

Research Note

The Developmental State and Educational Advance in East Asia

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Abstract *This paper attempts to illustrate a link between educational advance and formation of the developmental states in East Asia. The paper first introduces several approaches explaining East Asia's rapid development. Then, it focuses on statist approaches. The developmental state theory, one of the statist approaches, attempts to explain the government driven development of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. Finally, this paper introduces the characteristic features of the national education systems in the East Asian developmental states. The paper argues that the national education systems contributed to nation-building by cultivating skilled human resources for economic development and by promoting national solidarity and social cohesion.*

Contextualisation

This paper is based on an historical analysis of the national education systems in the East Asian developmental states. The concept of the developmental state has been adopted in development studies and international sociology. However, in the field of educational studies, it has not been widely investigated. Therefore, this paper tries to shed light on the concept of the developmental state in order to illustrate educational processes in the East Asian states.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to illustrate rapid educational advance in East Asian states; namely: Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore. This paper particularly focuses on the concept of the developmental state.

Some East Asian states provide different models from those of Western capitalism. After the Second World War, Japan and the so-called "four little tigers": South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong, showed rapid economic development through their distinctive development models. In these countries, the state played a crucial part in fostering rapid national development. These countries can be defined as developmental states.

In the developmental states, the education system was also established under strong direction of the state. The respective national education systems played a crucial role in providing social cohesion and skilled human resources.

This paper will first, introduce several approaches to East Asian development. Then, it will introduce the concept of the 'developmental state'. Finally, it will analyse the national education systems in the East Asian states.

Theoretical Approaches

There are several approaches, which have attempted to explain the development of East Asian states. In this paper I discuss three approaches: (1) the socio-cultural approach, (2) the neo-classical approach (The World Bank, 1993), and (3) the statist approach (Amsden, 1989; Ashton et al., 1999; Castells, 1992 and 2000; Johnson, 1982; Wade, 1990).

Socio-cultural Approach

East Asian states are regarded as “Confucian societies”. Many (eg, Cummings, 1996; Morishima, 1982; Tu et al., 1996; Vogel, 1993) have pointed out that Confucianism has contributed to rapid economic development in East Asia. Certainly, Confucianism is one of the distinctive characteristics of East Asia. Confucian traditions of respect for authority legitimated the centralised state apparatuses and Confucian virtues of diligence brought about a hard-working human resource. However, there are two questions on the approach concerning Confucianism.

The first question is how Confucian virtues, which regard conservatism as important, contributed to radical reforms for economic development. The virtues of Confucianism value existing conditions and take things as they were. In short, Confucianists attempt to maintain the status quo and avoid reforms. These features of Confucianism are not adequate to explain the rapid development of East Asia. According to Max Weber (1972), Confucianism was even an impediment to modernisation.

The second question is whether a single model, “Confucian societies”, can be used to classify the East Asian states or not. Although Confucianism can be regarded as one of the fundamental cultures in East Asia, the East Asian states harbour diverse cultures. Meiji Japan can be regarded as a Shintoism state rather than a Confucian state. Taoism rather than Confucianism has affected Taiwan. In South Korea, approximately 50 per cent of the population believe in Christianity, although Confucianism affects Korean Christianity. Additionally, in South Korea, the post-war military government took a negative position against Confucianism, in order to modernise the state. Singapore is a multi-cultural society rather than an homogeneous Confucian society. In short, it is difficult to label East Asian states as “Confucian societies” although its influence is strong in these states. Thus, the influence of Confucianism in East Asia needs to be examined carefully.

Neo-classical Approach

The Neo-classical approach regards the role of the state as correcting for “market failure”. The neo-classical approach to education and training sees the market as the most efficient basic framework for education and training. Rapid expansion of education systems is explained by demands for skilled human resources as economies develop and expand.

In “*The East Asian Miracle*”, the World Bank (1993) regards investment in education as a crucial factor used to explain rapid economic development of the East Asian states, which are called the High Performing Asian Economies. Their analysis of the role of the state in education is determined by the requirements of the neo-classical approach that suggests the market-failure argument.

However, as Yasusuke Murakami (1992) states, *laissez faire* economic approaches can not be applied to many of the East Asian states because the approach was created in the context of an advanced industrial state such as England. The development of Hong Kong can be explained by *laissez faire* economic approaches; however, in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, national development was conducted by the state and not by the market.

Statist Approach

In the cases of Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore, radical social transformations were state-initiated rather than market-driven. Statist approaches are the most proper approach to analyse the characteristic and common features of the processes of national

development in these states. It has been pointed out that state-oriented development policies in these states can be explained by *economic backwardness* and *the late development mechanism* (Vogel, 1993; Dore, 1997). The East Asian developmental states, which can be defined as late developers, could learn technology and social systems effectively from Western early developers. However, since there were considerable gaps in the level of technology between early developers and late developers, huge capital and strategic planning were needed to fill the gaps. In the East Asian developmental states, local capital was not mature enough to promote economic development. Thus, “states” had to direct development themselves.

There is another reason for the strong involvement of the state in the economic development of the four East Asian states. In these states, state formation proceeded under antagonistic relationships with neighbouring states (Morris, 1996). As Castells (2000, p. 284) emphasises, the strong states in the East Asian societies were born of the need for survival and grew on the basis of a nationalist project affirming cultural and political identity in the world system.

For example, after World War II, due to the United States Occupation, Japan was largely reformed. As an impoverished and defenceless state without natural resources, post-war Japan mobilised its whole capital collectively in order to survive. South Korea had been liberated from the Japanese colonial administration and endured an attack from North Korea. However, its territory and population were divided and the land lay in ruins. Moreover, South Korea was reconstructed by the United States as a front line on the North Asian frontier between the communist world and the democratic world. In 1949, Taiwan became the last shelter of the defeated Kuomintang (KMT) and, protected by the United States, as a defensive line against communist mainland China. Singapore was unstable after its independence of 1965. It was expelled from the Federation of Malaysia, and a multi-racial society consisting of a Chinese majority, which had a link with communism and several minority groups like the Malays and the Tamils. The first concern of the People’s Action Party (PAP) was to unify Singapore as a state, under the threat of the Malaysian Communist Party supported by mainland China.

Due to these national crises, these states adopted “developmentalism” as the central discipline. Murakami (1992) defines developmentalism as an ideology in which the economic system aims to achieve industrialisation and admit the government intervening in the market. He points out that developmentalism is a political and economic system based on nationalism, which tends to limit parliamentary democracy (Murakami, 1992). There were specific political actors who transformed the state according to developmental principles. The main actors of the development process were the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in post-war Japan, the Park Regime in South Korea, the KMT in Taiwan and the PAP in Singapore. These political elites regarded rapid industrialisation as a crucial national aim as they thought their state could not survive without strengthening the state through economic development. Such ideas were gradually accepted. In this manner, developmentalism was formed and became the central element of these states.

The Developmental State

The developmental state is the apparatus, which embodies such developmental ideology. Chalmers Johnson (1982) developed the concept of the developmental state in the 1980s. Johnson has provided analyses of the rise of the Japanese developmental state, and its critical role in strategically guiding the nation’s economic growth, at least between 1955 and 1985. The developmental state can be defined as a state in which the political elites aim at rapid economic development and give power and authority to the bureaucracy to plan and implement efficient policies. A high rate of economic growth legitimises the centralised state apparatus; therefore, the nation tends to be excluded from decision-making processes on economic development. According to Johnson, the developmental state aims at rational and

deliberate development and implements state-driven industrial policies, with co-operation between the government and private enterprises. The developmental state contrasts with the “regulatory state” such as the United States (Johnson, 1982, p. 10). In the regulatory state, main actors for economic development are private enterprises. The regulatory state regulates the enterprises only when the enterprises deviate from established regulation. In short, the regulatory state can be characterised by market driven development.

Analysing these processes, Johnson (1982) points out four elements in the Japanese developmental state. Firstly, Japan assigned to the bureaucracy the tasks of planning, constructing, and supervising industry. Secondly, Japan established the political system to support the bureaucracy. Third, when the government needed to intervene in the market, it allowed plenty of scope for activities of private enterprises. Fourth, political direction by the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) had effective functions.

South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore can be classified as the developmental state. Focusing on Taiwan, Robert Wade (1990) argues that the role of the government in Taiwan is to “govern the market” rather than “*laissez faire*”. Alice Amsden (1989) illustrates a relation between state intervention and late, but rapid, industrialisation in South Korea. Manuel Castells (1992) also adopts the concept of the developmental state, to explain the mode of the economic development of the so-called four Asian tigers. Castells’s definition of the developmental state is as follows; “a state is developmental when it establishes as its principle of legitimacy its ability to promote and sustain development, understanding by development the combination of steady high rates of economic growth and structural change in the productive system, both domestically and in its relationship to the international economy.” (Castells, 1992, p. 56) Ashton et al. (1999) identify four characteristic features on the East Asian developmental states: the politico-economic strategy, the mechanisms to link trade and industry policy to education and training policy, the centralised control over the education and training system and the ability to maintain the links through time. They state:

First and foremost was the commitment on the part of the ruling elites to develop the economy in a specific direction. This commitment may have meant taking actions which conflict with the immediate interests of either capital or labour. A normal basic precondition for such actions is the establishment of a strongly, relatively insulated state. Second, the political leadership established mechanisms to ensure that the requirements of the economy played a central part in determining the output of the education and training systems. Third, so that governments could deliver the appropriate skills to the workplace, they had to establish strong controls over the institutions responsible for education and training. Fourth, governments had constantly to steer the system by adjusting the outputs from the education and training system to meet the existing and future demands. (Ashton et al., 1999, p. 141)

The role of the developmental state is vital in fostering, guiding, and ensuring economic growth and technological modernization. According to Castells(2000, p. 284), for the developmental state, economic development is not a goal but a means because to become competitive in the world economy is the way of surviving as a state. Then, economic development becomes only a way of asserting national interests in the world.

Rapid educational expansion can be closely linked with these politics of the developmental states in the intensive processes of state formation.

Educational Advance in East Asia

In the East Asian developmental states, the national education systems expanded rapidly during the processes of state formation. Rapid educational advance was a part of the developmental process.

It has been stated that emphasis on skill formation is one of the distinctive features of the East Asian national education systems (Cummings, 1997; Green, 1998; Morris, 1996). Efficient human capital was vital for the developmental states in the process of state formation. To produce skilled human resources, these states carried out detailed human capital strategies, especially in Taiwan and South Korea along medium-term economic development plans. In Japan, in 1960s, interest groups in industry such as the *Keidanren* (the Japanese Federation of Economic Organizations) demanded that education provide efficient human resources from the government. Cummings (1997, p. 275) names the East Asian approach the “J-Model”. Illustrating the model, he states “the Asian state in seeking to coordinate not only the development but also the utilization of human resources involves itself in manpower planning and job placement and increasingly in the coordination of science and technology. (Cummings, 1997, p. 276)”

The East Asian developmental states coordinated an upgrade of industry and expansion of the national education systems. Consequently, as Morris (1996, p. 107) states, the expansion of the national education systems was largely sequential, with first priority placed on primary education, then later on secondary education, and to tertiary education. Cummings (1997, p. 206) points out that state investment at tertiary level was limited primarily to critical areas such as engineering and the science.

The East Asian states have also placed stress on citizen formation. The emphasis on values and moral education is one of the most characteristic features of the East Asian national education systems. Moral and Values education relates to the priority given to promoting national identity and social cohesion. In Japan, moral education had been undertaken since the pre-war period. However, after World War II, because moral education was used for promoting ultra-nationalism, the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers prohibited Japan from ‘doing’ moral education. In 1958, moral education in Japan was revived as a measure to improve juvenile delinquency and moral decay after the defeat of the World War II. In Singapore, it can be argued that moral education was introduced to create loyalty to the PAP government, which faced gradual democratic movements. It can be argued that in South Korea and Taiwan, which experienced civil war against communist counter states, moral education was, at an early stage, linked with an anti-communism strategy. What should be pointed out here is that moral education in the East Asian developmental states indirectly contributed to creating national solidarity, which was necessarily for rapid economic development directed by the state. Green states;

The importance of education in this process of state formation is evident. The major impetus for the creation of national education systems lay in the need to provide the state with trained administrators, engineers and military personnel, to spread the dominant cultures and inculcate popular ideologies of nationhood, to forge the political and cultural unity of the burgeoning nation states, and to cement the ideological hegemony of their dominant classes. In all countries there was a need to promulgate popular literacy and to generalize the use of the dominant language or dialect as part of the process of fostering national identity. In new nations, such as the USA, education also had to play a major part in assimilating immigrant cultures. (Green, 1997, p. 35)

These educational projects for skill formation and citizen formation have been conducted by strong direction of the developmental states. In the process of state formation, the state was

the most appropriate actor for these large educational projects. Thus, the East Asian national education systems became centralised. The developmental states intervened at many stages of development to modify the national education systems.

As stated above, the East Asian national education systems have common structural features: an emphasis on skill formation, a stress on values and moral education, and central control, are all distinctive and common features of the East Asian national education systems.

Conclusion

This paper has focused on the relation between the formation of the developmental state and rapid educational advance in East Asia. The concept of the developmental state provides a general perspective on historical processes informing national development and educational advance in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore.

This paper has introduced several theoretical perspectives on development in East Asia. The Socio-cultural suggests that Confucianism was promoted to cultivate diligence and loyalty, which contributed to rapid industrialisation. However, it is difficult to define East Asia as a homogeneous Confucian society. Neo-classical approaches can be adopted to explain the development of Hong Kong. However, it is not appropriate to illustrate state-driven development in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore. This paper has suggested the concept of the developmental state is the most appropriate approach to analyse these countries.

Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore can be defined as 'developmental states'. The state has played a crucial part in developing economies and industries in the intensive processes of state formation.

During the period of state formation, the education system contributed to national development as an instrument for skill formation and citizen formation. To coordinate industrialisation and education efficiently, the developmental states often intervened. This contributed to East Asia's rapid economic development, the so-called "East Asian Miracle". The national education system in each country also promoted citizen formation. Moral and value education for citizen formation is one of the characteristic features of education in East Asia. Citizen formation was a vital factor for the East Asian developmental states, which were striving for nation building.

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