

JAPANESE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES – A CONCEPTUAL STUDY

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Abstract: The paper focuses its attention on the management practices being adopted by Japanese companies which are the result of the values nurtured by them since childhood in an individual. The paper is based on the secondary data and reveals the secret of Japan being known as a developed nation despite of being deviated in the bomb blasting during the Second World War. The progress made by the nation is quite surprising and the practices talk about the culture of these people where values and principles are so thoroughly being imbibed in an individual that when he starts earning he concentrates on his work very hard and come up with productive results. Being a good human being automatically leads to be a good employee this is what Japanese culture teaches us and is reflected through their management practices and through development of the nation.

Keywords: values, Second World War, Japanese culture

Introduction:

Japan is one of the largest and second most developed economies in the world. It has a well-educated, industrious workforce and its large, affluent population makes it one of the world's biggest consumer markets. More it is appreciated and admired for the development in a short period and for rising from ashes. The success story of Japan is the story about its hard work, dedication, innovation, risk taking, sincerity and its consistent efforts. The whole world has always looked at it with lot of curiosity. Despite of unfavourable geographical conditions the progress made by the nation is astonishing and has set an example in front of the world about how love for the nation and hard work pays off in terms of success. Japan has witnessed worst climatic conditions, scarcity of natural resources, frequent earthquakes, poor agriculture and many wars. All these worst conditions have made Japanese people stronger and they have learnt to live against all the odds and face whatever comes in life with great courage and with optimistic attitude. This has developed a typical culture and value system among the Japanese. Some of the important elements of their culture includes strong sense of patriotism, strong team spirit, and practice of working together, ready to sacrifice self- interest for the well-being of the society, a strong sense of obedience, discipline and respect for seniors, willingness to work hard sincerely and consistently for the accomplishment of the long term goals.

Objectives:

1. To study the management practices of Japan.
2. To study the effect of these practices on business organisations.

Research Methodology:

This paper is based on secondary data. Secondary data was collected from various journals, books, articles, working papers, NGO reports etc.

Japanese Management Practices:

Japanese Management has always emphasized on the human factor in the organisation. Japanese think that any kind of development, progress and improvement is the outcome of the sustained efforts of people and the result of the technology alone. Japanese principles deeply rooted in Japanese culture, traditions and social norms and conventions. These practices are the result of social values and parameters. Following are the practices:

1. Lifetime Employment:

Japanese organisations assure life time employment. It means when once an individual joins the organisation as an employee he spends his entire life in the same organisation i.e. till his retirement. Switching the organisation is considered as a matter of dishonesty and disloyalty. Its management

responsibility to take care of the employee and provide him job security. Japanese management adopt paternalistic approach towards their employees and do not believe in hire and fire policy. A worker/employee is considered as permanent member of corporate family, actually organisations are considered as a corporate family and all the employees are treated as family members. In fact employee do not join the organisation just to earn his living and satisfy is personal need but he becomes the member of that family and works with full sincerity and dedication towards the achievement of company goals. He feels pride to be associated with the organisation. Usually Japanese do not introduce themselves by their name or profession but by referring the company for which they do the job. This practice of lifetime employment is practiced by selecting the best candidate from the society, who is academically, physically and mentally fit for the job. For this scientific selection process is carried out, wherein various test like aptitude, logical reasoning etc. are conducted to understand the psychology of the candidate.

This practice increases the morale of the employee, it develops attachment towards the organisation. The employee very well knows that his welfare is attached with the organisation. Job security makes an individual mentally relaxed as he is sure that he will spent his entire work life in the same institution, so he works with full dedication and with loyalty.

2. **Seniority based rewards:** In Japan rewards like higher pay scale or promotions are based on seniority. Seniority is based on the length of service. The most senior employee is rewarded with such rewards. Due to this individuals are assured of reward for their dedication, sincerity. This leads to increase in morale, productivity and loyalty among the employees. Employees are not jealous of each other and so the relations among them do not get spoiled. Group performance is given more importance rather than individual. Credit of good work goes to the group and blame of mistakes or errors also goes to the group.
3. **Non-specialised career path:** Japanese management insists on generalist rather than specialists. During the initial years of job, employees are assigned with variety of tasks. They work under the guidance of their superiors and get acquainted with all kinds of jobs. This is one kind of training where an employee gets an opportunity to do all varieties of work and creates versatile employees. Therefore the company is in position to handle any kind of situation and any kind of work. This develops co-operation among the departments and employees too. It also develops interdisciplinary skills and relationships among employees.
4. **Strong emphasis on training:** Japanese give more importance to training. It is a regular and routine activity of Japanese companies. Every employee has to undergo training till his retirement. Training does not focus only on specific area but includes knowledge and skills from other areas also. As non-specialised career paths are followed, every employee has to develop multiple functional skills and has to possess knowledge about different functional activities. The aim of training is to generalise, and not to specialise. The emphasis of training is self- development through use of new skills imparted. During the training, the employees have to stay together at company guest house which develops collectivism and they learn to develop themselves as members of the group and living and working together.
5. **Emphasis on harmony:** Japanese companies eliminate disparities and inequalities among the employees. Having same uniforms for all the employees and group singing at work places are the symbolic elements showing harmony and togetherness. They emphasis on group activities and group performance.
6. **Self-discipline:** Discipline in Japanese people is not externally imposed, but it is self- discipline. Employee is brought up in such a socio – cultural environment that he learns to give maximum productive return of the wages or salary he earns. This attitude towards work doesn't get developed all of a sudden but it is a result of value system which they have nurtured over the years. The work ethics in japan are very rigid and hard. Self-control, tolerance, obedience, self-discipline and co-operation are treated as the highest virtues of an employee.
7. **Ringi system of collective leadership:** Ringi is the system of decision making through mutual and collective consent. Ringi is a Japanese word where Rin means preparing a proposal containing a problem and Gi means discussion and decision. RINGI system is a part of ancient Japanese culture,

wherein the head of the family before taking the decision used to consult the senior members of the family. In corporate sector same system is followed. The employees whenever they face day to day problems regarding the work assigned to them they prepare a document named RINGISHO , which consists of what the problem is all about and then it is circulated to all the departments. Every personnel in the department write his own comments about the proposed decision and recommendations. Ringisho is sent back to the person who has initiated it for its implementation.

8. **Omikoshi Management:** It includes recruitment of young employees at lower level of management and doing group activity under their leadership. This style makes active participation of these young employees in decision making process. Also these employees are given autonomy to take any decision or action. Omikoshi management provides the employees job satisfaction and creates pleasure in the work.
9. **Group Responsibility:** Japanese people are habituated to work in group as since their appointment in the organisation whenever they are imparted with training they are supposed to live in groups. Japanese culture focuses on group behaviour, group responsibility and group performance. The work group of employees are responsible for success or failure, individual is neither blamed or appreciated for the results.
10. **Kaizen :** It is technique of Total Quality Management which is a Japanese word which means continuous improvement. It views that everyday the progress is possible. Kaizen insist on improvement in personal life, home life, social life and work life. It believes there is always possibility of improvement, but that improvement is not all of sudden and drastic but slow and gradual.

Conclusion: The secret of development of Japan seems to be in the practices of management. The way personnel are handled and treated is definitely a unique way, which is nurtured in their culture and reflected through development. The values, ethics, principles, obedience, loyalty etc. are the characteristics of Japanese people which have made them good human beings. The practices show the justice given to the employees and homely treatment given to employees which increases their morale. The quality of patriotism is also admirable which has brought all the countrymen a long way and given them the strength to rise from ashes.

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