

## Analysis of Cultural Influences on Quality Management by Comparison of Japanese and German Enterprises

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**Abstract :** Quality is known to be the accordance of product characteristics and customer requirements. Both the customer requirements and the assessment of the characteristics of the product with regard to the fulfillment of customer requirements are subject to cultural influences. Of course, the processes itself which lead to product manufacturing is also subject to cultural influences. In the first point, the cultural background of the customer influences the quality, in the second point, it is the cultural background of the employees and the company that influences the process itself. In times of globalization products are manufactured at different locations around the world, but typically the quality management system of the country in which the mother company is based is used. This leads to significantly different results in terms of productivity, product quality and process efficiency at the different locations, although the same quality management system is in use. The aim of an efficient and effective quality management system is therefore not doing the same at all locations, but to have the same result at all locations. In the past, standardization was used to achieve the same results. Recent investigations show that this is not the best way to achieve the same characteristics of product quality and production performance. In the present work, it is shown that the consideration of cultural aspects in the design of processes, production systems, and quality management systems results in a significantly higher efficiency and a quality improvement. Both Japanese and German companies were investigated with comparative interviews. The background of this selection is that in most cases the cultural difference regarding industrial processes between Germany and Japan is high. At the same time, however, the customer expectations regarding the product quality are very similar. Interviews were conducted with experts from German and Japanese companies; in particular, companies were selected that operate production facilities both in Germany and in Japan. The comparison shows that the cultural influence on the respective production performance is significant. Companies that adapt the design of their quality management and production systems to the country where the production site is located have a significantly higher productivity and a significantly higher quality of the product than companies that work with a centralized system.

**Keywords :** comparison of German and Japanese production systems, cultural influence on quality management, expert interviews, process efficiency

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