

文化：经济增长的关键？

Culture: the Key to Economic Growth?



文/李少民 朴胜虎
By Shaomin Li and Seung Ho Park



家，那么多半会招来怀疑的目光。可是，这正是我们的生产力增长研究基于这些国家的文化所得出的结论。

虽然分析师和政策制定者强调经济改革对于促进经济发展的重要性，但他们往往忽视了其他在提高工人生产力方面发挥关键作用的因素——工人生产力才是经济增长的源泉。如果仅关注法律法规和财产权保护之类的经济改革，那就解不开经济增长之谜了。我们在研究中得出了如下结论：

我们将中国、韩国与一些有着相似的经济水平、制度质量和收入水平的国家进行比较，发现近十年来中韩两国在生产力增长方面明显胜出，分别达到对比国家的五倍和三倍（见表1）。这与中韩两国的文化密切相关。

促使我们进行这一研究的不是学术文献的缺乏，而是一些个人化的观察：一

些内陆城市学校教育的失败（提示：与基础设施或教师质量无关），畅销书《虎妈战歌》所引发的争论；以及一些有趣的实例：一些人在某种文化中如鱼得水，在另一种文化中却一筹莫展。我们以社会科学理论来分析这些案例，重点关注新兴经济体，试图找到推动经济发展的秘诀。我们从世界银行、世界价值调查和世界大型企业联合会等机构提供的可靠数据中分析了100多个可能的解释性变量，以期找出影响劳动生产力的文化变量。

我们的研究发现，在新兴经济体（人均收入低于10000美元的国家），有三组对劳动生产力发生显著影响的文化因素。第一组是“与经济相关的文化”，例如，人们对于自身财政状况的认识、对于收入不公和税收的态度等。我们发现，对于财政状况不满的人倾向于制定长期计划，并承担较大风险，这些都有助于提高

为什么在相似的经济体制下，不同经济体的发展速度却各不相同？根据我们的研究，原因就在于文化。

如果有人问埃及、摩洛哥和孟加拉国将会成为下一批经济高速增长的国家，

表1：生产力增长、制度质量和收入水平

Table 1. Productivity Gains, Institutional Quality, and Income Levels

| 国家/地区 Country/Region | 人均收入 Income per Capita | 年均劳动生产力增长 (2001–2011年) Annual Labour Productivity Gain (2001–2011) | 制度质量 (经济自由度指数) Institutional Quality (Economic Freedom Index) | 制度质量的变化 (经济自由度指数) Change in Institutional Quality (Economic Freedom Index) |
|---|---------------------------|---|--|--|
| 第1组 (人均收入在750–1250美元之间的国家, 不包括中国) Group 1 (countries, excluding China, with income between \$750–\$1,250) | \$935 | 3.5% | 5.40 | 0.39 |
| 中国 China | \$1,000 | 17.8% | 5.28 | 0.39 |
| 第2组 (人均收入在10000–15000美元之间的国家, 不包括韩国) Group 2 (countries, excluding South Korea, with income between \$10,000–\$15,000) | \$12,134 | 1.0% | 6.39 | 0.33 |
| 韩国 S. Korea | \$10,890 | 3.3% | 5.92 | 0.25 |

Data Sources: World Bank, IEMS, Globescan, Conference Board, UN Demographic Yearbook, and Freedom House

数据来源：世界银行、工业工程和管理科学 (IEMS)、全球观察 (Globescan)、世界大型企业联合会、联合国人口统计年鉴、自由之家

Why do some economies grow faster than others despite having similar economic institutions? The reason, as our study shows, is culture.

If one suggests that Egypt, Morocco, and Bangladesh will be the next bright spots for high economic growth, it would not be surprising to get sceptical reactions. Yet, based on the culture of these countries, this is what our study on productivity gains suggests.

While analysts and policy makers emphasise the importance of economic reforms to pursue economic growth, they miss other factors that play a critical role in improving worker productivity – the ultimate source of economic growth. The narrow focus

on economic reforms, such as the rule of law and property right protection, leaves a puzzle unexplained. We found the answer during our study.

Let's take China and South Korea and compare them with countries with similar levels of economic and institutional quality and income. They greatly outperformed their peers in productivity gains during the past ten years by as much as five and three times, respectively. This has a lot to do with their culture.

What inspired us to study this issue was not a gap in the academic literature, but some personal observations: the failure of inner city schools (hint: it is not poor infrastructure or teachers), debate around the book *Battle Hymns*

of the Tiger Mother, and mounting anecdotal evidence on why people of certain cultures thrive while others fail. From here we draw on social science theories to build our case with a focus on emerging economies that are searching for clues to boost economic development. We then examined over 100 possible explanatory variables using the data from reliable sources such as the World Bank, World Value Survey, and the Conference Board to identify the cultural variables that would affect labour productivity.

Our study identified three groups of cultural factors that significantly affect labour productivity in emerging economies – countries with a per capita income below \$10,000. The first group



生产力。我们还发现，生产力高的人更能够容忍收入不公，也更讨厌税收。

第二组是“对威权和自由的态度”。我们发现在这一组中，以下文化因素尤其有助于提升生产力：接受并期待高权力差距的文化，例如，无权无势者接受权力分配不公的现实；那些意识到自己并没有太多自由的人往往更具生产力；要求政府来保证社会安全稳定的社会态度，而不是让个人为其行为负责的缺乏监管的社会。总之，高生产力国家的文化似乎更加专制、更少“自由”。

第三组则全部是关于“家庭价值观”。家庭是社会的最基本单位，是一个人成长并社会化的主要组织，因此家庭对塑造价值观具有极其重要的作用。同时，家庭也是文化传承的主要载体。如果一个家庭破碎，那么就会影响孩子学习社会主流文化的过程。我们研究了三种与家庭价值有关的态度，尤其是对于“幸福家庭”的观点。高生产力国家通常认可“孩子需要在父母双全的家中抚养长大”的观点，不鼓励非传统的家庭形式（资料来源于“世界价值调查”）。根据统计数字，高生产力国家的离婚率或分居率通常较低。从总体上看，高生产力国家往往拥有深入人心的传统家庭观和更多的完整家庭。

我们把这三组文化因素结合起来，创造了一个文化指数，用于描述那些激

励人们努力工作、提高生产力的最主要的文化因素。如图1所示，该文化指数与生产力增长有很强的关联：该文化指数较高的国家，其生产力增长速度也较快。

我们从中得到了另一个有趣且重要的发现：比较经济改革和文化对生产力增长的积极作用，我们发现经济改革对生产力增长的积极作用在人均收入5000—10000美元的国家达到顶峰，而文化对生产力增长的积极影响在人均收入达到更高水平（从大约15000美元到高达60000美元）时也不会消退。这说明，与经济改革相比，文化对于提高生产力有着更为持久的影响力。因此，各国政府应投入资金并制定政策，以培育可以提高生产力的文化。

我们的研究可以用于解读若干政策的效力。首先，旨在减少收入不公的高税收、高福利政策无助于培养可提高生产力的文化。政府应该制定鼓励人们勇于冒险和创业的经济政策，例如简化手续、自动批准企业注册等让创立企业变得容易的举措。由此引申开来，就是关于政府应不应该提高低生产力地区工资水平的争论。提高工资水平并不能解决生产力低下这一问题的根源；相反，会使得生产力低下的问题进一步恶化，因为这会培养出一种“津贴”文化，从而阻碍生产力的发展。

其次，我们关于“对待威权和自由

的态度”与生产力增长之间关系的研究表明，在新兴国家中，权威文化与生产力增长之间确实存在正对应关系。教育政策应该让学校在学生的学习和纪律方面有更多的权威。尤其是一些最不发达国家，制定政策来培养一批服从命令、纪律严明的劳动者有助于提高生产力。当然，这些政策最好能与建立自由市场、法制社会的经济改革结合在一起。

第三，我们发现，家庭对于培养可提高生产力的文化也起重要作用。与高生产力相联的通常是较低的离婚率、青少年妊娠率和婚外生育率。这意味着鼓励传统家庭观念的政府政策可能更有助于提高生产力。

如今世界各国都在寻求经济复苏的妙招。我们的研究表明，政府、学校和家庭都应积极培养可提高生产力的文化。虽然这并非易事，但有些文化因素是在短期内改变的。近几十年来社会对于吸烟态度的改变就是一个很好的例子。

最后是一点附加说明：一个国家贫穷的根本原因在于经济体制。没有经济改革，就算是推动生产力的文化也无法让国家走向繁荣。一个国家想要获得文化红利，就必须改进其经济体制，如保护财产权、确保公平的市场竞争。另外还要提醒读者注意，我们的研究仅限于生产力增长这一课题，并不包括改变态度和文化价值观所引发的创新。

希望通过生产力增长来获得利润增长的跨国公司必须格外关注文化。目前大多数新兴经济体都在进行经济改革，那些有着可提高生产力的文化的经济体能够在下一轮竞争中获胜，成为外国投资的首选目标。

李少民 欧道明大学国际商业学教授
朴胜虎 中欧国际工商学院战略学教授

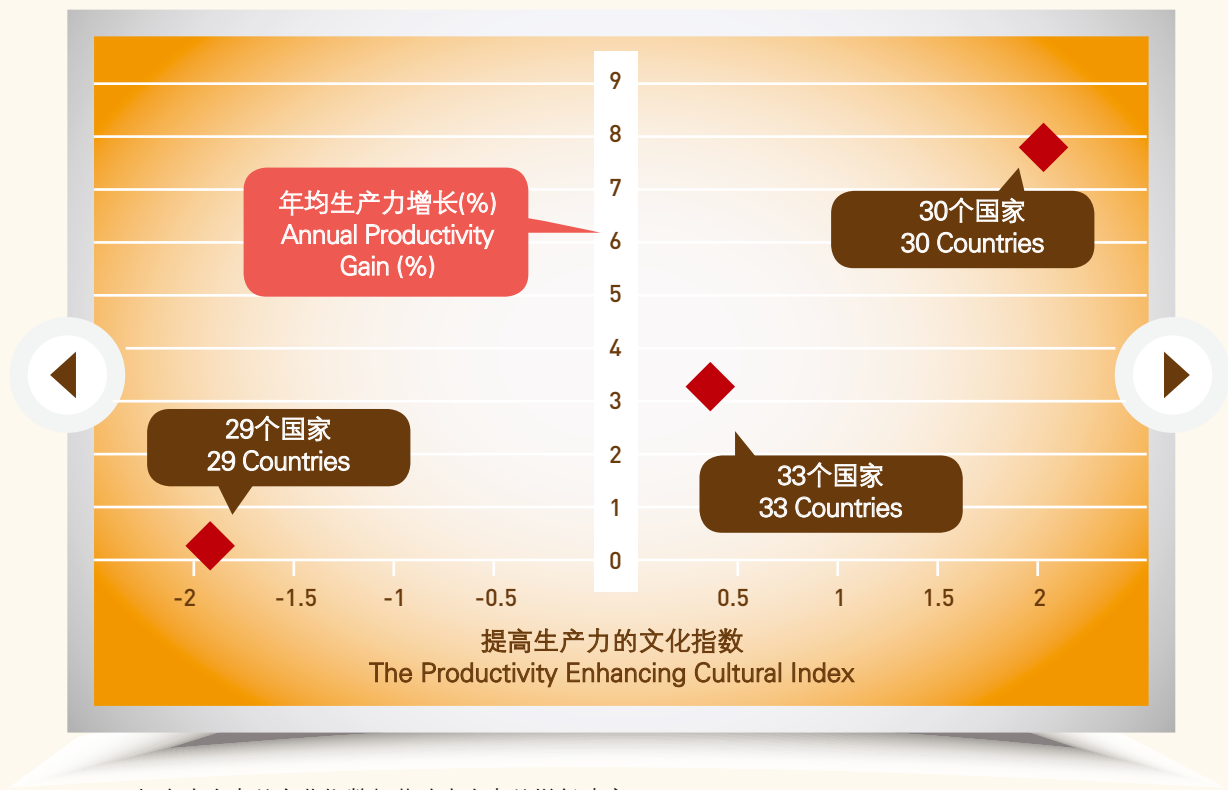


图1：提高生产力的文化指数与劳动生产力的增长速度

Figure 1. The Productivity Enhancing Culture Index and Labour Productivity Gains

is economy-related culture, i.e., people's perceptions on their own financial situations and their attitudes toward income inequality and taxes. We found that people who are not satisfied with their financial situations tend to plan for a longer term and are willing to take greater risks, factors which in turn help improve productivity. We also found that high-productivity people tolerate inequality more and dislike taxes.

The second group is attitude toward authority and freedom. In particular, we found that four cultural factors are conducive to productivity gains in this group: a culture that accepts and expects a high power distance, e.g., less powerful people accept that power is not distributed equally; people who

perceive that they do not have much freedom tend to be more productive; and, a social attitude that prefers to have government ensuring social safety and stability versus a deregulated society where people are responsible for their own actions. In sum, the culture of highly productive countries tends to be more authoritarian and less 'free'.

The third group of factors is all about family value. The family – the most basic element in a society and the primary organisation in which a person is brought up and socialised – plays the most important role in forming the value of a person. It is the primary vehicle through which culture is passed along from generation to generation. When the family is broken, it will

adversely affect children's learning of the established culture in the society. We examined three family value-related attitudes, in particular the view of a happy family. Countries with high productivity have a social attitude that frowns upon non-traditional family arrangements, supporting the thinking that "a child needs a home with both a father and a mother to grow up happily" (The World Value Survey). Statistically high-productivity countries have lower divorce or separation rates. In general, high-productivity countries tend to have strong traditional family values and more intact families.

Combining the three groups of factors, we created a single cultural index that captures the most important



Countries high in the cultural index are also high in productivity gain.



elements of a culture to encourage people to work hard and be productive. As can be seen from the chart below, there is a strong correlation between the cultural index and productivity gains: countries high in the cultural index are also high in productivity gain.

This leads to another interesting and important finding we have made: comparing the positive effects of economic reform and culture on labour productivity gains, we found that the positive effect of economic reform will reach a peak in a country when per capita income reaches the range of \$5,000 to \$10,000. Meanwhile, the positive effect of culture on productivity gains will not taper off until income per capita reaches a much higher level, from approximately \$15,000 to as high as \$60,000. This shows that culture has a much longer-lasting effect on improving productivity than that of economic reform. This should be an incentive for governments to invest in and implement policies that will nurture a productivity enhancing culture.

Several policy implications can

be drawn from our study. First, high taxes and high social welfare that aim to reduce income inequality do not help nurture a productivity growth culture. Governments should institute economic policies that encourage risk-taking and entrepreneurial behaviour, such as making it easier to start a business (simplifying the process and instituting automatic approval of business registration). An extension of the above discussion is that governments should not raise the wage level of regions with low labour productivity, because doing so does not address the source of the low productivity. On the contrary, it may exacerbate the problem by nurturing an entitlement culture that hinders productivity growth.

Second, our finding regarding the attitude toward authority and freedom and its relationship with productivity gain shows that there is a positive association between an authoritarian culture and productivity gains in emerging countries. The educational policy should allow schools to have more authority over students' learning and discipline. Especially for least developed nations, implementing policies that can help establish an obedient and disciplined labour force may help increase productivity growth. These policies work best if combined with economic reform that aims at instituting the free market and the rule of law.

Third, we found that family is important in nurturing a productivity-growth culture. There is a strong association between high productivity gains and low divorce rate, teenage childbirth, and birth out of wedlock.

This suggests that government policies that encourage traditional family values could be more conducive to productivity growth.

Today countries are seeking ways to revitalise their economies. Our study implies that governments, schools, and families can actively help nurture productivity-enhancing cultures. Although it is not easy, some elements of culture can be changed in a relatively short period of time. A good example is the change in attitude toward smoking in recent decades.

Lastly, a caveat: The fundamental reason for a country to be poor is in the economic institutions. Without economic reform, even a productivity-enhancing culture will not bring a country to prosperity. For the above-mentioned countries to harvest the cultural dividend, they must improve their economic institutions such as protecting property rights and fair market competitions. It also needs to be noted that this study is limited to productivity gains, not innovations that would require different attitudes and cultural values.

Multinational firms pursuing a margin increase through productivity gains should pay attention to culture. Most emerging economies embark on an economic reform and the ones with productivity-enhancing culture will win the next round of the race and become hot destinations for foreign investments.

Shaomin Li is Professor of International Business at Old Dominion University.

Seung Ho Park is Professor of Strategy at CEIBS.