

Japanese challenges to change her culture

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With no exception, the world is being engulfed in a wave of globalization as we witness the exploding networking of knowledge and the market economy. I say 'without exception' because it is having a major impact on research and related organizations which in turn reach and effect all corners of the planet.

This wave of globalization may appear an enigmatic and unaccountable monster for those who have their hands and minds harnessed to the next research or policy initiative, and, for that matter, business people whose main concern is carving out a quarterly profit. The burden of my argument is that the invisible wave of globalization is as real as waves in nature. Nor is it a new tide that has surged only in the last decade, for its origins can be traced back to the mid-twentieth century. What is more, there are great scientists, thinkers and students of management and of system and organization theories who have given profound thought to the nature of these waves. And there are entrepreneurs, political leaders and social activists as well as engineers who have in turn been enlightened by them and successfully innovated their thoughts and organizations in what may fairly be called a paradigm shift. Successful organizations include numerous first-rate companies and NPOs as well as national and local governments and communities that have become smart, streamlined and flexible.

Some may say that education and research are of special and require a discriminating approach. I refute this. They are either failing to understand the meaning of a management/organization or are under an illusion. A general definition of an organization might be that it is "a network composed of multiple interdependent but independent factors that collaborate to achieve a given objective"¹. Almost three thousand years ago, Socrates pointed out that in terms management of organization there was not so much difference between a heavy-armed infantry and a chorus of the time². Max Weber in the early twentieth century concurred; governments and private corporations can be treated in the same light as organizations. Peter Drucker, a contemporary guru on management theory, argues that 'there are differences between managing a chain of retail stores and managing a Catholic diocese (though amazingly fewer than either chain stores or bishops believe); between managing an air base, a hospital and a software company. But the greatest differences are in the terms individual organization use. Otherwise the differences are mainly application rather than in principles. There are not even tremendous differences in tasks and challenges.'³.

(first page only)

¹ *The New Economics for industry, government, education*, W. E. Deming, MIT Case, 1996

² *Memories of Socrates*, Xenophon, Penguin Classics, 1990

³ *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*, P.F. Drucker,