

Impact Objectives

- Investigate how people with disabilities are suitable workers for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) and large companies suffering from labour shortages
- Study the types of working environments people with disabilities create psychological safety
- Provide evidence that synergy effects brought about by people with disabilities are universal

Preventing discrimination in good faith

Professor Makoya Kageyama discusses his research highlighting the benefits of hiring people with disabilities for employers, fellow employees and people with disabilities themselves



dispels this narrative?

Employing people with disabilities has a great diversity effect for companies, which dispels discrimination in good faith against people with disabilities. Discrimination in good faith is discrimination based, not on malicious intent toward people with disabilities, but simply the opinion that disabled people cannot work because of their low abilities, or work sufficiently in terms of labour productivity. However, my research shows that people with disabilities are suitable workers for small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) suffering from labour shortages. They can also benefit large companies too. Furthermore, employees with disabilities increase the labour productivity of all employees. In the case of SMEs, this may even affect business performance. There are various factors that produce this synergistic effect, but one major factor is psychological safety. Employing people with disabilities can increase the psychological safety of the workplace and improve the labour productivity of non-disabled employees.

Can you explain what 'discrimination in good faith' toward employing people with disabilities is and how your work

What are some of the knowledge gaps you are hoping to fill with your current investigations into employment of persons with disabilities?

Behind the synergist effects created by people with disabilities is the phenomenon that people with disabilities create psychological safety. I'm investigating further in what working environments do people with disabilities create psychological safety? Also, is psychological safety created without hiring people with disabilities? For example, is psychological safety also created by giving a contract job to a facility for people with disabilities and having them do the job at a company factory? Finally, I hope to measure the size of the synergistic effect. By clarifying these questions, I will provide evidence that synergy effects brought about by people with disabilities are universal and a way to estimate the impact of these effects on corporate performance and the overall economy.

You have also looked at the characteristics and significance of network-type regional alliances for employment of people with disabilities. What did you learn from this work?

When government and welfare organisations become the centre of an alliance, the alliance becomes less vibrant. In some cases, it may even stop working. However, when companies are actively participating and

playing a central role, the activities of the alliance will be activated and the employment of people with disabilities will increase. I also found that the network configuration and the depth of cooperation formed by companies are impacted by the types of disabilities and issues closely related to the types of disabilities.

What challenges have you faced in your research?

In the case of the research regarding the employment of people with disabilities, companies are reluctant to cooperate. Following a survey by Japanese Government agencies on 1 June 2019, only 48 per cent of companies are able to employ the legally mandated percentage of people with disabilities. Furthermore, employment of people with disabilities is an area that companies do not want to discuss. Therefore, I asked companies that are active in hiring people with disabilities, support organisations for people with disabilities and the government to help me find companies that are likely to cooperate with this work. In addition, I hold seminars and lectures on employment of people with disabilities, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in various places, and I ask the audience to cooperate at that time. With these two approaches, I was able to collect the data I needed for my research. ●

Overcoming barriers

Myths about hiring people with disabilities are a barrier to employment for these individuals. By conducting research to identify and measure the benefits of hiring people with disabilities for employee and employer, Professor Makoya Kageyama believes this barrier can be eliminated

Biases exist in human attitudes towards people with disabilities, often without malicious intent. Rather there is a belief that those with disabilities are limited in what they can do. While modern society is making progress in dispelling some of these ingrained notions, this so-called discrimination in good faith still exists. For example, despite legal requirements in Japan that companies hire a certain number of people with disabilities, only about 48 per cent of businesses meet this requirement. This can also be a difficult topic for companies to openly speak about. However, as developed countries are faced with low-growth, labour shortages and challenges increasing labour productivity of existing workers, Professor Makoya Kageyama believes these countries are overlooking the value people with disabilities offer.

SYNERGY AND INNOVATION

Kageyama is based at the Graduate School of Urban Social and Cultural Studies, Yokohama City University in Japan. His research is beginning to show just how wrong the belief is that people with disabilities are not productive employees. In this work he is focusing on the synergistic effects hiring these people has on a business. 'A synergy effect is an effect that cannot be reduced to each of the elements that make up the system,'

he outlines. 'Employment of people with disabilities creates synergistic effects through contact between people with disabilities and people without disabilities, which leads to innovation,' he says. 'The fact that employing people with disabilities produces innovation was one of the reasons I became interested in this work.'

To do this research Kageyama needed to conduct interviews with companies all over Japan. Asking questions including what kind of issues there are regarding the employment of people with disabilities and what types of disabilities are deeply involved in each of the issues. 'While it was challenging to find companies open enough to talk about these topics, I was able to work with firms that already hire disabled persons and reach out to others at conferences and speaking engagements in order to get enough data and the results of this data were promising,' he observes.

UNTAPPED POTENTIAL

Kageyama's work revealed that people with disabilities can be valuable for companies suffering from labour shortages, especially for SMEs. He also saw that overall labour productivity could be increased via the synergistic effects of hiring people with

disabilities. 'This research revealed that labour productivity of non-disabled employees can be improved by the modifications to the work process, the layout of the company and improvements in relationships between non-disabled employees in the wake of employing people with disabilities.' He then went further and began to empirically quantify these effects so that companies can see the untapped potential and eliminate discrimination in hiring people with disabilities.

The benefits are clear for employers, non-disabled employees, and of course, for people with disabilities. For them, a sense of purpose, greater income and improved relationships are benefits that many others take for granted. ●

Project Insights

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KEY COLLABORATORS

Many companies that already hire disabled persons, local governments and organisations that support people with disabilities all over Japan

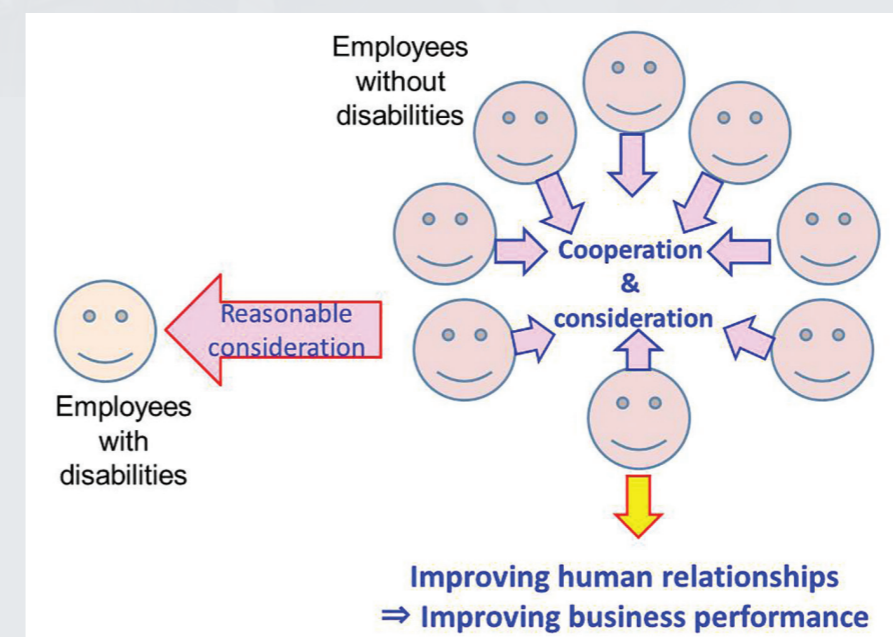
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BIO

Professor Makoya Kageyama graduated from Waseda University with a Master of Commerce. He became an Assistant Professor, Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Yokohama City University in 1989, became a Professor in the Faculty in 2001 and became a Professor, Graduate School of Urban Social and Cultural Studies, Yokohama City University in 2009. Kageyama's specialty is in the theory of economic systems and CSR. He has authored several books, including 'Why SMEs Hiring People with Disabilities Continue to Perform Highly?' and 'Regional CSR Saves Japan'.



People with disabilities increase the psychological safety of their organisations