



# Managing Innovation in Japan: The Role Institutions Play in Helping or Hindering how Companies Develop Technology

*Chihiro Watanabe*

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This book summarizes highlights of the investigation of “An Elucidation of the Role of Institutional Systems in Characterizing Technology Development Trajectories – A Global Comparative Analysis of Manufacturing Technology and Information Technology in the Enhancement of Business Practice” supported by Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research (S) by Japan’s Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology/Japan Society for Science Policy over the period 2002–2006. Background and objectives of the investigation are summarized as follows: (a) Japan ranks far below the level of the USA with respect to the development and utilization of information technology (IT) in the information society that emerged in the 1990s. (b) This can be attributed to a vicious cycle between Japan’s non-elastic institutions, insufficient utilization of the potential benefits of IT, and economic stagnation. (c) The source of such a vicious cycle can be derived from the fundamental differences of the characterizing process of technology between manufacturing technology (MT) and IT during their diffusion processes. This investigation – tempted to elucidate this mechanism. Noteworthy findings obtained include: (a) MT has been developed largely by the supply side and its functionality is established during the stage of its supply to the market. In contrast, IT is strongly driven by the demand side and its functionality is created through diffusion in a self-propagating way. This contrast can be clearly observed in the dramatic advancement of Japan’s mobile phone industry in the late 1990s.



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