

Abstract

This research aims to study the critical success factors of Continuous Improvement Program (CI Program) in electronic manufacturing industries between American-style versus Japanese-style organizations operated in Thailand. From literature review, this study collected 16 critical success factors from four perspectives, all of which were divided into tangible and intangible factors. Then a set of hypotheses were formulated based on the review of literature. First, it was speculated that there were other factors beside Top management commitment which were critical to the success of CI Program. The next hypothesis stated that different factors were critical to the success of CI Program in American and Japanese-style organizations. The last hypothesis postulated that intangible factors were more important to the success of CI Program than tangible factors. Then an empirical study was conducted by interviewing eight experts from the case studies. The data was analyzed by employing the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) method, as well as the Pareto Principles. The results revealed that five critical success factors were found to be common among both styles of management: Quality and management system, Process control and improvement, Controlling and performance standard, Plan and strategy, and Culture. The first three factors were regarded as tangible factors while the other two were intangible ones. Therefore this study implies that both tangible and intangible factors are vital to the success of CI Program. This finding differs from the speculated hypothesis which stated that the intangible factors were more important than the tangible factors. Moreover it was found that American-style organizations tend to emphasize education and training while Japanese-style organizations place emphasis on top management commitment and leadership. Both are subfactors under the Organizations and culture which are considered to be an intangible factor. From the overall findings, a self-assessment tool was constructed to assist organizations in evaluating potential success of CI Program implementation.