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Japanese production management: An evolutionâ€™”With mixed success

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Abstract

Japanese production management (JPM) became a dominant influence in the field of operations management when, in the early 1980s, knowledge of its main elements became known beyond Japan. Those elements â€™” quick set-up, small lots, cells, kanban, and so on â€™” are well known. Rather than explaining them again, this paper's objective is to explore the sequence of events leading to JPM as a competitive force globally, as well as its impact on theory and practices in operations management. JPM's evolution includes shifting terminologies, fusions and adulterations; limited extensions from manufacturing into services and innovative enhancements, largely of Western origin. Longitudinal research data, based on inventory trends, provide insights on JPM's diffusions and its uneven results. Latter-day puzzling lapses and disappointments, among Japanese as well as Western companies, raise questions about JPM's sustainability, as well as some of its changing manifestations. While the core of Japanese production

management, now over three decades old, appears to have become solidly mainstream, its current and future states are problematic.



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Keywords

Operations management history; Just in time; Total quality; Toyota system; Global inventory trends

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