

Welcome to our third issue of *IJPPM* this year. We have a selection of papers focussing on the topics of: lean, quality, continuous improvement, reverse logistics, intellectual capital reporting (ICR) and new product development. Most of the studies are carried out in manufacturing organisations whilst one is based on a local government organisation.

First on the topic of lean, Ramadas and Satish provide an account of employee barriers in implementing lean manufacturing in SMEs. They use a SEM approach with a sample of 117 SMEs. They found that lack of well-trained and experienced staff, lack of knowledge about existing specialists and cultural resistance to change have equally important impact upon employee barriers. Then, Lin and Zhu present a revisit of lean production and their effects on performance based on heterogeneity; their study is based in China. Their results show that whilst lean production has no significant effect on business performance, it has a positive effect on operations performance, particularly non-state-owned organisations.

Second on the topic of quality, Formby, Malhotra and Ahire focus on quality management and leadership and workforce involvement on manufacturing firm success. They propose a multivariate polynomial model as a better predictor of firm success than linear models in collaborative environments. They posit that there are some management behaviours that can be optimum towards supporting self-management workforce, whilst other types of management behaviours could lead to hindering performance.

Third on the topic of continuous improvement, Ahenkan, Tenakwah and Bawole investigate a local government authority in Ghana. Using interviews, themes emerged of problems as well as potential solutions, e.g. training of senior officials, linking rewards to recognition. Next, Singh, Singh and Sharma present a reflective practice case study paper, reporting on the success of a mobile TPM programme within a handtool manufacturing firm in India.

Fourth on the topic of reverse logistics, Mahindroo, Samalia and Verma study reverse logistics, taking into account the role of information systems. Using a survey questionnaire of logistics and supply chain managers in India, the results are twofold. First, they show a relatively strong moderating effect of return frequency and resource commitment. Second, they show that resource commitment has a stronger moderating effect than return frequency.

Fifth on the topic of ICR, Alfraih's article poses the question of what drives ICR. This is investigated among the companies listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange and in the context of ICR becoming increasingly important and the expectation that it is included in the annual reports. The findings show that ICR reporting is surprisingly low as this is deemed significant to regulatory bodies who can support and encourage this practice.

Finally, on the topic of new product development, Zhang and Yang study the impact of customer orientation on new product development performance and the role of top management support. Their study spans ten countries and focusses upon high-value manufacturing. The findings show that customer focus, customer involvement and communication with customers all have a positive effect on new product development.

Overall, we hope you enjoy the variety of insights, contributions to knowledge and practice that the papers in this issue provide to us, the *IJPPM* community.

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