

Fostering the inclusive leadership of students and teaching assistants through multicultural groupwork

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Summary of Research

In the globalized and uncertain world with specializations spread among work teammates, inclusive leaders, who empathize with and respect others, value their ideas, appreciate their cultural, ethnic and gender differences, and include them in the process of decision-making, are increasingly called upon. How can universities help students develop such inclusive leadership? One of the ways in which this can be done is to use multicultural collaborative groupwork (MCGW) in increasingly multicultural classes in universities, as a space in which students develop inclusive leadership by interacting with students from other nationalities. Teaching assistants (TAs) play important roles in facilitating MCGW, particularly for large-size classes. Through helping MCGW to be more inclusive, TAs too can grow as inclusive leaders. However, there have been limited studies on the effects and growth of TAs in and through facilitating MCGW. Furthermore, though there are common elements between long-standing multicultural competencies and emerging inclusive leadership, there appear to have been no concrete studies for rigorously connecting these. Therefore, this study seeks to measure the development of inclusive leadership of students and TAs through their engagement in and with MCGW in multicultural classes of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University (APU). This will be done through an inclusive leadership framework, which the research team will try to develop, by basing it on the literature of multicultural competencies. Then it will seek to investigate what factors facilitate and hinder such development, including the effects of TAs on MCGW.

This study will employ the mixed methods strategy and seek to meet the international standards of research on multicultural collaborative learning. The research team will first review the past inclusive leadership studies in order to identify its attributes related to multicultural competencies, thereby creating an inclusive leadership framework suitable for this study. It will then craft and administer research instruments (particularly a questionnaire) based on the framework, in order to measure how much students and TAs in the sample multicultural classes develop inclusive leadership. It will also examine their inclusive leadership development process in depth through qualitative methods, such as interviews, focus groups and observation.

In addition, we plan to hold the inclusive leadership workshop for multicultural groupwork for the different education units (namely, the colleges and centers) in APU for FD purpose, comprising 1) a sharing session of practices and research on inclusive leadership in the sample multicultural courses; and 2) a workshop for designing courses/programs which incorporate inclusive leadership.