor was hailed as the hero of a new cause and management began as a distinct social function performed by a unique breed of men with special intellectual and behavioral levels in getting not so intelligent people to increase their productivity. He contended, "the science of handling pig iron is so great and amounts to so much that it is impossible for the man who is best suited to this type of work to understand the principles of this science, or even to work in accordance with these principles, without the aid of a man better educated than he is." (Stewart, 2006, p. 81). It is paradoxical that Taylor's scientific management was not based on any science. The forty percent 'adjustment' he made to his ideal productivity achieved through his chosen ten Hungarian workers as model performers has never had any 'scientific basis'. When the study of lifting bars into rail carts was investigated by the U.S. Congress, his defense of these adjustments was the importance of 'managerial judgment', not scientific methods. This first victory, therefore, was not a positive one. "Taylorism, like much of management theory to come, is at its core a collection of quasi-religious dicta on the virtues of being good at what you do, ensconced in protective bubble of parables (otherwise known as case studies)". In spite of this, Taylor's pig iron story captured the imagination of the whole country as he was successful in generating a wide range of followership and acceptance by the U.S. establishment. His regular seminars at Harvard University were critical in the establishment of the famous Management School in 1908.

In his book titled "False Prophets: The Gurus who created Modern Management and why Their Ideas Are Bad for Business Today" Hoopes argued that the popularity of the impactful writers of Management led more to the legitimization of immoral and anti-democratic practices of management and less to the values inherent in their concepts (Hoopes, 2003). He categorizes these Gurus into two groups – *one with heart in the right place* (Mary Parker Follett, Edward Demming and Peter Drucker) and *those whose moral authority was questionable* (Frederick Taylor and Elton Mayo).

A popular management technique with global acceptance in recent years is the concept of Balanced Scorecard. The conceptual foundations of the Balanced Scorecard were built on the Quantitative

Measurability of Organizational Performance on four dimensions of customer service, process management, knowledge generation and financial performance. However, the widespread use of the frame is not in accordance with the ideas of Kaplan and Norton. The aim of this management frame lies in the financial results emerging from the organizations dedicated to meeting four goals. But in most companies, the financial measures are now wrongly the input measures serving these goals (Kaplan & Norton, 1992).

The search for the transforming concepts that energizes the passive-obedient Taylorist employees into holistic partners of a human organization has dominated the past three decades. Some of the leading proponents seeking such transformation, however, have not argued on the ideological foundations of the managerial practices. The central question of determining the role of 'human beings' in terms of their relationships with organizations cannot be answered through the conceptual masks of one society over the others. It is interesting how the Japanese managerial concepts and practices impacted the rise of a new and influential genre of managerial writings around the theme of corporate culture (Burrell & Morgan, 1979; Ouchi, 1981; Pascale & Athos, 1981; Peters and Waterman, 1982; Deal & Kennedy, 1982; Schein, 1985; Senge 1990). Most of the recent best sellers from this genre essentially revolve around the theme of corporate culture with terms like 'shared values', 'quality circles', and 'team development'. Until the 1960's, the managerial paradigms on meeting production and other performances, but this was just an extension of Taylorism softened by a myriad of concepts around the behavior of individuals, groups and teams. The following decade saw the emphasis move away from making products in large volumes to a newer managerial culture where 'creativity' and 'initiative' of employees were encouraged. There were very few exceptions in these literatures in the conceptualization of the role of human beings in organizational settings. The 'human element' considered in the management literature over the past few decades is not a 'holistic' or 'global' in essence.

The concepts mask the implications the 'man' is a fragmented and soulless 'instrument of profit' for the organization. As has been pointed out, "it is as if we need only call on this person and tell him or her that we earnestly want him or her to embrace the right culture and symbols, to join the team, and become a champion. It is as if there was no need to have a clearer idea of the reasons, events and circumstances that might bring about such a metamorphosis. Obviously, such clarity can be gained only if we are willing to take the point of view of the employee who is, after all, the "human element" that

these theories want to promote. Thus, it is necessary to construct a vision of the person other than that conveyed by the theoretical framework to be overcome" (Aktouf, 1992, p. 411).

The dominant Western frames from the Tayloristic directness to the contemporary subtleties ignore the critical challenge of opening up of the managerial practices that ensures an 'agricultural mindset' where the nurturing of the employees holistic and powerful energies results in his/her desire to belong and contribute to his/her worklife in spite of economic, industrial, legal and other constraints. This is an anti thesis of the dominant Western managerial assumptions that an employee of an organization is 'instrumental element' of the production/service generation and delivery. The answer to the narrow economism and the mask of human relations cannot be incremental reframing of this praxis – but in the search for an alternative paradigmatic canvass.

2. Weakness of the Western concepts

Over the past decade, one of the refreshing voices within the dominant Western managerial theories has been the intellectually challenging ideals of Sumantra Ghoshal. In his posthumously published paper, "Bad Management Theories Are Destroying Good Management Practices" and other papers he had presented a series of provocative and constructive thinking to challenge managers in building organizations as better places to work for greater good (Birkinshaw and Piramal, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005). In Ghoshal's view, most of the contemporary management assumptions and formulations were seriously flawed. He argued that bad theories being articulated by generations of University academics, and management trainers, and popular authors had a profound and damaging impact on managerial practices around the world. This, he argued, had led to the production of dysfunctional organizations with misguided governance systems, misplaced priorities and poor ethical guidelines. Western managerial ideas have neither served the shareholders nor created meaningful work environment for employees. Societies and economies around the world have suffered because of these bad theories. His critique of the force for good can be understood as, "if a theory assumes that the sun goes round the earth, it does not change what the sun actually does. So, if the theory is wrong, the truth is preserved for discovery by someone else. In contrast, a management theory if it gains sufficient currency – changes the behaviors of managers who start acting in accordance with the theory. A theory that assumes that people can behave opportunistically and draws its conclusions for managing people based on that assumption can induce managerial actions that are

likely to enhance opportunistic behavior among people" (Ghoshal, 2005 p. 77).

In a word, Ghoshal was correct. He was right in the sense that the dominant theoretical underpinning of the modern managerial frame accepted and popularized by scholars around the world needs widening and enrichment. As Kanter maintained that it was the 'demand side' of the management theory that perpetuated the dominance of the Western managerial tools and techniques. She suggests that the gloomy picture portrayed by Ghoshal was correct, but it was mainly due to the demand for it rather than its supply. She asserts, "these theories corresponded to what looked like the triumph of capitalism over other economic systems. In 1989, Communism collapsed in Eastern Europe with the fall of the Berlin Wall, Asian financial markets deregulated; Latin America was looking for market reforms. Economics seemed to be more important than societies, as the public sector privatized and shrunk. American theories and theorists had disproportionate influence" (Kanter, 2005, p. 94).

Another longstanding critic of the dominant U.S. managerial frames from a very different point of view is an Australian academic, Donaldson, who has been advocating the creative contingency of context relevant realities as the answer to the problem of misguided management theories over a long period of time (Donaldson, 2002). His criticism of the institutional, population ecology, resource dependence, transaction costs and agency theories and the defence of activist managers have often been criticized as pro-capitalistic paradigms. However, the critical point he makes about the lack of relevance of these major theories in diverse contexts still remains instructive. The idea that an organization will perform better when their values, structures and strategies match the contextual imperatives cannot be disputed. His normative views about managerial competencies may not, however, be widely shared.

Other voices warning on the limitations of contemporary managerial frames are Henry Mintzberg, Charles Handy and Peter Drucker (Drucker, 1997; Handy, 1998; Mintzberg, 2004) who have spent lifetimes in writing about the need for managerial ideals of the industrial society to be able to absorb and respond to post-industrial societies as they cross over to the knowledge and service economies. Handy explored the internal transformations needed at every level in modern work organizations in his extensive writings (Handy, 1998). It is clear that correct questions were being asked, but somehow the answers have yet to emerge with global relevance. Drucker's ideas were based on family mentor and famous economist Schumpeter and on the

minimalist role of Government. He contended that productivity in manufacturing and agriculture had increased fiftyfold in the last century and growing still faster, but they only employ less than one sixth of the U.S. workforce. The challenge is that over the three fourths of workforce in most countries now are in the service and knowledge sector. However, the productivity and dignity of knowledge and service work still remains very low in the managerial concepts and practices (Beatty, 1988). The creation of a sustained argument about the role and purpose of managers and work organizations in such societies needs to be based on a very different assumption about 'man' and 'essential purpose' of economic successes. A transformation of the dominant managerial model requires an integration of global perspectives not only in terms of polycontextuality of locations, but also time, institutions, developmental trajectory of societies.

3. Japanese case

Japan is an interesting example of an Eastern nation that embraced the Western technology and market philosophies with considerable uniqueness. The preservation of many indigenous values while allowing the Western thinking to sink into their organizational life may provide a new window. Since the 1980's, Western logical realm subordinating indigenous ethical, spiritual and aesthetics have been more widespread within Japan while its own managerial philosophies and techniques took the West by storm. As has been argued, "Westernization was somewhat like an impact item for Japan in the free marketplace of ideas. The issue may have been conditioned by external circumstances (most notably, the expansion of Western imperialist powers into Asian and the Pacific), but to some extent, at least the Japanese welcomes the imported product" (Kasulis, 1995, p. 228). As being pointed out, "... the new Japanese management model that is a product of the grating of Western concepts with traditional Japanese concepts has not yet achieved a stable equilibrium in which various elements of the system are mutually self-reinforcing and in synchronicity with the Japanese societal context" (Pudelko and Mendenhall, 2007, p. 283). The main areas of Japanese style management theories that are becoming increasingly relevant around the world are not only the production systems, but also the employment and HRM strategies. Though it is accepted that management studies in one particular country are very much a product of their social cultural context. "When US companies were successful, American-style management theories held sway; when Japanese companies came to the fore, the focus was on Japanese-style management and Japan as a model of management theory. However, it is necessary to transcend national functionalist theory in order to ad-

dress the problems and issues that are born of corporate society and common to all humanity" (Hasegawa, 2006, p. 82). The significance of study of Japanese management lies not in discovering any specific magic in Japanese management, but in the establishment of new integrative theory of management where management studies of Asia complement the Western models. "The development of management studies in the 21st century cannot be achieved without the development of historical and theoretical research in various individual fields of management" (Hayashi, 2002, p. 204).

The success of the Japanese model in the 1980s resulted in the revival of the old debate about the divergence and convergence of Asian and Western managerial frames. The transferability of Japanese Management practices to a Western context here has been limited mainly due to cultural boundaries. "A further issue is whether managerial practices between countries are coming closer together, as this has implications for the transferability debate." (Naylor, 2000, p. 169).

Japanese experience may be extended to consider the following:

1. A global managerial framework blending the best of the West and the East can become sustainable without destroying the roots and rich indigenous traditions. The trends of Western dominance appear to be taking a stronger hold as many companies abandon their life time employment policy to follow Western style employment policies. The tradition of building market through extended '*nemawashi*' (social networking) platforms is no longer unquestionably employed.
2. The Asian (and certainly Japanese) philosophical tradition has opposed a 'single monolithic ontology'. The ideas of multiple truths of pluralism have always had a strong base.
3. The Japanese example of accepting science without embracing 'scientism' provides a robust pathway in blending divergent contexts. This positions a society away from "excessive order and structure" as well as "brittleness to outside dominance".
4. The interdependence of economic and business relations as globalization takes hold needs to extend to cultural, social, educational and other relations so that the hegemonic dominance of one over the other can be avoided. The idea of '*ordered flexibility*' has been a successful managerial positioning. The idea of maintaining order as well as embrace circumstance allows the 'core' and 'peripheral' identities to find an intelligent network.

5. Man's nature is undeniably social and community orientated and this has been one of the main traditions of Asia. In a private discussion, one of India's most celebrated management innovators Narayana Murthy reflected on the value of family bonding and enriching the workplace through social commitment as the single most feature sustaining Indian organizations (Chatterjee, 2005).
6. Evidence is available to indicate that for Japanese practices to work in overseas conditions, subjective experience, knowledge of the local context and the strategic motivations at every level need to be taken into account much more seriously (Taylor, 1999).
7. Over the past three decades, there has been an overemphasis of research linked to 'keiretsu' in the mainstream ENA research. The U.S. based leading management journals would welcome scholarly papers incorporating any aspect of 'keiretsu' membership as part of their models while ignoring research exploring whether 'keiretsus' actually exist (Lynn, 2006).
8. The idea of viewing an organization as a collective membership of people is very different from the 'property rights' or 'shareholder rights' view. Japanese idea of partnership of employees and managers in achieving organizational outcomes is a strong contribution.
9. The pre-war 'financial cliques' or 'zaibatsu's' have been criticized for many ills of Japanese society. These have gradually clustered into 'keiretsus' or associations of interdependent companies with separate identities. The essential point of interest may be not the hierarchical, formal control structures but marshalling of resources in a mutually beneficial synergistic relationship.
10. The Japanese ancient word 'Wa' is a deeply philosophical concept depicting peace and harmony. It literally means a 'circular movement' in contrast to the vertical and horizontal layers of Western management. Wa implies employees and managers subscribing to a super ordinate goal with mutual trust, harmonious relationships, and collective responsibility not only for decisions but also for outcomes.

4. Incorporating pan-Asian contributions

In order for the managerial ideas and ideals to have a global relevance, the action-focused and technique orientated modern managerial formulations may benefit by drawing on the reflective and contemplative civilization heritage of Asia. Exploration of the traditional roots of Asian civilization and the diversity in mindscapes for managers and their worlds began with the wider understanding of the Japanese mindscapes three decades ago (Maruyama, 1994).

Discussions on Japanese managerial mindscapes over the past decades and the Chinese traditional influences in recent years can be complemented significantly by a new investigation into the mindscapes shaped by the Indian wisdom tradition. There is a need for a pan-Asian alternative frame to integrate the ideals drawn from these three wisdom traditions and present itself as an alternative. 'Core' and 'peripheral' values of these three national contexts have exerted differential social control at both individual as well as organizational levels over a very long period of the past decades. The traditional Confucian values of 'kinship' have remained 'core' in the Chinese society for generations.

The traditional Indian 'core' values of reciprocal bonding of 'Sneha' and 'Sradha' discussed later in this paper is an example of such a long sustaining primary ethos of the Indian tradition. In recent years, a global relevance of the Asian heritage has mostly been attempted in terms of Confucianism over the past few decades. After decades of vilification not only by Chinese mainstream, but also by Western observers, Confucianism has suddenly been in ascendancy. A large part of tradition in China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam and Singapore derive from Confucian heritage. A contrast to the wider discussion of the role of Confucian frame in the Asian context, the relevance of the Indian tradition has not received scholarly attention in the management literature. It may be of interest to note that the metaphysical literature of the ancient Indian tradition was not only concerned with deeper philosophical and spiritual issues of human values, but also dealt in details with the universal questions of individual behavior, models of social functioning, leadership and organizational governance.

Like the residual frames of Confucianism still dominating the managerial ideas for Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese and to some extent overseas Chinese, the Indian tradition had a strong secular foundation that continues to sustain the interpersonal world in Indian organizations. Like Confucian ideas, the rich Indian tradition focused on individual, community and broader society's commitment beyond narrow economic goals. These ideals provided rigid frames of discipline where individuals learned with the primary motivation to serve the community.

"Asia is the demographic, geographic and developmental future of business. Japan is the world's number two economy; China and India and numbers two and three in Asia. Before too long, half of the world's largest 500 firms will be headquartered in Asia. East Asia and the countries of China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan all deserve far more attention..." (Fruin, 2007, p. 353). Asia represents about

twenty percent of world economy and about forty percent of the world's population. Its emergence as an economic powerhouse, therefore, makes exploration of Asian perspectives in management more urgent. The recognition of the traditional roots of India and China in the managerial thinking worldwide can only benefit the contemporary managerial ideas. Economic reform and sustainability through imported ideas need to be grounded through the freshness of the ideas of generations.

The economic rise of Asia of the past decade and especially the economic emergence of China and India over the recent years has increasingly generated global attention to the managerial systems in Asia (Chatterjee & Nankervis, 2007). Despite Asia's diverse and sometimes conflicting trajectory into the world of contemporary business, there are sufficient similarities in geographic, historic and cultural characteristics. The extended family networks within and outside their respective countries have maintained a cohesive entrepreneurial spirit. A number of commentators on Asia have emphasized the potential contribution that Asia can make in developing managerial frameworks beyond the imperatives of narrow competitive strategies, profitability, efficiency or market domination (Dobbs-Hingginson, 1993; Mahbubani, 2004). As Chinese and Indian companies show global aspirations through stunning foray into the economic world of business in the region and beyond as well as the imperatives of intellectual globalization draws global corporation into Asia, it is inevitable that lessons of Asian heritage may provide a significant broadening of contemporary managerial frames.

Cultural dimensions of Confucianism-dynamism popularized by Hofstede and Bond has dominated managerial thinking for the past two decades (Hofstede and Bond, 1998). It is now evident that such notion of explaining the complex and multifaceted roots contributing to Asian work settings needs a much broader perspective than the dimension of long and short terms orientations. The dichotomization of 'long' and 'short' terms may not adequately explain viewing 'time' as cyclical and repetitive where past, present and future coalesce people's behavior as they interpret the world around them. Most of large and small economic organizations in Asia have embraced formal principles and practices of modern managerial culture while the unseen world within these organizations is deeply embedded to the reasoning and intuitive understandings of their respective settings.

Recent decades have witnessed an acceleration of isomorphic acceptance of the Western managerial values around the world. Amongst the myriad of reasons including joint-ventures, global technological regime, global industry culture, supply-chain networks (for example, the rise of auto parts industry in India over the past decade have seen a techno-managerial isomorphism). "The much cited examples of McDonald's or Coke hide the fact that most multinational corporations, even when they adopt their products to local tastes, introduce management practices that are the same all over the world. More importantly, because they are the dominant players, they are models generally emulated by most firms in developing countries" (Hafsi & Farashahi, 2005 p. 499).

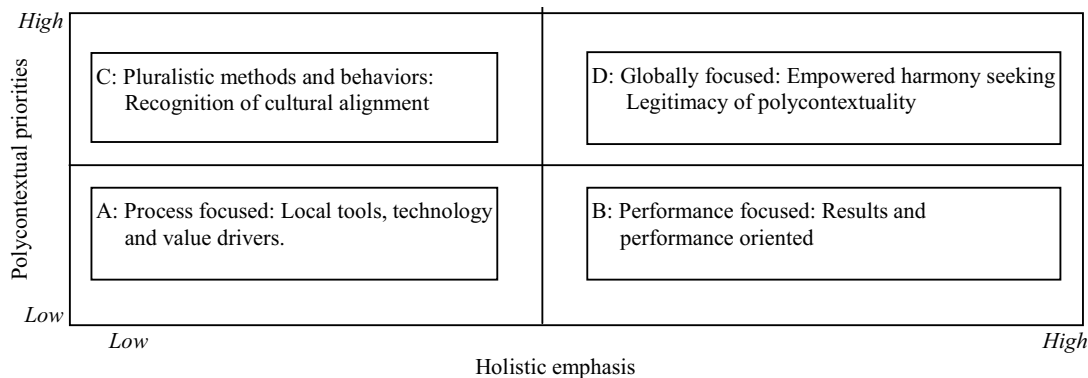


Fig. 1. Integrating polycontextuality in contemporary management

This paper argues that the experiences of multinational companies operating across the world should have generated a 'reverse isomorphism' and established a countervailing effect on the dominant managerial frames. If the discipline of management is to make a global contribution, it needs to be anchored explicitly on the set of core and peripheral foci across countries (Fig. 1). At a minimum, the figure explores the cross-verging balances needed in four key areas of managerial attention.

Figure 1 summarizes the key themes of this presentation. The two dimensions of Holistic emphasis and Polycontextual priorities are overlapped to generate four areas where the priorities of the alternative framework need to focus. The relevance seeking a global frame highlights the process of corporate transformation that involves building multi-directional priorities and capabilities. Success and performance in the new paradigm are defined largely in terms of its sustainability. It is surprising

how many scholars and practitioners have considered brilliant marketing strategies while not grasping the elementary principles of community, communication and society. The pillars of success in management practices beginning with Taylor were built on having resources or technology while the pillars of success for tomorrow are knowledge and the people who have the dreams.

The contributions from Asia to the dominant managerial frames are therefore, in terms of scale, diversity, values. The development of such knowledge and dreams depends on a culturally endorsed organic knowledge creation. Such knowledge flow can enrich and empower not only the managerial world, but also the world management as new corporate language and symbols. Transnational social and educational networks building through conferences such as this facilitate not only the flow of knowledge, but also the network essential. The more the momentum for globalization occurs, the more is the need to complement it with contextual inheritance of 'core' assumptions and identity. The cognitive skills of conceptual understanding, reasoning and openness to the world complemented by the roots of tradition create a global mindset that empowers the ability to overcome ethnocentric narrowness (Chatterjee, 2005).

5. Blending the best of West and East

Seventy companies from Japan, twenty companies from China, twelve companies from South Korea, six companies from India, three companies from Taiwan and one company each from Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore made to the 2006, Fortune list of 500 leading global companies based on revenue. After decades of embracing all things Western, Asian companies are embracing on a new path of self-confidence. This rise of outward expansion of Asian companies can only lead to the increasing number of world class domestic companies that need to go beyond the typical advantages of cheap labor, state support and lack of competition. Bureaucratic red tape, corruption, and lack of a globally relevant managerial perspective need to be overcome.

A central concern in management of work organizations needs to be the search for variables that can be generalized not only at the technical micro or strategic meso levels but also at the macro societal wisdom levels. In physics, chemistry or biology, the scholars need to be totally objective across these levels while in disciplines like management, the subjective domains of people, values and tradition are the central areas of concern. The challenges of generalizability across nations in management therefore are much more complex as no models of management function can remain unaffected by

the contingent imperatives of locality. The 'context-embedded and context-specific' societal variables need to be understood in searching for managerial level variables as well as 'context-free' variables may not be so readily generalizable (Cheng, 1994; Rosenweig, 1994). Based on the management extend theories and research practiced and preached in universities around the world.

This is an exciting opportunity for global scholars in management as Indian and Chinese companies to adopt the goals of extending their operational boundaries with wisdom drawn from their societal traditions. The increasing disquiet about the impact of economic globalization and the critical role of global companies can be answered not by making the same managerial mistakes as their predecessors from the West few decades ago. These new global champions can only become history builders if they can leverage their societal wisdom in practical managerial challenges by seeking sustainability, social harmony, creative inclusiveness, network building and commitments to social responsibility. Dominance of the Western managerial logic should not be the managerial frames of global companies from Asia. As has been suggested, "the best universities in the U.S., Australia, the U.K., and to some extent continental Europe are populated with many Asians. Some of the best and brightest have stayed, others have returned home. If cleverly exploited, this group can be an enormous advantage to a global corporation. Those who have stayed overseas form a potential network of allies. The ones that have returned bring home potentially a vast wealth of know-how about foreign markets and culture, but prerequisite to leveraging this potential advantage is an appreciation that today it is knowledge and values, not just resources that will be decisive in future global competitive battles" (Meyer et al., 2005, p. 14).

Asia houses about two-thirds of the world's population and unlike the Western majority of Asians are less than thirty years of age. With the rise in Asia's stature as the economic hub of the world, it is hardly surprising that management education draws the best talents in Asia. It is in this context that the new generation of managers in Asia needs to be able to create a major impact upon the architecture of long-term and relevant management knowledge. The idea of imparting immediately usable skills to management students through specialized courses needs to be resisted with increasing attention to the development of theories that are relevant in a polycontextual setting.

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