

Date: 24-02-2024

## External Evaluation Report for the FY2018–2023 Project Results

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This document reports the results of the external evaluation of the FY2018–2023 project results based on the attached Report on the Results of the Initiative for Realizing Diversity in the Research Environment (Advanced Type) for FY2018–2023.

1) Achieve a recruitment rate of over 30% for women researchers

Remarks:

Although the aspired project result of 30% recruitment rate for women researchers has not been achieved over the course of the full project cycle (2018-2023), there are several positive developments that should be celebrated and continued. Revised Faculty HR Committee system which allows that the Executive Assistant to the President in charge of diversity to attend meetings is an important measure to provide not only continuous advocacy but also monitoring of internal accountability. Empirical research on a global level show that having a responsible person in meetings to monitor progress who is also supported by senior management is a critical success factor in diversity efforts. It also allows for institutionalization of accountability. The other measures that have been designed and implemented, ie., building a new HR governance system and visualizing the hiring, promotion and retention rates of women faculty, are indeed useful to keep track and to enhance accountability for progress, or lack thereof.

It must also be kept in mind that during the project lifecycle, the world experienced one of the most traumatic pandemics which seriously hampered efforts towards gender equality, diversity, inclusion everywhere. In that context, it is not surprising that there is a significant drop in the recruitment rate of women from 2021 to 2022. This is the period when the effects of the pandemic took a serious toll on division of labor in the household with home-schooling of children, isolation, difficulty of getting domestic help, questioning of career and other goals. In the US, there was a mass exodus of women from the labor market. It would be good to know how these changes affected women and their careers in Japan.

The fact that the recruitment rate picked up from 2022 to 2023 is a good development. It might be useful to explore additional positive measures to speed up the recruitment rate beyond what has been achieved.

## 2) Improve the rate of women holding higher-ranking positions

### Remarks:

Despite the challenges presented by the unexpected pandemic that wreaked havoc on best laid plans, the project has done well in managing this objective with adaptive strategies such as changing the age limit, using online methods, building an organization for overseas support. These adaptive strategies show resilience and innovation which are critical elements for change. I remember a visit from the Gender Office officials who came to see me in my office at UNESCO while they were traveling around to build an organization for overseas support. I strongly encourage that all of these adaptive techniques are well documented as examples and lessons learned for similar future projects.

Although the number of women researchers promoted to higher ranks has remained below the target of 20% for the overall life cycle of the project, it would be critical to keep the target beyond the project life cycle and advocate for even higher percentage target. Women in senior management positions, especially in scientific fields, is still a rarity in Japan. Despite a government-led push for women's empowerment since 2013, only 8.2% of 1.2 million Japanese companies had female presidents according to a survey by Teikoku Databank. Of those, more than half, inherited their position via a family business. The fact that Kobe University reached, and in fact exceeded its target of 4 women in senior management roles is significant and should be congratulated. It is important to keep this achievement and publicize the results as good practice.

## 3) Increase the base of next-generation young researchers

### Remarks:

It is difficult to assess this component of the project without access to the detailed information on the websites mentioned which seem to be in Japanese only. Available information indicates modest success for collaborative research. It would be good to conduct longitudinal research to assess the impact of exposure to overseas research opportunities for career development in the short and medium terms. Have these researchers managed to establish international networks, do they continue to undertake collaborative research, do they transfer their learnings to their colleagues and students back at Kobe University, do they get invited to international and regional conferences? We live in an increasingly integrated global system and scientific research can only benefit from increased collaboration.

Regarding role model networking, all of the methods being used are important and should be continued after the project ends so that effects are long-term and sustainable.

#### 4) Enhance the diversity environment and expand it beyond the university

##### Remarks:

Sincere congratulations to Kobe University for the remarkable progress and success for this goal. All of the achievements are important and very timely.

Diversity Fund is an important instrument to continue with the efforts. The use of the Fund should be discussed very carefully and whatever use is identified, it should build on successful initiatives to make them sustainable.

Collaboration with companies is essential to enlarge the diversity environment, to build alliances and to advocate for change in the right direction.

Continuous teaching and learning are essential features of today's world.

In the area of diversity, the world is facing serious challenges with rising nationalist, populist movements in many parts of the world, with increasing conflict in and among countries. One of the common reactions of people who face challenging political and economic conditions is to turn inwards, to blame an external enemy and hence damage efforts for diversity. Diversity in all of its forms has been documented to be positive for moving forward, in the economy, in research and innovation, in social development, etc.

It is important that leading higher education institutions, such as Kobe University, continue to spearhead efforts to promote diversity and to advocate for it with its partners and allies to expand it beyond the university.

#### 5) Verify the outcomes and evaluations of the overseas support programs for women researchers

##### Remarks:

The results of the overseas programs seem to be quite positive in general. I got a little worried when I read the number of resignations but the fact that most of the resignations were for higher positions in other universities, it made sense.

Going forward, perhaps one consideration should be designing and implementing initiatives and services to keep these researchers at Kobe University for a minimum period of time – for example at least for 2-3 years, so that their learnings and networks could be beneficial to the University itself. It might also be an idea to have the researchers who apply for these overseas support programs to sign an agreement to stay at Kobe University for a pre-determined period of time after they complete the program (if this is not already the practice).

6) Regarding the project initiatives undertaken over the six-year period

Remarks:

I congratulate Kobe University for this exemplary project which seem to have produced positive results overall. This project was implemented over a period of time which witnessed an unexpected global pandemic that required very drastic, strict and different measures on working modalities, travel (including within national borders but more so on an international level). These changes in mid-cycle for the project so the agility of the project leadership is especially commendable.

It is also rare in 5-year projects to have such a thoughtful process of constant assessment and re-adjustment of different methods so this is quite an exemplary effort which would benefit similar efforts in the future if Kobe University carefully and succinctly documents all of the thought processes that went into planning, adjusting, readjusting the goals and action plans and share them widely within and outside Japan. Lessons learned from this project would be invaluable for diversity efforts not only in universities but in other institutional settings and in the corporate world.

As I mentioned before, women in senior management positions is still a rarity in Japan. Despite a government led push for women's empowerment since 2013, only 8.2% of 1.2 million Japanese companies had female presidents according to a survey by Teikoku Databank. Of those, more than half, inherited their position via a family business.

While many firms now provide services and incentives for women, such as generous maternity leaves, they lack programs such as mentoring women to develop their skills after they return to work as well as services and incentives to keep them in their work place. Women Around the world, there is still a cultural tendency to evaluate employees on the number of hours they work rather than actual output (this can be research papers in the case of universities) with the result that some women get demoted after they return to work. In Japan, the government supports a merit-based system but application of this system still needs to be supported. The pipeline of female senior executives is another area that needs serious consideration and this could be an important goal as the project moves forward and some of the resources under the Diversity Fund can be allocated for this purpose.

Congratulations to Kobe University's senior management, leaders and managers of this project and all of the researchers who participated in this wonderful and successful initiative. I would like to send my special regards and congratulations to the Gender Office at Kobe University and its members over the years. I have had the pleasure to partner

with them starting in 2010 as the Director for Gender Equality at UNESCO. They have surprised and impressed me with their enthusiasm, knowledge, willingness to learn and try new methods and their unwavering commitment to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion. They are many but I would be remiss if I do not mention a few names: I met Professor Roumiana Tsenkova and Professor Junko Okada on my first visit to Kobe University. They introduced me to the world of Kobe University, its Gender Office and guided me through the beautiful complexities of Japan. Among the many members of the senior management team of Kobe University that I have had the pleasure to interact with, I have to mention Professor Uchida who stayed as a strong and unwavering ally of the Gender Office and visited me at UNESCO with Professor Okada. Professor Ronnie Alexander made sure I stayed connected with the project and kept me informed about the achievements of both the Project and the UNESCO Chair.

As this project comes to a close, I deeply appreciate my long-term association with Kobe University, its management, faculty and staff over the years. I wish you all continued success with all your projects and endeavors.