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**Work Goals of Asian Managers: Contrasting
Evidence to the Meaning of Working Study**

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Abstract

Following the seminal study by George England and his Meaning of Working (MOW) research team (*MOW*, 1987), which assessed managerial perceptions of the relative importance of a set of 11 work goals, a stream of follow-up research has been undertaken over the past twenty years. With the recent forces of convergence of managerial work goals unleashed by the logic of globalization, it has become relevant to extend these investigations to social contexts where managerial values and assumptions have been different from the contexts of the MOW study. The macro-level economic reform and progress in Asian societies are mostly mediated by the values and goals of managers at the micro-level setting, and, therefore, the replication of the MOW study in these societies has considerable relevance. This paper documents the relative importance of a set of 11 work goals for a sample of 2057 managers in eight Asian nations. The study reveals that as the Asian national environments move forward with divergent reform agenda, there is a convergence emerging in the work goal priorities. These converging findings contrast sharply with the previous MOW findings. The paper provides an analysis and discussion on this outcome.

Introduction

The role of managers in translating the national environment to work goals has been receiving increasing research attention as economic reform and global linkages redefine the Asian countries. On the one hand, diversity of managerial practices and goals have been shaped by their respective national environments. But on the other hand, the logic of globalization has created considerable convergences (Bigoness & Blakely, 1996; Ralston, Thang & Napier, 1999; Shenkar, Ronen, Shefy & Chow, 1998; Westwood & Posner, 1997). The reforms and reshaping of many planned economies and the widespread adoption of market economy have impacted the managerial goals (Elenkov, 1997; Koubek & Brewster, 1995; Ralston, Gustafson, Cheung & Terpstra, 1993). For instance, countries like India have adopted a market based economic system and embraced a radical reform agenda as it shakes off its past socialistic control by the government (Gopalan & Rivera, 1997; Pearson & Chatterjee, 1999). Moreover, the emergence of China and a number of developing nations as collectively leading world consumers has promoted a plethora of research aimed at better understanding managerial work related values (Corney & Richards, 2001; Lubatkin, Ndiaye & Vengroff, 1997; Nicholson & Stepina, 1998; Okechuku, 1994; Ralston, Egri, Stewart, Terpstra & Kaicheng, 1999).

The MOW study was a notable seminal endeavor that explored managerial work related groups. This comprehensive program of research was undertaken by a team of scholars, led by George England, *(MOW*, 1987) who investigated the comparative meaning of work with 8192 managers in the eight leading industrial nations of the early 1980s. The researchers conceptualized a three-level model to describe the 1) formation, 2) existence, and 3) impact of work meanings in terms of human resource management (HRM) policies and practices. Indeed, the MOW findings about work preferences have considerably shaped contemporary domestic and international HRM policies and practices (McGaughey, Iverson & DeCieri, 1997). Although the sequential notion of the heuristic research model of the MOW international team is strongly underpinned by a long lineage of the social science literature the forces that are concerned with the formation of the second level variables (patterns of meanings and work values) have changed significantly since 1981 to 1983 when the MOW data were collected. Consequently, it might be contended that a different profile of relevant work values could be enjoyed by contemporary international managers.

This paper reports the patterns of work goal preferences for a sample of 2057 managers from eight Asian countries. All of these nations are engaged in the competitive market arena and their importance to the world economy is widely recognized (Kakar, Kakar, Kets de Vries & Vrignaud, 2002; Ralston, Thang & Napier, 1999; Samant & Edwards, 2000; Westwood & Posner, 1997). The procedure employed for assessing the relative importance of respondent

work goals employs the same instrument as was used in the MOW study, hence, arguably some comparisons are feasible. Given the assertion that there will be similarities as well as differences between the results of this study and those reported by the MOW researchers the study findings hold implications for managerial practices and particularly HRM schemes for enterprises engaged with the Asian business community.

Historical Framework

George England and his colleagues (*MOW*, 1987) developed an elegant three level conceptual model to explain how the formation, existence and consequences of work meaning varies across countries. In this model the first level variables (personal, career history, macro socio-economic environment) are predicted to lead to certain patterns individuals attach to the meaning of working. The MOW researchers suggested these beliefs and values of working were captured by five domains; 1) centrality of work as a life role, 2) societal norms about working, 3) valued working outcomes, 4) work role identification, and 5) the importance of work goals. Consequences of these five domains is the third level of the model. These consequences are broadly grouped as future job expectations and behaviors. Despite the importance of the underlying ideas of the MOW model comprehensive replications have yet to be reported.

One popular approach for estimating relationships between managerial work related orientations and their consequences for facilitating better business encounters has been to measure managerial values. For instance, Elenkov (1997) examined differences and similarities of United States and Russian managers' values with Hofstede's (1980) constructs of individualism, masculinity and uncertainty avoidance, as well as other Western measures of machiavellism and dogmatism. Later, Ralston and colleagues (1999) assessed the values of 724 north and south Vietnamese managers with measures of individualism and collectivism in an attempt to establish a reference for Western managers intending to do business in Vietnam. In addition to these two studies there has been a plethora of similar investigations that have used Western instruments in Asian countries (Gopalan & Rivera (1997), Western instruments with Western and Eastern managerial groups (Nicholson & Stepina, 1978; Westwood & Posner, 1997), Western and Eastern measures with international managers from Asian and non-Asian countries (Ralston et al., 1993) as well as research which employed Asian measures with Asian countries (Pearson & Entrekin, 2001). The common theme of this research has been to evaluate relationships between personal values of managers and the context relevant socio-economic forces. For example, the goal of economic benefit over other priorities would signal a social reality of instrumental motivation for managers while the priority of team orientation would demonstrate other contextual perspectives. Despite the direct measurement of values being an attractive strategy, as it is a relatively simpler method than the three level conceptual model that was advanced by the MOW researchers, which provides an impressive wealth of information, the use of a diversity of scales leaves much room for alternative interpretations. More importantly, some concerns have been raised that the employed instruments are culturally biased.

This general interest in managerial values and their connections with the nature of work organizations in industrial society is underpinned by a depth of social science research. Indeed, some of the contributions of prominent scholars (Allport, Vernon & Lindzey, 1951; England, 1975; Kluckhohn & Strodtbeck, 1961; Rokeach, 1973) provided sound foundation for assumptions that values are residual forces that predispose people to ideologies, and guide judgements and evaluations about themselves and others. These central propositions encouraged attention to examining relationships between managerial values and behaviors to better predict and explain how managers influence organizational achievements. Accordingly, studies have focussed upon associations between managerial values and a host of outcome variables such as decision making (Elkins & Cochan, 1978; Revlin & Meglino, 1987), job satisfaction (Organ & Greene, 1974; Szilagyi, Sims & Keller, 1976) and organizational commitment and effectiveness (England, 1978; O'Reilly, Chatham & Caldwell, 1991). In spite of the richness provided by these and similar studies seldom have they employed the MOW study design. A notable exception is the limited replication that was undertaken by Lundberg and Peterson (1994) with a small sample of United States (U.S.) and Japanese local government managers.

Despite Lundberg and Peterson (1994) cautioning the value of comparing their study results with those of the findings of the MOW study there are some interesting trends. For instance, the Japanese managers (n = 309) ranked the work goal *opportunity to learn new things* third which was considerably higher than the seventh rank given by the Japanese managers (n = 3226) of the MOW study. Also, the U.S. managers (n = 485) ranked the work goal of *opportunity to learn new things* fourth which was similar to the fifth ranking expressed by the U.S. managers (n = 1000) of the MOW study. Moreover, rankings for the work goal of *interesting work* remained unchanged at the highest preference (rank = 1) in both U.S. samples, whereas in the Lundberg and Peterson study the Japanese managers reported a lower preference (rank 4) than the MOW (Japanese) study managers who ranked *interesting work* second. Overall, the Japanese managers of the Lundberg and Peterson study reported greater preferences (three or more ranks difference) for the work goals of *opportunity to learn new things*, *interpersonal relations*, and *good opportunity for promotion*; but expressed less preference (three or more ranks) for the work goals of *matching of job requirements with incumbent competencies* and *a lot of autonomy*. In contrast, the U.S. managers of the Lundberg and Peterson study expressed greater preference (three ranks difference) for the work goal of *opportunity for promotion*, and less preference for the work goal of task variety than was given (to these two work goals) by the MOW study managers. The greater variation in the Japanese samples is somewhat curious.

Other recent evidence of variations in the work goal preferences (between countries and including U.S. respondents) is provided by Corney and Richards (2001). Their sample was relatively small and with university students: Moldavan (n = 51), U.S. (n = 90). Although these authors acknowledge the research limitations their reported results are generally consistent with the work goal rankings of the MOW study, except for the work goal of *opportunity for promotion*, which was ranked markedly higher (rank 3) than the MOW study ranking. Overall, the respondents of the Corney and Richards study reported relatively high importance for the work goal of *interesting work, good salary* and *good job security*; intermediate preferences for the work goals of *matching of job requirements with incumbent competencies*, *a lot of autonomy* and *opportunity to learn new things*; and the lowest importance was assigned to the two comfort work goals of *convenient work hours* and *good physical work conditions*. Despite minor contrast between the two countries and across respondent demographics, except for *opportunity for promotion*, there were few substantial variations to the profile of U.S. managerial work goal rankings that were provided in the initial MOW study. Corney and Richards suggest the relative similarity of work goal preferences for their sample of U.S. students, and the MOW sample of U.S. managers is the result of preferences for intrinsic goals in the current economic context.

The MOW researchers were able to estimate managerial values with a relatively simple acultural instrument. In practice managers were required to rank the importance of a set of 11 goal facets (e.g., pay, convenient work hours, promotion opportunity). This notion had been developed by a number of social scientists (Cummings, 1970; Elizur, 1984) who argued the values espoused by managers could be assessed by establishing the ordered degree of importance of relevant work goals. Indeed, Harpaz (1990) demonstrated the methodology employed by the MOW research team to understand what is important to individuals in their work settings. The purpose of this study is to employ the MOW instrument to broaden the conceptual framework of managerial mindset in terms of the expectations, attitudes and work goal priorities in the context of Asian societies undertaking reforms and transitions in market culture.

Method

Participants
Data were obtained from 2057 managers who were working in eight Asian countries from mid 1996 to early 2001. This sample consisted of 416 managers from the northern Chinese city of Beijing, its precincts, and the city of Shijiazhaung (mid 2000 to early 2001), 421 managers from throughout India who attended residential programs under the auspice of the Centre for Human Values Institute of Management, Calcutta (mid 1996), 195 Japanese managers from the cities of Kyoto and Osaka as well as the Kansai district (mid to late 2000), 231 managers from the Republic of Singapore (1998), 143 managers from Malaysia mainly from the northern

industrial region of Penang, the central area with the prominent centre of Kuala Lumpur as well as the eastern province of Sarawak (1997 and 1998), 156 Thailand managers from the city of Bangkok and its surrounds (1999), 380 Mongolian managers, many of whom attended United Nations sponsored educational programs in the capital of Ulaanbattar (1997), and 115 managers in Brunei (1999) who were employed in the administrative/industrial centre of Seria.

The managers surveyed worked in a wide range of organizations characterized by industry, size, structure and ownership. Indeed, the study institutions were engaged in banking and finance, education, health, science and technology, engineering and mining within the categories of manufacturing or service enterprises. These enterprises were drawn from both the public and private sectors within government and local government instrumentalities. Moreover, their size varied from small family businesses to large corporations at the national and international level. Collectively, the organizational profiles varied from country to country, and, therefore, it was considered to be less than meaningful to attempt to partition the data across these organizational properties, but rather by country and individual demographics. This approach has precedence in earlier studies that have attempted to account how similarity and dissimilarity of managerial work goals is related to demographic dimensions (Corney & Richards, 2001; Harpaz & Fu, 1997; Lundberg & Peterson, 1994).

Procedure
The study design incorporated three key attributes. One key element was the administration of a questionnaire that required managers to provide 1) demographic detail in terms of gender, age, managerial level and highest level of formal education; and 2) to rank their preferences for a set of eleven work goals. A second feature of the study was to optimize response rates by employing *guanxi* (pronounced gwan – see), which is a reciprocal obligation to respond to requests for assistance. Although it is likely this phenomenon exists in all cultures it is most prominent among ethnic Chinese to whom *guan* means relationship or connection and doing someone a favor, while *xi* means to tie up and extending the relationship. In practice all of the respondents were obtained by the authors developing research based relationships with managers many who in turn became questionnaire administrators to other manager colleagues with whom a state of *guanxi* existed.

The third feature of the study was to employ focus groups to enrich understanding and enhance the interpretation of the findings. These focus groups, which were usually comprised of small numbers of managers, were established in each of the study countries, where the participants were invited to reflect on the provided information about the results that were obtained for organizations of that country. More than one focus group was established for each country. For instance, the Chinese data attracted three types of focus group. Firstly, a number of bilingual Chinese post graduate students who had managerial experience in their homeland (and were enrolled at the authors' universities) provided feedback in terms of the findings. Secondly, an opportunity was created for a Professor at the Beijing university to be interviewed, and hence, supplement understanding of the results. Lastly, 15 senior managers from various regions of China, and who were undertaking an executive program in the Chinese Ministry of Finance building, were assembled to discuss, examine and later present their commentaries in a plenary session (through an interpreter). The contributions of the different focus groups provided elucidation of the relative importance of managerial work goals as perceived by the study managers.

There was one version of the questionnaire, but four languages were employed. The Chinese questionnaire was in Mandarin, Japanese characters were used to format the questionnaire administered in Japan, in Thailand a Thai compilation was employed and in all other countries an English version was used, with an added feature in Mongolia where bilingual assistants provided respondents with help if required. The non-English versions were back translated for the intent of meaning rather than literal meaning. However, it should be acknowledged in developing countries (e.g., Thailand) where certain words are yet to be commonly used, or in non-English extant societies (e.g., China, Japan) which have very rich languages it is not always possible to have perfect correspondence with Western nomenclature. An English version was used in India, Singapore, Malaysia, Mongolia and Brunei as this language is widely taught in their schools and is becoming the preferred universal language.

Measurement

The relative importance of 11 work goals was assessed by calculating item mean scores from rankings provided by the managers. This procedure was employed in the seminal Meaning of Working study (*MOW*, 1987), and has been popularized in further investigations (Chatterjee & Pearson, 2000; Corney & Richards, 2001; Harpaz, 1990; Lundberg & Peterson, 1994; Pearson & Chatterjee, 1999). In practice the respondents are required to assign their preferences (first = 1, second = 2 to last = 11) to a set of work goals. The instrument is presented as Appendix 1.

The 11 work goals were treated as independent variables. Previous endeavors to establish composite sub scales by factor analyses provided different combinations (Harpaz, 1986; *MOW*, 1987). Subjecting the data of this study to factor analyses provided further variations. This is understandable as over time data has been collected from managers with substantially different ethnicity and religious backgrounds within a diversity of societal contexts. Moreover, in a recent partial replication of the Meaning of Working study Lundberg and Peterson (1994) stated that the work goals "are only loosely associated with any particular composite and are best analyzed as largely separate items." (p. 1468). Consequently, composite indices were not used in this study.

Results

The respondent demographics of Table 1 (Appendix 2) reflect interesting features of the study managerial cadres. Overall, nearly one third of the managers were female, which underscores the emerging role of women in these Asian countries. Indeed, the effect of 50 years of communism in China has brought women 'out of the family' and into the workplace. Moreover, the south east Asian countries of Singapore, Malaysia and Brunei have recognized economic achievement is likely to be atuned with effective development and utilization of all human resources. Albeit that the Thailand sample is probably gender distorted because of the nature of the employed guanxi to obtain responses. Nevertheless, even in that country there is growing prominence for women in business encounters. Furthermore, in the land locked Central Asian country of Mongolia the extent of women managers is a distinctive characteristic in the country's transition to a market economy. The Indian and Japanese samples evidence a 'bamboo ceiling' in two countries that are exceedingly culturally complex. This gender imbalance was unexpected given the extensive number of women who are engaged in paid work in both these nations although it is reported females have been discriminated against, strategically. There was, generally, a reasonable distribution of respondents across the three assessed managerial levels. The notable variation was for the Indian sample which was essentially CEOs of relatively large institutions throughout that country. Few of the Indian and Japanese managers were less than 30 years of age which contrasted with younger aged respondents in the Chinese, Singaporean, Malaysian and Thailand sub samples. In fact, the Indian sample were mostly from the executive level, which was a unique dimension which made it possible to capture data. The importance of formal education was most pronounced, but it also needs to be recognized that more educated managers may be in a better position to articulate their views and were more comfortable to complete a questionnaire. The profile of Table 1 reveals the extent of demographic differences which were employed to partition and evaluate managerial work goal preferences.

Table 2 (Appendix 3) shows the work goals means and their ranks for the study countries as well as the ranks for these same work goals as recorded in the MOW study. Inspection of the means and their ranks reveals the respondents of our study expressed a high level of consensus for the work goal of the *opportunity to learn new things*, and at lower levels of preference considerable agreement was given for the work goal of *interesting work*, and *matching of job requirements with incumbent ability and experience*, respectively. These observations are confirmed by the comparison of means test results that demonstrate the mean scores for the work goal of learning were non-significantly different. For the work goal of interesting work the Indian and Malaysian means differed significantly (at the $p < 0.001$ level) with one another, while these means contrasted only with three other countries at lower p levels. Also, for the work goal of matching job requirements there was only two pairs of means that were significantly different across the 28 paired tests for each goal. Generally, the two

comfort goals of *convenient work hours* and *work conditions* were the least preferred items (ranked as 10 or 11), except in Mongolia and Brunei where local conditions reinforced higher priorities for *convenient work hours* which is confirmed by the comparison of means results. Marginally more preferred than the two comfort goals was *good job security.* The exception was the Thailand mean as revealed by the contrasts results. Although the results are not presented work goal preferences were evaluated to establish rank relativity in each set of country means. Frequently, it was found adjacent ranks (e.g., 1 versus 2, 5 versus 6) were non-significantly different, but two rank differences (i.e., 1 versus 3, 5 versus 7) were significant at the $p < 0.05$ level, and by four rank differences (e.g., 1 versus 5, 4 versus 8) there were significant differences at the $p < 0.0001$ level.

As expected there was divergence in work goal preferences between country groups. For example, in this study rankings varied substantially between countries for the work goals of *good opportunity for promotion, good salary,* and *task variety,* with fewer significant contrasts for the work goal of *good interpersonal relations* and even less contrasts for the work goal of *a lot of autonomy.* The significant differences are reported in Table 2. In addition, there were variations between the country work goal rankings of this study and the overall rankings of the MOW study. Notably, the work goal of *opportunity to learn new things* is considerably elevated as is the *opportunity for promotion,* while the work goal of *matching of job requirements with incumbent competencies* is marginally more important. It is also shown that the work goals of *interesting work, autonomy,* and the two comfort goals of *convenient work hours,* and *good physical work conditions* have retained their relative importance over time. The economic work goals of *good sa*lary and *good job security* were considerably less preferred by the managers of our study (than the reported preferences of the MOW managers), and there were also some differences for the work goals of *interpersonal relations* and *job variety*. These differences and similarities are explored across demographic categories.

Table 3 (Appendix 4) presents the work goal means and their ranks across countries for gender categories. In addition, results of means comparisons for the study male and female populations for each work goal are shown together with compatible MOW data as presented by Harpaz (1990). A prominent feature of Table 3 is the extent of consensus expressed by the eight country study male and female managers for the relative importance of the 11 work goals. Indeed, given the differences of means are only likely to be significant at the $p < 0.05$ level for two rank differences (i.e., 1 versus 3), there are few instances when male and female work goal preferences were substantially different (e.g., Promotion, Mongolia and Brunei; Salary, Japan, Mongolia and Singapore). Moreover, the patterns of relative importance of work goals show the *opportunity to learn new things* frequently attracted the highest preferences, *interesting work* was often reported to be reasonably important to the respondents, and the work goal of *matching job requirements with incumbent ability and experience* was perceived to be of intermediate importance. Furthermore, it was generally expressed the two comfort work goals were the least preferred by the study male and female managers. Results of analyses of the total responses from the male and female samples reveal the global relative importance of the 11 work goals as well as the extent of consensus in terms of the importance of a work goal to the gender group of this study. It is also indicated in Table 3 how the ranked preferences, of these same work goals, contrasted with those which were recorded by the MOW study when conducted almost two decades earlier. A strong inference of Table 3 is, overall, the eight country study respondents held similar expectations in terms of how they valued certain job facets, but there were some divergences between gender groups for particular work goals, and reasons for these variations were explored in discussions with focus groups.

Table 4 (Appendix 5) reveals ranked work goal means across three managerial levels for the study countries. Also is presented the ranked means for the total number of respondents in each category. It is demonstrated there was often a relatively high level of consensus in terms of the importance of a work goal across the managerial groups of a country. Moreover, there was a reasonable degree of agreement about the relative importance of the 11 work goals across countries. Indeed, the *opportunity to learn new things*, was often the most preferred work goal, compared to *interesting work* which was perceived to be more important than *matching job requirements with incumbent ability and experience,* while the work goal of *opportunity for promotion* was also relatively attractive. Respondents expressed a lower

preference for the work goal of *good interpersonal relations* and reported their least preference for the two comfort work goals. There were some significant variations for some work goals (e.g., salary) when contrasts across the three managerial levels were undertaken with all responses. Understanding the extent of these differences was enhanced by the use of focus groups.

Table 5 (Appendix 6) presents the profile of work goal mean rankings for the study countries across age categories. Despite the substantial variations in the number of respondents in each examined group (country and age) the data of Table 5 show a high preference for the work goal of *the opportunity to learn new things.* Arguably, the rank scores show the work goals of *interesting work,* and *matching of job requirements with incumbent ability and experience* were the next most important work goals, respectively. The two comfort goals of *convenient work hours*, and *work conditions* were perceived by the respondent managers to be of relatively least importance. The relative importance of the remaining six work goals often varied somewhat between countries and age groups, although there were instances (e.g., Promotion; India and Mongolia: Autonomy; Thailand) where there was a reasonably strong consensus for a work goal in a country across the age groups. Contrasts with the MOW study rankings are shown. Endeavors to understand the relevance of these similarities and differences were approached by discussions with focus groups.

Discussion

The findings of this study with 2057 practicing managers in eight Central and South East Asian nations have three salient implications for global business encounters. First, the study data have consequences at the investor level for establishing and sustaining successful business arrangements in the rapidly developing market economies of the region. Indeed, the relative importance of work goals in contemporary industrial societies is underpinned by appreciating these personal dispositions of managers shape and influence managerial beliefs, expectations, attitudes and behaviors. Clearly, understanding managerial work goal priorities has potential to facilitate the building of mutual trust and respect, which has been widely recognized by a bevy of researchers (Ayios, 2003; Jeffries & Reed, 2000; Mead, 1994) as a major challenge for establishing successful business ventures in different cultures.

The second major consequence arising from the study findings is a prominent motivational learning orientation. It was found, despite different sample size across countries and demographic categories, there was a profound universal preference for the work goal of the opportunity to learn new things. A number of scholars (Ottewill & Laughton, 2000; Wakabayashi, Kondo & Chen, 2001) have argued a strong undercurrent for learning is central to the active support of systems conducive to the acquisition of skills and learning. In turn, these competencies are vital for broad based structural reforms designed to deliver rapid and sustainable growth of incomes and employment with efficient key service infrastructures, such as education, health care, transport and communication. Within this contemporary business arena, which frequently transcends national borders, managers, and employees in general, are exposed to opportunities and challenges which are only likely to be successfully discharged by relevant practices. Vital for the success of these operations is requisite knowledge, skills and core competencies which would be recognized as key functions in quality HRM development programs.

A third implication of the study results is relevant to international HRM policies and practices. The three distinctive features of the study findings are 1) the perceived convergence of preference for a number of managerial work goals across the eight countries and assessed demographic properties, 2) in spite of some converging trends there are interesting and curious paradoxes in the way particular respondent categories perceived the relative importance of work goals, and 3) there appears to be some definite differences between Western and Asian mindsets in terms of the expressed priorities of the examined set of work goals. Collectively, these observations demonstrate international HRM will benefit by grounding the frameworks in etic (broad or common) and emic (culture specific) dimensions.

A notion of identifying important values as concepts of diversity for international HRM is reflected in relevant, recent literature. For instance, Dowling, Welch and Schuler (1999), as

well as Rowley and Benson (2000) have questioned convergence and modern variants of universalistic HRM. Constraints on the converging perspective can be identified in the empirical evidence presented by Mc Gaughey, Iverson and De Cieri (1997) who demonstrated relevant work preferences, of an international sample of 617 Australian, Mexican and U.S. respondents, were structured on etic and emic qualities. In a more recent study across 21 nations (Zanko, 2003) reported a lack of strong cultural contiguity in terms of HRM issues and trends. Indeed, a salient pattern to emerge was the variety of HRM policies and practices which were shaped by a plethora of contextual factors. Consequently, although there may be pragmatic economic benefit in designing universal HRM policies and practices for such elements as managerial style, engagement procedures, and remuneration schemes these and associated labor frameworks are likely to better facilitate business undertakings if they embrace local customs, *morés* and nuances. In a context of corporations operating internationally or employing multi-ethnic employees challenges linked with globalization, benchmarking and best practices are likely to be better addressed by substantial broadening of conceptual HRM frameworks to meet the work relevant expectancies and preferences of different national categories of participants.

Profound work events since the MOW study have potential for impacting Asian managerial cadre. The MOW study was undertaken in the early 1980s with occupational samples of the world's industrial nations (Belgium, Britain, Germany, Israel, Japan, Netherlands, United States of America) during a period of relative economic stability, which may account for the related importance of the expressive (interesting work) and economic (salary, security) dimensions. By the close of the 1980s extensive restructuring of the manufacturing industry and the emergence of the quality service sector provided impetus for dislocation of labor markets and new competitive challenges that compelled managers to introduce different methods of operations for business engagements. Further unanticipated managerial actions were advanced during the 1990s with the collapse of socialist regimes. These events intensified market liberalization programs and onset historic transition from centrally planned systems to market economies (Autenrieth, 1993; Chattopadhyay, Glick & Huber, 2001; Pearson and Chatterjee, 1999) that led to unprecedented reshaping of managerial attitudes and practices. In today's dynamic global learning economy, which emphasizes information and communication technologies, that impose "more stringent conditions for the competitiveness and survival of firms and nations" (Pavitt, 2002; p. 125). It is not unexpected to observe a converging managerial (work goal) preference for a "learning dimension" (Lundberg & Peterson, 1994; p. 1462). This outcome has displaced the economic dimension (salary, job security), while the expressive dimension (interesting work, good interpersonal relations) remain relatively high. The former dimension is a likely consequence of challenging tasks that enable incumbents to experience a sense of accomplishment, while the latter dimension reflects attention to contemporary job settings that endorse cross-functional teams and other synergistic work patterns. In the context of the study results, clarifying the reasons for variations in personal preferences is both stimulating and valuable for reframing HRM systems in diverse institutions and cultures.

Focus groups were employed to explore causes for variations in managerial work goal preferences. Representatives of the respondents universally endorsed the profiles provided by Tables 2, 3, 4 and 5, and provided commentary to explain likely causes for variability between countries or demographic categories. For example, these groups expressed the relative importance of the work goal of *an opportunity to learn new things* in comments like, "while it is nice to have a good job today, it is vital there is an opportunity to learn skills which will better prepare an employee for tomorrow's job." Understandably, this work goal attracted a high preference across all assessed categories. Several focus group members reported the importance of the work goal of *interesting work* was relative to encountering newer tasks or crisis type of events in their dynamic, competitive work settings. Also, the work goal of matching job requirements with incumbent ability and experience enjoyed a reasonable level of preference for a variety of reasons. This workgoal preference of 'match' of job and ability has an inherent attraction for those who wish to avoid stretching demands of organizations. They reported a feeling of 'comfort' in the match and a feeling of 'vulnerability' where match was not available. Moreover, these priorities were also associated with jobs of high status or where incumbents had to continuously learn on the job. A number of focus groups also indicated lowers priority rankings for the work goals of convenient work hours and the

conditions of work. For instance, in the emerging capitalistic system of Mongolia, many people and particularly those in government jobs were not highly paid and hence, held a 'second' job. Consequently, many of the respondents, and particularly women (who also had family responsibilities), expressed an attraction for the work goal of convenient work hours.

The focus groups also elucidated relativities of male and female work goal rankings. In this study the gender work goal rankings were generally non-significantly different (see Table 3). This finding contrasts the MOW study results which revealed eight of the male and female work goal means were statistically different. All focus groups unanimously proposed that while the work goal means may not accurately represent the total cadre of high population complex societies, such as China, India and Japan the role of women is changing in Asian societies. Hence, the similarity of preferences is reasonable, and differences can be explained as a function of country. As an example Singaporean women managers ranked salary higher (than men managers) because increased financial capacity provides access to social facilities (transport, accommodation, health care and education), and it is the females who often have to balance vocational, recreational and family commitments. The focus groups also speculated about the extent of similarity of work goal means across categories of managerial levels (Table 4) and age (Table 5).   Overall, their comments presented a perspective that work goal preferences could be reconciled less against a long tradition of deeply rooted beliefs and values, but more about the influence of their work contexts that are undergoing significant economic transformation.

Conclusion

This paper attempts to understand the contemporary Asian managerial developments from the proxy variables of managerial work goals. The interpretation of the field data collected from eight Asian contexts suggest a number of contrasting findings from the MOW study. This paper provides, perhaps for the first time, an explicit convergence of managerial work goals across these countries. In contrast to the MOW findings, it is clear that the 'learning' goal has emerged as the most significant work goal priority. In most cases, immediate economic outcomes have become much less relevant to the managerial work life. Our findings reinforce the notion that the work goal priorities in Western countries during the decades of 1970s and 1980s captured through the MOW study have almost no practical relevance for the managerial mindset in Asia. Surprisingly, little awareness of this is evident in the recruitment, motivation, development and retention of managers not only by the Asian organizations, but also by organizations entering those countries in establishing relationships.

A careful analysis of this research findings will suggest a paradigmatic shift in the culture of Asian organizations. The deeply held, tacit beliefs that stimulate the organizational thinking and action are being revised as learning orientation impacts the 'core of organizational functioning'. This study underscores the commonalities in managerial thinking across Asian societies most likely to the uncertainties of global forces over powering influences of societal reform programs.

Appendix 1

Respondents are required to rank in order (1 = first to 11 = least) the importance of each work goal for their work life.

A. A lot of opportunity to learn new things
B. Good interpersonal relations (supervisors, co-workers)
C. Good opportunity for promotion
D. Convenient work hours
E. A lot of variety
F. Interesting work
G. Good job security
H. A good match between your job requirements and your abilities and experience
I. Good pay/salary
J. Good physical working conditions (such as light, temperature, cleanliness, low noise level)
K. A lot of autonomy (you decide how to do your work)

Source: Harpaz, 1990; *MOW,* 1987.

Appendix 2 - Table 1

Demographic

	Overall	China	India	Japan	Singapore	Malaysia	Thailand	Mongolia	Brunei
Respondents	2057	416	421	195	231	143	156	380	115
Gender:									
Female	31.8	43.0	6.9	5.6	32.9	32.9	71.8	45.0	26.1
Male	68.2	57.0	93.1	94.4	67.1	67.1	28.2	55.0	73.9
Managerial Level:									
Executive	34.7	18.8	70.1	26.2	29.4	37.1	14.7	32.3	19.1
Middle	36.9	44.7	25.4	34.8	37.2	35.6	26.3	46.1	39.2
Supervisory	28.4	36.5	4.5	39.0	33.4	27.3	59.0	21.6	41.7
Age (years)**:**									
20-29	22.7	52.5	5.0	7.7	36.8	21.0	44.2	24.2	11.3
30-39	32.2	32.2	16.9	32.3	38.1	45.5	27.6	44.7	25.2
40-49	24.4	10.3	34.0	27.7	20.8	25.8	22.4	21.6	51.3
Above 49	20.7	5.0	44.1	32.3	4.3	7.7	5.8	9.5	12.2
Education Level:									
Senior High School	15.1	13.7	6.2	30.3	18.2	30.1	6.4	3.9	50.5
Trade or Vocational	18.8	18.8	38.2	6.6	19.5	14.7	12.2	7.4	19.1
University	66.1	67.5	55.6	63.1	62.3	55.2	81.4	88.7	30.4

Appendix 3 - Table 2

Work Goal Means and Relative Importance

Work Goal Group #	China 1	India 2	Japan 3	Singapore 4	Malaysia 5	Thailand 6	Mongolia 7	Brunei 8	Means Comparisons Scheffé	MOW
Opportunity to learn	3.87^1	3.81^1	4.30^1	3.96^1	4.75^2	4.37^1	3.97^1	4.17^1	n.s.	7
Promotion	4.45^2	5.62^6	5.88^6	4.91^3	4.08^1	6.61^8	5.24^4	5.63^5	1<2***3***7*8*, 5<2***3***6***7*8**, 6>1***2*4***7***	11
Interesting	4.75^3	4.09^2	4.67^3	4.79^2	5.94^5	4.90^2	5.12^2	5.13^2	5>1*2***3*, 7>2**	1
Salary	5.15^4	7.60^9	7.03^8	5.51^5	5.31^4	7.08^9	6.66^7	5.63^6	1<2***3***6***7***, 2>4***5***7*8***, 4<3**6**7**, 5<3**6**7**	2
Good match	5.53^5	4.75^4	4.43^2	5.34^4	4.83^3	5.29^4	5.31^5	5.46^3	1>2*3**	5
Autonomy	6.26^6	6.00^7	6.30^7	5.61^6	6.70^9	6.08^6	6.87^8	7.30^{10}	2<7*8*, 4<7**8**	6
Inter personal	6.38^7	5.24^5	5.41^5	5.77^7	6.38^7	5.13^3	5.17^3	5.54^4	1>2**3*6**7***, 5>2*6*7**	3
Security	6.54^8	7.16^8	7.39^9	6.92^9	6.46^8	5.56^5	7.18^{10}	6.70^9	6<2***3***4**7***	4
Variety	7.31^9	4.33^3	5.05^4	6.26^8	6.34^6	6.46^7	6.54^6	6.46^7	1>4**7*, 2<1***4***5***6***7***8*** 3<1***4**5**6**7***8**	8
Convenience	8.01^{10}	8.69^{11}	8.10^{10}	8.59^{10}	7.92^{11}	7.12^{10}	6.91^9	6.63^8	6<2***4***, 7<1***2***3**4*** 8<1**2***3**4***	9
Conditions	8.80^{11}	8.69^{10}	8.43^{11}	9.02^{11}	7.78^{10}	7.42^{11}	7.43^{11}	8.01^{11}	1>5*6***7***, 2>6***7***, 3>7*, 4>5**6***7***	10

Notes:
a. MOW = The work goal rankings of the Meaning of Working Study (Harpaz, 1990; *MOW*, 1987).
b. The superscripts denote the ranking of the work goal.
c. n.s. = non-significantly different.
d. * $p<0.05$, ** $p<0.01$ and *** $p<0.001$.

Appendix 4 - Table 3

Work Goal Means and Ranks Across Countries and by Gender

	n	Opportunity to learn	Promotion	Interesting Work	Salary	Good Match	Autonomy	Interpersonal	Security	Variety	Convenient Hours	Work Conditions
China												
m	237	4.08^{1}	4.58^{2}	4.91^{3}	5.54^{5}	5.43^{4}	5.76^{6}	6.32^{7}	6.98^{8}	7.08^{9}	8.08^{10}	8.78^{11}
f	179	3.58^{1}	4.27^{2}	4.55^{3}	4.64^{4}	5.66^{5}	6.93^{8}	6.45^{7}	5.94^{6}	7.60^{9}	7.92^{10}	8.83^{11}
India												
m	392	3.77^{1}	5.57^{6}	4.17^{2}	7.56^{9}	4.77^{4}	5.86^{7}	5.28^{5}	7.22^{8}	4.31^{3}	8.84^{11}	8.64^{10}
f	29	4.41^{2}	6.31^{6}	3.03^{1}	8.14^{10}	4.48^{3}	7.86^{9}	4.72^{5}	6.31^{7}	4.62^{4}	6.72^{8}	9.38^{11}
Japan												
m	184	4.30^{1}	5.86^{6}	4.73^{3}	6.99^{8}	4.37^{2}	6.24^{7}	5.45^{5}	7.43^{9}	4.93^{4}	8.14^{10}	8.43^{11}
f	11	4.36^{2}	6.18^{5}	3.55^{1}	7.64^{10}	5.36^{4}	7.36^{8}	4.73^{3}	6.64^{6}	6.91^{7}	7.36^{9}	8.27^{11}
Singapore												
m	155	4.12^{1}	4.90^{3}	4.83^{2}	5.74^{6}	5.43^{5}	5.35^{4}	5.79^{7}	6.76^{9}	6.14^{8}	8.89^{10}	9.00^{11}
f	76	3.63^{1}	4.93^{3}	4.70^{2}	5.05^{4}	5.16^{5}	6.16^{7}	5.75^{6}	7.24^{9}	6.53^{8}	7.97^{10}	9.05^{11}
Malaysia												
m	96	4.83^{2}	4.08^{1}	5.86^{5}	5.55^{4}	4.97^{3}	6.77^{9}	6.11^{6}	6.43^{8}	6.17^{7}	7.86^{10}	7.89^{11}
f	47	4.57^{3}	$4.09.^{1}$	6.09^{5}	4.81^{4}	4.55^{2}	6.55^{7}	6.91^{9}	6.53^{6}	6.68^{8}	8.02^{11}	7.55^{10}
Thailand												
m	44	4.07^{1}	6.43^{8}	4.48^{3}	7.11^{9}	4.32^{2}	5.75^{5}	5.57^{4}	6.34^{7}	6.27^{6}	7.84^{10}	8.02^{11}
f	112	4.48^{1}	6.68^{8}	5.06^{3}	7.07^{10}	5.67^{5}	6.21^{6}	4.96^{2}	5.25^{4}	6.53^{7}	6.83^{9}	7.18^{11}
Mongolia												
m	209	4.14^{1}	5.59^{5}	5.04^{2}	6.80^{8}	5.16^{4}	7.03^{10}	5.07^{3}	6.79^{7}	6.44^{6}	6.90^{9}	7.45^{11}
f	171	3.75^{1}	4.81^{2}	5.22^{3}	6.48^{6}	5.50^{5}	6.67^{8}	5.28^{4}	7.65^{11}	6.65^{7}	6.91^{9}	7.40^{10}
Brunei												
m	85	4.39^{1}	5.88^{6}	5.26^{3}	5.35^{4}	5.14^{2}	7.14^{10}	5.62^{5}	6.47^{8}	6.38^{7}	7.07^{9}	7.91^{11}
f	30	3.53^{1}	4.93^{3}	4.77^{2}	6.43^{7}	6.37^{6}	7.73^{10}	5.30^{4}	7.37^{9}	6.70^{8}	5.40^{5}	8.30^{11}
Total Data												
m	1402	4.11^{1}	5.32^{4}	4.76^{2}	6.54^{8}	4.98^{3}	6.15^{7}	5.59^{5}	6.97^{9}	5.69^{6}	8.13^{10}	8.38^{11}
f	655	3.91^{1}	5.04^{3}	4.87^{2}	5.88^{6}	5.46^{4}	6.71^{8}	5.68^{5}	6.56^{7}	6.80^{9}	7.31^{10}	8.10^{11}
MOW												
m	4573	8	11	1	2	6	4	3	5	7	9	10
f	2736	5	11	1	3	4	9	2	6	8	7	10
Mean Comparison		**	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.	*	*	**	*	**	**	*

Notes:
a. n = number of respondents, m = male, and f = female.
b. The superscripts denote the ranking of the work goal.
c. MOW = Meaning of working study (*MOW*, 1987), gender work goal rankings.
d. * p<0.05 and ** p<0.01, and n.s. = non-significantly different means.

Appendix 5 - Table 4

Work Goal Means and Ranks Across Countries and by Managerial Levels

	n	Opportunity to learn	Promotion	Interesting Work	Salary	Good Match	Autonomy	Interpersonal	Security	Variety	Convenient Hours	Work Conditions
China												
Executive	78	4.17^2	4.10^1	4.24^3	5.54^6	5.21^5	5.12^4	6.76^7	7.22^8	7.23^9	8.15^{10}	9.00^{11}
Middle	186	4.11^1	4.60^2	5.03^3	5.50^4	5.62^5	5.94^6	6.09^7	6.72^8	7.07^9	7.84^{10}	8.71^{11}
Supervisory	152	3.41^1	4.43^2	4.68^4	4.53^3	5.58^5	7.24^8	6.53^7	5.97^6	7.63^9	8.14^{10}	8.81^{11}
India												
Executive	295	3.75^1	5.54^6	4.20^2	7.59^9	4.62^4	5.87^7	5.34^5	7.21^8	4.26^3	8.85^{11}	8.75^{10}
Middle	107	4.03^2	6.09^6	3.89^1	7.63^9	4.95^4	6.32^7	5.24^5	6.75^8	4.46^3	8.15^{10}	8.50^{11}
Supervisory	19	3.63^2	4.32^4	3.58^1	7.68^8	5.53^6	6.05^7	3.74^3	8.68^9	4.63^5	9.21^{11}	8.95^{10}
Japan												
Executive	51	4.04^2	6.02^6	4.75^3	8.00^8	3.65^1	5.06^5	6.10^7	8.14^9	4.90^4	8.63^{11}	8.55^{10}
Middle	68	4.46^1	5.41^6	5.06^4	6.93^9	4.88^3	6.40^7	5.38^5	6.85^8	4.62^2	8.41^{10}	8.51^{11}
Supervisory	76	4.34^2	6.20^6	4.26^1	6.47^7	4.54^3	7.05^8	4.97^4	7.37^9	5.53^5	7.46^{10}	8.26^{11}
Singapore												
Executive	68	4.19^1	5.37^5	5.24^2	5.32^4	5.31^3	5.96^7	5.69^6	6.71^9	6.59^8	8.19^{10}	8.53^{11}
Middle	86	4.06^1	4.99^3	4.48^2	5.41^6	5.01^4	5.40^5	5.67^7	6.94^9	5.92^8	9.19^{10}	9.31^{11}
Supervisory	77	3.64^1	4.43^2	4.74^3	5.79^6	5.74^5	5.56^4	5.96^7	7.08^9	6.36^8	8.27^{10}	9.12^{11}
Malaysia												
Executive	53	4.83^3	4.68^2	5.98^6	5.23^4	4.15^1	6.42^8	6.62^9	5.87^5	6.38^7	8.34^{11}	7.70^{10}
Middle	51	5.10^2	3.49^1	6.12^5	5.33^4	5.24^3	6.82^9	6.47^7	6.67^8	6.14^6	7.43^{10}	7.80^{11}
Supervisory	39	4.18^2	4.05^1	5.64^5	5.38^4	5.23^3	6.92^8	5.92^6	7.00^9	6.54^7	7.97^{11}	7.85^{10}
Thailand												
Executive	23	3.87^1	5.61^6	5.17^5	7.52^9	4.87^3	4.96^4	6.74^8	6.48^7	4.74^2	8.00^{11}	7.91^{10}
Middle	41	5.24^4	7.02^{10}	5.32^5	6.80^8	5.07^3	6.54^7	4.83^2	4.66^1	6.41^6	7.20^{11}	6.90^9
Supervisory	92	4.10^1	6.67^7	4.64^2	7.10^{10}	5.49^4	6.16^6	4.87^3	5.73^5	6.90^9	6.86^8	7.52^{11}
Mongolia												
Executive	123	4.00^1	5.35^4	5.44^5	6.69^8	5.33^3	6.67^7	5.05^2	7.17^{10}	6.54^6	6.78^9	7.35^{11}
Middle	175	3.92^1	5.27^4	5.06^2	6.45^6	5.45^5	6.83^8	5.08^3	7.47^{11}	6.57^7	6.87^9	7.37^{10}
Supervisory	82	4.02^1	4.99^3	4.79^2	7.05^8	5.01^4	7.24^{10}	5.52^5	6.56^7	6.49^6	7.17^9	7.68^{11}
Brunei												
Executive	22	3.64^1	5.18^3	5.73^5	4.68^2	5.27^4	6.64^7	6.00^6	7.86^{11}	6.68^8	7.64^{10}	7.18^9
Middle	45	4.24^1	6.16^7	4.60^2	6.11^6	4.69^3	7.56^{10}	5.76^4	6.04^5	6.80^9	6.51^8	8.16^{11}
Supervisory	48	4.33^1	5.35^3	5.35^4	5.63^5	6.27^7	7.35^{10}	5.13^2	6.79^9	6.04^6	6.29^8	8.25^{11}
Total Data (Group #)												
Executive (1)	713	3.98^1	5.29^4	4.77^2	6.76^8	4.80^3	5.91^7	5.69^6	7.12^9	5.50^5	8.24^{10}	8.35^{11}
Middle (2)	759	4.22^1	5.23^3	4.88^2	6.23^7	5.24^4	6.37^8	5.57^5	6.78^9	6.12^6	7.72^{10}	8.23^{11}
Supervisory (3)	585	3.89^1	5.14^3	4.73^2	5.95^6	5.40^4	6.78^9	5.60^5	6.57^7	6.62^8	7.60^{10}	8.31^{11}

Notes: a. n = number of respondents.
   b. The superscripts denote the ranking of the work goal.

	n	Opportunity to learn	Promotion	Interesting Work	Salary	Good Match	Autonomy	Interpersonal	Security	Variety	Convenient Hours	Work Conditions
China												
< 30	218	1	2	3	4	5	8	6	7	9	10	11
30-39	134	2	1	3	5	4	6	7	8	9	10	11
40-49	43	5	3	1	6	2	4	7	8	9	10	11
> 49	21	2	6	3	7	1	5	4	10	8	9	11
India												
< 30	21	2	5	1	8	6	7	4	9	3	10	11
30-39	71	1	5	2	8	3	6	7	9	4	11	10
40-49	143	2	6	1	9	4	7	5	8	3	10	11
> 49	186	1	6	2	9	4	7	5	8	3	11	10
Japan												
< 30	15	1	3	2	8	6	7	4	10	5	9	11
30-39	63	2	7	1	6	3	8	5	9	4	10	11
40-49	54	2	6	4	8	1	7	5	9	3	10	11
> 49	63	2	7	3	11	1	6	5	8	4	9	10
Singapore												
< 30	85	1	2	3	4	6	7	5	9	8	10	11
30-39	88	1	4	2	6	3	5	7	9	8	10	11
40-49	48	1	5	4	7	2	3	6	8	9	10	11
> 49	10	6	9	1	5	2	3	8	4	7	10	11
Malaysia												
< 30	30	1	2	5	6	3	8	4	9	7	11	10
30-39	65	2	1	5	3	4	9	8	7	6	10	11
40-49	37	5	1	7	4	2	9	8	3	6	10	11
> 49	11	8	10	3	5	1	2	6	7	4	11	9
Thailand												
< 30	69	1	7	2	8	5	6	3	4	10	9	11
30-39	43	1	8	3	9	4	6	2	7	5	11	10
40-49	35	2	8	3	11	1	7	6	4	5	9	10
> 49	9	4	11	1	8	3	6	7	2	5	10	9
Mongolia												
< 30	92	1	2	5	3	6	8	4	9	7	10	11
30-39	170	1	4	3	9	5	8	2	10	7	6	11
40-49	82	1	4	2	7	3	10	5	9	6	8	11
> 49	36	1	5	4	11	3	8	2	10	9	7	6
Brunei												
< 30	13	1	3	2	9	5	10	4	7	6	8	11
30-39	29	1	2	3	7	6	4	5	10	8	9	11
40-49	59	1	6	3	2	4	11	5	7	8	9	10
> 49	14	1	3	5	8	6	10	2	9	7	4	11
MOW												
<31	2326	5	11	1	2	6	4	3	8	7	9	10
31-50	3987	9	11	1	2	4	6	5	3	7	9	10
>50	1596	10	11	1	2	5	7	3	4	6	9	8

Notes: a.   n = number of respondents   b.   MOW = Meaning of working study (*MOW*, 1987), age work goal rankings.

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