

SUMMARY

Consistent with global statistics, the participation rate of people with disabilities (PwD) in the labor market in Japan remains insignificant. Though the government claimed improvement over the years, only less than 25% of total PwD in the working-age group of 18-64 years old is absorbed into the regular workplace. Employment opportunities for the rest of the group are then approached through the provision of welfare services performed by the Continuous Employment Support Offices for people with disabilities (*shōgaisha shūrō keizoku shien jigyōsho*), or the Offices for short. The Ministry of Health, Labor, and Welfare (MHLW), under whose jurisdiction the welfare system takes place, acknowledges two types of Offices: Type A (*A-gata*) and Type B (*B-gata*). PwD registering with the Offices are termed as users. In the Type A offices, employment contracts are formally concluded with users. Type B offices do not conclude employment contracts with users as they are considered to join Offices to receive training.

Although being part of the national welfare system, Offices are, in fact, businesses. They are legitimately pursuing business activities through a wide array of activities, hiring Management and professional staff, acquiring revenue, and providing users with monetary rewards. To pay users adequate wages/salaries, which will also secure the government subsidy, Offices need to do well in their business. However, the Offices' workforce is not necessarily the best in skill and capabilities and sometimes includes PwD with severe disabilities. Offices also generally take the form of small businesses with limited production capability.

This dissertation discusses human resource management (HRM) practices pertaining to users employed/trained at the Offices. Offices are the Japanese context of work integration social enterprise (WISE), a subset of social enterprise with the social mission of providing employment opportunities for disadvantaged members of society. Investigation from an HRM perspective is relevant given the Offices' distinctive workforce and the quest for business survival, all wrapped within the institutional context of Offices as a welfare service provider. Utilizing the constructivist grounded theory approach, interviews with the Management side of the Offices (chairman, representative director, or director) from twenty-one (21) Offices across Japan were conducted.

This dissertation first identifies key HRM practices: tasks/job design and assignment, recruitment, pay policy, and user mobility management. The practices vary depending on the Office's classification as either Type A (employment provider) or Type B (training provider), but with a general premise of accommodating users' characteristics. Drawing from the concept of power-dependence relations, the analysis suggests the Offices have a higher dependency and less power toward the government and users. The efforts to reduce the power disadvantage ("balancing operations") are performed within the system by regaining control and minimizing risk.

This dissertation also examines the descriptions, classifications, causes, and responses to tensions experienced by Offices in managing users. The findings exhibit tensions manifested as dilemma, dialectic, and paradox. Contrary to the institutional logic hybrid perspective, the findings prove that tensions are rooted in the conflict between and within multiple role identities the Offices assumed: as welfare provision organizations and as business entities. The responses to tensions are the function of role identity's degree of adherence with institutional logic, the degree of perception of the system's benefit, and external opportunities.

This dissertation is bound to two limitations. First, interviews with the Management side are the sole data source. Second, the high-low degree of adherence/perception to institutional logic and degree of perception of the system's benefit is proposed, but such a classification might oversimplify the degree of intensity.

The dissertation proposes theoretical contributions to the studies of social enterprise and human resource management by submitting perspectives of power-dependence relations, as well as institutional logic and role identity hybrids. This dissertation extends the invitation for future studies to develop an HRM model for WISE. Managerial implications are also proposed. Offices should pay attention to managing dilemmatic tensions due to their low adherence to institutional logic. Given the enduring power disadvantage, Offices can also explore the mechanism of balancing operations. Finally, the government should consider taking initiatives that convince Offices that pursuing their organization's objectives is better off conducted within the national welfare system.