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Persuasive Paper re: *Managing Creativity: A Japanese Model*

Considering the reading and comparative management models like the Hofstade Model and the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Model, write a ONE page persuasive essay about whether or not this Japanese Model for innovation can be implemented in the United States. Make sure that you have read Tucker Chapter 13 *Intercultural Relations* before reading the article in Katz

In *Managing Creativity: A Japanese Model*, Min Basadur discusses the specifics of the Employee Suggestion System (ESS), a form of quality-circle activity for receiving and incorporating feedback from rank-and-file employees into the business, within several large unnamed Japanese corporations. The author discusses several characteristics of this system that deal specifically with the interactions of the individual within the corporation. Using the Hofstade typology for assessment of intercultural differences and specific dimensions of the Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck Model, it will be shown that any implementation of a Japanese-style ESS would directly conflict with United States cultural values on a number of levels.

Hofstade’s Individuality vs. collectivism dimension is perhaps the most obvious of the differences. Basadur describes how employees are encouraged in “constructive discontent” from the start of their careers and “interact with co-workers to solve such problems and demonstrate that their solutions can be implemented” (Basdur 65). This approach presupposes both that employees possess sufficient internal incentive to adopt this frame and that they will be in their careers for a sufficient length to develop useful insight into the business in which they are working.

American culture, however, has long rewarded and reinforced the culture and mythology of the individual innovator. The wealthiest Americans, by and large, started with an idea and drove it from the top – examples of this can be seen in Bill Gates, Warren Buffet, and the Sam Walton’s Wal-Mart. Along the way, those who have historically contributed most heavily to the businesses associated with those names have received significant individual recognition and, frequently, wealth. This fact might tend to discourage those with highly innovative ideas from providing them to the corporation; an understanding that the big cultural wins are to be made outside of existing organizations is likely to have a chilling effect on internal innovation. One can predict that those most likely to contribute heavily are also those most likely to attempt it on their own.

Kluckhohn-Strodtbeck’s concept of the relationship of an individual to their environment also applies when considering the potential efficacy of implementing a Japanese-style ESS. In many cases, a “Wild West” mentality accompanies initial American entrepreneurial efforts. Within this approach is the suggestion of environmental domination – “blazing a new trail” involves altering the landscape, the impact of which can be clearly seen when opening up new markets or taking turf from a less agile competitor. This is typically accomplished by leveraging one or two big ideas with small refinements added along the way, and the mindset required is one of dominance of the existing environment. It is difficult to see how, within this top-down-driven system of game-changing ideas, a cultural of continual and incremental internal improvement could be fostered or incentivized. In contrast, it could be that Japanese corporations, relying on an individual’s relative harmony in their job role and willingness to pursue it over the long-term, would naturally have more success with incremental rank-and-file improvement.