

# KAIZEN Management and the Japanese Glance: The Path towards Global Performance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

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**Abstract:** *This research details the location and Kaizen management in the current global economic context. The study is part of a series of practical studies published in various journals, proceedings and international journals. The authors insisted on the efficiency and effectiveness of such an approach that could be of benefit to those who would approach Kaizen Management regardless of the chosen organization. It is extremely important, in the opinion of the authors, to choose and implement such a management model, namely Kaizen Management. The research presented was carried out by the team of authors with optimal results.*

**Keywords:** *Kaizen Concept, Kaizen Management, Quality Management, University Management*

## I. The KAIZEN Social® – from idea to action

The moment when the individual decides to continuously improve his life, the effects of his actions fall not only on himself, but also on the environments he comes into contact with. Therefore, whether we are talking about the infrastructure of the work environment, personal space or even the groups of people the individual comes into contact with day after day, each of these end up changing continuously according to the evolution of that person. In time, through collaborations, consistency, and groups more and more dynamic and bigger, the effects can be shown in the community, then in society and last but not least, on the environment.

It is important to consider that each individual and company is, in fact, a sub-system of a vast system which, in order to develop and reach performances in harmony with the social and natural environment, requires the involvement of all subsystems it is made out of. As a consequence, evolution implies small improvements, coming from activities done at intervals as small as possible and consistent to which an ever-increasing number of people end up participating.

Based on these ideas, the KAIZEN Institute Romania, in partnership with Clean Up Association Japan, KAIZEN Management Club Romania, AOTS – The Japanese Management Association in Romania, the Japanese Embassy in Romania, local authorities, RNP Romsilva – Alba Silvic Office and volunteers from the university environment, NGOs, associations, schools, high schools, urban community, as well as mass-media have started several projects of KAIZEN Social in order to make the community more sensitive regarding the care for the public space and the environment.

Among the sponsors of these events are companies that support the promotion of the KAIZEN spirit in Romania like: Assa Abloy Romania, Hirschmann Automotive Romania, Johnson Controls Romania, Stabilus, Sunimprof Rottaprint, Supremia Grup, Takata Romania.

Up to the present moment there have been 4 actions organized by 5S Public<sup>1</sup> out of which the first one within the *“Japanese glow for the cities of Romania”* transformed in 2013 in the national program *“KAIZEN education for Romania”* to which 2 more greening actions adhered within the project *“KAIZEN for People and Nature”*.

*The purpose of the 5S Public actions* is to extend the practices encountered within Romanian companies with a KAIZEN management, at the level of the city, in order to improve its environment and the relations between the local administration, private companies and citizens.

Practically, a 5S Public action involves the cleaning of a public space, the standardized stages of a 5S workshop following (*sorting, systematization, shine, standardization, support*) with the help of volunteers. However, in itself, the idea of the action is far more than the process in itself. It means a certain behaviour, way of thinking, attitude, of giving an example and last but not least, the opportunity to live in a more pleasant environment, shaped through the power of each individual.

It is considered that the members of the community can work together in order to help not only each other, but also to help fellow countrymen to feel at home, as a family. Through dialog, openness and involvement, people can change any social space in a safer, organized, healthier and welcoming space. This activity, consistently done, has the potential to develop a pro-active attitude and a mentality focused on harmony with fellow people and nature. According to the representatives of the *Clean Up Association Japan* actions have the potential to also decrease the criminal ratio at the city levels. This aspect is confirmed by the results obtained in the Shinjuku neighbourhood in Tokyo, which a decade ago registered the highest criminal rate in the capital and which, through the actions of the 5S Public has become nowadays the most quiet and popular neighbourhood in Tokyo.

Up to the present moment, 5S Public actions have taken place in 124 areas of Japan and 4 countries: Brasil, USA, China and Taiwan. Romania is the first European country in which 5S Public actions took place.

*The purpose of the “KAIZEN for People and Nature”* is to promote the KAIZEN culture amongst citizens, by harmoniously using the resources that are available to us: the people, nature and economy.<sup>2</sup>

Practically, this is done through actions of planting trees in the neighbourhood of city areas. It is considered that by supporting the environment in regeneration, a change in mentality occurs and the respect toward people, nature and the environment is developed.

<sup>1</sup> Trademark of the KAIZEN® Institute Romania, <http://ro.kaizen.com/> (last time accessed: March 20, 2018).

<sup>2</sup> *KAIZEN pentru Oameni și Natură* [KAIZEN for people and nature], [http://ro.kaizen.com/fileadmin/DATA/kaizen\\_ro/Documents/Prezentare\\_KON\\_\\_130408.pdf](http://ro.kaizen.com/fileadmin/DATA/kaizen_ro/Documents/Prezentare_KON__130408.pdf). (last time accessed: March 20, 2018).

*A. 5S Public – “Japanese glow for the cities of Romania” – 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2011*

In October 2011, the first edition of KAIZEN Social took place, both in the country and in Europe, done through a series of 5S Public workshops in three of the most important cities in Romania.

The project “*Japanese glow for the cities of Romania*” which took place in Brasov – 11<sup>th</sup> of October, Timisoara – 13<sup>th</sup> of October and Alba Iulia 14<sup>th</sup> aimed at developing the individual conscience in order to make the community more sensible regarding the care for public space.

The project was considered a success because, aside from the physical visible results (250 volunteers including 6 mayors and vice-mayors, 7 TV stations and 1500 km made in one week, a first step in removing two of the most known obstacles previously mentioned in implementing the KAIZEN practices: “*the mistrust in the KAIZEN philosophy*” due to lack of information and “*people’s resistance to change*” due to the mentality “*this works just fine*”.

More so, the 250 volunteers present there were able to find out that the 5S method is, beside an administration and maintenance techniques of the work spaces, also a manner of expressing the KAIZEN spirit in the public life space and a life style that can help them develop on a personal and professional level.



**Fig. 1. The volunteers of the 5S Public actions from the project “Japanese glow for the cities of Romania” – 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2011**

Source: The site of the KAIZEN Institute® Romania,  
[http://ro.kaizen.com/fileadmin/DATA/kaizen\\_ro/Documents/Prezentare\\_5S\\_Public\\_111025.pdf](http://ro.kaizen.com/fileadmin/DATA/kaizen_ro/Documents/Prezentare_5S_Public_111025.pdf)

As for the impact of the project on the community and society, the results were considered from the perspective of reaching the purpose. Because the reaction of the participants and the echoes in the local and national mass-media from after the event were positive, the management of the KAIZEN Institute Romania considered that for a first attempt, the purpose of the project to catch attention on the potential of collaboration between the city’s main forces in order to improve the quality of life was reached.

### B. “KAIZEN for people and nature” – 1<sup>st</sup> Edition 2012

Due to the fact that the need to develop the social responsibility projects by using the KAIZEN management practices and methods was encouraged, in the period of 13-14 of March, 2012, the project “KAIZEN for Alba County” was organized.<sup>3</sup>

The project focused on three directions. The first one was presented on the 13<sup>th</sup> of March and it addressed the economic sector. With this opportunity the “KAIZEN for SMEs” product was launched, destined for the continuous development of performances of Romanian small and medium companies, in the context of an environment in which the effects of the economic crisis were still felt.

The project continued on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March when the program “KAIZEN Individual for young people” was launched, the first program for personal development through the individual strategic management. At the basis of this program was the premise according to which changing the mentality can be done in the easiest manner, from the young level of the population, because young people are the most permissive when facing change, embracing an open attitude and non-discriminatory regarding innovative ideas.

The project ended with the “KAIZEN for People and Nature” which aimed the harmonious development of young people and, implicitly, the increase of the value brought by them to society. The action consisted in planting trees in Oarda locality, 5 km from Alba-Iulia City, with the help of 118 volunteers.



**Fig. 2. The volunteers of the first “KAIZEN for People and Nature” action in Gemba**

Source: The KAIZEN Institutie® Romania site <http://ro.kaizen.com/succese-kaizen/kaizen-social/kaizen-pentru-oameni-si-natura/judetul-alba-evolveaza-in-stil-kaizen.html>

The entire action took place according to a *gemba* Kaizen workshop. Among the results of this action one can count: the planting of 700 trees 5 km from Alba Iulia, increasing interest related to the practices of the KAIZEN philosophy, increasing the level of awareness regarding the responsibility toward the environment and future generations, increasing individual consciousness, a better collaboration between state institutions, private institutions and NGOs, mass-media and citizens, and last but not least, enthusiasm.

<sup>3</sup> *Județul Alba evoluează în stil KAIZEN!* [The Alba County evolves in KAIZEN style!], <http://ro.KAIZEN.com/succese-KAIZEN/KAIZEN-social/KAIZEN-pentru-oameni-si-natura.html> (last time accessed: March 20, 2018).

*C. 5S Public® – ‘Japanese glow for the cities of Romania’ – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2012*

The second edition of 5S public actions and the third KAIZEN Social event took place in Alba Iulia on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June, 2012. Among the 80 participants Japanese guests of the *Clean Up Japan*, Mr. Toru Shimizu – President of the *Police Academy* from the Yamanashi Prefecture, Mr. Seiji Nakajima – General Manager of *Quarter Back consulting* and Mr. Brad Schmidt – COO at *KAIZEN Institute Consulting Group*, were also present.



**Fig. 3. Volunteers during the 5S Public action –  
“Japanese glow for the cities of Romania” – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2012**

Source: Supremia Grup Company site <http://www.supremia.ro/Evenimente/Supremia-Grup-a-facut-curatenie-in-stil-Kaizen--eID130.html>

During this event the new volunteers had the chance to find out which are the visual standards of cleanliness for the city and the ones with previous experience to refresh their information and practice regarding the KAIZEN concept.

An area from the city centre was cleaned according to the steps of the 5S method. At the end of the event, participants gave their feed-back and suggestions to improve in order to support the project in the editions that followed.<sup>4</sup>

*D. “KAIZEN for people and nature” 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2013*

Found at the second edition, “the KAIZEN for People and Nature” action, which in 2013 became part of the national program of KAIZEN Social “KAIZEN education for Romania”, aimed to promote the KAIZEN culture by planting 600 acacia trees 15 km from Alba Iulia, in Mereteu, Vintu de Jos Commune, with the help of 130 volunteers.

Being an action of raising awareness and responsibility with the purpose of educating the young people in respect to nature, the event began with presentation of fragments from the documentary “Home” that offered a troubling vision on the manner in which the planet’s balance has been destroyed in the last decades.

Alarming statistics regarding the disappearance of water from more and more areas of the globe, of the effects of deforestations and of global warming have been brought to the

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<sup>4</sup> *Supremia Grup a facut curătenie în stil KAIZEN* [Supremia Group cleaned in KAIZEN style], <http://www.supremia.ro/Evenimente/Supremia-Grup-a-facut-curatenie-in-stil-Kaizen--eID130.html> (last time accessed: March 20, 2018).



attention. The conclusion of these statistics was: humanity has created phenomenon which humanity risks of not controlling any more. One of the effects of these phenomenons speaks about the possibility that by 2050 there will be *200 million climate refugees*.

That is why, involvement is required to reverse the course of events in our favour and of course in the favour of the environment. And the first step consists in taking responsibility. In order to illustrate this advice, after closing of the presentations, the organization and preparation stage for going to *gemba* (action zone) took place.

Once arrived in *gemba* (Mereteu, Vintu de Jos Commune) and before planting began, RNP Romsilva responsible presented the main security rules, they instructed the team leaders and awarded the sectors for each team. For the next hour the 130 volunteers, helped by the forestry staff, have planted 600 acacia trees. For part of the volunteers this action represented a first opportunity to plant trees. Most volunteers expressed their enthusiasm in participating in the next editions.



**Fig. 4. Volunteers during the “KAIZEN for people and nature” action – 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition 2013**

Source: KAIZEN Institute® Romania

<http://ro.kaizen.com/succese-kaizen/kaizen-social/kaizen-pentru-oameni-si-natura/o-actiune-cu-fapte-bune-pentru-tineri-si-natura.html>

#### *E. 5S Public® – “KAIZEN education for Romania” – 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 2013*

On May 27, 2013, in Aiud Municipality, the third edition of 5S Public action took place. The event, organized in two stages, followed the scope of the previous actions to develop the attitude of the urban community regarding improving the quality of life through collaboration between local administration, the representatives of the private and state business environment, NGOs, citizens and mass-media.

In the first part of the event one aimed at informing the volunteers regarding the manner of applying the 5S method, both professionally and personally, and the benefits of applying the 5S Public. Mr Hidesaburo Kagiya, Mr Yoshihito Tanaka, representatives of the *Clean Up Japan Association* and Mr. Brad Schmidt, Senior Advisor at the *KAIZEN Institute Japan* spoke. Some of their observations and recommendations are presented in the following paragraphs.

***“With small improvements done at first with big efforts, persevering, you can reach results that are beyond expectations.”*** Hidesaburo Kagiya, Founding President of *Clean Up Japan*.

After years in which he has undertaken 5S Public actions in Japan, China, Taiwan, USA and other countries, Mr Kagiya noticed that the results of being in the habit to clean and to maintain it has effects on the performances inside companies, schools, and last but not least, helps to develop a better society. More so, being the president of one of the most developed companies in Japan, *Yellow Hat*, Mr Kagiya has the conviction that the company environment cannot be good if the employees are not happy. That is why, his recommendation is to put emphasis on keeping the work place clean and tidy so that the entire attitude of the employee, his efficiency and productivity can turn into daily activities.

***“Cleanliness points out what is good in people, in the place and in the equipment.”*** – Mr Yoshihito Tanaka, President of *Clean Up Japan*

From his work experience Mr Tanaka learned that the main cause of all accidents is found in the unsafe conditions and in an untidy environment. As a consequence, improving the environment in the companies and machines, problems are identified before they aggravate the situation and produce losses or accidents. In this why, once identified, problems can be solved instantly and in the future, prevented.

***“Through cleanliness people change, they open up, ending up appreciating his kind even more.”*** – Mr Brad Schimdt, Senior Advisor at *Kaizen Institute Japan*

Mr Brad Schmidt added that the practices of cleanliness and their benefits are found, from ancient times, mentioned as being the best ways in opening people’s hearts, lowering the level of crime and intensifying the feeling of belonging to a group and the quality of life.



**Fig. 5. Mr. Kagiya during the Gemba action**

Source: KAIZEN® Institute Romania

<http://ro.kaizen.com/evenimente/5s-public/programul-educatie-kaizen-pentru-romania.html>

The second part of the event had as purpose instructing the volunteers according to the work standard. This was conducted by Mr Julien Bratu, manager of KAIZEN Institute Romania. After this stage, the actual action started.

The action in *gemba* (action area) took place in the Aiud Municipality’s park. Once the work equipment (cleaning materials, bags, hand gloves, etc.) were prepared, each team was assigned with a sector in which to develop the action. According to the sector and the need

to improve, the volunteers gathered waste selectively, plucked out grass, picked up branches and dried leaves and swiped the area. For most of them, the activity from 27<sup>th</sup> of May was a continuation of the previous actions.

After closing the action, the work tools were cleaned and they were arranged according to category as they were at the beginning. The event closed according to custom with a group photo.



**Fig. 6. The volunteers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> “5S Publication – KAIZEN education for Romania”**

Source: KAIZEN<sup>®</sup> Institute Romania

<http://ro.kaizen.com/evenimente/5s-public/programul-educatie-kaizen-pentru-romania.html>

#### *F. 5S Public – “Cluj shines with cleanness” - 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2013*

During 22-23 of October the 4<sup>th</sup> 5S Public action took place at national level and the first at the level of Cluj municipality, “*Cluj shines with cleanness*”. The project was launched on the 22nd of October within an official meeting to which the local authorities, KAIZEN Institute Romania and Clean Up Japan representatives and representatives of the business environment from Cluj attended.

The event gathered 168 volunteers coming from the local authorities (*Cluj-Napoca City Hall and the Romanian Police Department*), national companies with KAIZEN experience (*Sunimproff Rottaprint, Assa Abloy Romania, Takata Romania, Hirschmann Automotive Romania*), representatives of the private business environment (*Respect Agency, Ambient, the Rotary Club Association, Brinel, Compexit Trading, Electrica SA, Hotel City Plaza, Hotel Topaz Cluj, Invest Commercial Services, IQuest and Psihoselect*), representatives of the educational environment (*Technical University Cluj-Napoca and the Technical College “Anghel Saligny”*), non-governmental organizations (*Best Cluj-Napoca, New Horizons Foundation, the Consortium of Student Organizations, the Organization of Economy Students and the Society of European Students*) and mass-media (*TVR Cluj-Napoca, Cluj News, Cluj Monitor, Pro Tv Cluj, Look Tv Transilvania, Mediafax, City News, Monitorul de Cluj, Transilvania Reporter, Cluj Newspaper and Cluj Hour*).

For starters participants gathered at the City Hall for the education part. With this occasion, the Cluj volunteers were able to find out more about the KAIZEN concept, the benefits and the impact of the 5S method and the extension of the actions at national and world level.

Again emphasis was placed on the idea that *we are all part of nature* and regardless of our social status, the positions we hold or the financial situation we have, *we are equally responsible for the environment we are part of and its improvement*. After instructing the volunteers regarding



the steps of the 5S method (*sorting, systematization, shine, standardization support*) and the manner of making each of them, the volunteers headed toward *gemba* (the action area) for the second part of the action, namely the practical part.

Detunata Park was selected. The volunteers were divided into 10 teams and, according to the sector assigned, they gathered leaves, they cleaned the paths of grass and swiped them, they cleaned the children swings, the urban furniture for adults and the garbage bins, they removed the dried paint off the banks, tables, chairs and a gazebo and re-painted them.



**Fig. 7. Volunteers during the action “Cluj is shining with cleanliness” – 4<sup>th</sup> edition 2013**

Source: Picture taken by Sunimprof Rottaprint

The action ended with organizers', guests' and participants' feed-back during the press conference. It was noted that the action had the desired impact even from during the activity, because the Cluj volunteers showed interest in participating in future actions as well. More so, it was suggested to extend the 5S Public actions outside park areas.

The echoes of this action were found in 3 television stations and 18 local and national publications.

### *G. The impact of the KAIZEN Social actions*

This aspect was considered, analysed and checked through different methods: structured and unstructured interviews, questionnaires and free discussions both within KAIZEN Social actions and outside them. Based on the answers received the following observations were drawn.

For starters, the feed-back offered by the participants at the actions reflected the fact that part of them sent further to their families and friends information received regarding the experience in participating and the benefits of the KAIZEN management in private life. Therefore, people discovered that they can better plan their daily activities and resources, maximizing their potential and even working more efficient. As effect, one can say that the purpose of the actions, to extend its boundaries outside the company and the actual action was reached.



**Fig. 8. Volunteers of the 4<sup>th</sup> “5S Public action – Cluj is shining with cleanliness” - 2013**

Another finding is that people start to think in a “KAIZEN style” right after they become aware of the utility of the practices put at their disposal. Whether KAIZEN teaches the attitude to always be better and to change for the better the things surrounding us that depend on each person, or whether it is perceived as a philosophy in which making value of people, common sense in using resources and the perpetual movement and collaboration toward evolution represent the most important values, significant is the fact that the life philosophy and the management style promoted by KAIZEN start to shape up in the mind of people.

This aspect was also confirmed in the paper ***“The level of perception of the KAIZEN philosophy, KAIZEN management and 5S technique in the academic and business environment in Romania.”***

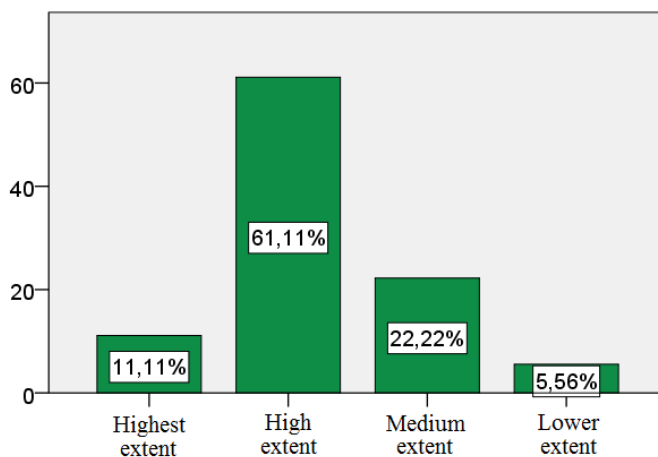
According to the research done, for 61.1% of the respondents of 14 national companies that function based on the KAIZEN management system and quality systems, the KAIZEN Social projects have effects on the society to a very big and big degree. However, the respondents consider that the KAIZEN Social actions have, at this moment, a low impact, visible at local level at most. In order to increase this impact, informing the community regarding the purpose of the actions, the nature of the events and the benefit of participating, for both the community and the volunteers, is suggested. For visible changes,

the involvement of a high number of participants, at short intervals, action found in tight connection with the promotion efforts, is necessary

According to the same respondents, the practices obtained after participating at the KAIZEN Social projects are further conveyed by 27.8% of those involved to a high extent, by 44.4% to not a high or low extent, by 16.7% to a small extent, while 11.1% from respondents convey these practices to a very low extent.

Also, the respondents consider that the mentality of the person the message is directed to makes the conveyance of practices possible to a large extent, very large extent or small extent. The resistance to change, lack of clear information, inconsistencies appeared in conveying the message and different perceptions on the actions can make the efficient conveyance of practices difficult outside the actual practices. It is also considered that a single participation does not offer enough support to understand the essence of the activities, therefore, consistency and patience are also needed. An efficient way of conveying the practices is represented by the honest enthusiasm of participants and the power of example.

The extent to which respondents consider that the KAIZEN Social projects could change the mentality of Romanians by developing individual conscience is reflected in the following graph:



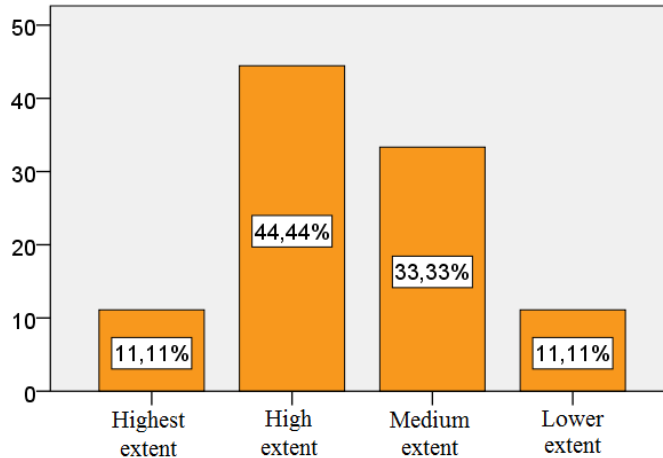
**Fig. 9. The extent to which the KAIZEN Social projects could change the mentality of Romanians**

Regarding the exploitation of the KAIZEN Social actions at national level, opinions are divided. On the one hand, it is considered that the 5S Public actions and the forestations actions should be done in as many localities as possible, especially because the budgets offered are minimal, and on the other hand, the idea that precisely the financial resources are the ones that make the extrapolation of actions at national level difficult is rumoured.

However, the general valid opinion is that, in order to organize, the openness and involvement of economic agents and local authorities and also a vaster promotion focused on information so that volunteers will gather out of their own initiative, is required. It is considered that if people would come to understand the simplicity and logic of the actions, as well as the benefits obtained, the interest of participating could increase. Contrary, the

resistance to change will go on as a barrier in the way of extending the KAIZEN Social actions at national level.

Currently, the respondents from the business environment consider that the KAIZEN Social projects could be extended at national level to the following extent:



**Fig. 10. The extent to which the respondents of the business environment consider that the KAIZEN Social projects could be extended at national level**

Last but not least, Dr. Eng. Julien Bratu, general manager of KAIZEN Institute Romania is of the opinion that in order to be able to speak about a real change in the society's mentality it is necessary to have a 5S Public action at least once a month, in a systematic manner, for 3 years in a row. However, regardless of the level of promotion and the interest of the business environment, the educational environment and citizens to uphold the extension of the actions at national level, the speed it unfolds is directly influenced by the local authorities. According to Mr Julien Bratu the political level could make for the extension to be done in 10, 20, 50 or even 3 years.

#### ***Where can 5S Public be applied?***

Any public space with improvement potential through collaboration is a suitable space for the 5S Public. Including schools and state universities are allowed for such actions. Regardless of the level, the steps are the same and imply the same consistency and involvement.

#### ***Where can the 5S actions be done?***

If we start from the premise that the behavioural models are copied even outside the 5S Public projects we can consider that the 5S method can be applied in any space or area with improvement potential. As we have mentioned before, at individual level, the 5S method can be applied in organizing one's own thoughts by setting out objectives at the beginning of the day. Then, one can continue with organizing and keeping a desired order in the personal space, maintenance of plants and the area around the house and the yard. Each person can participate active to the improvement of the quality of his or her life and of those around them giving a positive model of carrying for the personal, social and natural environment.

### ***Who can get involved in the KAIZEN Social actions?***

Anyone! In KAIZEN each person is important and his or her potential unlimited. If at individual level each can decide for his/herself, in the KAIZEN Social (5S Public and tree planting) children, young people and retired persons, NGO volunteers, employees from plants and commercial societies, public workers, company directors, faculty rectors, deans, prime-ministers and head of states or any other can be involved. Each person can bring his/her input in the continuous improvement of his/her life quality and of those around them.

### **Why are the KAIZEN Social actions useful?**

At the basis of the KAIZEN Social actions there is, as Mr Kagiama also said, a weak point. It is people's inability to leave alone, independent from each other. However, this weak point can be transformed in an advantage through reciprocal help and collaboration for building a better society.

Step by step, the current efforts considered big and with small results, can change into small efforts with big results. However, it is only through assuming responsibility and each of us contributing that we can improve the environment we are part of to the benefit of all of us.

## **II. Conclusion**

KAIZEN is a Japanese philosophy which focuses on continuous improvement in all aspects of life. Applied in the business environment, the KAIZEN management system follows the constant improvement of the organization, starting with the staff, continuing with the processes and closing with the products and post-sales services. The system involves employees on all levels, regardless of the level of training or their status and implies small improvements, brought day after day, with costs as small as possible. Also, the KAIZEN management system also applies in the relation with the suppliers, clients and investors, partners, NGOs, local community, authorities, government and other parties involved.

Implemented for the first time in some Japanese companies, amongst which Toyota, immediately after World War II, KAIZEN management spread rapidly in companies all around the world, after 1986 when Professor Masaaki Imai, the father of continuous improvement, founded the KAIZEN Institute Global. Through its 37 branches in Europe, America and Asia, companies from all around the world had and have the chance to implement some of the most efficient work techniques and practices at world level.

What makes the difference between the KAIZEN management and other American and European management systems focused more on development through innovation and high costs is the fact that the entire system is based on an interdependency of the staff who ends up working as a team for reaching the same goal. Aside from the fact that this aspects transforms it in the most humane management system on the market, it facilitates the improvement of all elements involved in the creation and delivery process of goods and services, through costs as low as possible. The employees from the companies with a KAIZEN management system work in clean spaces, neat and kept at certain standards that they constantly improve (5S), follow daily the elimination of all types of *muda* (losses), they are helped in the communication and decision making process by the visual management and standardization, they are cherished for the work they do and the suggestions are taken into consideration (*teian*) generating added value, as a consequence, both them and the company are winning. More so, according to the company profile and the activity object, there are numerous other KAIZEN techniques and practices developed in order to support the processes control (TPM, TFM, VSM, SMED etc.). However, it is important to mention



that the KAIZEN system does not replace nor does it exclude innovation. It only looks for the most efficient mechanisms of using and maximizing its benefits when it comes to progress.

The evolution of the KAIZEN management in Romania was in tight connection with that of the quality management. Through bodies such as The Romanian Society for Ensuring Quality (S.R.A.C.), The Romanian Movement for Quality (M.R.C), The Romanian Association for Quality (A.R.C), The Romanian Foundation for Promoting Quality and The Romanian Quality Award Foundation “J.M. Juran”, the basis for developing an economic environment focused on excellency was created. The KAIZEN Institute Romania also participated at this evolution, which from 2004 offers consultancy, training and projects in order to improve the economic and social environment in Romania.

Regarding implementation and functionality of the KAIZEN management in the Romanian organizations, an aspect that is worth mentioning is the fact that it is possible and more and more spread. Everything starts in the mentality. As long as their interest, openness and the cultural diversity is seen as an advantage, through proper training, practice and personal example, the necessary expertise for implementing and supporting the system in any company and in any field can be learned.

The most known obstacles in implementing the KAIZEN system “*resistance to change*” and “*mistrust in the reliability of the KAIZEN management system*” are favoured mainly by the lack of clear information. This aspect can be controlled through a better training of those responsible with implementing and supporting the system and a more efficient conveyance of knowledge amongst the colleagues they work with. Additionally, the manner of conduct offered by management and the extent to which they support the development of their second in command, step by step, in a productive climate, also represents a basis for ensuring the implementation of the KAIZEN management system in companies.

At social level, in order to change mentalities and improve the society by means of the KAIZEN Social projects, the increase of the concept’s visibility at national level is necessary.

Regarding the evolution of the KAIZEN concept at national level, it is appreciated that it will have an ascendant direction, ending up being found both in organizations and in the daily life of the employees and of those interested in continuous improvement. The key to the evolution of the KAIZEN concept lies in sending on a large scale, the simplicity on which the management system is built on. And the simplicity lies in the nature of the KAIZEN concept of being a life style, and not just a manner of working.

In conclusion through sustained effort and involvement, it is only a matter of time before results occur. Starting today and continuing day after day to improve something with ourselves, we ensure through the activities we undertake and ourselves a better future for us and future generations.

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