
Comparing innovative competences: Pioneering a cell therapy sector in Japan, South Korea and the UK

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Abstract (in French and English)

This paper addresses the growing work on East Asian Business Systems (Whitley 1992, 2013; Witt and Redding 2013) and the frequent associations made between particular institutional environments and innovative competences in the comparative capitalism literature (Hall and Soskice 2001; Allen 2013). To focus on firms' capacities to engage in novel product innovation, we study firms' activities in a sector at technological frontier. In this paper, we look at the emergence of the cell therapy industry across three countries – Japan, South Korea and the UK – in the following institutional spheres: intra-firm relations; inter-firm relations; the financial system; the research and training system; and the role of the state. Contrary to the prevailing associations made between so-called liberal market economies – such as Britain – and radical innovation, the empirical evidence in this case suggest no clear institutional advantages among the three economies. The research illustrates how highly innovative industries may build more upon tacit rather than codified knowledge, and may advance in institutional environments less frequently associated with novel product innovation. It also highlights the fundamental role of the state as both enabler and disablers of innovation.

Keywords: Institutions, innovation, business systems, Japan

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