

JAPANESE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AT MAKITA ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT

The major reason why culture influence work commitment and attitude is that culture entails the basic values, norms and behaviour patterns that are relevant in the organizational context. Due to the fact that human resources are a factor of differentiation and a source of competitiveness, a growing number of companies are constantly expanding human resources investment even in periods of recession. The objective of our study was to identify some important similarities of Japanese human resources development adopted by international subsidiaries from our country. We took into consideration the case study of Makita because of its major investments done into our industry and impact on labour market. Therefore it is essential to develop appropriate programs to support the human resources performance into Romanian society.

KEYWORDS: *cultural values, human resources development, Japanese management style*

1. Introduction

Culture is essentially about people and the way in which they behave as a result of their background and group affiliation. The reason why culture is so important to business strategy development is the fact that cultural values influencing their efficiently and effectiveness of how they do their jobs. Within the context of globalization, the main concern of the corporations and their managers, in the actual environment, is to understand the behaviour of people from different countries. By understanding their background, work related values, what shapes their behaviour, it will be easier for organizations to identify both similarities and differences, and apply some methods or strategies for managing them.

About the Romanian culture identity many sociologists, historians and specialists in branding presented different ideas, many of them in contradiction. Analyzing a survey conducted by IRSOP in June 2005, a working paper of Cousins, Ch., Tang, N., 2003, resulted the following values: friendly, affectionate, insensitive to others, behaving like followers rather than leaders, intelligent, active, high prevalence of teamwork, at least in those areas where the job's tasks permitted that, being rather disorganized, superficial and conservative.

Another important aspect of culture implication was explained by Hofstede in his study, and provided an important framework not only for analyzing national culture, but also for considering the effects of cultural differences on management practices and organization strategies. Based on this model many studies applied in Romania reveals high values for power distance and uncertainty avoidance.

The high value obtained for the last dimension shows that Romanian people seen ambiguity and change undesirable. They tend to prefer a structured and routine, even bureaucratic way of doing things.

In conclusion due to the results from our survey and based on the most relevant items we consider the following consequences for the organizations and their management:

Consequences of work-related cultural values for organizations

Table 1

Work related value	Consequences for organizations
Obedience in front of superiors	Large proportion of supervisory personnel
Elderly referent power	Experienced managers are promoted
Need of coordination	Task oriented subordinates
No confliction relationships	Permitting group integration
Personal time important	Organizations should not interfere with people's private lives
Preferred strong leaders	Interest for individual achievement
Employment security	Less ambitious employees.

Starting with this point, our objective it was to analyze how which cultural context influencing the management practices applied by international companies into Romanian subsidiaries? Due to the fact that their specific style of management is so efficient and productive, we considered that Japanese companies could bring more interesting changes in the Romanian work behaviour and their attitude regarding job commitment. For this reason we started our research with identifying an important Japanese company, which developed in recent years, productive activity and made major investments in our market. We stopped at Makita Corporation, due to its international reputation and their interests in becoming an important player into European market. We also considered that through its actual and future actions shown a strong influence on the Romanian labour market.

2. Particularities of Japanese human resources development

The traditional Japanese management practices used in Japanese companies was used partly as argument for their rapid growth throughout the 1970s and 1980s. These management practices, however, have been in change. They have evolved as the economic, social, and competitive conditions have changed. Although these practices were very successful in dealing with management problems arising out of these changes in the 1970s and 1980s, Japanese enterprises today face a variety of new problems, caused by recent social and labour market changes, that are not being adequately dealt with within most companies. Thus the effectiveness of these practices is being questioned. Consequently, Japanese organizations and, in particular, their human resource policies need restructuring and revitalizing in order to overcome these problems.

Many studies and researchers, reveals that because of a prolonged recession, Japanese companies were forced to restructure products, operations, management and also human resources, in order to remain competitive. Due to their specific humanistic economic

philosophy, most of the nation's leading companies started to offer education and training programs to their employees, by implementing their private employee-education system. More and more companies make a considerable effort to reduce training time required for competitive and committed employees. Also focus their energy on training for managers with skills of training, development and motivation subordinates.

The new tendency is to apply the job rotation within the firm or in corporate, for groups of middle-aged employees or lord, which have less chance of formation new skills to current jobs. The companies have not avoided the off- the Job Training, but they have strengthened their human resources power through on-the Job Training program and supported efforts to self-development. A study done in 1996 by the Labour ministry, shows that 63.6% of companies surveyed believe that top managers have no way to check whether or not a professional development programs was properly implemented for the employee. Also they believe that middle managers and supervisors are aware of this system to support employee in this direction, but their daily actions in this regard may call into question for three reasons:

- time too load tasks did not allow expression of interest in training new recruits,
- middle managers do not realize the importance of system control
- and not least, a big problem of Japanese companies had difficulties in communication due to the difference between generations.

The uniqueness of Japanese management development system is on the job training, which involve relationships with different jobs from the company, not formally education and training, outside the company. This system, on the job training (OJT), is essential for new employees of the company and for implementing companies have to choose a senior employee as instructor for each new employee until she/he will achieve basic tasks. The jobs are such that employees can develop and train their skills through the daily routine of tasks. Due to this system, new employees are considered non-active members for a period of time (from one week to several months), when they are in training position. During this trial period is a rotation on some jobs - in factories and offices - in order to form the overall picture of the company. The role of instructor is very important because direct supervisor should plan the daily work of employee and support him daily in his work.

To meet the deficiencies in training and employee development, Japanese companies have applied a particular form of training "outside-inside", meaning that the instructors are actually employees of the company. For example, top managers are trainers divisions; they themselves are instructors for managers or team work area. Thus companies' employees are responsible for training and human resource development. But, most of whom have not a background in education. Some of those responsible for training are selected from other departments or sectors, the department of human resources for a certain period of time, after returning or leaving for other sectors. Therefore sometimes happens that employees are trained by people "novice" in the areas of activity, mainly for the seminars organized outside of the company.

3. Profession development at Makita Romania

Makita initiated business activity in Romania in 2000, having initially only distribution activity. In time, it created a strong distribution network based on 142 of intermediaries in entire country. After that in 2007 it decided to invest in a production unit. By employing a total of 300 people and plans for extended activity, Makita is one of the leading Japanese investors at our country, with more than 40 mil. Euros total investment.

Therefore, in the process of Romanian subsidiary management, made by a top managerial team with 4 Japanese managers, have been transferred and implemented also their specific models, principles and methods of management system. The study that we carried out in 2009 among employees of this company, responded to the scope of identifying how their managerial methods have been implemented in Romanian subsidiary and which is the perception towards them of Romanian employees.

The research method was a structure interview on a sample of 11 managers from different level all with Romanian nationality. The questionnaire for the interview was structure on 14 questions, for 5 of them being used Likert scale for measuring their responses.

In terms of professional development in the first place should be noted that 45% of managers surveyed have received training in Makita Corporation of Japan. This experience varies from one week to 20 months, depending on the professional position. In a proportion of 90%, these managers are also, followers of system integration of new employees in the company through mentoring. This system, applied by Makita Romania is similar with the Japanese one, and implies establishing a mentor for each new member of the company, which guided them in order to learn the organizational culture and performance standard for their activity.

The managers of Romanian Makita's branch prefer organizing subordinates in small teams or individually, using in coordination a participative leadership style. Moreover, they consider this type of organization as typical for Makita company in general.

Even if subordinates of Makita are not familiar with employment for life, they prove to be characterized by the same cultural values as japans employees, namely: security, sensitivity and certainty. Due to economic humanistic philosophy of Japanese management style human being is the centre of company's concerns (Keisha). This is shown in the subsidiary by the fact that employees Makita is one final factor in the situation a crisis slaughtered by managers.

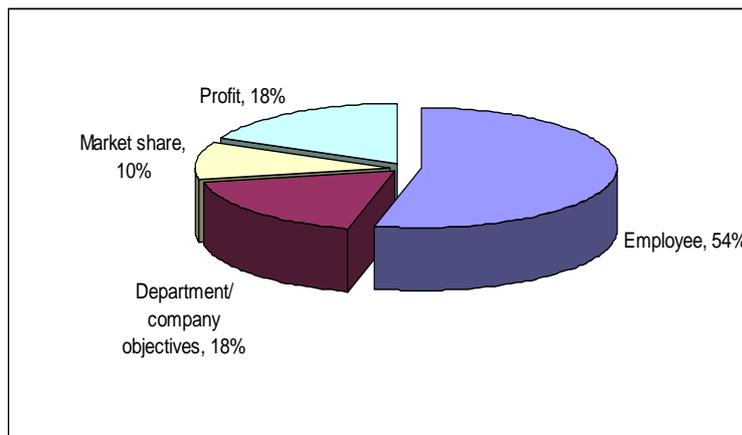


Figure.1 The last element slaughtered in the crisis situation at Makita

Regarding the emphasis on motivational factors, in Romania, as in Japan, emphasis is placed on seniority at work.

In terms of professional development programs implemented by Makita, applying a likert scale, where 5(very useful), resulted the following ranking (see the table). We observed that managers showed a preference for group discussion, training systems at work and abroad and visits to other branches or headquarters.

Perception about human resources development programs utility

Table 2

	Training	Job rotation	Conference	Group discussions	Simulations and case studies	Visiting in other branches
Mean	3.8	3.4	2.1	3.9	3.7	3.8
Median	4	3.4	2.1	4	4	4
Std. deviation	0.57	0.97	0.89	0.51	1.13	1.26

Another important human resources techniques applied by Makita into Romanian labour market is the establishment of high school class, with mekatronic specialization starting with the academic year 2008-2009. The graduates of this class represent the future employees of Makita Corporation, but not necessarily in Romanian subsidiary. This system provides us more arguments for the particularities of Japanese management model, like:

- long term planning of employees,
- responsibility for the employees job security
- and importance of training employees based on the policies and strategies established by the company.

Many of the teachers for this class are employees of Makita's branch and they influence the students' cultural values. For instance students are taught to emphasis results and performance. These two aspects are specific for Japanese culture.

According to study made by Hofstede, Japan is a country that captures the best characteristics of masculinity dimension, the result counts most, but this dimension is complemented by that of femininity, because of the importance of harmony with the environmental factors, vital for all Japanese.

Even if classes are firmly rooted in the Romanian educational system, they are complemented by techniques used in Japan, such as visits to certain departments of the company, acquiring experience programs for holidays, etc. Thus, all these methods are intended to familiarize students with the whole culture Makita. The students appreciate on a scale from 1(poor) to 5(very good) these methods applied in their class with average of 4.29 the entire program, but in the first position in their preferences is situated with 4.9 the visiting program in different departments of the company. Students considered that this system is important for their education and professional training.

4. Conclusions

Using this model of survey addressed to managers of Makita Corporation, we tried to emphasize the Japanese management practice by Makita Corporation in Romania. For better results in coordination Romanian work teams, the company implemented a training system for some of the Romanian managers into branches from Japan. This technique brings a strong commitment for the organizational culture and values, and also a sensitivity toward participative leadership, specific for Japanese management and for Makita

corporation. Other similarities have been noted like, criteria for work evaluation system, motivational factors and integrating new employees.

Taking into account all these elements and characteristics that are both current employees and future employees, we can say that the Makita was able to bring in Romania a part of the organizational culture of the parent company in Japan. Along with other Japanese companies operating on the Romanian market, Romanians are not foreigners or reluctant to bring new Japanese management.

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