

## Understanding Kaizen in Basic Educational Institutions in Metro Manila, Philippines

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— Review of —  
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### ABSTRACT

This research focuses on the Japanese quality management concept of kaizen philosophy (literally meaning “continuous improvement”) and how it is applied in selected educational institutions in Metro Manila, Philippines. This research explores how kaizen is being applied in the Philippine educational setting. The study involved 3 top basic educational institutions from the north, central, and south geographical areas of Metro Manila and their administrators and stakeholders. The research showed that there were 4 emergent themes common in all participant schools about how kaizen is being applied in basic educational institutions in Metro Manila, namely continuous improvement, student improvement, communication, and functions. The study also confirmed that kaizen application process in participant schools is “student-centered” with the primordial objective of assisting them in all their academic and non-academic needs in school, being the primary stakeholders of basic educational institutions. However, while the study showed that the kaizen process is well understood and applied, the lingering challenge remains to be still with communication among administrators and stakeholders. Researchers espouse that kaizen application process could be adopted in any service-oriented industry or organization, whether public or private.

Keywords: Kaizen, continuous improvement, quality management, service driven.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Business organizations perpetually generate new practices that would ensure the security of their competitive advantage in the market for a relatively long period. In essence, the consistency of manufacturing products or rendering quality service would be the objective. Educational institutions also exhibit a function of business. For schools to stand against the test of time, ensuring the market of providing quality services should transpire.

In the context of Philippine Education, the *United Nations Development Program* publishes a *Human Development Report (n.d.) (HDR)* showing that the Philippines ranks 117 out of 187 with an education index of 0.610 which was stagnant from 2010-2013. The education index in this context measures the quality of the educational system in the country with a score of 1.00 being the highest. Furthermore, the criteria for the education index are measured by educational attainment, adult literacy rate, and combined primary, secondary, and tertiary gross enrollment ratios. In 2014, the education index dropped to 0.528 and slightly increased in 2015 with 0.539 which garnered the Philippines a rank of 115 out of 188. In 2018, the HDR showed that the country’s rank decreased to 116 out of 188 but increased its’ education index to 0.563. However, the most recent HDR placed the Philippines at the rank of 107 with an average education index of 0.718. Despite this

improvement, the HDR suggested that other member nations are improving their educational quality faster than the Philippines during the last decade.

The research explored how *kaizen* as a tool for quality management is being applied in selected basic education institutions within Metro Manila. With this in mind, the research hopes to be able to provide insight, additional knowledge, and recommendations to educational managers on how to continuously improve respective educational institutions. It also aimed to identify what are the *kaizen* application themes common to all participant schools and what could be their principal motivating factor in adhering to *kaizen* philosophy. Given the findings of this study, researchers likewise assessed the feasibility of adopting *kaizen* application process in other industries, enterprises or organizations.

## 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### 2.1 Definition of Kaizen

*Kaizen* is a quality management concept that is defined as “continuous improvement or change for the better”. The philosophy itself is not exclusive to organizations as it can also be applied in personal and social life. (Osada, 1989; Macpherson et. al. 2015). *Kaizen* is related to “change” however it is not similar to “innovation”. Furthermore, *kaizen* can be implemented in organizations through processes and not be considered innovation as discussed and differentiated by Imai (1986).

### 2.2 Kaizen as a Philosophy

According to Emiliani (2008a) *kaizen* is a philosophy essential to organizations whether for-profit or non-profit and a method designed to bolster quality improvement. Khamis et. al. (2009) would agree with this by stating that the philosophy of *kaizen* can be used as a technique to establish and maintain a quality environment in an organization. Coincidentally, Jimenez, et. al. (2015) argued that the philosophy itself is not exclusive to organizations and that the interpretation of continuous improvement can be adapted to personal, family, social, and professional life.

### 2.3 Kaizen and Innovation, Distinguished

Imai (1986) notes that traditionally, western organizations have focused on a short-term perspective and tend to favor the use of *innovation* with its results-oriented return on investment, but technology-driven, instead of the introduction of gradual improvements as espoused by the *kaizen* philosophy where a long-term perspective of continuous improvement, with particular attention to details instead of “great leaps”, as the thrust of most Japanese organizations. It was further elaborated in his research that *innovation* usually connotes a one-time event, unlike in *kaizen* where efforts are continuous and perspective is long-term but steps taken are “small but incremental”. As such, it was advanced that *innovation* can provide drastic improvement to an organization but often requires a large investment in time and money. The effects of *innovation* gradually erode when competitors copy the technology and ideas. Such copies are less expensive to produce since the technology already exists.

Imai (1986) further argued that *kaizen* is not only process-oriented, but also people-oriented and requires little investment in terms of money as it focuses on the efforts of people who continuously share information among themselves with the extensive use of feedback systems.

### 2.4 Kaizen as a process

One of the *kaizen* processes discussed in the literature review is “lean manufacturing or most commonly known as the 5S methodology. It covers step-by-step insight on how to apply “continuous improvement” in the workplace and the 5S corresponds to the; *seiri* (sorting), *seiton* (streamlining), *seiso* (shining), *seiketsu* (standardize), *shitsuke* (sustain). *Seiri* (sort) classifies all items and segregates them accordingly in a location and removes all unnecessary items. *Seiton* (streamlining) places all necessary items in the optimal place for fulfilling their function in the workplace. *Seiso* (shining) sweeps or cleans and inspects the workplace, tools, and machinery regularly. *Seiketsu* (standardize) standardizes the processes used to sort, order and clean the workplace. *Shitsuke* (sustain) maintains the developed processes by the self-discipline of the workers. Also translates as "do without being told". (Osada, 1991; Kobayashi, 2005; Kanamori et. al., 2016).

Another process under the *kaizen* philosophy is the PDSA which is a cycle involving planning, doing, studying (checking), and acting where “plan” studies the current situation, describes the process, determines the student's expectations, and identifies available historical or additional data that is required to understand the process. Then identifies the primary causes of the problems, develops potential changes or solutions to the problems, and selects the most promising solution(s). “Do” conducts a pilot study or experiments to test the potential solutions and identifies measures to understand how the solution is addressing the problem. “Study (Check) reviews the results of the pilot study or experiment, determines if the solution is effective, and identifies further experimentation that may be necessary. And lastly, “act” selects the best solution, develops an implementation plan, standardizes the solution, and monitors the performance (Sadiq, 2017).

### 2.5 *Kaizen* Challenges

Since originating from the manufacturing industry, educational institutions and their administrators have a poor understanding of the concept and are subject to misinterpretations and as such cannot provide concrete answers for the “how” and “whys” of implementing *kaizen*. Therefore, schools are unable to construct proper strategies applicable to their institution’s problems, and evaluation standards do not lead to quality improvement. With this in mind, because there is no consistency in the *kaizen* conceptualization, there tends to be uncooperative individuals, a lack of communication, uninterested participants, and an absence in the process of implementing *kaizen*. Resistance to change is also a factor and more often than not, traditionally inclined individuals do not welcome contemporary practices (Emiliani, 2008b). This is supported by Nurillah et. al. (2022) who suggested “change readiness” as a key factor in digital acceleration from the educational perspective in Indonesia. In their study, it was established that only 2 dimensions were optimal and 5 dimensions were not, which was reflective of the poor reception and response toward quality improvement.

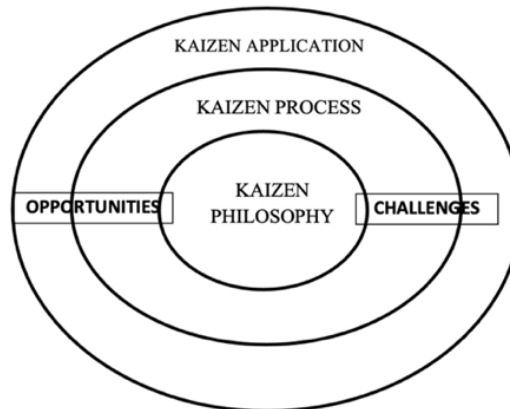
### 2.6 *Kaizen* Opportunities

Despite the challenges of the *kaizen* philosophy, the literature also presented some of the philosophy’s opportunities such as improving overall organizational performance, teaching and learning, student satisfaction and performance. It was also used to improve organizational processes and educational quality through the value proposition of students and community engagement respectively (Park et. al, 2013). Corollary to this, Truong et. al. (2023) examined the impact of management practices on organizational commitment and job performance in Vietnam’s public sector and suggested that public service motivation has a significant relationship with empowerment and job characteristics. Suffice it to say, if *kaizen* would be nurtured in an organization as a management practice, coupled with consistent motivation, it could yield similar positive results. Suryanarayana

(2022) supports this by concluding that HRM management practices in the Nepali banking sector significantly created a positive impact on employees' affective and organizational commitment.

### 3. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



The conceptual framework for this research is presented in Figure 1 which depicts 5 concepts namely *kaizen* philosophy, *kaizen* process, *kaizen* application, opportunities, and challenges. For this conceptual framework, philosophy represents the theoretical definition of *kaizen* based on the literature review. The process includes, but is not limited to, processes disclosed in the literature review such as the 5S methodology (sort, streamline, shine, standardize, and sustain) and the PDCA method (plan, do, check, act). Application in the framework is how organizations respectively apply the processes depending on their needs. Opportunities are room for improvement in the application of the *kaizen* philosophy in the organization while challenges are barriers to such improvements. The study reflects *kaizen* philosophy's process and application. The framework is designed by researchers in a manner where the concepts are not mutually exclusive from one another but rather, have an associative connection. The opportunities and challenges of *kaizen* philosophy, process, and application are represented by boxes within.

### 4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As the study aims to present *kaizen* applications in selected basic educational institutions in Metro Manila, Philippines, the research answers the following questions:

- 1.) How is *kaizen* philosophy understood by the selected basic educational institutions?
- 2.) Why do selected basic educational institutions apply the *kaizen* philosophy?
- 3.) What are the *kaizen* process/es they have considered in their school?
- 4.) How is *kaizen* philosophy being applied in the selected basic educational institutions?
- 5.) What are the challenges they have encountered?
- 6.) What are the opportunities that they look forward to as they apply the *kaizen* philosophy?

### 5. METHODOLOGY

The research used the qualitative multiple case study design based on Robert Yin's approach (2014). This research's "phenomenon" is the *kaizen* philosophy and the researcher's objective is to understand the "how" and "why" it is being applied in an educational institution. Yin (2014) defined his "gaps and holes" type of case study as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident. This type of case study typically answers the questions "how" and "why". The research used Yin's case study method to understand "how" *kaizen* is being applied in selected basic educational institutions in Metro Manila and "why" is it being applied.

Metro Manila's basic educational institutions were geographically classified by researchers into the North, Central, and South sectors. In each geographical sector, they selected one school on the bases of the top enrollment rate in that area, followed by the schools' willingness to participate in the study. Fortunately, the schools which agreed and were selected from each of the three sectors belong to the top three schools from the North, Central, and South sectors of Metro Manila.

In all of the three participating basic educational institutions, the individual participants were assigned by the respective school heads from their roster of academic and non-academic administrators from the Coordinator's level up to the Principal's level, including parents' association representatives who are members of some school committees, depending on their availability at the time of researchers' visit.

One of the criteria for establishing quality research design, according to Yin (2014), is the "construct validity test" which is a test in identifying correct operational measures for concepts being studied. It requires multiple sources of evidence to establish a chain of evidence. With the participants' composition, Yin's "construct validity test" is thereby satisfied.

Participant schools are referred to as "Cases (location in Metro Manila)". For confidentiality purposes, the background of these schools shall be omitted from the research.

## 5.1. Participants

### 5.1.1 Case 1 (Las Piñas School: South Sector)

There were five (5) participants from Case 1. Pseudo-names were provided by the participants for confidentiality purposes. Table 1 below shows the general socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1: General Table of the Background of the Participants for Case 1

	<b>Pseudo name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Number of years in the school</b>
Case 1	<b>Bea</b>	Female	Single	24	MA with units	5
	<b>Kat</b>	Female	Single	25	MA with units	5
	<b>Jun</b>	Male	Married	51	PhD degree	29
	<b>Gab</b>	Male	Single	29	MA degree	9
	<b>Henry</b>	Male	Married	43	MD degree	12

As seen in the table above, Jun serves the longest with 29 years in the school while Bea and Kat are the shortest with 5 years each. Lastly, Henry is a parent of a grade 9 and 12 student, who also happens to be a part of the parents' association of Case 1.

### 5.1.2 Case 2 (Makati School: Central Sector)

There are four participants from Case 2 and Table 2 below shows their general socio-demographic background.

Table 2: General Table of the Background of the Participants for Case 2

	<b>Pseudo name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Number of years in the school</b>
Case 2	<b>Amy</b>	Female	Single	50	MA with units	16
	<b>Andy</b>	Male	Married	56	MA with units	31
	<b>Darwin</b>	Male	Married	39	MA degree	16
	<b>Hail</b>	Male	Married	42	MA degree	10

Of the participants, Hail is a parent and a member of the parents' association. His son has been a student in Case 2 for 11 years – from kinder to grade 10 but he started being active in the parents' association when his son was in Grade 1. Currently, Hail has been with the association for 10 years.

### 5.1.3 Case 3 (Quezon City School: North Sector)

There were four (4) participants from Case 3 and Table 3 below shows their general socio-demographic characteristics.

Table 3: General Table of the Background of the Participants for Case 3

	<b>Pseudo name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Civil Status</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Highest Educational Attainment</b>	<b>Number of years in the school</b>
Case 3	<b>Dan</b>	Male	Married	55	MA degree	30
	<b>Erika</b>	Female	Married	47	PhD with units	28
	<b>Bonnie</b>	Male	Married	45	MA degree	19
	<b>Grazie</b>	Female	Married	43	MA degree	12

As seen from the table above, Grazie is the assistant principal for student affairs at the high school level. She also has a Master's degree in Theology similar to Bonnie. Unfortunately like all administrators, she is not teaching anymore. She used to teach Reading and Christian Living for 10 years. She had been part of Case 3 for 12 years.

## 5.2 Instrumentation and Sampling Procedures

The research applied snowballing sampling, where key participants – school stakeholders shared contacts and connections that they now possess the same characteristics to create the chain of evidence. An in-depth interview guide was used during the interview. The guide is divided into six blocks, namely: background of the participants, kaizen philosophy, kaizen process, kaizen application, challenges, and opportunities.

As mentioned in the foregoing paragraphs, the research is according to Yin's (2014) multiple exploratory case study method and therefore follows as such. According to Yin, there are 6 sources of collecting evidence. These are documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. The interview guide asked specific questions based on the data collection matrix in a conversational unbiased manner.

Table 4: Data Collection Instrument Matrix

Blocks	Sections	Variables and Indicators
I	Background of the participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Socio-demographic Characteristics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Age</li> <li>- Gender</li> <li>- Civil status</li> <li>- Educational Attainment</li> </ul> </li> <li>● Characteristics               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current position</li> <li>- Number of years working for/ being part of the school</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
II	Kaizen Philosophy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How is kaizen philosophy defined by the selected basic educational institutions in Metro Manila?</li> <li>● Why do selected basic educational institutions apply kaizen philosophy?</li> </ul>
III	Kaizen Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are kaizen process/es they have considered in their school?</li> </ul>
IV	Kaizen Application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How is kaizen being applied in the selected basic educational institutions?</li> </ul>
V	Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the challenges they have encountered?</li> </ul>
VI	Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What are the opportunities that they look forward to as they apply the kaizen philosophy?</li> </ul>

The research conducted individual case reports for each case before analyzing them through cross-case analysis. Triangulation method was conducted to evaluate the results of the interview by combining at least two or more theoretical perspectives, methodological approaches, data sources, investigators, or data analysis methods. The interviews conducted were triangulated with documents and site observations and documentation. The information gathered from the interviews was analyzed and categorized according to their common themes.

## 6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of the research from three (3) basic educational institutions in Metro Manila shall be referred to as Cases 1, 2, and 3. The discussion presents a within-case analysis that will also be connected with the research questions which will also include narratives from participants concerning the emergent themes, categories, and codes. A cross-case analysis of all three cases will be available at the end of this chapter.

### 6.1 Case 1 (Las Piñas City: South Sector)

The data showed that *kaizen* in Case 1 exhibited a linear approach where the management is in charge of the overall *kaizen* process in the school. The management then communicates *kaizen* to the entire school through their mandatory plenaries and meetings with the faculty. The theme of “communication” emerged as the bridge in their process of *kaizen*. The understanding of *kaizen* being continuous improvement is discussed through the said management plenaries. Moreover, the plenaries would introduce

“initiatives” every school year and the purpose as to why they apply these functions about *kaizen*. Case 1 claimed that these initiatives are for their students however *kaizen* is not exclusive to such. The school also incorporates *kaizen* in their training and development programs for teachers as well as improving their curriculum annually. The plenary also evaluates the curriculum and correspondingly introduces initiatives to improve it. With this in mind, the management then provides the improvement changes and sets deadlines for teachers in accomplishing their respective tasks.

### 6.2 Case 2 (Makati City: Central Sector)

The discussion showed that the administrators were tasked to come up with improvements for the school but specifically aligned in helping students improve. Coincidentally, the administrators learned about quality management strategies in their respective schooling, including *kaizen*. *Kaizen* and its nature of continuous improvement were applied in the school through its respective functions. Furthermore, Case 2 saw potential in adapting *kaizen* to improve the overall school environment which also led to extracurricular projects based on student interests as well as improving the working environment of teachers. Unlike the first case’s emergent framework which was linear, Case 2’s framework is comprehensive. In this case, they do not follow a step-by-step process but rather a collective approach. This would explain why Case 2 also suggests that communication and time are key components of their overall *kaizen* process. It could be derived that when communication and time are mixed with the *kaizen* process of Case 2, both would serve as necessary components. Case 2 views communication through daily meetings and discussions with stakeholders as a pivotal theme that would determine the success of *kaizen* application. For a time, Case 2 admits that the success factor does not happen overnight but must occur gradually.

### 6.3 Case 3 (Quezon City: North Sector)

The data emphasized the “cycle of evaluate and improve”. Case 3 also recognizes *kaizen* as continuous improvement. It was revealed in the discussion that the *kaizen* process begins with the school’s curriculum review. The school suggests improvement changes based on the review but notes that these changes should still be structured for their students. Changes are then discussed throughout the school through meetings where administrators provide necessary information for stakeholders. Case 3 also disclosed that this is the first year of its application of *kaizen*. With this, they made necessary adjustments in their school functions and enrichment programs for teachers. *Kaizen* was also seen as an opportunity for the growth of Case 3’s technological aspect. Nevertheless, Case 3 insists that if *kaizen* were to be successful in terms of achieving their targets for application, the school must require a significant amount of time to be acquainted with the new and succeeding processes.

### 6.4 Cross-case analysis

This segment presents the cross-case analysis of the cases in the research. To recap, there are 3 cases; case 1 involves a school in Las Piñas, case 2 is a school in Makati and case 3 is a school in Quezon City. Table 5 shows the cases and the emergent themes. Highlighted are categories that are common to all cases.

The results revealed that 4 emergent themes were common in all the cases. These themes are continuous improvement, student improvement, communication, and functions. The cross-case analysis is structured to capture a holistic view of how *kaizen* is being applied in basic educational institutions in Metro Manila. This is evidenced by the connecting lines of the themes and *kaizen* suggesting concepts to complement one another. Furthermore, *kaizen* in the 3 cases is understood as continuous improvement, and



the purpose for its application is directly focused on the students. As to how it functions in their respective schools, all cases had their discretion but agree that they incorporate *kaizen* in their institutions. Communicating *kaizen* is implied to be the supporting theme that holds the *kaizen* process together and to some extent, becomes the determining factor for its success.

Table 5: Cross-case analysis of the cases

Theme	Category	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3	Common to all / some cases	Unique to one case
Management	Management prerogative	X				X
Continuous Improvement	Continuous improvement	X	X	X	X	
	Management plenary	X				X
	Quality management strategy			X		X
Student Improvements	Student-centered	X	X	X	X	
	Resource efficiency	X				X
	Performance improvements	X				X
	Values formation			X		X
Curriculum	Part of the curriculum	X				X
	Curriculum Design		X			X
	Curriculum Review	X		X	X	
Functions	School Functions	X	X	X	X	
	Pilot testing			X		X
	Evaluation	X		X	X	
Training & Development	Enrichment programs	X		X	X	
Communication	Meetings & Discussions	X	X	X	X	
	Misinformation	X				X
	Miscommunication			X		X
	Resentment	X	X		X	
Time	Time management	X	X		X	
	Significant adjustment			X		X
	Workload	X				X
School Environment	Work environment		X			X
	Student environment		X			X
Technology	Technological advancements			X		X

## 7. CONCLUSION

### 7.1 Understanding *kaizen*

In answering the research questions, first, it was clear that the cases understand *kaizen* as

a concept of “continuous improvement”. However, cases pointed out slight divergences in interpretation of the concept such as “choose the better things”, “change for the better” and “constant improvements”. Nonetheless, all cases construed *kaizen* as being a ‘continuous’ (perpetual or consistent) ‘improvement’ (development or enhancement). This is supported by the participants’ statements that *kaizen* in their respective schools is not a stagnant process that occurs in one day, but rather a perennial process that takes days, weeks, and/or years.

### 7.2 Purpose of *kaizen*

Significant to note is that all cases agreed that “helping students” is their main purpose for applying *kaizen* at the basic education level. The cases claimed that the application of *kaizen* is “student-centered” and that its functions are not exclusive to improving their academic performance: improvements in their well-being were also highlighted. The desire of schools to increase overall student improvement was the main factor in considering the application of *kaizen* in their respective institutions.

### 7.3 Process of *kaizen*

Data gathered showed that although the cases agreed on the theme functions and its category school functions, the cases had their variations on how they respectively apply *kaizen* in basic education. For instance, Cases 1 and 2 adhere to the “5S methodology” but they apply it differently in their respective cases. For Case 1, the 5S is used for “grading order and cleanliness” while Case 2 incorporates it in the “students’ department grade criteria”. As for Case 3, they apply a different *kaizen* method in the context of the PDCA which also serves as their guide in making proposals for change or improvement. It was also revealed that Case 2 and Case 3 apply *kaizen* through their “continuing education initiatives” but they still differ in terms of approaches. Case 3, on the other hand, requires the continuing education initiative for teachers while Case 2 simply encourages them. What is unique in Case 2 is that it applies *kaizen* in what they call as a “preventive system” where the school provides all necessary contingencies for every scenario before it even happens. This is pursuant to their school motto of “choosing the better things”.

### 7.4 Challenges and Opportunities of *kaizen*

“Communication” was revealed to be both a challenge and an opportunity for *kaizen* in all the Cases. It was disclosed that the foremost challenges they encounter in the application of the concept of *kaizen* involve misinformation, miscommunication, and resentment among parties. The Cases nevertheless admitted that not everyone in the academe is familiar with or knowledgeable about *kaizen*, which could be the main reason why these challenges occur in their application. The ascertained common solution to resolve this, as disclosed by all Cases, was through meetings and discussions with stakeholders and affected parties. Furthermore, it was concluded that communication plays a vital role in the overall application of *kaizen* in basic educational institutions in Metro Manila. For the Cases, the need to communicate effectively and build collegial relationships with stakeholders was affirmed to realize the maximum potential of the *kaizen* process.

### 7.5 Implications to local and global development

Attaining quality education is essential to every nation’s future. Applying *kaizen* in education has both local and global development implications as it is created for continuous improvement of processes, programs, and services, not only for the educational institution concerned but also for the stakeholders. The participant schools

applied *kaizen* in their institutions for the main purpose of helping students develop holistically, not only in terms of academics but also in terms of character development. In turn, the hopes of improving the quality of education in the Philippines are evident. The Philippines' national hero, Dr. Jose P. Rizal, even mentioned that the youth is the hope of a nation. Similarly, former South African President and Nobel Peace Prize winner, Nelson Mandela quoted that "education is a powerful weapon that can change the world".

While the future remains uncertain, improving the quality of education not only in the Philippines but on a global scale merits advantages to society such as decreasing the poverty rate through career employment opportunities, improving the quality of life, and bridging gaps among individuals regardless of race, religion and gender identity. An educated society promotes and upholds respect and open-mindedness in accepting and recognizing divergent views and opinions of others to foster and build harmonious relations in the local and global community. *Kaizen's* philosophy of continuous improvement is certainly a tool that can be utilized in education to help improve its quality and reap the benefits that would redound to society and mankind.

The research showed that there four emergent themes were common in all participant schools concerning how *kaizen* is being applied in basic educational institutions in Metro Manila, namely *continuous improvement, student improvement, communication, and functions*. The study also confirmed that *kaizen* application process in participant schools is "student-centered" with the primordial objective of assisting them in all their academic and non-academic needs in school, being the primary stakeholders of basic educational institutions. However, while the study showed that the *kaizen* process is well understood and applied, the lingering challenge remains to be still with *communication* among administrators and stakeholders.

Basic educational institutions, being "service-driven" organizations legally mandated by government regulatory agencies to address the "academic and character formation needs" of their principal stakeholders, *i.e.*, the students, are considered as microcosms of societal organizations which are likewise "service-driven". Through this study on the Japanese *kaizen* philosophy, researchers espouse that *kaizen* application process could be adopted in any service-oriented industry or organization, whether public or private, to be truthful to their mandate, vision, or mission.

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