

# Implications of Ba and the Application of Hourensou as a Style of Work Communication in Japan: a Case Study of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka

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## ABSTRAK

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui implikasi ba (tempat atau ruang sosial) dalam penciptaan lingkungan kerja yang inklusif dan harmonis serta penerapan gaya komunikasi kerja hourensou (singkatan dari tiga kata dalam bahasa Jepang: *houkoku* yang berarti "melaporkan", *renraku* yang berarti "berhubungan", dan *soudan* yang berarti "berkonsultasi") yang digunakan sebagai metode penyelesaian masalah di Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. Metode yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode kualitatif dan dianalisis secara interaktif. Data penelitian diambil dari hasil observasi langsung di Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka dan wawancara dengan informan kunci yang merupakan guru yang dilaksanakan pada November 2022. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa dengan terciptanya ba dalam lingkungan kerja mendorong guru-guru di Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka menjadi lebih terbuka terhadap perbedaan budaya. Selain itu, visi misi dari Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka juga menumbuhkan sikap persaudaraan antar guru sehingga memastikan lancarnya komunikasi dengan satu sama lain. Penciptaan ba dalam lingkungan kerja Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka terbukti memberikan dampak positif terhadap keterbukaan dan efisiensi kerja para guru Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. Gaya komunikasi kerja hourensou juga berhasil dilaksanakan dengan efektif sehingga masalah-masalah yang muncul dapat dikomunikasikan dengan baik. Hal ini membuat kinerja guru Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka menjadi meningkat dan menambah pengalaman mereka sehingga lebih siap dalam menghadapi masalah yang akan muncul kedepannya.

**Kata Kunci:** Ba, Budaya Kerja, Gaya Komunikasi, Hourensou, Jepang

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to determine the implications of *ba* (place or social space) in the creation of an inclusive and harmonious work environment and the application of the work communication style *hourensou* (abbreviation of three Japanese words: *houkoku* meaning "to report", *renraku* meaning "to relate", and *soudan* meaning "to consult") used as a problem-solving method at *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka*. The method used in this research is qualitative method and analyzed interactively. The research data was taken from direct observation data at *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka* and interviews with key informants who are teachers conducted in November 2022. The results of this study show that the creation of *ba* in the work environment encourages teachers at *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka* to be more open to cultural differences. In addition, the vision and mission of *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka* also fosters a brotherly attitude among teachers, ensuring smooth communication with each other. The creation of *ba* in the work environment of *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka* has been shown to have a positive impact on the openness and work efficiency of the teachers of *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka*. *Hourensou* is also successfully implemented effectively so that the problems that arise can be communicated well. This has improved the performance of *Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka* teachers and increased their experience so that they are better prepared to deal with problems that will arise in the future.

**Keywords:** *Ba*, Communication Style, *Hourensou*, Japan, Work Culture

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In work culture, communication style is very important in maintaining and improving work efficiency and productivity. However, it is important to note that Japanese culture emphasizes communication that is described as indirect and quiet expression, with a focus on nonverbal indications and subtle emotions, with a concentration on nonverbal indications and subtle emotions (Hall and Hall 1987). A person in Japanese communication often projects polite and respectful *tatemae* while simultaneously conveying sincere intentions through subtle nonverbal indicators, resulting in a complex yet unique interplay between the two concepts.

Another important part of the Japanese communication style is the concept of *nemawashi*, which refers to seeking consensus and support from all stakeholders before reaching a decision. This procedure can be time-consuming and require many rounds of consultation but is considered necessary to ensure that everyone's perspective is heard, and decisions are made communally and collaboratively (Yumoto and Wada 2012). Although communication styles in Japan have different meanings, being able to communicate in Japan requires a high degree of context sensitivity. Communicating individuals must be able to read subtle signs and change their communication style accordingly. This can be challenging for foreigners, as they may not be familiar with the intricacies of communication in Japan and may unwittingly offend or misunderstand others (Lebra 1976). Therefore, to communicate effectively in Japan, it is important to understand the nuances of Japanese culture and language, as well as consider cultural sensitivities in each situation. Therefore, awareness of the differences in communication styles in different cultures can help individuals adapt and succeed in their careers in Japan (Iwamoto and Smiler 2013). Japanese communication styles are generally indirect and context-dependent, focusing on nonverbal indicators such as facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language (Kawakami and Dionne 2010). Non-Japanese speakers may struggle with this communication style as they may not understand the subtleties of language and subtle nonverbal cues.

The complexity of communication in Japanese can be problematic, especially for foreigners who are not familiar with Japanese language and culture. This can result in foreigners struggling to adapt to different communication styles and can ultimately affect their success in their careers in Japan. Moreover, in Japanese educational institutions, effectiveness in communication is very important, as parents have high expectations of teachers to be role models for their children. Therefore, the researcher was interested in conducting a study on the work communication style in problem solving at the *hoikuen* educational institution Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka located in Nishikigaoka, Aoba, Sendai, Japan. This is also supported by the different national backgrounds of the teachers at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, which gives the researcher a diverse perspective on communication styles. Some teachers at Carl Jido Club

Nishikigaoka (a Japanese daycare center based on English education) are from outside Japan and may not understand the subtleties of language and subtle nonverbal cues in Japanese communication, which may affect their effectiveness in communicating with their colleagues and ultimately affect the performance of the educational institution.

The problems discussed above can occur in any field, and education is no exception. The focus of this research is on concept of *ba* (a shared space fostering collaboration and innovation through mutual exchange of knowledge and ideas among individuals or groups) and *hourensou* (a communication method involving reporting (*hou*), informing (*ren*), and consulting (*sou*) information systematically for effective team coordination and decision-making) communication style as a problem-solving method at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka is one of the branch institutions of the private bilingual *hoikuen* Carl Eikaiwa School founded in 1993 located in Sendai, Japan (<https://carleikaiwaschool.com/about>).

*Hoikuen* is a formal institution for early childhood care and education in Japan, established and operated by both the government and the private sector. *Hoikuen* provide childcare services for children under elementary school age and are usually operated from morning to evening to fit in with parents' work schedules (Hegdea et al. 2014). In 2022, Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka had 20 students ranging in age from 7~12 years old, all of whom were elementary school students although *hoikuen* students are usually under 7 years old. Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka has 3 teachers, 2 full-time teachers from outside Japan (EC/KU, an American with western-leaning culture; AA, a Filipino with South East Asian-leaning culture) and 1 part-time teacher from Japan (a Japanese which have experience living in United States). Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka also has interns from outside Japan, namely the researcher himself from Indonesia and MR, an intern from Egypt.

The diverse national backgrounds of the staff at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka indicate a very heterogeneous and multicultural working environment. The activities at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka do not differentiate by age or class because the activities focus on the goal of developing children's socialization skills and training them to communicate in English with their friends and teachers.

The first literature review of this research is a scientific article entitled "*Hourensou: A Japanese Communication Process for Continuous Improvement*" by Reyes-Nunez, Leticia, and Karen L. Becker discusses the concept of *hourensou* in Japanese business culture, which is a communication process used to achieve continuous improvement in business performance. This research contains a discussion of the origin of *hourensou* and the influence of Japanese culture in this communication process. The research results of this article show that *hourensou* is an effective process in improving organizational performance and reducing errors. *Hourensou* can also help develop employee skills and experience, as

well as increase job satisfaction and trust within the organization. In this study, Reyes-Nunez and Becker conclude that *hourensou* is a process that can be implemented in global organizations to improve communication, skill development, and process improvement. However, they also highlighted that implementing *hourensou* requires an open and transparent organizational culture and commitment from all members of the organization (Reyes-Nunez, Karen L. Becker, and Leticia 2015).

The second literature review is a scientific article entitled "The Effects of *Hourensou* Communication on Work Performance: An Analysis in Japanese Companies" written by Hiroaki Matsushima, Akira Uchino, and Kazuhisa Takemura in 2018 discusses the relationship between *hourensou* communication (報・連・相) and work performance in Japanese companies. The results show that effective *hourensou* practices significantly improve employee work performance in Japanese companies. Effective *hourensou* communication was also shown to have a positive impact on relationships between employees and management, as well as helping to effectively identify problems and solutions in the work environment. Overall, this study suggests that effective *hourensou* communication can be an important factor in improving employee work performance in Japanese companies.

The last literature review is a scientific article entitled *Nihon kigyō ni okeru chūgokujin shain no komyūkēshon kōdō ni tsuite hō ren-shō, shiji e no taiō, home no uketori-kata, mondai no hōkoku, shiji e no iken, han'i-gai no shigoto o chūshin ni* which translates as "Communication Behavior of Chinese Employees in Japanese Companies Focusing on Reporting, Contacting, Consulting, Responding to Instructions, How to Receive Praise, Reporting Problems, Opinions on Instructions, and Out-of-Scope Work" written by Shugo Tsuji. This study focuses on the communication behavior of Chinese employees in Japanese companies. The purpose of this study is to analyze the communication behavior of Chinese employees in a Japanese work environment. The research covers several topics such as responses to instructions, problem reports, how to receive praise, and opinions on instructions given. It also looks at how Chinese employees handle tasks that may be considered outside of their job scope.

The results show that Chinese staff in Japanese companies have different communication behaviors from Japanese staff. They tend to be less willing to report problems and ask for help and prefer to solve problems on their own. However, they are also considered to be more active in putting forward their opinions and making suggestions to their superiors. In addition, they are more sensitive to praise and rewards, and tend to respond positively to them. Overall, the results of this study suggest that there are some differences in the communication behaviors of Chinese and Japanese staff in the workplace. These differences may be due to differences in the cultures and values espoused by each country.

However, this study suggests that understanding these differences can help Japanese companies to more effectively communicate and collaborate with their Chinese staff (Shugo 2020).

The researcher considers it important to conduct this study to understand the work communication style of *hourensou* in a Japanese corporate work environment where foreigners are present. This study was also conducted to determine the influence of the *ba* concept at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka in creating an inclusive and harmonious work environment for foreigners. An understanding of Japanese communication styles can also help improve effectiveness and efficiency in conducting business and cooperation with Japanese people.

## 2. METHOD

In this study, the researcher used two conceptual frameworks to analyse the Japanese work communication style as a problem-solving method at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. The concepts used are the concept of *ba* and the concept of *houkoku*, *renraku*, *soudan*.

### 1) Ba (場)

According to a review entitled "The Concept of 'Ba': Building a Foundation for Knowledge Creation" by Ikujiro Nonaka and Noboru Konno, defines the concept of *ba* as follows:

"Ba is a shared space for emerging relationships. It can be physical, virtual, or mental. It is a platform for individuals to interact, engage in dialogue, share experiences, and create knowledge. Ba enables the dynamic interaction of explicit and tacit knowledge, leading to the creation of new knowledge." (Nonaka and Konno 1998)

The concept of *ba* in Japanese culture correlates with Japanese-style work communication as a method of problem-solving in organizations. *Ba* can be defined as a space where knowledge, experience, and ideas are shared collectively between group members or individuals in an organization. In *ba*, people can freely exchange opinions, ideas, and notions, which enables creativity and innovation.

In Japanese work communication, there are principles related to the concept of *ba*, such as approaches carried out through face-to-face meetings, group discussions, and approaches carried out carefully and politely. Japanese-style work communication also emphasizes the importance of mutual understanding and respect among team members to create an effective *ba* environment for problem-solving. Therefore, the *ba* concept can help build cooperation and develop consensus among team members to find effective solutions to solving organizational problems.

## 2) Houkoku, Renraku, Soudan (報告、連絡、相談)

The book entitled "Gemba Kaizen: A Commonsense Approach to a Continuous Improvement Strategy" by Maasaki Imai, defines the concepts of houkoku, renraku, soudan as follows:

"Houkoku (reporting) is the process of sharing information among team members on the current status of a process or improvement activity. Renraku (informing) is the process of sharing information with other parties who are concerned with or who have an interest in the improvement activity. Soudan (consulting) is the process of seeking advice or opinions from others who have expertise in the particular process or problem at hand." (Imai 1997)

From another perspective, Jeffrey K. Liker in his book entitled "The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer" defines houkoku, renraku, soudan as follows:

"Hourensou, which means "report, inform and consult," is the way Toyota communicates. It is critical to the Toyota Way because it ensures that everyone is working from the same information and toward the same goals. The process starts with the reporting (houkoku) of important information, followed by the sharing of that information (renraku) with others who need to know. Finally, consultation (soudan) takes place so that everyone can learn from each other and make the best decisions possible." (Liker 2004)

In the book "Gemba Kaizen: A Commonsense Approach to a Continuous Improvement Strategy", this concept is also explained as part of a simple and practical kaizen approach. The concepts of houkoku, renraku, soudan is important in building a solid team that is actively involved in the improvement process. Through effective and open communication, team members can obtain accurate and timely information, and can work together to solve problems and achieve improvement goals.

While in the book "The Toyota Way: 14 Management Principles from the World's Greatest Manufacturer", this concept is explained as part of the "Toyota Way" or Toyota's management philosophy. Toyota emphasizes the importance of clear and open communication among team members, as well as the involvement of all members in the improvement process. The houkoku, renraku, soudan concept is one way to achieve this, with team members reporting (houkoku), informing (renraku), and consulting (soudan) with each other in the improvement process.

Thus, it can be said that the concept of houkoku, renraku, soudan is one of the keys to success in implementing kaizen and the Japanese work communication style. This shows the importance of effective communication and the involvement of all team members in the improvement process, which is the hallmark of the Japanese work style.

The research method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative research method. The qualitative method is a research method that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observed behavior (Moleong 2018). Qualitative research has a descriptive nature which means that the data collected is in the form of words and images, does not emphasize numbers and emphasizes a deep understanding of the problems that exist in the object of study (Sugiyono 2014). The descriptive qualitative method was chosen in this study because in this study the author aims to explain the effect of Japanese work communication style as a problem-solving method at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka so that the data obtained in the form of writing obtained through interviews, direct observation, and data in the form of images, photographs, written documents and electronic documents (Endraswara 2003).

The data collection methods used by researchers are interviews, observations, and literature studies. The literature study method is a way of collecting data and information through written documents, photographs, images, and electronic documents. The primary data used in this research are informant interviews and direct observation at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. The researcher conducted participant observation for 1 month at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, Sendai City, Miyagi Prefecture, Japan to find out the application of work communication style in solving problems at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. The researcher also interviewed 2 key informants (K and EC/KU) at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. Key informants are informants who are considered an important source of information for the research. These key informants can provide detailed and in-depth information on the topic being researched. With information from key informants, researchers can gain a better understanding of the phenomenon or problem being studied (Tilaar 2016). Secondary data used by researchers in this study are data sources that already exist or have been recorded previously. This secondary data comes from data contained in literature, previous research, or books related to primary data. It can be concluded that researchers use 2 data collection methods, namely interviews and participant observation.

### **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

#### **A. Case of Teacher Cultural Differences at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka**

In Takeo Doi's *The Anatomy of Dependence*, the concept of *haji* (恥) is described as an important concept in shaping mindsets and behaviors in Japanese society. The concept of *haji* in Japanese culture refers to the feeling of shame or guilt that a person feels when they do something that does not conform to established social norms and rules. However, the concept of *haji* and the strict social rules in Japan can be challenging for foreigners who are not familiar with the culture and norms. Foreigners may struggle

to understand and abide by social rules that are different from their own culture, which can cause discomfort, even embarrassment or haji for themselves and others around them (Doi 1973).

The case discussed in this section is a case of violation of Japanese traffic norms by AA (one of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka's teachers), namely not crossing through existing crosswalk markings. The violation by AA, i.e., not crossing through the crosswalk markings, can be related to the concept of haji in Japanese culture. Although this case may seem trivial to others, in Japanese culture, it is considered a serious violation of social norms. K took this case very seriously because of his Japanese cultural background. Moreover, AA as a teacher at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, should be a good example to his students to show good behavior and obey the rules. AA's action of disobeying traffic rules can be considered as an action that damages his image and also the image of the educational institution where he works.

In the context of the concept of haji in Japanese culture, AA's actions may cause him embarrassment and damage his amae relationships with others, especially with K and the other culturally oriented staff of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. It should also be noted that K is fairly senior so K has more Japanese cultural integrity than Japanese people younger than him. Therefore, K felt the need to correct AA's actions that went against the concept of haji. From this case, AA may also lose the trust and respect of others around him, including his students. Therefore, the case of AA's violation of traffic norms should be taken seriously and resolved by taking into account the factors of AA's cultural background. This case shows how important the concept of haji is in Japanese culture, which affects human behavior with others.

#### a) Hourensou Analysis

In this case, the researcher observed K and EC/KU communicating the problem of norm violation cases with AA based on the hourensou principles, which are as follows:

##### 1) Houkoku (reporting)

On the day of the incident someone from Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka did not cross through the existing crosswalk markings, K saw the incident and given that K is oriented to Japanese culture considers that the offense is very shameful. K reacted quite seriously and immediately reported to EC/KU the next day. However, EC/KU said that he did not see the incident because he went home first and his car was parked next to the Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka building so he did not know who crossed. K also mentioned the incident to the front office staff of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka but they also did not pay much attention to the vicinity of the scene because the incident happened at night and it was too dark to see who was crossing the road. By K reporting



to the EC/KU and the front office staff of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, K has fulfilled the houkoku principle by ensuring that the incident is conveyed to the people concerned with the matter.

2) Renraku (informing)

K informed the other teachers of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, namely AA, and the intern, namely the researcher and another intern by the name of MR who came from Egypt. The researcher and MR on the night of the incident were waiting at the bus stop with K which is parallel to the Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka building so it was most likely AA who crossed carelessly on that night. K also asked AA if it was true that AA crossed that night and AA confirmed this and said he was in a hurry and happened to be able to park right across the Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka building. By conveying information about the incident to people who are deemed to need to know, K has fulfilled the renraku principle of ensuring that people who are deemed to be concerned with this issue are properly informed.

3) Soudan (consulting)

K together with EC/KU advised AA that crossing the street without using the existing road markings especially in the poorly lit nighttime conditions is very dangerous and advised AA that next time no matter how hurried AA's business is, he should still obey the rules and norms of pedestrians in Japan. K also expressed his understanding, albeit biased, of the habits of Southeast Asians, especially in the Philippines, who cross the street carelessly due to the perception of poor public crossing facilities in the Philippines. This bias was straightened out by EC/KU that not all Filipinos behave this way and gave K the understanding that generalizing a nation or culture is an inappropriate point of view. AA also reflected on the mistakes he had made and admitted that his habit of crossing the road carelessly was innate in his home country. AA promised not to repeat his mistake and K together with EC/KU reminded AA of the importance of being a good example of a teacher especially since AA works as a hoikuen teacher whose students are young children who need good moral education and norms.

b) Ba Analysis

Based on one of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka's visions and missions, "Homely", which emphasizes a family-based work environment, Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka teachers are expected to create a warm and conducive work environment. By achieving this condition, knowledge sharing can be carried out well among Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka teachers. Looking at the case discussed above, AA learned an important lesson from the case, namely the importance of knowing and adapting to Japanese norms and

culture. K and EC/KU also provided advice and corrections to AA, encouraging AA to introspect and improve his quality as a teacher who is used as a moral benchmark and norm by his students.

## **B. Case of Teacher Cultural Differences at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka**

Thomas and Peterson (2014) reveal that cultural differences can affect the effectiveness of individuals and teamwork which is described as follows:

“Differences in cultural values can affect individual and team effectiveness. Values related to time orientation, openness in communication, and power hierarchy can influence how individuals work and interact in the workplace, which in turn can affect their performance and productivity. Furthermore, cultural differences can also affect leadership styles in the workplace. Hofstede (1980) found that more collectivistic cultures tend to have more authoritarian leadership styles, while more individualistic cultures tend to have more participative leadership styles, which can affect employee motivation and performance.” (Thomas and Peterson 2014)

They state that differences in cultural values such as views on time, openness in communication, and power hierarchies can affect the way individuals work and interact in the workplace. One aspect of culture that influences the Japanese way of working is the concept of *wa* or harmony. This concept is very important in Japan and is considered an important factor in maintaining effective cooperation in the workplace. The concept of *wa* is an important cultural principle or concept in Japan and relates to harmony and cooperation among group or team members. It emphasizes the importance of maintaining harmonious relationships among team members by supporting and respecting each other.

However, when the concept of *wa* is overused, it can affect work productivity and efficiency. For example, if an organization over-prioritizes *wa*, then decisions may be made slowly as it has to take into account all opinions from team members. This can hinder a quick and effective decision-making process, which in turn can hinder work productivity and efficiency.

AA also experienced similar issues during his time at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. K and EC/KU assessed AA as not working effectively because AA often made mistakes in entering important data, was not observant in finding misinformation, and was less communicative to parents of students at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka considering AA's duties at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka were as an administration department as well so that important information that needed to be conveyed to parents of students was the duty of AA. On the other hand, during the researcher's internship at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, K and EC/KU were often told and reprimanded for miscommunication and misinformation by AA, but AA kept repeating it so AA finally asked for a special meeting with K and EC/KU.

a) Hourensou Analysis

In this case, the researcher observed K and EC/KU communicating the problem of declining productivity levels and work efficiency with AA based on the hourensou principles as follows:

1) Houkoku (reporting)

During the researcher's internship at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka, the researcher saw AA's lack of maximum communication in Japanese with the parents of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka students. This of course caused miscommunication and often made K and EC/KU replace AA's duties to explain information and convey news related to activities at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka to parents. EC/KU, who assessed the declining quality of AA's work, reported her concerns to K to discuss further with AA considering that AA also acted as a mentor for the researcher and MR. This is so that the decline in AA's work productivity does not affect the interns' perception of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka's performance. EC/KU has fulfilled the houkoku principle by reporting this problem to K as the most senior teacher of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka.

2) Renraku (informing)

After EC/KU discussed with K, they decided to hold a special meeting with AA to discuss the issue of AA's declining level of productivity and work efficiency. Then, EC/KU informed AA about this meeting without telling the purpose of holding this meeting because at this time they were talking in front of the researcher and MR so EC/KU considered that the researcher and MR did not need to know about this problem yet. K also informed the researcher and MR to replace their guard duty because they would have a meeting during working hours so the task of supervising children and welcoming parents was left to the researcher and MR. EC / KU has fulfilled the renraku principle by informing about this meeting to people who are deemed necessary. K also managed to provide a distraction from this meeting to researchers and MR so that researchers and MR did not have to worry about the purpose of the meeting.

3) Soudan (consulting)

Since the researcher and MR were not involved in the special meeting held by EC/KU and K for this AA, the researcher could not explain the content of the meeting objectively and the researcher only obtained information from K's perspective, as follows:

“... , yeah, we mostly talked about how AA has been doing lately regarding her works as the admin. I am just concerned about her capability to speak properly with the parents, especially in this work situation. You know, right? Japanese have many forms, and it seems AA struggling with speaking business Japanese, keigo, with the parents. But did a great job communicating with the kids but she does need to improve her communication skills, not only with the parents, but with us too.”

The researcher saw that after the meeting was over AA looked a little tearful. However, AA was still professional and asked about the condition of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka when they left the meeting. After the meeting, AA began to show significant changes by trying to communicate optimally not only with parents, EC/KU, and K but also with researchers, and MR. AA also began to learn and practice using business Japanese with K, the researcher and MR. The researcher assessed that the special meeting provided satisfactory results and that EC/KU and K had fulfilled the soudan principle by consulting with AA which resulted in an increase in AA's level of productivity and work efficiency.

#### b) Ba Analysis

Looking at the previous explanation, K and EC/KU managed to communicate AA's problem well and AA also received support from K through formal Japanese language training. The actions taken by K and EC/KU are clear examples of the application of *ba*, which is to create an inclusive and harmonious work environment by nurturing fellow staff to improve and enhance the quality of work. Furthermore, by giving attention to AA's problems early on, Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka teachers have successfully taken preventive action against potential conflicts that may arise if AA's problems are not addressed and communicated quickly and appropriately.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

The application of the concepts of *ba* and *hourensou* can be found in the work environment of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka. The creation of *ba* in the work environment of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka has proven to have a positive impact on the openness and work efficiency of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka teachers. This is evidenced by the openness of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka teachers to cultures outside their own. The researcher as an intern also believes that the application of *ba* in the Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka work environment has been successful in making the intern feel accepted and valued despite coming from a country and culture completely different from the other Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka staff. In the process of problem-solving, teachers at Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka also constantly use the principles of *hourensou* to ensure that problems that arise can be known to the people concerned, can be informed to the people who need to know and consulted for solutions smoothly.

The researcher's findings in this study are that the application of the concepts of *ba* and *hourensou* in the work environment of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka proved effective in increasing openness, work efficiency, and smooth problem-solving among teachers. The creation of *ba* also provided an opportunity for the teachers of Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka to be open to cultures other than their own.

In addition, the implementation of *ba* also proved successful in creating an inclusive and welcoming work environment for Carl Jido Club Nishikigaoka staff as well as interns from different countries and cultures.

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