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Exploring the Inclusion and Exclusion of Foreign Talents in Japan



It is my great pleasure to serve as the Director of the Center for Inclusive Leadership (CIL) in Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). The center is built upon the reputation of APU as a highly diverse and unique institution in Japan. It aims to take the next step in making diversity and inclusion a core value by generating new thinking and research on inclusive leadership and building public awareness about the importance of inclusive leadership in making business and social impact.

Being a founding member and director of CIL, I am also responsible for executing research projects related to inclusive leadership. One of my research projects focuses on the inclusion of foreign talents in Japan. This topic was triggered by personal and professional reasons. I myself am a foreigner, a woman, a minority working in Japan. It just becomes natural for me to think about inclusion.

Moreover, I often hear stories from APU alumni, sharing their success and struggles of working in Japan. HR managers also share with me their concerns about recruiting and retaining foreign talents. As such, I have decided to focus on foreign talents in Japan as my research subject with the aim of providing implications for inclusive leadership and responsible management.



This research focus is also supported by the following observations. Deloitte has reported that several companies across countries struggle to create a diverse workforce and even if they do, they are unable to leverage the advantages of diversity. In Japan, Keidanren (Japan Business Federation) has set forth a policy for creating “a vibrant working environment for everyone” with its vision “Toward the Creation of a More Affluent and Vibrant Japan”. Such need is driven by the challenges of increasing globalization, a lack of global talents, an aging society, and the goal of creating a super smart society (Society 5.0) that utilizes Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Internet of Things (IoT) for social welfare and industry competitiveness. Nonetheless, while practitioners and policy makers have highlighted the need for transforming diversity into



organization power and competitiveness, there is still limited research on addressing this issue. This research gap can be attributed to the common misleading assumption that diversity is the same as inclusion and the lack of understanding that it is only when organizations and leaders embody and embrace diversity, i.e., are inclusive, that diversity drives performance.

Hence, I aim to contribute to research and practice by exploring how foreign talents experience inclusion and exclusion in the Japanese workplace. Understanding how foreign talents experience inclusion and exclusion can help reveal the underlying logics of the phenomena, and the practices that drive these experiences. The study also seeks to uncover the ways through which foreign talents achieve the advantages of inclusion and overcome challenges of exclusion in the workplace.

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