

COMPLETION REPORT

Enabling the Disabled to Work: Uncovering the Experience of Japanese Multinational Corporations and Lessons Learned

Dr. Ang Chooi Hwa Magdalene

Associate Professor

Centre for Research on Women and Gender

Universiti Sains Malaysia

COMPLETION REPORT

Enabling the Disabled to Work: Uncovering the Experience of Japanese Multinational Corporations and Lessons Learned

A survey of the literature indicates that Japan records a relatively higher employment rates of persons with disabilities (PWDs) when compared to other countries. While the employment outlook appears to be promising for PWDs in Japan, recent statistics released by the Ministry of Human Resources Malaysia reveal that more than 95% of Malaysians with disabilities are still unemployed. Against this backdrop, the present study collected data via face-to-face interviews with 20 hiring managers in Japan and Malaysia. A thematic analysis of the interview data shed light on three research questions: (1) What are some of the policies and plans that help to increase the labor participation of PWDs in Japan?; (2) How can these initiatives be successfully patterned after by Malaysia?; and (3) What are the challenges and benefits of hiring PWDs from a managerial perspective?

With regard to research question 1, the Japanese respondents generally concurred that Japan's employment quota system for PWDs has considerably helped in improving PWDs' employment prospects. Other salient factors contributing to the effective hiring and employing of PWDs include: (1) top management's role and commitment in driving PWDs' employment agenda; (2) training and education programs to enhance understanding of disability and legislations which can in turn mitigate negative attitudes towards hiring PWDs; (3) use of job coaches and induction courses for new recruits to ensure that not only the disabled workers are hired but they will also remain employed; and (4) close and effective contacts with community service providers that can transfer knowledge on workplace/job accommodations and support for PWDs.

In relation to the second research question, the key takeaways for Malaysia are: (1) revamp the existing disability act by incorporating the employment quota system akin to that of Japan; (2) transfer of Japanese experience concerning disability friendly strategies and other good practices; and (3) embed the employment agenda for PWDs in the corporate culture and business strategies which transcend corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Pertaining to research question 3, the data revealed a set of similar perceived challenges and benefits of hiring disabled workers. The main concern shared by the majority of the respondents was the belief that disabled workers were not able to perform at work. Another top concern was related to the type of work which is suitable for PWDs. There is general consensus that there would be benefits to the workplace from employing disabled workers. The benefits are enhanced CSR performance, loyal and committed disabled workforce, and increased employee morale.

In conclusion, the solutions to the complex issue of unemployment among PWDs go beyond simplistic approaches. Employer education/training is perhaps a good starting point to demystify the challenges of hiring and employing PWDs. Equally important is establishing partnerships with disability interest groups to assist companies in the successful integration of PWDs in the workforce and to ensure that disabled workers remain employed. Organizations also need to be given persuasive information such as hiring PWDs is not only good business practice but it can also benefit the company's triple bottom line.

Publication of the Results of Research Project:

Verbal Presentation (Date, Venue, Name of Conference, Title of Presentation, Presenter, etc.)

- (1) Date: 24-26 January, 2017
Venue: Bangkok, Thailand
Name of Conference: International Conference on Business and Information (BAI-Winter 2017)
Title of Presentation: To Nudge or to Shove: Disability Fundamental Law and Employment Quota System in Enhancing Persons with Disabilities' Employment
Presenter: Magdalene ANG Chooi Hwa

- (2) Date: 6-8 August, 2017
Venue: Taipei, Taiwan
Name of Conference: 7th International Conference on Education, Research and Innovation (ICERI 2017)
Title of Presentation: The Challenges and Benefits of Employing Persons with Disabilities: The Japanese Multinational Corporations' Perspective
Presenter: Magdalene ANG Chooi Hwa

Thesis (Name of Journal and its Date, Title and Author of Thesis, etc.)

“The Challenges and Benefits of Employing Persons with Disabilities: The Japanese Multinational Corporations' Perspective”

Publication in an affiliated journal, *International Journal of Innovation, Management and Technology* (IJIMT, ISSN: 2010-0248, DOI:10.18178/IJIMT), to the ICERI 2017 conference

Book (Publisher and Date of the Book, Title and Author of the Book, etc.)

Proposed Title for a book chapter: “Disability and Gender: The Japanese and Malaysian Cases”