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KAIZEN PRINCIPLE OF CONSTANT IMPROVEMENT: COULD THIS REENGINEER THE COMPETITIVENESS OF KENYA'S MANUFACTURING SECTOR?

Kenya is an emerging economy that is averagely industrialized with manufacturing which is at the core of industrialization contributing significantly to the Kenyan economy. As a result, it has been made one of the Big Four Agendas as a component of industrialization. However, quality concerns that can be traced down the value chain are hampering the competitiveness of the manufacturing sector in Kenya. Evidently, the manufacturing firms need to create confidence in the public regarding their quality systems. For a country that does not have a national culture or a long state coordinated manufacturing history, this may be a challenge. Further, while the manufacturing sector currently subscribes to several standards, certifications and quality management systems, most of these do not prescribe constant improvement such as the Kaizen principles. The objective of the paper was to examine the impact of the Kaizen principle of constant improvement on the competitiveness of Kenya's manufacturing sector. The study revealed while there was subscription to quality standards, there was lack of reinforcing quality culture which made the quality standards not to be adhered to. The paper recommends that there is need to mainstream the Kaizen constant improvement philosophy as a manufacturing culture to improve our global competitiveness.

Keywords

Kaizen, constant improvement, competitiveness, manufacturing sector, quality culture

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