

**Keynote Speech at the Attorney General's Chambers  
Annual Performance Award Ceremony  
7 June 2019**

In April this year, Adv. Keetshabe visited my office and requested me to give a keynote speech on the efficiency of Japanese people in their work places. Today, I am very happy that his request is materialized. It is my honor to share with you my view on the efficiency of Japanese people.

Before I start talking about it, I would like to emphasize that I am not going to argue that Japanese ways are superior to or better than Botswana ways. Rather, what I am going to present from now are lessons learnt through the experience of Japan on how Japanese people achieved effectively functional society.

Let me first introduce how Japanese people acquired hard-working spirit by looking at Japan's history. We can trace the roots of hard-working spirit back to 18th century about 200 years ago. At that time, farmers needed to pay tribute to their rulers by contributing certain amount of rice. They were allowed to sell the excess of the rice after tribute and they could accumulate wealth.

However, at the same time, Japan was experiencing rapid growth of population which meant that the land one could use was very limited. This meant that they could not expand their farming land. What they did instead was to put intensive and efficient labour power to the small farming land so that they could increase the production volume and accumulate wealth. Here, we saw the dawn of Japanese way of hard-working spirit.

Having said that, it was about 100 years ago when many Japanese turned into diligent and hard-working people. What happened 100 years ago was industrialization like western countries. Then government of Japan tried to catch up with western powers and educate Japanese people to become strong force for development. In order to proceed with their development policy, the Japanese government used an icon called "Ninomiya Kinjiro".

Kinjiro was born in 1787 to a rich family. However, he lost his father when he was 14 and her mother when he was 16 years old. Then he was taken in tow by his uncle. Though Kinjiro liked studying, his uncle said to him that farmers did not need education and told Kinjiro not to read books at home. Since then, Kinjiro started reading books while he is walking and carrying fire woods on his shoulders. Eventually, he got independent from his uncle. Through his tireless efforts, diligence and frugal life, he managed to accumulated wealth and reestablish his family. His performance received an attention from a ruler and he was appointed to do financial reform. As he has done it very well, his reputation spread to all parts of Japan and he rebuilt public finance in a great number of places in Japan.

After he passed away, the government of Japan used Kinjiro as a model citizen of Japan

who represented diligence and hard-working. He was introduced in government textbooks and sung in various songs. Even today, you will see statues of him, reading books while carrying fire woods, in a great number of schools throughout Japan.

I have so far talked about the history on how Japanese as a whole have acquired hard-working spirit. Now I would like to look at the current situation in Japan by focusing on efficiency specifically. First of all, Japanese people share strong sense of not bothering others. This makes you think that you are one of wheels of a vehicle. If you fail to do something, the vehicle does not work and it results in bothering the entire group that you belong to.

This notion is closely related to Japanese people's punctual character, or time management. For example, when there is a meeting at 10:00, Japanese people gather at a meeting point at 09:55, five minutes before the designated time.

Since the strong notion of punctuality is shared among Japanese people, they can expect that things will be done on time as planned, therefore, this shared notion of punctuality is a foundation of efficient Japanese society. Imagine, if you don't do on time what you are supposed to do and things are often delayed, you can't have efficiency in your group or society.

Punctuality is taught at every school in Japan as one of the most important values and virtues in Japanese society. On the other side of coin, failure in punctuality is a subject of strong condemnation.

Here, I need to mention that being punctual does not mean in Japanese society that you can compromise the quality of your work. You are still expected to do your work to the perfection within allocated time. Japan is well-known for its high quality products represented by vehicles, cameras, other electronics, and infrastructure to name a few. This demonstrates how Japanese are obsessed with accuracy and quality.

Japanese people are disciplined to be diligent, punctual and accurate from when they are very small at school. Through education, Japan successfully educated her citizens to be strong labour force that enables them to do high quality work within an allocated time. Education, as you can imagine, is the back bone of efficient society.

In a nutshell, Japanese people's efficiency comes from shared value of diligence, punctuality and perfectionism. These values were penetrated into Japanese people's mind through education.

Thank you for your attention and I am very happy if you could learn something new today.

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