

The Korea Business Interview Series:

Yong Wook Jun, Ph.D.

"Business Lessons in Hallyu & Globalization at Solbridge International School of Business in Daejeon"

Yong Wook Jun, Ph.D. is Dean of [Solbridge School of Business](#) at Woosung University in Daejeon, Korea, as well as Director and Advisor to many Korean corporations.

Transcript of the interview by KBC's Tom Tucker
on *July 13, 2011*.

Tom: Hello. It's a pleasure to have you with us today at KoreaBusinessCentral.com. My name is Tom Tucker. I am the host, and I'm excited to bring you today's conversation in our Korea Business Interview Series.

Our guest today is Yong Wook Jun, also known as Woody Jun. He is the Vice President of Woosung University and Dean of SolBridge International School of Business in Daejeon, Korea. Dean Jun earned his bachelor's degree at Seoul National University, his master's at the Kellogg Graduate School of Management at Northwestern University in Illinois, and a Ph.D. from the Sloan School of Management at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, MIT.

He was on the faculty of Chung-Ang University in Seoul for 22 years before taking his current position as Dean of SolBridge last year in 2010. Dean Jun has also served on the board of directors for many leading Korean multinational companies, including Hynix, Samsung Electronics, Hyundai Motors, and SK Telecom.

Dean Jun, welcome, and thanks for joining us. It's a real pleasure to have you today.

Dean Jun: Hi, Tom. Nice to meet you today.

Tom: Let's talk about the SolBridge International School of Business. You spent most of your career at Chung-Ang University in Seoul. What was it about the unique program at SolBridge International School of Business that led you to your job change last year? Also, can you tell us about that program and why Woosung University chose such an original education model for SolBridge in the first place?

Dean Jun: That was tough decision on my part, about a year and a half ago, to change my career from Chung-Ang University to SolBridge. Actually, I've been with the very traditional

Korean university for 22 years. But one time I wanted to have some new life, and at that time I encountered the SolBridge International School of Business.

SolBridge's model was very unique, so I was attracted by that. That is the only business model in the Korean education system that has more than 80% of the students coming from overseas, and 80% of the faculty are also non-Korean. So in a sense, it's the only unique international business school in Korea. That model really fascinated me, so that's the reason I joined the school.

Woosung developed this very unique business school model in Korea, which is just one of a kind. The reason I think is on two sides. On one side, the external environment is changing. That is that the Korean education market is declining in terms of the size of the students because of the low birthrate.

But at the same time, Asia in general has a huge market. So Woosung Educational Foundation saw the opportunity for growth in the Asian market. That's the reason they set up this international school—not for the Korean students, but for the Asian students.

Internally, our chairman, Mr. Kim Sung-Kyung, he has his own vision. That is that he tried to develop a school that connects Asia to the world. That's the reason that he put the name SolBridge. Sol is “pine” in Korean, so a pine bridge that is linking Asia to the world.

This unique business model was invented by the external environmental change and, internally, his own vision.

Tom: The facilities at SolBridge are second to none. Talk about that a little bit.

Dean Jun: At SolBridge the campus is basically a 14-story building. It's just one campus that is composed of just one building, but it is like a five-star-quality hotel. In it there are facilities such a swimming pool in the basement, a fitness center, and also a restaurant. Even they have a very special guest hotel on the top floors. It's like a boutique hotel, so we call SolBridge a boutique international business school.

Besides these amenities, inside the building they have also their own separate dormitory, which we call SolGeo. That is with furnished rooms, wireless access, and study lounges. About 514 students are accommodated in this one dormitory. The campus is basically one dormitory outside the campus and plus the very fine, five-star hotel.

Tom: It certainly sounds wonderful. Let's change gears a little bit and talk about Hallyu and what it means to the Korean economy and business in general. Many of our listeners will know that Hallyu, also known as “The Korean Wave,” refers to the recent popularity of Korean culture throughout East Asia, and the most visible aspects of Hallyu are K-pop music and Korean TV shows and movies.

But the Hallyu phenomenon actually extends to even more diverse elements of Korean culture in areas such as food, clothing, and others. Lately, there have even been efforts to bring Hallyu to the West.

What are your thoughts on the Hallyu phenomenon and its sustainability in Asia and even expanding it to the West?

Dean Jun: Hallyu is a very unique element of the Korean culture, but I think that it has a global element in it. That's the reason that it has the potential to be expanded not only in Asia, but also to the West.

First of all, Hallyu, especially the Korean part, it is very easy to sing, and they have dynamic beats. The singers, the artists, are very handsome and pretty, and so it's very enjoyable to watch. This kind of element is really globally applicable.

More than that, this kind of artist has been prepared for a long time, more than ten years as trainees. There is a certain developing system inside Korea to develop such professional singers and artists. In normal cases, these trainees spend long hours a day, from like 7:00 a.m. to midnight, for just training for singing and dancing.

Further than that, they have also a local aspect. When they go to the West, they hire foreign songwriters to be adapted to the local settings of those different countries, such as Paris and New York. Hallyu is expandable not only in Asia but also in the West because of this right mix of the global element and the localization effort.

Tom: Koreans are proud to be at the leading edge of popular culture in Asia. What specific historical factors make Hallyu so meaningful to Koreans?

Dean Jun: Koreans' life is full of musical festivals. In old days in Korea, when we had the harvest in the autumn, the people would get together and have some kind of musical festival among themselves. So we have such a tradition.

Recently, the karaoke culture is part of the Korean life. In Korea they have many social life in the evening, and the people get together and they spend some time going to karaoke. So music is the daily life of the Korean, and that has been now expanded into professional form as an artifact in this kind of entertainment industry.

So there is some linkage between the Korean historical element and the current development of the Hallyu movement.

Tom: What would you say are the factors which have made Hallyu so appealing to youth throughout Asia and the world? Why do you think it has caught on mainly in developing countries first?

Dean Jun: I don't think that it is applicable to developing countries first. If you look at the phenomenon of Hallyu, Hallyu is part of not only in the developing countries such as China and Vietnam, and but also it's very, very popular in Japan. So I think that it is not a contrast between developing country and developed country; it's more between Asian culture versus Western culture.

Hallyu is appealing to the Oriental culture first because we are in geographical proximity there, as well as the psychic distance is very short between Korea and Japan and China in general because it's all in Asia. We're sharing the same values. That's the reason Hallyu is so popular in Asia first. But now we are in the mode of expanding into the West, including the U.S. and recently in France.

Tom: In what ways does Hallyu contribute to the Korean economy and the bottom line of Korean companies other than those companies directly involved in Hallyu-specific businesses?

Dean Jun: The South Korean image has been negative and revolved around the Korean War and political instability and demonstrations. But because of this Hallyu, we have some opportunity to develop a better country image and better company image. Throughout this Hallyu movement we can overcome the past negative image of Korea.

That's one. One the other side, you know most of the Korean companies, but the globally known companies are very limited, such as Samsung, LG, and Hyundai Motors. But people may not know much about other Korean companies, especially small- and medium-size companies.

But because of the Hallyu movement, people may have more interest in Korea in general, but in Korean companies, too. Many Korean companies can take some piggyback effect by having this Hallyu boom popular in the world.

Tom: Let's talk a little bit about the SolBridge program on Hallyu. I understand that SolBridge is now preparing to offer a Hallyu major this autumn. Why did you decide to establish this program? What types of students are you targeting, and what value will this major deliver to graduates returning to their home countries?

Dean Jun: There is a very specific reason why we tried to introduce a Hallyu MBA next year. First of all, this is an attempt by SolBridge to be differentiated from other business schools in the world. There are so many business schools in the world, but SolBridge wants to be one of a kind in its category.

Hallyu is a good way to differentiate SolBridge from other schools because Hallyu is associated with Korea, and SolBridge has the right international infrastructure, like teaching in English and also all the first-class facilities. That makes us the natural choice to promote a Hallyu MBA. We may have the legitimacy to promote a Hallyu MBA at the right school.

Secondly, the Korean government has a very keen interest in expanding the Hallyu movement not only in Korea but also overseas. So we can have a great opportunity to get some support from the Korean government, who has strong desire to make it a sustainable phenomenon, not just a temporary event.

That's the reason that we introduced the Hallyu MBA, for our own needs, but also taking the advantage from the Korean government policy change.

The target students that we are shooting at is that we may have two different categories. One group may be the people who are already in entertainment or media industry in their respective countries in Asia such as Vietnam, Thailand, and China.

On the other hand, we're also shooting for students who have interest in the Korean language and culture, even if they don't have any professional job experience. So we are targeting two different groups.

Finally, the value proposition to the students is that once they finish this MBA program with us, they can go back to their own country and they become their own entrepreneur in this Hallyu business. They can develop some network with the Korean Hallyu companies like a media or entertainment company, and they can be the sales agent or marketer or run their own business. The students may take away some good value by having this kind of program with us.

Tom: What content and other unique opportunities will that Hallyu program provide?

Dean Jun: Basically we tried to develop the Hallyu program in two different tiers. The first tier, which is basically in the first year of the two-year MBA program, they will take the basic learning on some of the main elements of doing business, that is, they learn about accounting, marketing, finance in the first year along with the students of the regular MBA program.

But the second year will be totally different. The second year will be dedicated to just learning about the Korean Hallyu phenomenon. They learn about the Korean value-creation process of the Hallyu management, and also they will visit many of the actual scenes of taking movies, taking dramas, and Korean pop festivals like them. We'll provide very much hands-on experience in the second year. Further than that, we'll invite very famous guest speakers from the Korean entertainment industry.

So the program will be composed of three elements: one, the understanding the basics; second, the hands-on experience with the Hallyu situations; and third, invitation of special guest lecturers from the various dimensions of the Hallyu industry such as music, drama, and movie.

Tom: Let's talk a little bit about Korean education and creativity. You've studied and taught at top universities, both in Korea and the United States, and during this time you would have interacted with many students and faculty from Korea, the United States, and around the world.

This puts you in a unique position to comment on the differences and similarities between the Korean university system and those in other countries. Can you talk about that a little bit?

Dean Jun: A Korean university has certain unique aspects. Especially in the first two years of the four-year education, there is not that much of a hard-study culture. The reason is that most of the Korean students have had a very hard time up to the entrance exam of the university. They spend lots of hours studying in the high school, junior high school, senior high school just to get into the university. But once they get into the university, they just feel it's time for a well-deserved break after spending tremendous hours in the previous high school.

Like institutions in the U.S., we find that they don't study very hard in the beginning, but later in the junior and the senior year they come back and study hard. But the first three years is a little bit different from the experience that I had with especially American institutions where students really are committed and dedicated in their studying, whereas in Korea there's a little bit different story.

Tom: There's a never-ending discussion amongst our members at Korea Business Central about the need to reform the Korean education system to focus less on testing and more on soft skills, and this is in spite of international recognition that Korean students are some of the best in the world in many areas.

Do you agree that the Korean system needs to be radically changed?

Dean Jun: Not radically, but a few adjustments may be necessary to train Korean students for the global market. I think the Korean universities are already up to the global standards in terms of the curriculum and emphasis on research and the teaching methodology such as utilizing a lot of case studies in the business school cases.

Also, the professors of major Korean universities are mostly Ph.D.s from the major U.S. educational institutions. One episode with regard to this one is that if you don't have any Ph.D. from an American institution, you are not mostly eligible to apply for a position in the Korean universities.

What I said is basically the Korean educational infrastructure and the systems are already up to a global standard, so there is not much to reform.

The only thing that we may have to reform is some of the softer skills and some of the softwares, some mentality issues. Besides that, I think the Korean universities are ready to accommodate the international educational culture.

Tom: Do Koreans lack creativity, and if so, what do you see as the causes of this? Is the education system part of the problem, or is it based on culture or maybe economic development or other factors? And what should be done about it?

Dean Jun: Koreans, I don't think they are not creative. They are quite creative. The only thing that makes a problem is some of the cultural aspects. When I went to school in Korea, I was not that much encouraged to participate in class discussions. Mostly the instruction was one-way, from the instructor to the student. The instructor explains many things, and the students just take notes and go to the exam.

But those kind of situations are changing dramatically since I joined to Korea after staying in the States for ten years. These days the young kids are really alive, and they are very active and participatory. They bring out many creative ideas.

But still there is a certain element, some kind of confusing element, in it that the students are relatively shy and they are a little bit reluctant to participate. But if the instructor provides the right atmosphere and encouragement they are willing to participate.

So I don't see any serious problem in creativity in the Korean education system.

Tom: Let's talk about the Korean corporate world a little bit. You served on the board of directors for many of Korea's leading companies, including Samsung, Hyundai, SK. What were your responsibilities in those positions?

Dean Jun: For some companies I worked as the outside director, such as Hynix Semiconductors, but some other companies, like Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motors, I worked as an inside faculty advisor to them.

In the case of the outside directorship, the main job is the evaluation of the CEO. Also, in the case of Samsung Electronics and Hyundai Motors, this is mostly an advisory job, which is designing some of the global strategy of their corporations and then giving them some guidance on that.

Tom: To remain competitive over the next few decades, what top three strategic directions would you encourage these multinational companies to take?

Dean Jun: The Korean multinational companies have to maybe put more emphasis on the three dimensions in their strategy. One, they have to build more core competencies in core technologies and core marketing skills.

Korean companies are very good in adaptive skills or they apply technologies, but they lack the basic technology. For example, Samsung is a very leading company, but they are a little bit ways behind of Apple in the mobile phones. Samsung is very strong in semiconductors, but they are behind Intel. The whole reason of these kinds of problems is coming from the lack of the basic R&D technologies. They have to put more resources to develop this kind of basic technology.

That's one. The second one is that Korean companies have to pursue more globalization. Koreans are very strong in China and North America, but they have still a long way to go with

respect to the European markets. The European market is still far away on the mental side. I think the Korean MNCs need to focus their effort more in Europe, especially when we have the Korea and EU FTA, which is in effect from this July.

Finally, the third direction Korean multinationals should take is that they have to put more resources in upgrading their global brand image. As I mentioned about ten minutes ago, the Korean companies are still not that well-recognized in the global market besides just a few giant companies.

So those are the three directions they have to retool with their resources in the future.

Tom: Do you know Korean corporations lack a global mindset, or is success for them more a matter of focusing on and leveraging existing Korean strengths?

Dean Jun: I don't think that Korean companies lack a global mindset. Korean companies, on the contrary, they are born global players. Given the limited market potential in the domestic market, most of the Korean companies, from day one of their incorporation they look for the global market.

Most of the Korean companies started as exporters, so their mindset is more going outward rather than inward. I don't think that Korean companies lack any global mindset.

Tom: Lately many of the leading Korean corporations, such as LG, and Korean universities, such as KAIST, seem to be backing off their English-first policies in the office and in the classrooms. Is this a mistake, or were these high-profile English efforts a distraction anyway?

Dean Jun: Yes, I think it's a mistake to back off the English-first policy if Korea really wants to be global, but I also understand the situation. The situation is that still most of the Korean employees, even in major corporations such as Samsung and LG, they are not comfortable with speaking English, their oral English skills.

But their business environment is changing very quickly, so they have to make decisions very quickly and in the right time. But with English, working is harder in communications. In order to react to their environment they have to make communication very quick, but English is kind of a problem. So I understand the situation.

There is too much cost of the communication. If you insist on English in the business community, it'll create a lot of miscommunication, and also there is a cost of the double communication. In some cases, when you send email, in one email you have to write in Korean and in another email you have to write in English. It'll create a lot of inefficiencies. That's the reason they really backed off that.

What I'm thinking is that it'll take a little more time. Once most of Korean college graduates, they are little bit acquainted with or comfortable speaking English, then that will be the right

time for corporations to adopt English as their official language of communication. I think that it'll take more than five or more years.

Tom: We have about five more minutes to wrap up. We've talked a little bit about Hallyu today, a timely topic. We've talked about education. We've talked about big business in Korea. As we wrap things up, I'd like to point out a couple more notable facts regarding Woosung University and SolBridge.

Woosung University was recently recognized by the Korean government with the Advancement of College Education Award as well as the University Education Capacity-Building Project Award. Why was the university given these awards, and what does winning these awards mean for Woosung and SolBridge?

Dean Jun: In fact, this is a really great honor for Woosung to receive the big award from the Korean government. We were chosen as one of the 11 leading schools in Korea, and I think this is the result of faithfully following what we call niche strategy. Woosung is a relatively small university in comparison to other big universities in Seoul. We try to be a differentiated niche player.

Woosung has been very good in three different dimensions: One, they are very good at specialization; second, innovation; and third, globalization. Those are the three axes of the growth of the Woosung University.

In the case of specialization, instead of doing all the things from literature to law and business disciplines, they focused on a few strategic areas where they can excel. One of the areas Woosung University is very good at is culinary school. They try to specialize, like culinary school or railroad management school, that kind of stuff.

Secondly, Woosung University is a very innovative school. As a small player, they try to be innovative every day. One of the recent innovations in the academic system was they are the first school in Korea to adopt a four-semester calendar year.

Instead of two semesters and then almost a five- or six-month summer and winter vacation, they have four terms. They have spring and autumn regular semesters; they have also mandatory summer and winter terms. This is the only school in Korea which is running 42 weeks out of 52 weeks a year just for the study.

And finally, globalization. As SolBridge International School shows a case, Woosung devoted a lot of their resources to promote globalization by investing in SolBridge out of the Woosung Educational Foundation. Those are the three main focal points of Woosung of how they make a distance from other schools.

Tom: SolBridge is also fortuitously positioned near the Daedeok Valley area in Daejeon, where the Korean government is investing in a huge Science Belt over the next decade. Does this influence your education program, and if so, how?

Dean Jun: Yes, Tom, absolutely. Daedeok is what we call Korea's Silicon Valley. This is most intensely concentrated with the science and technology people and infrastructure. I think about 7,500 scientists are all located in this Daedeok Valley.

We are very much fortunate to develop a dialog between our business school with the science and technology people, and that is the way that we emphasize convergence as our key strategic focus area of the SolBridge program.

The future will be the age of the convergence. There's lots of convergence between our scientific areas, engineering areas, and even management art areas. Because of our proximity to a great science and technology cluster in Daejeon, we can develop some convergence management courses for our BBA program, and even in the MBA program we are going to develop a convergence MBA, that is, close communication between science and technology and management.

The future, as you see, there are lots of convergences happening: in automobiles, in biotech, IT. The convergence is coming, and we are fortunately well-positioned in the right place.

Tom: Finally, where do you hope to take the SolBridge International School of Business over the next five to ten years? What are your main goals for the school?

Dean Jun: As I mentioned in the beginning of the interview, we have the vision of becoming the Harvard Business School of Asia by 2020. But the more concrete goal is that we want to be recognized as the top icon in the Asian education system.

SolBridge will be recognized as a truly international business school with 80% of the faculty and students international. Only 20% will be local. This 80/20 business model is really unique in Asia.

I think that SolBridge in the future will be recognized by the prospective students and business community as a true business school with a predominant portion of internationality in its curriculum, faculty portfolio, and student portfolio.

Tom: Well, it certainly sounds interesting and ambitious. When you achieve that goal, it sounds like the university certainly will be an outstanding organization to be involved with. It was a great treat for us to hear about it today.

Yong Wook Jun, we really appreciate the time and the visit, and we thank you for sharing your knowledge and experience with us.

Dean Jun: Thank you, Tom. I also enjoyed the dialog with you. This is really fortunate for us to represent SolBridge today. Thank you so much.

Tom: Yong Wook Jun, the Dean of the SolBridge International School of Business at Woosung University in Daejeon, Korea, also known as Woody Jun, especially from his time working and taking classes in the United States completing his education here.

All right, thanks for joining us today. That is going to do it for this interview for Korea Business Central. This has been the latest in our ongoing Korea Business Interview Series. I'm your host, Tom Tucker, inviting you to improve your business results in Korea by joining KoreaBusinessCentral.com today. Thanks for listening, and have a great day.