**Introduction**

The past decade has brought severe economic turmoil to once prosperous Asian nations. Economic disorder has brought educational crisis, as the once-secure socioeconomic structures that supported and drew upon educational institutions are no longer so stable. What was in some countries a long-unquestioned link between economics, employment, and education is now a hot topic of debate – a debate with significant potential to shape the social and economic future of much of Asia. Our workshop will try to understand the nature of this broken educational/economic pipeline. What broke it, and why? Is it really broken badly, or is the current crisis more one of perception than reality? Can it, or even should it, be mended? And by which institutions, public or private? These are the questions that we will ask, and hope to begin to answer.

**Briefing Summary**

Starting in the 1960s, and lasting up until roughly a decade ago, many Asian nations experienced a long, nearly unbroken stretch of prosperity. Along with this tremendous economic miracle there developed a strong symbiotic relationships between systems of secondary and higher education and economic structures. Successful employment became identified with scholastic achievement, and institutions of higher learning became more and more – though by no means entirely – feeders for, and expressions of, the economic institutions. A kind of educational/economic pipeline emerged, at least in the popular imagination. Young men and women would seem to start in secondary school (or before), flow down the line during their college years, and be directed to safe and socially prestigious jobs as a function of their educational credentials. In Japan and South Korea in particular, the educational system was reconstructed in the post-War period to fit in with the “salary-man” economy. In some of these cases, actual curricula became significantly less important than the educational imprimatur of the credential itself, which became a kind of symbol of the pipeline itself.

With the Japanese collapse of the early 1990s, and the subsequent pan-Asian Crisis of 1997-98, the pipeline has, in the minds of many, broken. As the Asian economic situation has entered a state of protracted crisis, the education systems in many Asian countries have seemed increasingly outmoded, and socially and economically inappropriate. As the salary-man system, and the entire economic order around it, has quickly become brittle and perhaps unstable, the very rigid education system that grew up around it has also begun to disintegrate.

Not unexpectedly, this has had large-scale socioeconomic effects. In regards to Japan and Korean, though by no means exclusively, we will look at how closely the education system has been tied to the particulars of the economy, and how tightly paths were constrained by the education system. We will then explore the social effects in the last several years, in which suicide rates among recent graduates have more than tripled, and people have dropped out of schools in very high rates in Japan, Korea, and other Asian nations. We will look at the effects this has on society, especially in light of a growing sentiment of hopelessness, and the emergence of terrorist organizations like the Aum Shinrikyo.

Singapore, Hong Kong, and China, though suffering similar economic woes, have had different (if not less serious) difficulties in higher education. We will look to see if there are convincing social and economic commonalities of those areas that have made them less susceptible to educational catastrophe in the face of economic downturn. It is our hypothesis that, in these other countries, less social rigidity regarding educational relation to employment, and the “non-pipeline” nature of education and economy, has allowed for some crucial flexibility during economic difficulty and change.

We will look at how countries that have experienced the broken pipeline have reacted, and explore the solutions they have begun to implement, at individual, corporate, and governmental levels. As major educational reforms are being proposed by the Japanese and Korean governments, we will look to see if these reforms are effective, or even relevant, in light of the pipeline phenomenon. Issues of privatization and “professionalization” are taking center stage in the politics of education, and we will try to understand how the relationship between these issues and the future of the economic/education symbiosis. Does this reform involve enough government participation? Or too much? We will also look to understand how change has emerged at lower levels, through the development of entrepreneurial “schools” and the emergence of re-education and “outside” education from smaller, private skill-based academies -- e.g. the sharp rise in Private Investigation training academies in Japan and amateur singing instructors in Korea.
The workshop will feature leaders from the governmental, academic, and economic communities, who will help us to integrate ideas from economics, history, sociology, and education to provide insight into the tough questions that we ask above. With their help, and the enthusiastic participation of delegates from around Asia, we would like to foster a next stage to the education/economy debate and help shape the long-term solutions.

**Tentative Workshop Schedule**

Workshop Session I: Introduction and Overview
- Assignment of Small-Group Projects

Workshop Session II: Speaker TBA
- Recent Educational History of Japan, Korea, Hong Kong, and Singapore

Workshop Session III: Speaker TBA
- Educational disconnection in Japan and South Korea

Workshop Session IV: Speaker TBA (Educ. Minister or Pres. Of Tokyo University)
- Governmental Education Reform

Workshop Session V: Speaker TBA
- Privatization and Professionalization: Real and Relevant Trends?

Workshop Session VI: Speaker TBA
- Corporate and Non-institutional Educational Trends.

Workshop Session VII:
- Presentation of Small-group Projects

**Who Should Apply?**

We encourage any students with interest to apply. We are especially interested in those who have experience relevant to understanding the relationship between education and the economy, in whatever capacity. The more diversity of background, the more creative and interesting the solutions that we generate will be.