

Special Issue

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Asian Management and Entrepreneurship:
Consequences for and European Theory and Practice

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Asian Management Research

Management and entrepreneurship scholarship has developed in three waves, prompted by the economic development of Japan, the emergence of the Asian Tigers and, most recently, by the rapid growth of China and India. During each of these periods, scholars have grappled with a variety of issues which Tsui, *et al.* (2007)—drawing on the work of Ricks (1985), Tsui (2004) and Werner (2002)—usefully categorise as international(isation) business research, comparative management, and context specific (indigenous) research.

Surveying this literature almost a decade ago, White (2002) concluded that too much of this research provided little insight into underlying processes and engaged too little with theory. Five years later, Tsui (2007) was only slightly more positive, noting that international management research generally was relatively conventional, drawing on mainstream theory to explore and explain management practices, but limited in the extent that it engaged in detailed contextualisation of management practices. Similarly, Bruton and Lau (2008) find the beginnings of Asian management being to be used to refine existing theory or develop new theory, and hoped that such scholarship might have greater influence on theorising more generally.

“[T]heoretical contextualization of the research in Asia needs to occur. Many recent studies have good extensions of existing theory but the studies are still based on theories from the mature Western economies (such as institutional theory and resource based view). There is a need to focus more on the Asian context and develop new theories that will help to shift the management research paradigm” (Bruton and Lau, 2008:650).

In the intervening half-decade, only slow progress appears to have been made addressing these

weaknesses and opportunities, despite the variety of economic, political and social systems at work in Asia—suggesting significant potential for validating or refining existing theory or developing new theory. That is to say, there ought to be significant potential for mainstreaming the insights from the research of management and entrepreneurship in Asia for the benefit of scholars of management more generally. New journals specialising in Asia management, such as the *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, or in specialist niches, such as the *Asian Journal of Business Ethics*, provide valuable sites for discussion among Asia specialists, but do little to take those insights to the broader academy.

This much needed mainstreaming happens *ad hoc* in the management field, as noted by Bruton and Lau (2008), and on the same basis in cognate disciplines, such as socioeconomics and sociology. Research in this latter space can provide the raw material and theoretical templates for meeting this challenge. At the empirical level, case studies of managers and entrepreneurs (e.g., Yang, 2004), studies of employment practices by sociologists (e.g., Zhang, 2011) and studies of entrepreneurship by anthropologists (e.g., Zhang, 2001) provide rich insight into practice that is invaluable material for considering theory in the management and entrepreneurship domains, even if the work was not initially framed for this purpose. At the more abstract level, comparative studies at the structural level have been used to develop theories of nonliberal market capitalism (e.g., Whitley, 2000; Hall and Soskice, 2001; Streeck and Yamamura, 2005). Very recently, the first serious steps at addressing Bruton and Lau's (2008) challenge and mainstreaming Asian management research have been taken, at least within the relatively tightly defined international business (IB) literature, in a 2011 special issue of the *Journal of International Business Research* (Peng, et al., 2010).

Mainstreaming Research on Asian Management and Entrepreneurship

In order to further the mainstreaming of research on Asian management and entrepreneurship, work at three levels needs to be undertaken:

- I. Empirical research that provides deep contextualisation of management and entrepreneurship needed to understand practice in relationship to the distinct economic, ethical, social and political conditions in which it occurs. Meta-studies might also play an important role here, by drawing on more relatively narrowly defined empirical research to develop more detailed pictures of practices with single industries or within single professions, for example.

- II. Conceptual and review research that develop mid-range theory (Merton, 1968) informed on the one side by deep contextualisation of practice and, on the other side, by an awareness distinctly Asian narratives, and their underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions.
- III. Conceptual or review papers that seek to universalise Asian management and entrepreneurship practices, and make these relevant outside their native context, possibly through synthesis of distinct Asian and traditional Western theory.

Unfortunately, for branches of the academy focused Asian management and entrepreneurship research beyond the IB literature, spaces to remains relatively poorly developed with respect to detailed context specific research or comparative research seeking to universalise theory on Asian management practices.

Special Issue Focus

This special issue of the *European Journal of International Management* will provide a space for scholars focused on managerial and entrepreneurial issues closer to the sites of practice to explore, develop and diffuse insights from deep contextualisation (following Tsui, 2004) and to develop theory based on that insight (following Bruton and Lau, 2008). To precipitate this development, this call focuses on the second of the layers noted above—research in the first layer is more appropriate for monographs and the specialist Asia journals and it would seem that the field is too nascent for a special issue devoted to the third layer.

Mid-range theory (Merton, 1968), however, is particularly relevant for practice based disciplines, as it seeks to bridge the gap between grand theory in the tradition of Parsons (1967) and the “minor but necessary working hypotheses that evolve in abundance during day to day research” (Merton, 1968:39), the latter a characteristic, as noted above, of much Asian management and entrepreneurship research. For management and entrepreneurship scholars, mid-range theory provides abstractions at a level that goes beyond context specificity and can inform teaching, advisory and policy practice (i.e., to have impact beyond the research community). Moreover, mid-range theory provides the essential bridge between anecdotal evidence, case studies and narrowly defined theory testing, on the one hand, and the development of abstract theory building, on the other hand.

Asian Management and Entrepreneurship: Consequences for and European Theory and Practice

The economic development of Asia clearly provides challenges and opportunities to European management and entrepreneurship practice, both to address growing markets in Asia and withstand Asian businesses seeking European markets. Moreover, the significant efforts being made in Asia to increase research and development expertise in universities and science parks (Altbach and Selvaratnam, 1989; e.g., Watkins-Mathys and Foster, 2006) mean that continued European leadership in innovation cannot be taken for granted. For these reasons, the mainstreaming of the study of Asian business is both essential and timely.

Knowing that innovation occurs when the ideas of otherwise independent groups are brought together (Burt, 2004) and when normal science is confronted by its limits (Kuhn, 1970), the special issue will not just document and theorise Asian practices but also provide the material for European scholars and practitioners to critically reflect on the nature of their own theory and practice. The special issue editors will ensure that each contribution and the introductory article highlight the challenges to 'normal' theory and practice prompted by mid-range theorising on Asian practice.

Questions of practice and conceptualisation of practice

The contributions subject to the call will not appear *ab initio*. Scholars have made progress in laying the groundwork for exactly these types of contributions to understanding management and entrepreneurship, most typically through an array of single country studies that serve to highlight some of the limits of extant theory for explaining Asian management and entrepreneurship (e.g., Whitley, 1994; Whitley, 2000; Whitley, 2007; Witt and Redding, 2011). There are a number of particular themes that provide rich material to address this agenda. Specific themes within four spaces, from broadest to most specific, include:

Varieties of capitalism (VoC) and managerial practice:

The VoC literature provides valuable conceptual framing of how and where differences in the structure of economies might occur, focusing mostly on the regulation of labour and finance and its influence on pattern of governance (e.g., Orrù, et al., 1996; Hall and Soskice, 2001). For scholars with a focus on managerial and entrepreneurial practice, questions emerging from this literature and needing deeper documentation and mid-range theorising include: What is the role of the state in shaping managerial and entrepreneurial practice? What are the cultural and other systemic elements that structure opportunity in Indian and Chinese entrepreneurship, and in Japanese non-entrepreneurship? How can managerial and entrepreneurial practice be abstracted mindful of the differences between Asian and non-Asian varieties of capitalism (e.g., Witt and Redding, 2011)?

Trajectories of entrepreneurship and management

In the mainstream entrepreneurship and management literature, management and entrepreneurship are often characterised as callings. Entrepreneurship in particular is characterised as a choice to engage in a relatively insecure space and a reflection of the personal characteristics of the entrepreneur (Drakopoulou Dodd and Anderson, 2007). However, in Asia, particularly as economies undergo significant restructuring, entrepreneurship might become a necessity, as has been noted in other transitional economies (e.g., Smallbone and Welter, 2001), and raises an interesting set of questions: What characterises entrepreneurship of last resort and living dead entrepreneurs? What are the images, myths and metaphors of Asian entrepreneurs and how are managers and entrepreneurs in society represented and what does this tell us about how they are conceptualised by the public (Nicholson and Anderson, 2005)? What are the motivations for entrepreneurship and management (rather than say entering the professions) and how does that lead to novel conceptualisations explanations of the interrelated identities of economic actors? What are their perceptions of risk and uncertainty and the importance of randomness and (good, bad) luck? Should issues of creativity versus hard work, etc., be contrast to those in Europe and North America? How do different relationships between the state and business change the role of managers, firm-founders?

The supply side

It has been long understood that emerging economy conglomerates and family firms play an important role (Kim, et al., 2004). With the rapid changes in Asian economies, what explains changes in organisation, governance, centralisation, minority shareholders protections, international expansion and partnerships, transparency? How do these firms, and other more specialised ones, trade off factor-based versus efficiency-based versus innovation-based growth strategies and are new, more contextualised, approaches to strategy needed? What is the *modus operandi* of Asian diaspora networks, their institutional and systemic arrangements? How does the understanding of these networks and interactions inform theorising of social capital?

The demand side

Asian consumers, both individuals such as the new middle class consumers and corporate entities, provide new opportunities and challenges for managers and entrepreneurs. Can the logics, the biases and heuristics of Asian buyers be subsumed within traditional Western theories of marketing, consumer and industrial buyer behaviour? As Trumbull (2006) has observed in France and Germany, are there patterns of consumer activism and regulation that influence managerial behaviour and product specialisation? To what extent do these need to be distinctly theorised in Asia? Do influences of different ethical, value and religious underpinnings, such as collectivist and family oriented decision-making or the reverse, extremely hedonistic and individualistic behaviours, require different management techniques and opportunity scanning skills by managers and entrepreneurs?

The 5th EIASM Workshop on Asian Management and Entrepreneurship

The *5th EIASM Workshop on Asian Management and Entrepreneurship* will be held in Brussels on 31 MAY and 1 June, 2013. The workshop will be part of the ‘discussion’ of the themes noted above. Authors answering this call and attending the workshop will receive the support of fellow researchers to develop their papers, having received the first round of reviews from the editors and/or reviewers, while not compromising the refereeing process of the *European Journal of International Management*.

Key Dates

The deadline for submissions is **1 April, 2013**, for publication in early 2014.

Full papers should be submitted using the journal's online system:

<http://www.inderscience.com/info/ingeneral/cfp.php?id=2033>

Authors wishing to attend the *5th EIASM Workshop on Asian Management and Entrepreneurship* may submit abstracts (optional) by 3 March, 2013 and full papers by 1 April, 2013 at the EIASM website:

http://www.eiasm.org/frontoffice/event_announcement.asp?event_id=922

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