

## Book Review

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**Understanding Management in China, Past, Present and Future**, Malcolm Warner, London and New York, NY: Routledge, 2014. Paperback: £27.99/\$50.95, 244pp, ISBN 978-0-415-50612-0, Hardback: £95.00/\$160, ISBN 978-0-415-50611-3.

Emphasizing both the *length* of China's experience and the *breadth* and *depth* of management's role in the development of modern China, Professor *Malcolm Warner's* new book *Understanding Management in China, Past, Present and Future* provides a comprehensive coverage, as well as fine details of the evolution of management in China. The author is an Emeritus Fellow, *Wolfson College* and *Judge Business School, University of Cambridge* and has long experience of researching management in the PRC. His work is indeed judicious in the balance it strikes between acknowledging the massive accumulation of thinking on management in China over the past and an awareness of how the current institutionalization of management is working against the subject's philosophical roots.

The book is divided into four parts, with ten chapters in all, followed by three appendices. Following an Introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the historical background of management in China. Chapter 3 considers the influence of culture on the development of management in this context. Warner notes that, 'traditionalism and modernism were, and still are, intrinsically intertwined in its institutional evolution towards its modern form' (p. 190). As a key link in the chain of history, culture, and management of China, Chapter 4 presents a short review of changes in the Chinese economy over the last few decades. Chapter 5 identifies the industrial and institutional parameters of management reform in China. It records how the ownership of industry changed dramatically from one which focused on the role of SOEs in the economy, to one which involves with a wide spectrum of organizational models. Chapter 6 is concerned with the characteristics of Chinese managers and managerial behaviour with special focuses

on management training and development in China. Chapter 7 moves to the Chinese system of labour-management relations. The debate on whether Chinese human resource management (HRM) will converge or diverge towards Western practices is still ongoing, as Chapter 8 relates. Chapter 9 outlines the likely course of future management developments in China. Centring on the fundamental question of whether we need a 'theory of management in China' on the one hand, or a 'Chinese theory of management' on the other, in his conclusion, Chapter 10, Warner elaborates on a number of paradoxes which characterize management in China. He affirms that 'it is premature to assert that there is either a new theory or a new paradigm emerging in the field of management in China' (p. 206).

The book is written in highly accessible style and draws on the author's years of first-hand experience. The book not only illustrates a number of key elements in management in China but even more clearly explains that no one aspect can be seen in isolation. The discussion involves management in China in its historical context, as well as its contemporary reality. The story flows seamlessly from the past, present, to future. The chapters encompass in depth the key literature in the field, both theoretical and empirical, as well as the latest analysis, documentation and research available on the subject. As such, the book should be of interest to a wide audience - academics and practitioners alike, who have an interest in China. It will also appeal to both an undergraduate and a post-graduate audience undertaking courses in Asian economics and management, organizational behaviour, HRM and industrial relations.

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