

**Western Practicality Fused with Confucian Virtues:
How far can it take East Asia's Higher Education?**

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Overview of East Asian HE Development

- Learning from the West, University development in East Asia has been impressive:
- Throughout EA, a Western-styled HE system has been well established.
- EA is becoming the world's 3rd great zone of higher education, science and innovation, alongside North America and Western Europe/UK, with research powerhouses, and the fastest growth in scientific output.
- After absorbing Western knowledge for at least 1.5 centuries, most EA societies have established Western-styled HE systems and upgraded their academic programs.

Research Building in East Asian Universities

- A number of Japanese universities have long achieved world-class status in terms of research and general academic quality.
- China's recent growth of research has been exceptional, with an annual increase rate of 17% of science papers produced each year during 2000-2009.
- South Korean President Park Geun-Hye announced the desire for a more “creative economy” and launched the new Ministry of Science, ICT and Future Planning in 2013. For 2014, the ministry's budget increased to more than (USD equivalent) 12 billion.
- Singapore allocated 2.6 billion Singapore dollars (\$2.1 billion) for the operation of four universities in 2012.
- The production output of Taiwan's R&D grew steadily from US\$2.49 billion in 2001 to US\$4.10 billion in 2012, a compounded annual growth rate of 5%.

Setting Global (Western) Standard

East Asian higher education systems are rigorous in setting global research as the performance standard for their leading universities.

- National University of Singapore is stronger than all of Australia's universities in both research paper quantity and citation impact - in quantity and quality.
- Some middle-sized East Asian universities of science and technology have higher citation rates than the Australian National University, such as Hong Kong UST, Postech in Korea and Nankai in China (Maslen, 2012).

Assessing East Asian HE Development (i)

- EA's universities are even poised at the most exciting phase of their development, leaping ahead to join the distinguished league of the world's leading universities (Tan 2010).
- President Levin (2010) of Yale University often talks about the rise of (East) Asia's universities.
- Marginson (2011) has coined the "Confucian model" to describe EA's "effective" way to fund elite universities.
- Citing Marginson, Morgan (2011) writes that "Sun sets on Western dominance as East Asian Confucian model takes lead", and the "Confucian model" has put East Asia's universities at the cutting edge.

Assessing East Asian HE Development (ii)

- Although EA universities have made tremendous strides in terms of the volume and quality of research output, they generally still lag behind the best universities in the West.
- The notion of ‘world-class’ status in East Asian societies has been largely imitative rather than creative (Mohrman 2005).
- Financial and other resources combined with some innovation strategies can make progress only so far. Achieving ‘World-class’ status requires not only resources but also changing deeply entrenched academic practices. A kind of “glass ceiling” is to be reached soon (Altbach 2010).
- Developing ‘world-class’ universities in Asia takes more than money and determination. Asia faces great challenges as traditional Confucian pedagogy prevails (Levin 2010).

Assessing East Asian HE Development (iii)

- While there is an evident pride of the idea that EA universities are not willing to assume that Western models define excellence, very few have theorized their differences from Western universities (Jaschik 2011).
- Building their university identity is doomed to be an arduous task. What has been lacking is a cultural perspective that gives weight to the impact of traditional ways of cultural thinking on contemporary HE development.
- Their strikingly different cultural roots and heritages have led to continuous conflicts between the traditional Confucian and the imposed Western.
- The Western concept of a university has been taken for its usefulness.

Two Systems

- Different cultural roots and heritages has led to different trajectories of HE development in EA.
- Constant tensions between the formal (visible), institutionalized and the informal (invisible yet powerful) systems within universities.
- The European-North American university model has never been tolerant toward any other alternatives.
- East Asian societies have always attempted to indigenize the Western idea of a university, with little success.
- Even for highly respected institutions, such as the University of Hong Kong, after 1.5 centuries of colonization.

Emphasizing Western Practicality

- Since the Self-Strengthening Movement (1861-1895, China) and Meiji Restoration (1868-1912, Japan), Western and traditional higher learning values have contended for hegemony in EA societies.
- Transfer of Western practice often conflicts with EA traditions.
- Central purpose of EA's modern HE has been to combine traditions with Western elements to bring together aspects of East Asian and Western philosophical heritages, sth never fully achieved.
- Emphasis has always been on practicality (用), with corresponding ignorance of body (體).
- The development of modern universities in EA has often been confronted with the absence of both classical and modern ideas of a university.

Integrating the Western Concept: Unfinished Business

- Efforts to indigenize the Western university model somewhat succeeded at various levels.
 - Individual level: Cai Yuanpei deserves the highest tribute
 - Institutional level: The National Southwestern Associated University
 - System level: The period of 1911–1927 saw the first real effort to establish a university defined by autonomy and academic freedom.
- The fact that these relative successes at all 3 levels were achieved only when the Chinese nation was plunged into an abyss of suffering was not accidental.
- This situation continues to the present.

John Dewey's Comments on Cai

In an essay Dewey wrote after working at Peking for two years, the great American educational thinker compared Cai Yuanpei with the then presidents of Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard and Columbia. He concluded that in terms of professional knowledge, Cai was no match for the presidents of Oxford and Cambridge Universities. But in terms of education, the British presidents were no match for Cai Yuanpei. The latter had remade Peking University and turned it into China's first university in a truly modern sense. This pushed forward reform and progress in the entire society (Feng 1992).

Performances in ARWU: Chicago, Stanford and Tokyo

Universities	Chicago	Stanford	Tokyo
Found Year	1891	1885	1877
Institutional Ranking	8 th (06) 9 th (05, 07, 08, 09, 10, 11, 12, 13) 10 th (04) 11 th (03)	2 nd (03, 04, 07, 08, 09, 11, 12, 13) 3 rd (05, 06, 10)	14 th (04) 19 th (03, 06, 08) 20 th (05, 07, 09, 10, 12) 21 st (11) 22 nd (13)
Mathematics	14 th	6 th	51 st -75 th
Physics	9 th	6 th	7 th
Chemistry	45 th	3 th	11 th
Economics/Business	2 nd	4 th	101 st -150 th
Social sciences	2 nd	3 rd	151 st -200 th

Nobel Laureates at Chicago, Stanford and Tokyo, by 2013

Categories	University of Chicago	Stanford University	University of Tokyo
Chemistry	16	9	1
Economics	28	11	0
Literature	3	0	2
Peace	1	1	1
Physics	29	14	4
Medicine/Physiology	12	5	0
Total	89	40	8

We might need to ask ourselves whether or not there is a 'middle-income range/trap' in East Asian higher education development?

C. C. Tan: Bright future for Asian universities

- “It's a matter of time," ... "I fully expect that, in the next 10 to 15 years, Asian universities will play a much more prominent role in the higher education sector.”
- Aiming at a "hybrid system," he said “what we are doing is not just take what is being done in Yale, but building a different model”.
- "We don't have to follow the same patterns that are happening in the West. We should be learning; we should be leapfrogging; we should be doing **different** things and trying **different** models," he said. "Those will provide us opportunities to really excel and hopefully find new areas.”
(technology-enhanced learning, residential college learning, translational impact, compelling vision)

Universities as Cultural Institutions (i)

- History shows the introduction of Buddhism from India into China first and then Korea and Japan took over a millennium for these societies to respond and reshape their mentalities.
- The intrusion of Western culture into EA is on-going, with far greater magnitude.
- The process is far from completed, and “pain” is felt constantly and regularly.
- EA’s contemporary HE development is just part of this much wider cultural process.
- Essentially, this is part of a much more general process of seeking an alternative to Western globalization.

Universities as Cultural Institutions (ii)

- Universities have 3 layers: materials on the surface, social institutions in the middle, and values at the core.
- EA's import of the Western model has been centered mostly on the material level, with some touches on social institutions, while the core of the Western model has not been understood fully, let alone implemented.
- Studies of HE reforms have been overwhelmed by the powerful influence of economic and political realities.
- Only when the indigenous and the Western are successfully integrated, can EA universities become truly internationally-leading.

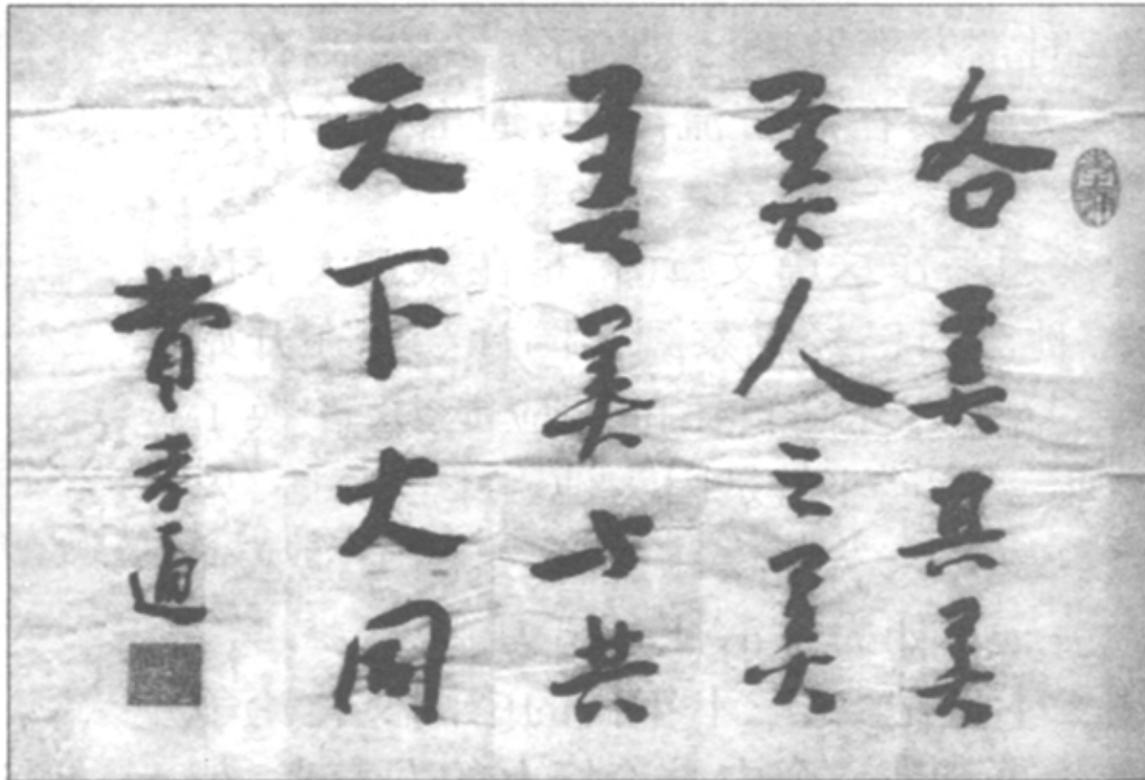
Traditional EA Way of Organizing Knowledge

- Chinese bibliographic classification (The imperial catalogue of the four treasuries 《四庫全書》):
- Confucian classics (經), historical records (史), philosophical writings (子), and miscellaneous works (集)

“Cultural Consciousness” by Fei Xiaotong

- In Dec 1990, Professors Chie Nakane (中根千枝, University of Tokyo) and Chien Chiao (喬健, Academia Sinica, Taiwan) celebrated Professor Fei’s 80th birthday at an international symposium on East Asian societies in Tokyo.
- Fei coined the 16-character maxim in a speech on his personal experience of research on human individuals in China: **“The world will be a harmonious place if people appreciate their own beauty and that of others, and work together to create beauty in the world”**.

Fei's 16-character Maxim



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Thank you for listening!

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