

## Abstract

High manufacturing competitiveness in South Africa has the potential to contribute towards mitigating the poor economic performance and high unemployment rate prevailing in the country. However, manufacturing competitiveness is lacking, majorly due to labour productivity issues that are idiosyncratic to South Africa. One of the dilemmas is how to increase manufacturing productivity without major capitalisation, as doing so usually leads to redundancy and retrenchment of employees. A possible solution is to implement manufacturing performance improvement programmes without major capital investment (or capital-labour substitution). Although various programmes exist and are successful elsewhere in the world, these have been found to fail in South African firms due to implementation challenges.

This study assesses the results from implementing a manufacturing performance improvement programme called Integrated Work Systems (IWS) in a South African factory of a multinational company (ABC). IWS has already proven successful in the multinational's factories in other parts of the world. The study aims to determine the critical success-factors and develop a framework for the successful implementation of such a programme in South Africa.

Implementation of IWS in ABC SA's factory was found to be successful in delivering breakthrough results in efficiency and throughput. Critical success-factors established through surveying relevant employees and management in ABC SA were related to the timing and planning of the programme, standardisation of work, regular reviewing and use of leading KPIs, having specific implementation resources and the nature of leadership involvement. The critical success-factors found in ABC SA's implementation were used as a basis for presenting a framework to guide practitioners in implementing manufacturing improvement programmes that aim to deliver higher levels of sustainable performance and improved shop-floor culture.