

Asiatic Values in East Asian Higher Education: From a Standpoint of Globalization

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Abstract

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The purpose of this paper is to examine Asiatic values in East Asian higher education from a viewpoint of globalization. In order to review the paper systematically, the author will address the following research questions: First, what are Asiatic values? Second, when and where were Asiatic values discussed? Third, what are differences between Eastern and Western viewpoints about Asiatic values? Fourth, what are the positive and negative functions of the values? Finally, how do the values reveal themselves in higher education?

To explore the research questions, the author uses a descriptive analysis method on the basis of a literature review. In addition, in order to explore the key problems of this study, he focuses on education and culture as two tributaries of the main current of globalization. In particular, the study is limited to the areas of higher education and culture in East Asia influenced by Confucian culture. Thus, the statement of Asiatic values centers on Confucian culture and higher education in the East Asia region. This paper discusses not only the conditions of East Asian higher education but also the cultural values of East Asian countries. In addition, the paper offers theoretical basics so as to establish new paradigms of higher education in the East Asia region.

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I. Introduction

Globalization is one of the key issues of the new 21st century. A full-scale debate regarding globalization started at the end of the last century, centering on several developed countries in the West, but experts debate globalization in many ways. Each country displays and develops globalization in its own way, but it has developed variously and broadly. On account of each country's different politico-economic situation, historical tradition, cultural background, religion, and thought, each country has different opinions and interests regarding globalization. Globalization, however, is not only an avoidable periodic trend but also a global phenomenon. In this epochal trend, either each nation has coped with current globalization issues practically or superficially, or it has challenged them actively or passively.

In the process of challenge and response, politico-economic factors have been the main axis of globalization, but education also plays a big part in any discussion of globalization. Especially, education has contributed to advanced scientific knowledge and information communication technology, core accelerants for globalization. In this vein, it is clearly said that politico-economic power is the most important factor, but that education is also an important minor factor furthering globalization.

Particularly, in the case of Asian countries which have been colonized by foreign powers, higher education has become an essential tool to cope with

globalization, as well as to promote their economic development. Furthermore, education plays an important role in providing basic information and technique necessary for globalization. On the other hand, culture is another way of maintaining the identity of each country or ensuring the uniqueness of each nation.

From a standpoint of world cultural history, although Asia, as the origin of ancient civilization, maintained its prominent culture, the majority of Asian countries had disgraceful experiences of colonial rules until the mid-20th century because they did not maintain their national power against ambitious political, military, and economic power of some industrialized countries. On account of such unpleasant experiences, not only did politico-economic power become enfeebled, but the capacity of culture and education became severely weakened. Up to the mid 20th century, almost all Asian people freed themselves from colonial controls. Taking this momentum, the people put forth their energy into the expansion of higher education in order to develop their impoverished national economy as well as to revive their collapsed national culture. With this national policy, higher education rapidly extended, and national culture gradually recovered its importance.

From this viewpoint, it is extremely important to develop higher education as well as to revive national culture so as to cope with globalization. In light of this importance, both the improvement of higher education quality and the establishment of cultural identity in Asian countries are essential assignments in the globalization era.

Considering the importance of this study, the purpose of the study is to examine Asiatic values in East Asian higher education from a standpoint of globalization. In order to review the study systematically, the author will address the following research questions:

First, what are Asiatic values?

Second, when and where were Asiatic values discussed?

Third, what are differences between Eastern and Western viewpoints about Asiatic values?

Fourth, what are the positive and negative functions of the values?

Finally, how do the values reveal themselves in higher education?

To explore the research questions, the author uses a descriptive analysis method on the basis of a literature review. In addition, in order to examine the key problems of this study, he focuses on education and culture viewed as two tributaries of the main globalization trends. In particular, the study is limited to the areas of higher education and culture in East Asia influenced by Confucian culture.

Thus, the statement of Asiatic values centers on Confucian culture and higher education in the East Asia region. This paper discusses not only the conditions of East Asian higher education but also the cultural values of East Asian countries, especially the nations affected by Confucian culture, such as China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Finally, the paper will offer theoretical basics so as to establish new paradigms of higher education in the East Asia region.

II. Concepts of Asiatic Values

Before discussing “Asiatic values,” the author will first of all briefly consult the concept of value from the viewpoints of Western theorists. The word “value” has various

concepts. According to Rokeach's (1973) assertion, values are enduring beliefs that the specific modes of conduct or end-state of existence are personally or socially preferable to the opposite or converse modes of conduct or end-state of existence (p. 5). Borgatta and Borgatta (1992) claim that values indicate preferences which people share for certain types of outcomes in their lives and for certain types of conduct. On the other hand, Geertz (1973) contends that values and norms are tangible evidence of culture in our society. Swidler (1986) asserts that the concept of values is related to culture inseparably because culture is actually a combination of values and practices in our society.

As briefly reviewed in the above, the concept of values has a number of different definitions. Furthermore, the concept of values can be changed somewhat by the different meanings given to the word, "value." For example, cultural value is defined as a combination of values and practices in culture (Swidler, 1986). Ethical value is regarded as a moral principle or norm (Shea, 1988; Trevino, 1986). In addition, social value is a means of balancing members' needs against the needs of society to maintain and enhance itself (Parsons and Shils, 1951).

Then, what are Asiatic values? The concept of Asiatic values is discussed variously like the concept of values. Some Eastern and Western theorists have defined the concept of values with their subjective opinions in the categories of their cultural boundaries. Asiatic values have been debated from various aspects, mainly political, economic, and cultural sides. The Asiatic values being discussed in the academic field mainly focus on the Confucian cultural region, including East Asian and a few South East Asian countries. The common cultural factor of these countries is Confucianism as a politico-ethical thought or a religion.

In this vein, Asiatic values in the academic field can be regarded as values of the Confucian cultural region. The author defines that Asiatic values are concrete tendencies or beliefs affecting Asian people's behavior originated by a Confucian cultural factor.

III. Appearance of Asiatic values

When and where have Asiatic values been discussed? Although we do not know the exact origin of this argument about Asiatic values, some Western religious ministers and philosophers, such as Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) and Georg W. F. Hegel (1770-1831), discussed Asiatic values several centuries ago. Up to the late 20th century, the economies of Western developed-countries stagnated, whereas Japan was coming up to the surface as one of the great economic countries. In addition, new industrialized-countries in Pacific Asia, such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, were rapidly developing their economies. Having been interested in this contrast phenomenon, some Western theorists, especially sociologists and economists, began to discuss Asiatic values in good earnest.

Western religious ministers and philosophers weighed Asiatic values in a politico-ethical or religious aspect, while sociologists, economists, and anthropologists examined Asiatic values from a socio-economic or cultural perspective. Some of the scholars discussing globalization have usually argued Asiatic values and cultural systems of East Asia from a deflected viewpoint, especially through a Western lens.

According to Lee's (2000) opinion, Asiatic values have been discussed in four types: first of all, Asiatic values were discussed as variables to explain Asian economic

and social phenomena by some Western scholars (de Bary, 1981; Hofheinz & Calder, 1982; Huntington, 1996; Kahn, 1979; Pye & Pye, 1985; Pye, 1992; Vogel, 1979); second, several Asian-origin scholars (Shimada, 1990; Tu, 1999) viewed Asiatic values as factors to illustrate Asian economic and social phenomena; third, some politicians--mainly in Singapore and Malaysia--mentioned Asiatic values as decolonization debates; finally, the values were considered as de-modern schemes for a complement of the negative effect of Western modernity (Tu, 1999; Hall & Ames, 1987).

Considering the above viewpoints, the debate of Asiatic values is mainly related to political, economic, and social issues. Asia has a broad scope historically and geographically due to its various ethnics, languages, cultures, religions, and thoughts. Thus, it is unreasonable that Asiatic values are regarded as a catholic or uniform value by some Western theorists who have a negative viewpoint about Confucian culture. Furthermore, culture is a practical and abstractive product being changed by interior and exterior circumstances or factors. For this reason, the debate can be changed according to the trend of era.

For instance, in the era of imperialism Max Weber (1951), who clarified the cultural origin of Western capitalism from Protestant ethics, argued that Confucian values in China became an obstacle to industrialization, but that the Chinese following Confucian doctrines and principles had the potential power to assimilate with capitalism economically and technically. Some Western scholars' argument focused on Weber's former logic until the early 1980s when China was backward in industrialization, but other scholars' argument focused on Weber's latter logic after China began to rapidly develop its economy from the late 1980s.

In practice, when East Asian countries were behind in industrialization, Asian

values were regarded as obstacles by several Western theorists. With Japan's appearance as a major economic power, when four East Asian countries, South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong, achieved a rapid economic development, some scholars (de Bary, 1981; Huntington, 1996; Perkins, 1986; Pye & Pye, 1985; Pye, 1992; Tu, 1999) insisted that the reason was Asiatic values. In the later 1990s, when several East Asian and South East Asian countries met financial crises and then overcame the crises, Asiatic values were viewed as merits (Krugman, 1995).

Weber's dual logic about Confucianism has helped both positive and negative impressions of Asiatic values develop. In terms of a positive function, Asiatic values have been considered as dynamic force for rapid economic development in the East Asia region, whereas in point of a negative function Asiatic values have been viewed as the main causes of industrialization delay and financial crisis in the East Asia region. On the basis of this contradictory logic, the debate on Asiatic values has developed two categories--a Western-oriented logic and a pro-Asiatic logic.

IV. Positive and Negative Functions of Asiatic Values

As reviewed in the previous section, the start of the Asiatic value debate came from the West. The main issues of the debate are whether Asiatic values have positive or negative functions in the development of Asian politics, economy, society, and culture. In this paper, under the assumption of the existence of "Asiatic values," the author intends to review the dual logic of Western scholars and attempts to critique the logic. In addition, supposing Asiatic values have positive or negative functions, the author

examines what these are and how they reveal themselves in terms of political and socio-economic functions.

The political function of Asiatic values is discussed from politico-cultural and politico-ethical perspectives. First of all, from a politico-cultural perspective, the political tradition of East Asia can be characterized as patriarchal obedience toward the authority of a sovereign. In addition, the main characteristics of East Asian politics are rulers' absolute leadership, strong politico-ethical morality, patriarchal authority, and unconditional fidelity. Considering these political characteristics, some Western theorists insist that the East Asian countries may achieve economic success, but they can not achieve democratization.

This claim cannot be considered as a picture drawing a deep internal aspect, but as a picture drawing an external phenomenon. In a Confucian politico-ethical system, a hierarchical system constructed by two core political concepts, authority and obedience. The system was a golden rule applied to all social levels, groups, and organizations in a traditional East Asian Confucian society. As several Western politico-cultural theorists' (Berger, 2003; Huntington, 1996; Perkins, 1986; Pye, 1992) assertion, this tradition has been transmitted to the current Confucian culture region. However, East Asian political culture, based on Confucian political ethics, has both positive and negative functions. In terms of Western democratic principles, authoritative leadership, patriarchal authority, and lack of tolerance against opponents may be viewed as negative factors for the development of democracy, but these factors can play a positive role as well as a negative role in unstable or unprepared countries politically and socially.

For example, the strong leadership of rulers or politicians could be force to rebuild political and social systems destroyed under colonial control. Of course, this

leadership is so excessive that it may bring on a possibility of totalitarianism or despotism. In addition, patriarchal authority is a basic politico-ethical principle which emphasizes a hierarchical order between rulers and subjects, administrators and staff, superiors and inferiors, teachers and students, and parents and children. On the other hand it stresses a reciprocal human relationship between or among them. Based on this reciprocal relationship, humanism, as a Confucian political philosophy, has been traditionally accentuated in the Confucian nations. If authority and obedience are highlighted in place of reciprocal relationship, totalitarian and authoritative characteristics or moral hazard can be brought on. In this vein, the assertion of Western politico-culturalists who emphasize the negative function of Asiatic values can be appropriate. On the other hand, some political leaders of South East Asian countries-- Singapore and Malaysia—strongly claim that a Western-typed democracy cannot take roots in their countries owing to deep-rooted Confucian politico-ethics and principles.

Next, the author reviews Asiatic values in terms of a socio-economic perspective. As mentioned in the previous section, some Western scholars point out that the main factor of great economic success in Japan and in four East Asian countries is Confucian culture based on Confucian values. According to their argument, "Confucian capitalism" is related to not only a family-oriented creed and a group-centered formalism on the ground of Confucian culture, but also to fundamental social principles, sincerity, and educational enthusiasm based on Confucian doctrines. These factors are considered as essential elements to formalize a nation-initiated economic development model for East Asian countries. A family-oriented creed and a group-centered formalism are the mainspring of making Confucian bureaucrats and governments to exercise their authority, while fundamental social principles, sincerity,

and educational enthusiasm are regarded as Confucian labor ethics, which become a dynamic force to propel the national economic development.

In terms of a negative function, a family-oriented creed and a group-centered formalism could be changed into a closed egoistic family-centered system and an egoistic collectivism, and then these factors could be degenerated to namely “crony capitalism” on the economic side, and favoritism and paternalism on the socio-cultural side. Crony capitalism is a distorted type of Confucian capitalism composed of government-business collusion, clan-oriented management, government-centered finance, and lifelong employment system based on Confucian values. The main reason of East Asian financial crises occurred in the late 1990s was that economic foundations and functions became weakened due to an unstable national economic structure and a banking panic (Sachs et al., 2000; Stiglitz, 2003).

As reviewed in this paper, Asian values are bilateral; that is, positive and negative aspects or bright and dark sides. The views of Western scholars regarding Asian values are largely related to negative characteristics of Confucian culture rather than orthodox Confucian theories. In the Analects of Confucius, the ultimate purpose of learning is to cultivate oneself and to become a virtuous or righteous gentleman. In light of Confucian cultural history, however, learning has been a tool to seek one's fortune or to become a Confucian bureaucrat, one who obtains a socio-political power and position. In spite of these bilateral aspects, some Western scholars discussing Asian values have not seen the substance of Confucian thought, but focused on the negative side of Confucian values.

V. Asiatic Values and Higher Education in East Asia

The positive and negative functions of Asiatic values also appear in the field of higher education. In East Asian countries, Confucian values pursue learning in order to obtain socio-political privileges. Education has become the prime mover enhancing the national economic development. However, the values have become the cause of an excessive educational fever which happens to young people in the severe competition for university acceptance or college entrance examinations. In addition, the values have become the main factors promoting unhealthy private education, accelerating social inequality, and making an academic background-oriented society in some East Asian countries, such as Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan.

As mentioned in the previous section, in Confucian-oriented countries, education was traditionally regarded as a means to obtain a political or socio-economic position and privilege. Of course, although the major functions of education put emphasis on the cultivation of personality and learning, the most important function was to foster a Confucian bureaucrat. Some Western scholars have viewed Confucian values as a driving force that has caused the national economic development. On the other hand these factors--such as extreme egoism of a bureaucratic group, a closed organizational system on the ground of favoritism and paternalism, authoritarianism on the basis of a doctrine putting government above people, and a deplorable custom of a feudal social strata system based on the traditional four classes (i.e. aristocrats, farmers, artisans, and tradesmen)--have been surfaced as negative elements and regarded as dominant causes of crony capitalism.

These elements or factors have also appeared in university administration and organization culture. They generally emphasized both hierarchical authoritative order and reciprocal humane relationship. The former leads to authoritarianism that causes a

homogeneously closed organizational system in higher education administration, while the latter leads to paternalism or favoritism that causes homogeneous collectivism and factionalism based on blood, region, and school ties. In particular, paternalism based on Confucianism has planted a humane culture which emphasizes mutual fraternity as well as interpersonal geniality or commiseration between superiors and subordinates, administrators and faculty members, teachers and students, seniors and juniors in higher education institutions (Lee, 2001; Lee, 2002). In addition, favoritism has promoted homogeneous coteries seeking for socio-economic interests and academic advantages, with special favor and partiality (Lee, 2002).

In current East Asian higher education, however, both paternalism and favoritism have shown a negative aspect related to egoistic factionalism and collectivism. In particular, factionalism bears egoistic scholarship between individuals or among schools, and hinders academic development in an open competitive system. Persons who are related to special favor or partiality have a correlatively neglect impact on others. In cases of educational matters between teachers and students, as well as between senior and junior faculty, students and junior faculty rarely criticize their teachers' or seniors' claims or theories (Lee, 2002). Owing to these factors, it is not a rare case to see absence of criticism and a closed organizational culture in higher education institutions of East Asia, especially Confucianism-influenced countries.

For example, in current Korean higher education, there are some problems of paternalism, factionalism, and favoritism. Due to interpersonal ties based on paternalism and factionalism, either students or faculty who share a human relationship with their superiors generally overlook their significant mistakes. Students usually follow their teachers' instructions without any criticism, and junior faculty rarely raise any

objections to senior faculty's assertions. In addition, the appointment of college and university instructors has been heavily influenced by regional and school ties. Favoritism hinders openness in higher education administration by promoting a homogeneously closed organization culture. These tendencies are general phenomena in the Confucian culture-influenced region even though there are some differences.

In Confucian-oriented countries, a number of universities or colleges have maintained a closed or vertical organization system based on authoritative Confucian principles. For this reason, college/university administrators have a tendency to ignore an open organizational system that embraces internal and external communication networks. Compared to Western university systems, higher education administration systems of East Asian colleges/universities maintain a vertically closed organization culture rather than a democratically open organization culture. The closed system of higher education administration is one of main reasons that a number of East Asian universities are backward in globalization.

V. Conclusion

As reviewed in the paper, Asiatic values appear in various aspects. In terms of Asian higher education, Confucianism emphasizes both hierarchical authoritative order and reciprocal humane relationship. The former leads to authoritarianism that causes a homogeneously closed organizational system in higher education administration, whereas the latter leads to paternalism or favoritism that can promote a reciprocal humane relationship in university administration and organization. On the other hand, paternalism or favoritism can cause homogeneous collectivism and egoistic factionalism hindering an open organizational system.

In particular, owing to rapid industrialization and an academic background-oriented society, the competitiveness of academic credentials has been gradually intensified, and the extension of higher education has been accelerated. Therefore, the negative functional factors of Confucian culture--such as dogmatic authoritarianism, egoistic collectivism, tie-centered favoritism, and closed factionalism--have exerted negative effects on higher education. These negative Confucian factors not only run counter to the trend of globalization, but also become a hindrance to establish new paradigms. In order to develop East Asian higher education, new paradigms should be constructed, as well as the positive functions of Asiatic values should be highlighted.

In addition, to meet the harsh wind of globalization, Current East Asian higher education needs new paradigms not merely to minimize trouble and collision between or among different nations and cultures, but to pursue cultural identity and catholicity, prospering together. The author suggests the SOCRATES and ERASMUS (the higher education Action of SOCRATES II) programs of the European Union. The programs are good exemplars in the East Asian Confucian cultural region. In particular, the objectives of SOCRATES provide East Asian higher education with desirable directions on how to go forward. The SOCRATES' objectives are the following:

to develop the European dimension in education; to promote a quantitative and qualitative improvement of general understanding of issues relating to the European Union; to promote wide-ranging and intensive cooperation among institutions in the member states at all levels of education; to encourage the mobility of teachers and students; to encourage the mutual recognition of diplomas, periods of study, and other qualifications; to encourage open and

distance education; and to foster exchanges of information on education systems and policy. (de Wit, Spring 1996: 4/3)

The above objectives suggest several examples for the settlement of new paradigms in East Asia. For the bright future of higher education in East Asia, the principles of new paradigms in the East Asia region have to emphasize equal distributions of the program among the countries of the region, have to stimulate each nation's cultural identity and the region's cultural universality, and have to develop world competitiveness through higher education.

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