Exploration of the key evolutionary operational improvement activities

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore crucial evolutionary operational improvement initiatives related to quality management, and the emphasis is on the lessons learned from operational improvement practices in Taiwan.
Design/methodology/approach – To understand a firm’s evolutionary operational improvement activities holistically and deeply, the authors conducted in-depth interviews with executives from four firms in Taiwan. The grounded theory method is adopted in this study to depict the profile of the key evolutionary operational improvement activities.
Findings – Based on the results of the qualitative empirical study, six major dimensions of operational improvement are identified. Further, eight empirical propositions are proposed with detailed descriptions.
Research limitations/implications – The results are based on international manufacturing companies in Taiwan, and thus cannot be generalized to situations in other emerging countries and industries without further research.
Practical implications – By referring to the results of this work, managers can better understand the relationships among operational improvement activities, and thus increase the chances to benefit from operational improvement initiatives.
Originality/value – This paper adds to the literature by providing new empirical insights into the relationships among operational improvement activities.

Keywords Taiwan, Manufacturing industries, Operations management, Quality management, Supply chain management, Supply chain quality management, Operational improvement, Case studies