

# The Western and Japanese Impact on China's Management Modernization: Path, Method, and Mechanism of Management Learning, 1978-1990<sup>1)</sup>

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## Abstract

China has made a rapid economic growth since 1978, and this largely attributed to the effective use of “foreign advanced experiences”. The government had initiated a nationwide management learning program and aggressively imported management thoughts and methods from the western developed countries and Japan in the 1970s and 1980s. How these “experiences” functioned and created China’s economic surge is not well explained. So, this paper tries to answer the question of how management leaning proceeded in the observed period, and how might it influence China’s management development.

By observing the state-led learning process from 1978-1990, this paper finds out (1) the U.S. and Japan transferred different management contents to China, (2) a top-down and a divergent transfer route formed a dynamic foreign management leaning mechanism, (3) which contributed to the pervasiveness of management in the SOEs and shaped an early form of management education and training in China.

## Introduction

Since the late 1970s, China has experienced remarkable achievement on economic development. Same as other emerging economies, reasons for China’s development are receiving higher attention than ever before. Management is one of the essential factors that explain the development, for it is believed to have led China to become a global manufacturing power. Management in China developed on the basis of “learn from foreign countries”, and current “management concepts were mainly adopted from the U.S., and the ‘floor-level’ practices mainly followed the Japanese way.”<sup>2)</sup> Therefore, it is inevitable to discuss the impact of foreign management in China when talking about Chinese

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2) Yun Wu, “Approaching Modernization Management: The Learning Process in the Early Economic Reform in China,” in *Industrial Development and Management in Asia*, Collections of International Academy of East Asian Economy 18, ed. Toshimichi Haraguchi, Xiaoyilin Liao, and Lixian Liao (Taiwan: Sunspot Technology Co. Ltd, 2015), 212-214.

management development.

Many research work has been done on the topic of foreign management in China. They can be summed up in answering the following three questions. (1) Which management model did China adopt, or which model best fitted China? (2) How to transfer management to China, or how did the transfer work? (3) What were the impacts?

The first question brings many answers, as some studies show China adopted the management model from Japan,<sup>3)</sup> and others support China learned the U.S. way.<sup>4)</sup> Recent arguments are more favorable to the idea that China develops management from her own origin.<sup>5)</sup> These different answers might confuse us, but they provide rich sources to generate new questions, that is how the multiple management models influenced China and how they worked together in China. To understand that, the historical process and contexts should be observed.

Discussions on the second question mainly deal with management transfer focusing on Americanization<sup>6)</sup> and Japanization<sup>7)</sup>. As Figure 1. Shows, either Americanization or Japanization describes a single-track transfer and most of the related literatures observe the transfer process from the exporter's perspective. China is also discussed in this framework, contributing many findings to understand the transfer process from America to China and the one from Japan to China. However, they do not actually explain how the multiple foreign management models worked out together. Moreover, China absorbed some European management practices as well, which made the discussion more complicated and out of the range that current framework (see fig 1.) could handle. This suggests a new analytical framework needed to view the syncretism between multiple foreign management elements and Chinese responses. This approach will be possible if we observe China as an active importer.

3) Anita Chan, "Chinese Enterprise Reforms: Convergence with the Japanese Model?" *Industrial and Corporate Change* 4, no. 3 (January 1995), 449-70; Douglas N. Ross, "Communitarian Capitalism: A 'Market' Model for China?" *Asia Pacific Business Review* 5, issue 3-4 (1999): 11-28.

4) Shirely C. Zhuang., & Arthur M. Whitehill, "Will China Adopt Western Management Practices?" *Business Horizons* 32, issue 2 (Mar/Apr 1989): 58-65; Frederick Kempe, "Executives of China's State-Owned Firms Learn to Do Business the American Way," *Wall Street Journal* (Eastern Edition), February 19, 1987.

5) Dongshui Su, *Oriental Management*, China: Fudan University Press, 2005; Jinggong Xu, *History of Chinese Enterprise Management*, China Financial & Economic Publishing House, 2017.

6) Lars Engwall, Matthias Kipping, and Behlül Üsdiken, "The Transfer of Management Knowledge to Peripheral Countries," *Int. Studies of mgt. & Org.* 38, no.4 (Winter 2009): 3-16; Satoshi Sasaki, *The development of Scientific Management in Japan*, Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1998.

7) JMNEGS (Japanese Multinational Enterprise Study Group), Series of Studies from 1988 to 2009; Akira Tanaka, "The Global Competitive Strategies of Japanese and Korean Steel Companies," Chap. 7 in *Competition Among Asian Firms*, ed. Takeo Kikkawa, Fumikatsu Kubo, Satoshi Sasaki, and Gakuya Hirai (Tokyo: Bunshindo, 2015), 118-137; Hiromi Shioji, *The Competitive Power of Dominant Industries in East Asia*, Kyoto: Minerva Publishing, 2008.

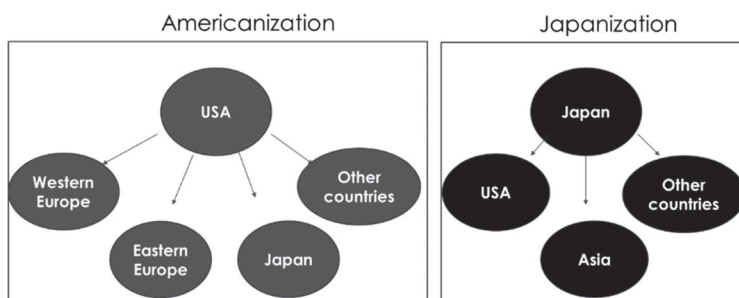


Figure 1. Two mainstreams of management transfer studies  
Source: made by the author

Regarding to the third question, the common view is that western management thoughts and methods had greater impact on Chinese management than Japanese ones. Many foreign management concepts and practices are playing an active role in China, whereas a lot of them imported directly from Japan in the late 1970s and 1980s, they are less known and hard to relate their original identity to Japan. In fact, most well recognized management methods, such as “SWOT Analysis”, “ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning)”, “MBO (Management By Objects)”, even “PDCA Cycle” and “JIT Supply Chain Management”, which were mainly taught by Japanese instructors in the observed period, are considered imported from western countries.<sup>8)</sup> This reflects a big cognitive gap between the management import and its consequences, in other words, the question of how the management methods imported from different countries formed different impacts in China needs to be answered. Unfortunately, no literature for the moment is trying to answer it.

Therefore, to better understand foreign management impacts on Chinese management development, a new historical research on the perspective of the active management importer (China) is imperative. The purpose of this paper is to build the foundation for further discussion on Chinese management hybridization. Although not stepping in much on “impact” issue, this paper intends to find out factors in the learning programs (1978-1990) that would have impact on the management development thereafter. Therefore, this paper tries to answer how foreign management was learned by focusing on “from where”, “by what methods”, and “how the learning carried out”. With these relevant variables teased apart, some characteristics of the learning activities could be observed and analyzed.

This paper is structured as follows: the first section traces on the origin of management introduction by looking at what options were (what management contents from which country) and how the decisions were made. The second section observes the methods used in foreign management

8) Xueli Wang, Chunjun Zhao, Bin Yang, and Lei Xue, *When East Meets West: The Influence of Western Management on Chinese Corporations*. Beijing: China Machine Press, 2011.

learning and clarifies how China learned at the time. The third section discusses the mechanism of promoting and consolidating learning outcomes. The last section is a general discussion of the findings and the significance of this paper. The main findings are (1) the U.S. and Japan transferred different management contents to China, (2) a top-down and a divergent transfer route formed a dynamic foreign management leaning mechanism, (3) which contributed to the pervasiveness of management in the SOEs and shaped an early form of management education and training in China.

## 1. The path towards foreign management: options and decisions

### (1) The start of “learn from foreign countries” policy

In the late 1970s, China finally broke out of the political trap of the Culture Revolution (Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution)<sup>9)</sup>, and transferred the state’s central task from political struggle to economic development. However, right after the Culture Revolution, China was extremely “poor and blank”, with no existing experiences to draw upon on economic construction. In this desperate situation, new political leaders which included Hua Guofeng (state president), Deng Xiaoping (vice-premier) and other senior members of Chinese communist party (CCP) turned their sights on foreign developed countries and started to encourage the nation “learn from foreign countries”. In the opening speech at the 1<sup>st</sup> National Science Conference held On March 18, 1978, Deng Xiaoping pushed forward a goal of “Four Modernizations” (modernization on Agriculture, Industry, Science & Technology, and National Defense), and called on all Chinese “use all the world’s advanced technology and achievements” to accelerate the modernization process.<sup>10)</sup> He stressed that China must open the door and take the advantage of foreign experiences, including those of capitalist countries. Following the “Four Modernizations” goal, China started a policy of “learn from foreign countries”.

### (2) The shift of the learning focus: from technology to management

However, the new policy was difficult to implement because China’s industry had been virtually isolated from the West and Japan until the early 1980s. So, China “had not been able to benefit from the managerial, engineering, technical, and efficiency measures that had been commonplace in the developed countries for many years”<sup>11)</sup>. Based on previous experience of “learning from Soviet” in the 1950s, new political leaders believed that technology was the priority for economic reconstruction,

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9) Happened in China during 1966-1976, initiated by the head of the state Mao Zedong. It severely disturbed the economic order and blocked the development of the social economy.

10) Xiaoping Deng, *Selected works of Deng Xiaoping, Volume 2* (China: People's Publishing House, 1983), 111.

11) Carl Pegels, *Management and Industry in China*, (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1987), 84.

thus the state's first attempt at learning was focused on technology. A huge technology import plan, called "Ten Year's Outline for The Development of National Economy 1976-1985", was then implemented. It soon failed though, for China lacked the capabilities to pay the new projects and was unable to manage those already imported ones effectively. Consequently, the state shifted the learning focus from "foreign advanced technology" to "foreign advanced management" by the end of 1978, and began to seek management models that could work for China.<sup>12)</sup>

The first milestone of the government's effort to approach "modernization management" (*Xiandaihua Guanli*) was sending overseas study tours. In October 1978, the State Council signed a mission to SEC (the State Economic Commission) for organizing a management inspection delegation that can travel overseas and figure out what constitutes "modern" and where to find them. A group of a dozen elite senior cadres, influential scholars, and SOE (State-Owned Enterprise) top managers were brought together and formed "SEC management delegation". This group then went to developed countries which were regarded to have successful management experiences. It made careful inspection in Japan (October 31-December 5, 1978) as well as in the United States (November 5-December 6, 1979) and in Western Europe (West Germany, Switzerland, Austria, April 30-July 4, 1980). The delegation came back with meaty tour reports, suggesting the government to learn selectively from each country it visited.

The extensive tour activities and tour reports of the delegation unveils a wide range of options that Chinese government had set for management learning.<sup>13)</sup>

### (3) The favored model: the Japanese management

However, the learning focus generally converged to Japanese management (see fig. 2) after several round of heat discussion and deliberate screening inside the government. Wu has given two reasons on why Chinese government favored Japanese management model other than western management models.<sup>14)</sup> The first reason was the ideological orientation of delegation members. Wu explains, the tour reports of Japan, the U.S. and Western Europe were written class sensitively and released the message that the U.S. management model fit the market economy but the Japanese one had more to do with

12) Yun Wu, "The Failure of the Technology Leap and Its Consequences: The Beginning of Management Introduction in Late 1970s," in *Industrial Development and Management in Asia*, Collections of International Academy of East Asian Economy 18 (Taiwan: Sunspot Technology Co. Ltd, 2015), 307.

13) For detailed information of the delegation's three inspection tours, see Wu, "Approaching Modernization Management," 215-217.

14) Yun Wu, "The Japanese Management Boom in Post-1978 Mainland China: Its Origin, Feature and the Long Term Impact," in *Industries and Enterprises in Aisa*, Collections of International Academy of East Asian Economy 19, ed. Huizhen Zhang, Xiaoyilin Liao, and Jianlin Li (Tokyo: Gogensha, 2017), 187-199.

planned economy and social equity.<sup>15)</sup> The second reason was that the socialism-emphatic standards that Chinese government valued management. Wu also claims the government considered “Japan was more socialistic, the U.S. and the Western Europe were more capitalistic”, and as a result, made Japan “the best model for socialist China in the 1980s”.<sup>16)</sup> This tendency on management preference, established an ideological positioning on management learning, and effected the learning contents and process afterwards.

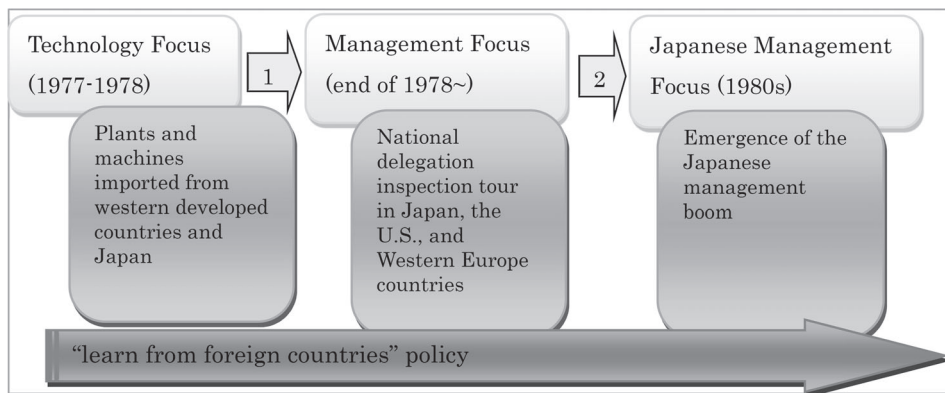


Figure 2. The convergence process towards Japanese management focus

Source: Data from Yun Wu, “The Japanese Management Boom in Post-1978 Mainland China: Its Origin, Feature and the Long Term Impact,” in *Industries and Enterprises in Asia*, Collections of International Academy of East Asian Economy 19, ed. Huizhen Zhang, Xiaoyilin Liao, and Jianlin Li (Tokyo: Gogensha, 2017), fig 11-1.

## 2. Methods and Characteristics of Foreign Management Learning

In responding to the “learn from foreign countries” policy, several state-led management learning programs were carried out. By the end of 1980s, the state vigorously promoted “modernization management” by establishing management associations, sending inspection teams and training teams abroad, conducting cadres’ general training and specialized field training, releasing a large number of management-related publications.<sup>17)</sup> These learning programs were implemented by various organizations but they all were under strong government guiding. This section intends to analyze how the government’s ideological positioning effected the learning process, thus the following observation will focus on the role of major management learning organizations. They are (1) CEMA (China Enterprise Management Association), (2) Sino-foreign management training centers, and (3) pilot enterprises. While the former two proclaimed themselves as nongovernmental organization,

15) Ibid., 192-193.

16) Ibid., 195.

17) Wu, “Approaching Modernization Management,” 214-215.

substantially they were controlled by ministries of the government, especially by SEC.

### (1) CEMA

On March 3, 1979, China Enterprise Management Association (CEMA, renamed to the China Enterprise Confederation on April 20, 1999) was founded. As a subdivision of SEC (not formally) that is responsible for management related issues, it brought together 55 leading officials and experts from enterprises, research institutes, universities, and publishing houses. According to CEMA's record, its main tasks were to 1) study the systems, methods, and experiences of foreign management, 2) facilitate the communication between enterprises and their relevant departments, 3) organize management seminars, 4) help enterprises improve management practices, 5) train cadres, 6) participate international conferences, 7) develop international communication and cooperation, 8) collect related information and publish books and journals.<sup>18)</sup> These comprehensive functions ensured CEMA play a big role on decision making and resource coordination for management learning.

Subordinated to CEMA, provinces and industrial ministries established lower bodies of CEMA and started their activities for local SOEs (see fig 3). According to CEMA, till the beginning of 1982, over 30 EMAs (enterprise management associations) were founded nationwide and the number rose to 145 by December 31, 1985, which involved 29 provinces and municipalities, 16 industries, and 100 cities.<sup>19)</sup>

In addition to expanding organizations, CEMA worked aggressively to fulfill its tasks. By March 1987, it trained 3812 senior cadres<sup>20)</sup>, sent 774 young workers abroad for training, held 20,000 seminars and training programs for over 2 million selected participants, and developed over 1900 professional counselors.<sup>21)</sup> In terms of research, it hosted over 3700 management symposiums, organized 2287 learning circles and research groups. In publication, it published 490 kinds of related journals and magazines, and the total circulation reached 800 million. In terms of international activities, it connected 65 management associations from 37 countries, and invited over 190 foreign specialists to China.<sup>22)</sup>

Worth to mention is the "enterprise management seminars" and the "distance training" programs that CEMA initiated, for they well reflected the relationship between the government's mindset and the way of management learning.

18) CEMA, *Memorabilia of CEMA's 20 Years*, (China: CEMA, 1999), 1.

19) *Ibid.*, 69.

20) Senior cadres here refer to directors and deputy directors from SECs of provincial level and city level, top managers from enterprises.

21) CEMA, *Memorabilia of CEMA's 20 Years*, 90.

22) *Ibid.*

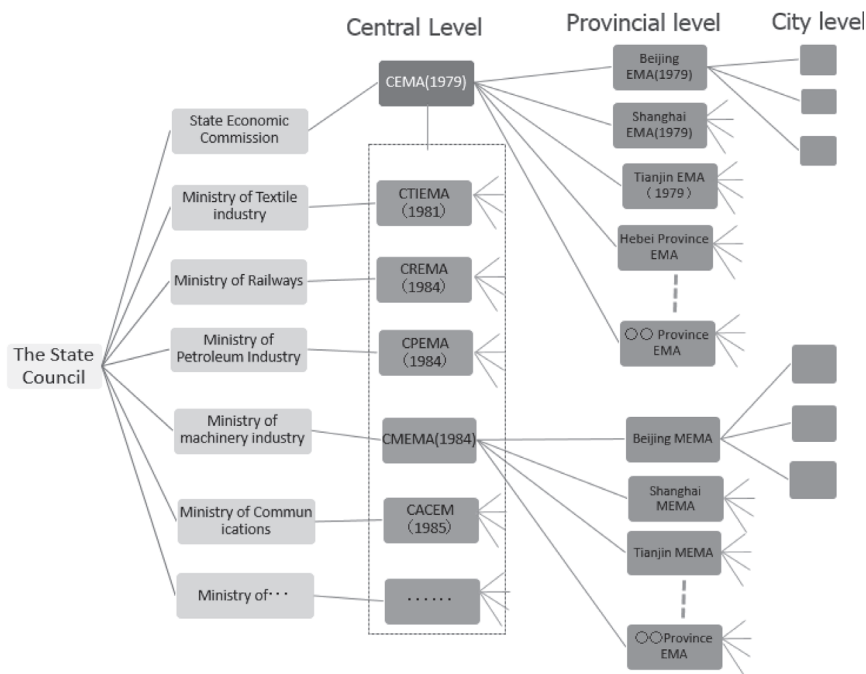


Figure 3. Structure of Enterprise Management Associations

Source: made by the author.

\* CEMA: Chinese Enterprise Management Association; CTIEMA: Chinese Textile Industry Enterprise Management Association; CPEMA: China Petroleum Enterprise Management Association; CMEMA: China Machinery Enterprise Management Association; CACEM: China Association of Communication Enterprise Management)

### Enterprise Management Seminars

On the same day of CEMA's establishment, "enterprise management seminars"<sup>23)</sup> started its function for cadres' training. Under the direction of the State Council and run by CEMA, the seminar was given the vision to "reflect on the lessons of our own experiences and learn from the experiences abroad, then effectively integrate them"<sup>24)</sup>. The seminar targeted senior cadres in economic sectors and SOEs who were considered as "business administrators". They were selected from provincial and city level Economic Commissions and large SOEs and received theoretical education by classroom teaching. Instructors were served by CCP leaders and academic authorities, as well as some management delegation members such as Liqun Deng and Yanning Zhang. The seminars opened averagely around 4 terms each year, trained some 120 cadres each term, and one term lasted from one to two months.

As for the training contents, the seminars focused not only on basic economic theories, but also

23) The seminar was the first and highest-level cadre training program after 1978's Opening-Up in China.

24) It was the Vice Premier Kang's speech at the opening ceremony of CEMA & enterprise management seminar. (Shien Kang, "Set Big Goals and Take Big Efforts to Make A Good Job on Enterprise Management," in *Elect Reference Materials for SEC Enterprise Management Seminars: volume 1*, ed.CEMA (Beijing: CEMA published in Interior, 1979), 4.)



“foreign management experiences, among which the Japanese experiences were highlighted”<sup>25)</sup>. This can be verified from the teaching materials used in the seminars. CEMA collected lecture drafts and edited them into series of textbooks named as *Elect Reference Materials for the SEC Enterprise Management Seminars*. The first volume was published in 1979 and the last one (volume 7) was published in 1981, although they were not public released, CEMA reports a total of 400,000 sets internal publication. These selected materials dress all aspects of economic construction issues such as the role of political work, discussion on planned economy and market economy, introduction of foreign experiences and so on. The third volume is the special edition of foreign economic and management experiences. It contains eight chapters involving six countries, of which two chapters are about Japanese management<sup>26)</sup>, two are about American management<sup>27)</sup>, the other four chapters are about economic policies of Rumania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and the Soviet Union. The volume placed importance on introducing Japanese and American experiences, which can be interpreted as a message that China should learn from them. However, Japanese management was given special attention. Compared with other countries, Japanese management was the only topic discussed in other volumes. For example, a report of a Chinese SOE practicing TQC (Total Quality Control) taught by a Japanese enterprise is in Volume 2, a reprinted version of SEC's inspection tour report on Japanese SME (small and medium enterprise) management is in Volume 6, and SEC's inspection tour report on Japanese industrial management is in Volume 7. Even in those chapters not dealing with foreign experiences, Japan is frequently mentioned in order to explain some economic theories. For example, Liqun Deng, who served as counselor in the management delegation visited Japan and the U.S., used Japan as an example to lecture the topic of “the mechanism of commodity economy and plan”.<sup>28)</sup>

Therefore, the evidences found above show that senior cadres received more knowledge about Japanese management than any other countries, and there are grounds for believing that Japanese experiences had a strong impact on the senior level officials at least in early 1980s.

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25) CEMA's president Baohua Yuan's conversation with Kaoru Ishikawa and Ryoichi Kawai on March 28, 1979. (Baohua Yuan, *Collected Works of Yuan Baohua Volume 1*, Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2013.)

26) They are “SEC Japan Management Inspection Tour Report,” (Chapter 1, written by SEC management delegation) and “Introduction of Japanese Management,” (Chapter 2, written by Yanning Zhang, the secretary of CEMA and also the member of SEC management delegation)

27) They are “American Enterprise Management and Its Development” (chapter 5, author unknown), “Top Manager from Westinghouse Electric Corporation Talking about Management” (chapter 6, it is a translation of a “Productivity Improvement” speech given by Donald C. Burnham (CEO of WH, 1963-1975) in Carnegie Mellon University in 1972.

28) Liqun Deng, *Pondering after Visiting Japan* (China Social Science Press, 1979), 50-52.

## Distance Training

CEMA also took effort to use foreign resources for training cadres and managers by sending people abroad. After the opening-up policy launched in 1978, there was a sharp increase in the number of teams from various government divisions going abroad and many of them were management related. CEMA was the most important agency connecting management training (or inspection) resources abroad. Table 1 is a rearranged list made by the author which shows the most important teams sent by CEMA from 1979 to 1989. During the first 10 years after the establishment of CEMA, it sent out 39 delegations (teams), and the destinations were concentrated on Japan, W. Germany, and other developed countries. The list also reflects two features of CEMA's distance training programs. 1) More teams for the purpose of inspection went to west Europe (11 visits to W. Germany), while more teams for taking management courses bounded for Japan (15 visits). 2) From the subject assigned to the teams, west Europe visiting was focused on making management education programs (for example the MBA education and worker's training). China at that time was seeking how to transfer the western management education systems in, thus many west Europe trips were the negotiation about cooperating training programs in China. In contrast to west Europe trips, Japan trips were aiming at practical management skills directly. This shows that Chinese government was specifically interested in the shop-floor management skills from Japan.

Table1. Inspection/training teams sent by CEMA, 1979-89)

Period	number of people	destination	description of inspection/training
1979			
11/5-12/6	≈ 20	The U.S.	Industrial management and enterprise management
1980			
1/30-n.a.		France, W. Germany, Switzerland	Participate a management conference and enterprise inspection
4/30-6/4	≈ 20	Switzerland, W. Germany, Austria	Enterprise management, worker's education
8/4/- n.a.	20	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
9/2- n.a.	4	Japan	Visit Japan Productivity Center
10/8- n.a.	11	Japan	Inspect the productivity movement
1981			
5/9-6/ 8	5	W. Germany	Industrial management
5/9-6/11	15	W. Germany	worker's education
6/30- (9months)	18	France	Receive "Enterprise Management Training Course"
8/26- n.a.	2	Sweden	Receive the training about organization and management
10/17-11/16	12	W. Germany	Enterprise management
11/4- n.a.	10	Japan	Enterprise and business
11/16-12/3	6	France	Current situation and the education of enterprise management
1982			
2/1-25	2	Australia	Manager's training program

4/3- n.a.	3	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
9/20- n.a.	8	Japan	n.a.
11/23- n.a.	5	France	Management consulting
1983			
1/26/- n.a.	3 +	Belgium, Italy	Deal with the cooperation of MBA program
5/25- n.a.	6	Japan	Meeting with MITI (Ministry of International Trade and Industry) and enterprise visit
6/4-7/ 3	4	W. Germany	Economic management
7/15- n.a.	17	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
9/5- n.a.	10	Japan	Personnel management
1984			
4/2- n.a.	7	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
7/10- n.a.	19	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
10/19-11/22	8	W. Germany, Switzerland	visit enterprises
1985			
Late July- n.a.	3	W. Germany, France	visit enterprises
7/30- n.a.	10	France	Training of management consulting
1986			
5/18	15	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
6/15- n.a.	20	Japan	Receive the "management course for senior manager's" offered by Central Japan Industries Association
8/1- n.a.	20	Norway	Receive the "basic computer management course"
11/3- n.a.	10	Japan	Current management situation of Japanese enterprises
1987			
4/1	5	Japan	Receive the "Management Consultant Training Course" offered by Japan Productivity Center
7/1	3	France, Belgium	Worker's education
9/25-10/18	10	W. Germany	Manager's training
1988			
4/30-5/15	4	Sweden	visit enterprises
10/10-29	8	W. Germany	visit enterprises
11/21-12/11	10	W. Germany	visit enterprises
11/26-12/25	20	Japan	Receive ATOS training
1989			
5/22-5/2	7	Singapore	Inspection of joint project

Source: data from CEMA, *Memorabilia of CEMA's 20 Years*, Beijing: CEMA Press, 1999.

Although the state sent many people abroad, still it could not meet the urgent need of training cadres and managers. According to a survey answered by 2000 SOE employees in 1979, about 80% of them received education under middle school, and very few people, even managers had knowledge of management.<sup>29)</sup> To speed up training people, SEC increased the number of cadre schools. In 1979 and

29) Yanning Zhang, and Guangfu Chen, *Thirty Years of Enterprise Management Training in China*, (Beijing: CEMA Press, 2008), 29.

1980, over 5800 cadre schools trained over 1190 thousand cadres, including some 328 thousand cadres who were county-level or higher government executives.<sup>30)</sup> At the same time, the government started a series of international cooperative training programs. Next two subsections will look at two distinct projects through two different kind of organizations. They are Sino-foreign management training centers and pilot enterprises.

## (2) Sino-foreign Management Training Centers

The first Sino-foreign management training center was founded in 1980 in Dalian. The center is called "National Center for Industrial Science and Technology Management Development in Dalian" (Dalian Center for short), located in the campus of Dalian University of Technology. Dalian Center was cooperated with the United States Department of Commerce. At the beginning, the U.S. side sent thirty professors mainly from the State University of New York at Buffalo. The training program was designed as a six-month course with a capacity of 120 students. On July 18, 1980, Dalian center welcomed its first term of 120 students who were SOE managers selected nationwide and started its operation.<sup>31)</sup> The lectures included "Management Economics", "Marketing", "Production Management", "Technological Management", "Organization and Personnel Management", "Management of Information Systems", "Accounting and Governance", "Financial Management", "Organization Behavior", "Enterprise Strategy and Policy", and so on. These lectures were translated into Chinese and edited into 13 textbooks, which sold over million copies at the time and became the best sellers in the category of economic books.<sup>32)</sup> Dalian center was a milestone for the modernization of management education in China. It opened the door to the west, far more active in attempting to transfer not only management knowledge, but also management curriculums, teaching methods to China's management education system.<sup>33)</sup>

With the success of Dalian Center, the government decided to open more training centers with more countries. Soon in 1982, China-Canada cooperation program "China Enterprise Management Training Center in Chengdu" was established. The next year followed up with three more, "Shanghai Enterprise Management Training Center" (China-W. Germany), "Tianjin Enterprise Management Training Center" (China-Japan), and "China Enterprise Management Training Center in Wuxi" (China-U.S.). After that, the government started working with Europe Commission (EC) in 1984, and with the World Bank in 1985. (See table 2.)

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30) Ibid., 12.

31) CEMA, *Memorabilia of CEMA's 20 Years*, 12.

32) Ibid.

33) Xingguo Chen, and Maode Sun, "Take the Advantage of Other One's Strength: A Study on Dalian Center," *The People's Daily*, December 2, 1986.

Table 2. Main Sino-foreign management training centers, 1980-1989

Founding Time	Competent Authority	Foreign Partner	Scale	Course&Teaching Method	Main Contribution
<b>National Center for Industrial Science and Technology Management Development in Dalian</b>					
1980.4	State Economic Commission, State Science & Technology Commission, Ministry of Education	The U.S.	Building area 10000m <sup>2</sup> , teaching staff 85	Case study, Chinese staff taught basic courses, US staff taught "Management Accounting", "Marketing", "Organization Behavior" etc.	Trained 2717 cadres in 10 years, 241 MBA graduates in 5 generations since 1984, edited 13 text books, translated 11 text books, collected and wrote over 1000 cases.
<b>China Enterprise Management Training Center in Chengdu</b>					
1982.9	State Economic Commission, Sichuan Economic Commission,	Canada	Building area 58000m <sup>2</sup> , teaching staff 134	12 courses mainly taught by Canada staff. "Management Planning", "Marketing", "Management Accounting", "Quality Management", etc.	Trained 1100 cadres in 5 years, held 30 seminars, consulted 32 projects for 15 enterprises, published 17 textbooks, 88 lecture notes, translated 71 articles, presented 107 academic papers.
<b>Shanghai Enterprise Management Training Center</b>					
1983.5	State Economic Commission, Shanghai Economic Commission,	W. Germany	Building area 30559m <sup>2</sup> , teaching staff 101, over 30000 book collections	n.a.	Trained over 5000 cadres
<b>Tianjin Enterprise Management Training Center</b>					
1983.10	State Economic Commission, Tianjin Economic Commission,	Japan	Building area 13400m <sup>2</sup> , teaching staff 60	On-the-job training, professional training, consulting qualification training, computer system training	Edited 9 text books, trained over 3000 managers from 24 provinces, 163 consultants from enterprises, 102 Japanese translators in management field, 494 software developers, edited and published 42 issues of the journal <i>Enterprise Management Study</i> .
<b>China Enterprise Management Training Center in Wuxi</b>					
1983.11	State Economic Commission, Jiangsu Economic Commission	The U.S.	300 boarding students	Training for grassroots people, research, consulting service	Held various courses over 90 terms, trained over 4000 people, consulted 35 enterprises, edited and wrote 21 books.
<b>China-Europe Management Institute</b>					
1984.9	State Economic Commission, China Enterprise Management Training Center	Europe Commission		EC in charge of textbooks and lecturers. Three-year course all taught in English, 4-6 months study in EC	236 MBA graduates in 6 generations
<b>China Comprehensive Transportation Management Training Center</b>					
1985.12	State Economic Commission, Ministry of Railways, Ministry of Transportation	The World Bank	Building area 40000m <sup>2</sup> , 600 students, teaching staff 70	n.a.	Trained over 1900 cadres in transportation, railway divisions, launched wide international academic communications.

Source: Data from *China Enterprise Management Year Book 1990*, Beijing: CEMA Press; Zhang, Yanning, Guangfu Chen, *Thirty Years of Enterprise Management Training in China*, Beijing: CEMA Press, 2008.

The increasing number of Sino-foreign training programs also brought great influence on management education. The Sino-EC project was the first MBA program in China. With the aid of 3,500,000 European Currency Units (ECU) from European Foundation for Management Development (EFMD), Europe Commission and SEC set up an education center called "China Europe Management Institute" in Beijing in 1982. After about two years preparation, the institute started its operation on September 1, 1984. Training high-level management talents as its mission, the institute set stringent requirements for enrolling. Only those who had college education and at least three years of managerial experience were allowed for applying. This means only handful people meet the standards. Also, unlike other training programs which usually lasted several months, this MBA program required three years (including four to six months learning in EC region) and all lectures were taught in English. Consequently, the number of first-generation students was limited to 34, while the second generation almost doubled the number, still only 62 were enrolled.<sup>34)</sup>

Another early MBA program was run by Sino-U.S. Dalian Center from October 1984. Same as the Sino-EC program, college diploma and three years of managerial experience were prerequisites for the entrance, and all courses were in English and required longer study. Textbooks and curriculum setting were fully brought from the State University of New York at Buffalo, as well as the grading system.<sup>35)</sup> Students must complete two years study domestically and one semester in New York State University. The first generation graduated 39 students.

From 1985, the Ford Foundation and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) started funding Chinese universities setting up management learning points<sup>36)</sup> (not in the formal education program, but implemented as experimental teaching program), which can be considered the embryonic form of Chinese MBA education.

MBA was not understood by the society at the time and most graduates were not able to exercise their skills in enterprises.<sup>37)</sup> However, MBA education became popular from 1991 when the government authorized nine Chinese universities run MBA courses.

Among the Sino-foreign training centers, Tianjin Center differed significantly from others. Instead of transforming management knowledge from classroom, more emphasis was placed on practicing.

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34) Deqi Dong, and Derong Chen, "Import Advanced Management and Develop Our Management Science," *Foreign Economic Management*, No.4 (1987):47-49.

35) Xingui Chen, and Maode Sun, "Studying Abroad Without Going Abroad: A Study on Dalian Center," *The People's Daily*, November 28, 1986.

36) Xianfeng Dong, Yubin Li, and Zhijing Wang, "A Study on Sustainable Development of Chinese MBA Education," *Journal of National Institute of Higher Education* 56, no.2 (2000): 46.

37) Jianwei Zhang, Zheng Jiang, Xiaoya Lu, Lanyan Guo, Jun Gao, and Guangqiang Ning, "Memorandum of Fate: Dissecting 38 MBAs' situation," *China Youth Daily*, December 2, 1987.

Tianjin center was opened on Feb 24, 1984, and its establishment was based on an agreement between CEMA and the Japanese government. Japan, through JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency), provided teaching equipment, helped develop textbooks, and sent experts to teach there free of charge. From 1984 to 1986, 6 regular Japanese experts<sup>38)</sup> with over 10 short-term instructors taught in the center. Tianjin Center first selected 25 students from manufacturing floor of SOEs, giving them intensive training as future management instructors. Two years later, when these students turned out to be instructors, the center started regular training programs for SOEs to improve their managerial capabilities. The teaching methods paid great attention to case study and field practice, which was praised by Chinese side as “advanced”, “efficient”, and “a good way of import Japanese management experiences”.<sup>39)</sup>

### (3) pilot enterprises

In addition to CEMA and China-foreign training centers, using pilot enterprises was another effective extension method for transferring foreign management to China. Unfortunately, the role of pilot enterprises has been overlooked in previous literatures due to limited resources as well as excessive attention paid to in-class education programs. Here, this paper looks at a case of transferring foreign management skills into SOEs. Beijing Internal Combustion Engine Factory's TQC (total quality control) learning was one of the most famous examples in the 1980s.

Beijing Internal Combustion Engine Factory (B Factory hereafter) was a large SOE with near 10 thousand employees in the late 1970s. In 1978, the First Ministry of Machinery Industry chose B Factory as a pilot factory to learn TQC from a Japanese machinery manufacturer KOMATSU Ltd.<sup>40)</sup> The factory took the learning opportunity seriously. On the one hand, it sent people to KOMATSU factory in Japan for training (See table 3.), on the other hand, it invited KOMATSU instructors teach in B Factory (See table 4.). The Japanese instructors not only taught TQC knowledge, but also the practices. According to a report from newspaper Yomiuri, KOMATSU instructors lectured TQC basic thinking and methods 200 hours in the factory by June 1979 and Chinese participants got good scores in the

38) They were the leader Naitou Takazou, Production Management expert Kimura Toshiro, Marketing expert Ogura Mitsuo, Information System expert Okano Toshio, Quality Control Management expert Edo Sumio and Financial Management expert Nakachi Tadashi. (CEMA, *Memorabilia of CEMA's 20 Years*, 57.)

39) Damin Yang, and Wenju Zhu, “The Gate of Introducing Japanese Management Experiences: Tianjin Industrial Management Training Center,” *Foreign Economic Management*, No.4 (1987): 50-53.

40) There were three reasons of choosing B factory so far as the author speculates, one was because the similarity on industry and products that both enterprises engaged. The second reason was because B factory's important position in the machinery industry and the scale advantage as one of the TWO BIG factories in Beijing, which means it can afford failure. The last reason was about networking. The key person who coordinated TQC introduction from Japan coached quality control problems in B factory before the TQC introduction.

same exam which was also used in KOMATSU operating in Japan.<sup>41)</sup> In practice training, according to the *Factory History* and the author's interview, instructors used three workshop sections, diesel engine assembly, crankshaft machining, and cylinder block casting, as labs to teach hand by hand how to improve quality and how to operate quality control system. A former trainee (chief of diesel engine assembly section, 25 years old in 1979) recalls, the Japanese instructors brought "revolutionary changes" to the factory.<sup>42)</sup> Not only had the changes happened in the measuring tools, in the way of manufacturing operation, in the methods of quality inspection, he explains, but also the factory had a great progress in management thoughts.<sup>43)</sup> For example, "the concept that quality cannot be achieved from inspection", "TQC involves all members and all departments of a firm", "speak with numbers and figures" were widely accepted and practiced.<sup>44)</sup> Following Japanese instructors' way, all three sections showed notable improvement in quality. The *Factory History* shows that the reject rate in crankshaft machining section was reduced from 3% in 1978 to 0.34% in 1979, as well as in cylinder block casting section the rate reduced from 4.4% in 1978 to near 0%. In diesel engine assembly section, the qualify rate increase from the arrange of 70%-80% in 1978 to 99.3% in 1979.

Table 3. Records of visiting KOMATSU, 1979-80

Period	Name	Delegation Name (Number of People)	Purposes
5/20/1978	Sha Ye, Dai Fuhai	The First Ministry of Machinery delegation(7)	TQC investigation
5/26-7/24/1979	Liu Kexin et al.	The First Ministry of Machinery Study Group(15)	To study TQC contents, practices and methods
11/1979	Ji Zhenheng	Beinei QC Circle delegation(5)	To attend and present at KOMATSU's 11 <sup>th</sup> QC Circle presentation contest
5/6-5/31/1980	Xiao, Jinming et al	Beinei TQC delegation (6)	Discuss about Quality assurance system and product R&D.

Source: Data from Jinshen Ren, *History of Beijing Internal Combustion Engine Factory*, China Science & Technology Press, 1993.

41) "Highly regarded in China, Overseas Training in Komatsu Ltd.," *Yomiuri Shinbun*, 1979, 14

42) Interview with Mr. Bian, interview by author, Beijing, February 14, 2017.

43) Ibid.

44) Ibid.



Table 4. Records of KOMATSU in B Factory, 1978-81

Period	Name (Number of People)	Purposes
8/8-9/6/1978	Takayashi; Baba et al	Teach TQC
8/24/-n.d./1978	Kawai; Ishikawa	Tour the factory and make management consultation
2/n.d.-1month/1979	KOMATSU instructors (2)	TQC training course for technical staff
3/8-5/10/1979	Takahashi et al (6)	Teach quality improvement and quality control system (in three workshop sections)
3/27-3/30/1979	Kawai; Ishikawa	First diagnosis consulting
7/n.d.-n.d./1980	Okada	Verify the effects of TQC practice
11/n.d.-n.d./1980	Kawai;Ishikawa et al	Second diagnosis consulting, TQC promotion suggestions
8/n.d.-n.d./1981	Ishikawa	TQC diagnosis

Source: Data from Jinshen Ren, *History of Beijing Internal Combustion Engine Factory*, China Science & Technology Press, 1993.

To have TQC widespread and practiced in the whole factory, B factory offered various training programs for different level of employees. As a result, almost all employees received TQC training. By July 1979, 435 middle class managers and technological staff received 7 to 14 days training, a total number of 7123 employees received over 8 hours training, and 1909 employees received over 24 hours training.<sup>45)</sup> The wide range of training made employees understand what the TQC was and how it could help the factory. Thus, the TQC activities became popularized in the factory and at the same time, the factory nourished many TQC instructors.

TQC practices in B factory became famous after it promoted its achievements publicly through journals and National Contests of QC Circles. A lot of other SOEs came to B factory and asked for experiences. As a model of TQC practice, B factory responded those requests by sending instructors to support them, as well as providing training opportunities for them in B factory. From August 1978 to end of 1979, 42000 people from 16 provinces were benefited from B factory's instruction, 100,000 external people received training inside B factory.<sup>46)</sup> In addition, B factory even edited TQC manuals and books which also made its experiences widely spread.

### 3. Mechanisms of Foreign Management Transfer

There were two related but different routes of foreign management transfer in late 1970s and 1980s in China. As section 2 has shown, management education was mainly relied on a top-down route (see fig

45) Jinsheng Ren, *History of Beijing Internal Combustion Engine Factory*, (China Science & Technology Press, 1993), 355.

46) Ibid.

4. A as an example). The government formulated education plans and they were transmitted to lower levels, implemented at each level institutes. The organizations of all level EMAs (see fig 3.) facilitated this kind of management transfer.

The other transfer route was a divergent one (see fig 4. B). Although government involved in it as well, the initiative was in enterprises. Take the example of TQC learning, China introduced TQC from Japan was not just by government running programs, instead, model enterprise like B factory played extremely important role on TQC popularization. Its successful experiences spread out quickly and drove a TQC learning boom in early 1980s. This situation also prompted the birth of China's first quality control law on March 10, 1980.

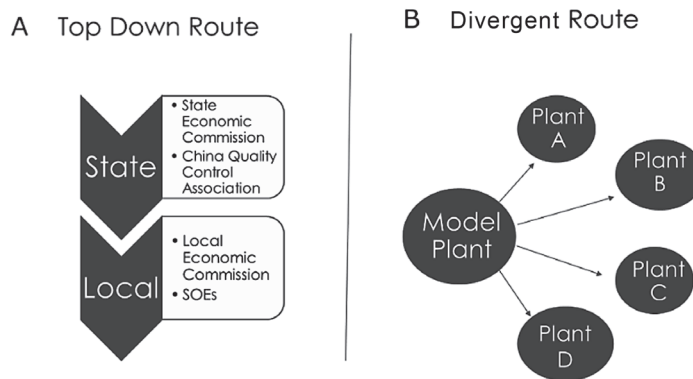


Figure 4. Two routes of TQC introduction

Source: made by the author.

Therefore, the top-down route and the divergent form of management transfer coexisted and they both contributed the management learning from foreign countries. The top-down route was focused on management education, the divergent route was effective in shopfloor practices. Working by this mechanism, western management knowledge and methods, consequently, were absorbed into Chinese management education systems. Later, with the spring up of business schools from 1990s, western management got well recognized. On the other hand, the Japanese practices which were actively introduced in actual operations in SOEs, gradually lost the recognition as mentioned in the introduction section. It was not because those practices were no longer applicable, on the contrary, they were deeply embedded in the operation and became one part of Chinese management. In this sense, current view in previous studies that western management had greater impact on Chinese management than Japanese one is discussable.

## Conclusion

Learning management from foreign countries was a solution the government recommended for the economic backwardness. It became an important means to implement modernization management in the 1980s. Its large scale, wide scope built a foundation of Chinese management development. What and how did China learn? What kind of impact had the learning left? This paper observes the learning programs of CEMA, Sino-foreign training centers, and pilot enterprises from 1978 to 1990 and the findings are as follows.

Firstly, the Western countries and Japan transferred different management contents to China. China learned more knowledges and methods from Western countries mainly by education/training programs. Whereas, on the learning of management skills, Japan contributed most. Such a different division in leaning to a large extent was due to the government's intention, since it favored Japanese management model and wished it could apply to Chinese enterprises as well.

Secondly, in respect to the leaning methods, a top down and a divergent learning route was found coexisted and they formed a dynamic management transferring structure. SOEs in the observed period are usually elaborated as be very negative and rigid in SOE studies. However, in case of TQC learning, SOEs were very proactive, and the pilot enterprise was found effective in the transfer activities.

Thirdly, the government's choice of management contents, the dual route of management learning mechanism brought different impacts. Management knowledge and methods which were mainly took from western countries kept their presences because they were the standards in most management textbooks. The impact of Japanese management in China is complicated though. In the 1980s, Japanese management was most recommended and learned, so logically Japanese management should have deeper impact than other ones. However, the result of survey in previous studies showed opposite view as mentioned in introduction.<sup>47)</sup> Although it needs further discussion, this paper partly explained the change on Japanese management recognition in China. Because of the skills learned from Japan was practiced and rooted in Chinese enterprises, they have been modified, adjusted each time when SOEs reorganized or restructured since 1990s. This can be considered as the hybrid process of Chinese management which causes those skills practiced in the shop floor lost their Japanese identity in China.

With above findings, this paper is expected to facilitate the studies on the hybridization of Chinese management. Further studies on how the imported foreign management concepts, theories and methods were adjusted to fit the Chinese needs, how they became part of Chinese Management are needed.

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47) See note 8.

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