



Asian Megatrends and Management Education of Overseas Chinese

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Abstract

Asian megatrends are impacting the development of management education of ethnic groups like the overseas Chinese and universities need to change accordingly. This article identifies six Asian megatrends and their impact on the management education of overseas Chinese. The megatrends are: the emergence of women in politics and business; a shift in industrial strategy towards high technology; urbanization; the rise of consumerism; migration of overseas Chinese to China, and overseas Chinese investment in China. The implications of these trends on universities are discussed and recommendations are made.

Keywords: Megatrends, Overseas Chinese, Change, Management education

1. Introduction

Globalization is a fact of life for universities and they are compelled to adapt and response to this change regardless of their commitment or ability to become global institutions. Even if universities are dedicated to developing global competitiveness the institutions may be prevented from achieving this goal if they focus their competitive responses to the present business environment instead of the trends leading the development of the higher education market place because the long time it takes for universities to develop the necessary organizational capability to response to the trends that impact the world (Kumar, 2001; Meyer, 2002). Although there is a similarity in these megatrends there are some regional differences that make necessary the identification of specific regional trends and their impact on universities. A generally accepted axiom among strategy theorists is that to maintain their competitiveness in a globalizing world organizations must identify trends in the business environment, respond with appropriate strategy and, develop the appropriate organization capability (Ansoff, 1984). Frequently, the key emphasis is on the concept of a "fit" between the organization's strategy, capability and, the future business environment (Miles and Snow, 1978; Hamel and Prahalad, 1994). Consequently universities need to identify likely trends in their business environment in order to be able to access their impact and make the necessary strategy and capability adjustments (Grummer, 1998).

The past two decades have been a period of fundamental change in the global business and higher education (Allen and Fitfield, 1999). The old Soviet Union is gone, the European Union was created and is growing, People's Republic of China (PRC) opened up to foreign ideologies and investment, and South East Asia became an economic power block followed by the 1998 financial crisis in the region, and the world's 2008 economic crisis (Porter, 1998; Fidrmuc, and Korhonen, 2009), these fundamental changes had significant impact on the management education in universities and education administrators struggled to catch up with the changes (Hall & White, 1997).

Moreover the world's economic center has been shifting toward East Asia and lately towards PRC which has experienced colossal economic growth in the past two decades which was partially fueled by foreign- investment and expertise which in turn has been to a great extent provided by overseas Chinese nationals. Consequently universities need to identify the unique education needs of the overseas Chinese students and provide management training program optimizing their effectiveness in this new dynamic market place (Butterfield, 2003). As universities are struggling with identifying the salient trends shaping the higher education needs of overseas Chinese students seeking management education at universities outside People's Republic of China, this article discusses some of the salient trends in Asia and their impact on the management education of overseas Chinese. The article is organized as follows: First the overseas Chinese are established as an identifiable subgroup in society with special education needs. Second the article identifies major trends affecting the management education of overseas Chinese and discusses what management programs universities need of offer to prepare the overseas Chinese students. Finally, conclusions are drawn and recommendations are made. The next section defines the overseas Chinese as sub-group and provides reasons for their circumstances.

2. The overseas Chinese are an identifiable sub-group

The scope of this study is the impact salient Asian megatrends have on the management education of overseas Chinese. Consequently one has to define the overseas Chinese and if the characteristics of this group or market segment is so significantly different from the general population that they merit to be studied separately. Williams (1960) gives one of the earlier definitions of the concept of Overseas Chinese, and Pan (1999) presents an interesting framework and analysis of the definition of Overseas Chinese that has been adopted by the World Confederation of Institutes and Libraries for Overseas Chinese Studies (2004) which defines the overseas Chinese as people of Chinese decent that immigrated from the China around or after the Maoist take over in 1949. Blackwell, Miniard, and Engel (2001) define a market segment as: "a group of consumers with similar needs and behavior that differ from those of the entire mass market". The Overseas Chinese can be considered such an identifiable subgroup or market segment of the Chinese society because of their location, culture, language ability, and political experience (Hofstede, Jan-Benedict, and Stenkamp, 1999). In addition to being an identifiable market segment, John Naisbitt (1997) considers the overseas Chinese to be the economic engine of the development of the South-East Asian region, he considers the overseas Chinese to be more creative and better business people than their much focused on Japanese competitors, and the overseas Chinese are the largest investor group in People's Republic of China, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, and the Philippines.

2.1 Location

According to Overseas Chinese Confederation (2004) the population of overseas Chinese is 34,072,632 and they are distributed in 141 countries. The overseas Chinese are based in 34 Asian countries, 34 African countries, 33 American countries, 26 European countries, and 14 countries in the Oceania.

2.2 Culture

A culture is a collection of values, beliefs, attitudes towards change, propensity towards risk, time- and action perspectives, goals of behavior, and a shared model of the world (Ansoff, 1984; Duncan, 1989). A subculture develops when certain members of a society experience problems, challenges, opportunities, and threats that are different than that of the main population (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1969; Gardner, 1999). Although the overseas Chinese are culturally persistent they have adapted to different climates, cultures, political systems, race, and economic opportunities in the countries they settled in (Jones, 1983). Consequently, the overseas Chinese culture is likely to be a mixture of cultures, and the overseas Chinese are used to cultural diversity from living in multicultural societies and this is a contrast to the relatively mono-cultural society of Chinese living in the PRC. Molohon, Paton, and Lambert (1979) recognized the existence of the overseas Chinese as a subculture of the Chinese culture and as a group having distinct characteristics separating them from the mainstream Chinese population and the population of the originating country. Munk (2003) concurred in a paper on the sub-ethnicity of the overseas Chinese where he concluded that Vietnamese overseas Chinese immigrants were significantly different in their culture than other overseas Chinese in Canada.

2.3 Language ability

The distribution and number of overseas Chinese in the 141 different countries makes them a minority group. Therefore, the overseas Chinese must have learned the local languages to be able to conduct their affairs and make a living in these countries. The overseas Chinese are bi-lingual or in some cases multi-lingual and this language ability is a contrast to the main population of Chinese as demonstrated by Pan (1999) when he concluded that this multilingual ability was a strategic advantage to overseas Chinese business people immigrating from Vietnam to Canada as the multilingual ability allowed the overseas Chinese to communicate more effectively with suppliers, customers, and the existing Chinese community in Canada. A review of the Encyclopedia of the Chinese Overseas reveals the multilingual ability of overseas Chinese students enrolling at universities the South East Asia is very extensive and includes most dialects of Chinese, major international languages, and most languages spoken in South East Asia (Pan, 1999). Kuo (2001) is a valuable reference source of comprehensive studies of the multilingual ability of overseas Chinese.

2.4 Political Experience

While majority of Chinese have lived under a communist political system since 1949, the overseas Chinese have experienced a variety of political systems ranging from democracies to dictatorships, capitalism to socialism, and everything in between. The overseas Chinese involvement in politics in the countries they migrated to has been a function of their perception of their political rights and economic privileges they enjoyed in the adopted homes. Political experience and involvement was seen as necessary in order to protect the economic interests of the overseas Chinese this was particularly true when former colonies such as Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and Indonesia gained independence in the 1950's and the 1960's. However in countries, such as the United States and Canada, where the perception of political threat to the economic interests of the overseas Chinese never existed the political involvement was minimal (Kim, 1999).

In this section we have defined the overseas Chinese as a separate identifiable sub-group and discussed their unique

situation rising from different location, culture, language ability and political experience. In the next section we will discuss Asian megatrends affecting the management education needs of the overseas Chinese.

3. Asian megatrends and the management education of overseas Chinese

Naisbitt (1997) identified eight megatrends that are likely to severely impact the development of the Asian continent. This article focuses the discussion on four of these megatrends and, the influences they have on the management education of overseas Chinese. The megatrends are: a social transformation from male dominance to the emergence of women in all sectors of government and industry; a shift from labor intensive manufacturing to high technology industries; a migration from farms to super-cities; and a shift in economic strategy from export-led growth to consumer driven economic prosperity. In addition to the Naisbitt megatrends, the article discusses the new trend of overseas Chinese returning to the People's Republic of China to invest and work. The following section examines these trends in more detail.

3.1 From male dominance to emergence of women

The decline in male dominance in all sectors of society has been a global trend for the last several decades. Asia has in no way escaped this trend as evident by the emergence of women in the political arena in many Asian and Pacific countries. Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, was elected as the President of the Philippines, Megawati Sukarnoputri, as the President of Indonesia, Khaleda Zia, as the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Helen Clark, as the Prime Minister of New Zealand, and Chandrika Kumaratunga as the President of Sri Lanka to name a few. Even the last bastions of male dominance in Islamic countries are falling as women have achieved the right to vote in conservative Kuwait, Afghanistan, and Iraq (CAPWP, 2003).

The male dominance of the business world in Asia is challenged by the emergence of women into executive ranks in the region. According to William Mellor (2001: 54) women "...may be few in number, but women as shaking up the way business is done in Asia." The examples are abundant. Christine Tsung took on the leadership of China Airlines, and later became the Minister of Economics in R.O.C. In China, Han Ying, is the CFO of AsiaInfo. In South Korea Kim Sung Joo, is the successful entrepreneur of the import retailer Sung Joo International. In Hong Kong, Elsa Pau has been the head of Allen Perkins Group since 1996. Naomi Yasuda Fisher has risen to be one of Japan's leading financial executive in her role as the head of infrastructure finance at Fuji Bank.

The impact this trend has on the management education of overseas Chinese students needs to be investigated as well as the barriers constraining the responsiveness of universities to this trend. A plausible implication of this trend is a need for reforms of the higher educational systems in the relevant countries. Universities will be required to increase the opportunities for learning and education for women at all levels in society by offering specialized program in gender-related issues and women studies with special emphasis on role of women from overseas Chinese communities. Universities need to establish specialized training programs for female educators and the universities need to implement sensitization programs for male lecturers and staff.

3.2 From labor intensive to high technology

The transformation of the societies in East Asia from a focus on labor intensive agriculture and manufacturing industries to high tech is as dramatic as it was in Europe and United States in the mid and late 20th century. The *People's Daily* (2004: b) reports that Niu Wenyuan, the chief scientist of the Academy of Science study group believes that the economy of the People's Republic of China will quadruple in size by 2020 this tremendous GDP growth is to come from a shift in economic strategy from labor intensive dirty industries to environmentally friendly science and technology industries contributing 65% to the national economy. For an example Taiwan's industrial policy was shifted from heavy and labor intensive industries such as steel and textiles to a focus on the development of high technology electronics for many years and most electronic firms were contented with making 80% of the world's motherboards and 75% of the world's notebook computers often designed by other companies. Moreover recently Taiwan's electronic firms are shifting their focus from making electronics for other firms to designing their own products and marketing them under brand names. Asustek intends to use its award-winning designers to establish a world brand in notebook computers. Acer achieved great success with their branded notebook computers in Europe and in the United States. The computers are designed and produced in Taiwan and sold in under the Acer brand name. Other companies in Taiwan are following this trend of designing and marketing branded electronics and the government is encouraging this as the competitive advantage of the country will depend on high value added innovation and design (Dean, 2004).

The transformation of industries in East Asia from labor intensive manufacturing to high technology is both a tremendous opportunity and a challenge for universities. Enormous market for management education has opened up with millions of students needing a new type of management education focusing on entrepreneurship, strategic management, and global consumer marketing. The challenges for the universities are that many of their management programs are obsolete as they have been focusing on the operation management and will required the universities to consciously align their education offerings to the demand for employees able to play new roles such as Internet CEOs,

chief technology officers, and vice presidents of e-commerce and education (Mobley, 2001).

3.3 From farms to super-cities

Most developed country has gone through a social transformation from rural based economy to an urban one. The East Asian countries are going through the same social transformation where workers migrate from the country side to the industrialized cities in look for work and improved life for themselves and their families. The overseas Chinese are impacted by this trend more than others as they tend to be located in cities in the region, are established in their own business, or work in business organizations. For an example the People's Republic of China is experiencing the largest migration in human history. Already, 114 million workers have left the drudgery of rural life and migrated to the industrial cities in the south of China and they were followed by millions of family members and this flood of people was only the beginning of a larger migration to the cities as the number of migrants is expected to rise to 300 million by 2020. Eventually the total migration may reach 800 million people by some estimates (Yardley, 2004). Consequently, the economic gravity of the People's Republic of China is expected to shift from farms to three super-city groups based in the Pearl River Delta, Yangtze River Delta, and the Bohai Bay area. In 2002/2003, the super-cities in these areas accounted for approximately 38 percent of the People's Republic of China's Gross Domestic Product and majority of the country's exports. According to Niu Wenyan, counselor to the State Council of the People's Republic of China, the future of China depends on the successful development of these three super-city groups. He predicts that in the year 2020, two thirds of the Gross Domestic Product of the People's Republic of China will come from the three super-cities (*People's Daily*, 2004a). As can be expected this migration has resulted in tremendous housing boom where builders have not been able to keep up with demand resulting in inflation of house prices to the tune of 30% in Shanghai and 80% in Beijing (*ChinaView*, 2009: 12/27a).

The migration to the super-cities has great impact on the management education needs of the overseas Chinese as a cadre of new professionals are needed to manage this urbanization which in turn results in an opportunity for universities to provide programs in a variety of management fields such as: construction management, urban planning, primary and secondary school administration, utilities management, transport system management, and logistics and distribution management.

3.4 From export-lead to consumer driven economic growth

Companies in the East Asian region are changing their business focus from exporting goods to consumers at home. The old economic model of manufacturing-to-export is becoming obsolete and replaced by domestic consumption based economic growth policy. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the PRC's response to the 2008 economic crisis. The Chinese government's economic stimulus package focused on increased domestic consumption and resulted in 8.9% GDP growth in 2009 (*ChinaView*, 2009:12/27).

The huge population of the region has growing disposable income and the Confucian frugality is giving way to materialistic consumption of anything from fashionable clothing to electronics, and vacations abroad. The China Brand Association's estimates there are 170 million consumers of top-tier brands in the PRC and the international fashion labels such as Gucci, Chanel, and Tiffany are in great demand. Jewelry, Rolex watches, the latest mobile phones, and electronic gadgets, and luxury cars are essential status statements (Jiaojiao, 2009). The strong Yuan encourages Chinese consumers to traveling abroad to satisfy their appetite for luxury goods where the Chinese travelers spending per person is twice the amount of money the previous record holders the Japanese.

The high GDP growth in the region for the last two decades has lead to a significant increase in purchasing power of the general population. The typical East Asian cuisine is now based on imported meat, fish, grains, vegetables, and fruits from the United States, Europe, Australia, South America, and others. The region is a net importer of most services. Insurance, education, entertainment, teachers, and consulting services are in demand. A clear sample is mainland China which recruited 480,000 foreign professional experts for its economy in 2008. The Chinese economic stimulus program of 2008 is similar to the response of many East Asian governments to the Asian financial crises in 1997 which prompted many governments in the region to simulate domestic consumption to lessen the economic dependence on exports. Consequently the region has suffered less from the financial crisis of 2008 and the economic efforts were successful in boosting consumer spending across the region (Barta,2004; *ChinaView*, 2009: 12/27).

The world's biggest companies have realized the huge market potential of this region. Disney has set up shop in Tokyo and Hong Kong, and Mickey Mouse will soon walk the streets of Shanghai (Bryan, 2002; Brooks, 2009). As early as 2004 the Reuters news agency reports that the world's carmakers had taken notice of the consumption boom in Asia. The Volkswagen Group experienced phenomenal growth in car sales on mainland China. According to Dr. Helhofer, the chairman of Volkswagen's Asia-Pacific region, two consecutive years of 40% growth had made the Chinese market "...Volkswagen's second largest individual market after Germany." Volkswagen sold 694,000 vehicles made in its two Chinese joint venture factories in 2003. Dr. Helhofer, believes that "Current market developments indicate that sales figure will double in the next five years, giving [Volkswagen] sales of one million vehicles in 2007." The company was

planning to introduce new models in the market to achieve this number of vehicle sales (Reuters, 2004). By 2007, Volkswagen was offering a full range of locally manufactured versions of its global brands of Volkswagens, Audi and Skoda vehicles and in 2009 China replaced the United States as the world's largest car market with 40% growth and 7.3 million vehicles sold in 2009 (*ChinaView*, 2009: 12/29).

The Chinese government's one child policy of the 1980's created a generation of children able to call upon the financial support of six people to fuel their appetite for luxury goods. Moreover the financial security of inheritance from parents and two pairs of grandparents relieves the person of worries of saving for economic security. Hence, the new generation of Chinese urban professional (CUP) isn't only spending the fruits of striking economic growth over the last two decades but, also the accumulated wealth of half a dozen people. The Cuppy's (CUP) spending power is unparalleled and supersedes the affluence of the Germans and Japanese children.

The Chinese consumers are not alone in drawing the attention of global businesses. In Korea retail spending is at all time high due to increased consumer credit, high level of savings, and untapped consumer credit lines. The consumer boom is fueling profits in department stores, discount retailers, television shopping channels, and cosmetic suppliers. Other countries in East Asia are not left behind in the consumer boom. In Thailand, education businesses including schools and book publishers are cashing in on the consumer boom. In Taiwan and Malaysia consumer are improving their homes and sending furniture and home improvement stores to the bank smiling (Holland, 2002).

The change in economic focus from export production to domestic consumption and the economic wealth created in the East Asian region creates many opportunities for universities educating Chinese students. The consequences for universities are a need to change the focus of management education from programs in export and international trade management to a focus on developing management skills with a special emphasize on consumer finance, domestic marketing, and consumer behavior. The growing luxury goods market creates opportunities to provide management education in areas such as: brand management, business models, product strategy, creative product design, and fashion culture and marketing.

3.5 From overseas to China

Since the opening up of the People's Republic of China's economy in the early 1980s, a salient trend of overseas Chinese returning to China to work or invest has been developing. The number of foreign experts working in China shows a continuous trend upward. In 2003, *The People's Daily* (2003) reported that the overseas Chinese are flocking back to China to work as human resource experts in China predict that China needs approximately 240,000 foreign experts every year and, that most prominent source of this expertise is provided by overseas Chinese returning to China and 190,000 of the foreign experts were overseas Chinese who came from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. By 2008 the number of foreign experts had risen to 480,000 (SAFEA, 2009). The expertise needed to assist China in its economic and technical development covers a variety of occupations including: management, international marketing, foreign language experts, and researchers and training personnel in these professions.

The Chinese government established The China Association for International Exchange of Personnel to facilitate the flow of professional managerial and technical talent from South Asian countries, the United States, Japan, Europe, and Canada. Furthermore the Chinese government sponsored forums attended by the by representatives of the Chinese government, United Nations, CEOs of multinational enterprises, and academic experts to discuss the salient trends in the human resource requirements of the People's Republic of China in the 21st century. The PRC government's willingness to accept foreign advisers was demonstrated in a February 2009 conference which sought the expertise of people from around the world to help China in dealing with the aftermath of the global financial crisis (Zhang, 2009).

The PRC's foreign expertise requirement and the fact that overseas Chinese are the foreign experts of choice in China create a demand for specialized education from universities educating overseas Chinese returning to PRC to work. The new education programs need to emphasize PRC culture, legal system, language, and politics as these may be significantly different in PRC from the overseas Chinese student's home country.

3.6 Overseas Chinese investment in China

According to ChinaFDI Statistics (2004) the overseas Chinese are also flocking back to China to invest in business enterprises. In 2002, the total number of overseas Chinese owned enterprises in China numbered 424,196 and these enterprises had invested a total of US\$828.06 billion. The overseas Chinese represented an overwhelming majority of this foreign direct investment in China having ownership of 65.73 percent of the enterprises and 61.04 percent of the total foreign direct investment. In 2008 this trend continues and of the \$92 billion invested \$47 billion come from overseas Chinese with Hong Kong alone investing \$41 billion dwarfing the United States FDI of \$1.9 billion (USCBC, 2009).

This trend implies that universities need to offer the overseas Chinese special programs on financial management, investing, management of wholly owned foreign enterprises, strategic alliances, and joint venture management in the People's Republic of China.

In this section we have identified the emergence of women in East Asia, shift in industry focus from labor intensive to high technology, migration from farms to super-cities, change in economic focus from export-lead to consumer driven economic growth, return of overseas Chinese to China, and investment of the overseas Chinese in China and, we have discussed the ramification of these trends on the management education needs of the overseas Chinese. In the next section we draw conclusions and make recommendation on the actions universities need to implement to meet the changing education needs of the overseas Chinese students.

4. Conclusion and recommendations

The overseas Chinese may be the embodiment of globalization as they are doing business in very diverse markets, they are highly mobile and not restricted by national boundaries, often migrating and moving investments back and forth from PRC and other countries as the opportunities presents themselves. The overseas Chinese are formidable economic force in Asia and certainly a separate group embedding the principles of globalization as they do business and work in diverse and challenging business environments. This creates the need for specialized management education and an opportunity for universities to modify their management programs to meet the needs of the overseas Chinese. In order to capitalized on this opportunity universities need to identify the special management education needs of the overseas Chinese and consider how culture and power creates a barrier to change in their organizations.

In universities there are many skeptics but globalization has made changes inevitable for all organizations. Sooner or later universities will have to respond to changing business environment and reconfigure or they are out of business. As globalization has made change continuous, universities need to embrace an organization culture and political power system that seeks out changes and facilitates them and universities need to adopt Jack Welch's philosophy and believe that they "... want to be a company that is constantly renewing itself, shedding the past, adapting to change." (Cited in Harris, Schiller, Mitchell, & Power, 1986). The most successful universities are going to be the organizations that create change by initiating new programs, pedagogical approaches, delivery strategies, and degrees as suggested by Carlsson & Fridh (2002).

Although the change leader's task is not an easy one as traditions and old habits are deeply rooted and various power centers are deeply entranced in most universities, the leadership of universities must take the universities on a road to modernization. The first step is to abandon obsolete and hopeless programs and activities (Drucker, 1993; Godin, 2002). For example, the Uganda Management Institute decided in 2002 to abandon the secretarial program at the Institute as the program was based on teaching shorthand and typing on obsolete manual typewriters. The program had been important when the Institute was established in the 1960s but totally inappropriate for a university in the 21st century. The second step is to seek continuous improvement in existing and viable programs and activities. The third step is to exploit successes and channel resources toward them. The explosive growth in the retail financial services and the information technology sectors of most economies in the last part of the 20th century motivated many universities to establish MBA programs and computer science departments. Likewise the 21st brings new opportunities for universities and they need to respond accordingly with programs that are tailored towards these new education needs. The fourth step is for universities need to establish a separate budget for innovation and change in management programs and this budget should be 10-20% of all expenditures (Drucker, 1999). The fifth step is to deal with and minimize the influence of the power centers resisting change (Boyett & Boyett, 1998). The sixth step is to institutionalize the new culture and political power structure (Drucker 1999, Ansoff, 1984).

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