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Integrating Industry 4.0 with lean manufacturing

Keywords: Industry 4.0; lean manufacturing; smart manufacturing; cyber-physical systems.

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1 Introduction

The Lean Production (Womack et al., 1990) system is the management approach that has allowed firms to advance in an ordered way through the various stages that lead to competitiveness because it allows products and services to be obtained fast and at low cost.

In 2011, to meet the growing challenges faced by industry in Europe, and especially in Germany, the term Industry 4.0 (from now on I4.0) or Fourth Industrial Revolution was coined at the Hannover Fair (Drath and Horch, 2014), although some authors consider that the I4.0 is nothing new but simply combines existing technologies and concepts (Buer et al., 2018). This ambiguity and the lack of a clear definition make implementation difficult.

This paper aims to fill this gap and to analyse the role played by the I4.0 tools in the lean production model.

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2 Objectives

The objective of this paper is to explore this new area of the I4.0 and to present the current state of research into the relation between the I4.0 and lean manufacturing. It aims to answer three questions: How can the I4.0 be integrated with lean philosophy? Will the computerisation of manufacturing make the lean principles unnecessary? Should the I4.0 be a facilitator of lean philosophy?

3 Methods

A systematic review of the literature to find how the I4.0 can be integrated with lean manufacturing through the state of the art of research on this topic.

4 Results

After the usual steps of a systematic review of the literature, 14 papers were considered relevant to our research. They show that the I4.0 approach can fit in a lean manufacturing model even though there is not yet a perfect fit between the two. The mistake that must be avoided is to digitalise and introduce technology without first transforming the firm to a lean philosophy. Once the firm has reviewed its processes in line with lean philosophy, the I.40 will be an important new ally and a facilitator. Not only are lean principles not left behind by the I4.0 but they become more relevant in the new I4.0 factories which in essence have to be lean in order to meet new challenges.

5 Conclusion

In general terms, I4.0 is the application to manufacturing of the latest advances in information technology. The bibliographical review shows that the I4.0 will become an important ally of lean philosophy. Every industrial revolution has had what are known as its "technological facilitators". The technologies of the I4.0 will be its facilitators. To avoid failure, it is important for IT professionals to understand the needs of factories and for manufacturing professionals to understand IT capacities.

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