
Book Review

Strategic Manufacturing for Competitive Advantage – A CSIR & HLL Symposiums by A. S. Ganguly, P. K. Chadha, A. Lahiri and V. R. Dhanuka (editors). Oxford IBH Publishing Pvt. Ltd. New Delhi, 1998.

The present volume is an outcome of a symposium organised jointly by CSIR and HLL in March 1997. Besides the foreword presented by the Research Director, Unilever, the inaugural and introductory addresses presented by the then Finance Minister and the Chairman, HLL, the volume contains six articles by eminent professionals in the field.

The articles have been presented in a lucid fashion and are rich with experiences of the contributors. The initial articles dwell on macro aspects on manufacturing technology and how it can be used in the Indian organisations for gaining competitive advantage. India's comparative competitiveness is examined and the need for effective use of technology is identified. The need for value added exports rather than resource or labour based exports is emphasised. In this context, the role of technology policy in improving use of technology is further examined. The need for policy reforms for facilitating technological development is suggested.

The subsequent articles identify different manufacturing related parameters that can be used by Indian organisation to compete globally. For example, "revitalizing people" has been identified as a necessary condition for excellent performance. A framework for attaining the same has been provided. That quality, flexibility, customisation and innovation can play a significant role in gaining competitive advantage has been illustrated by relevant but brief examples.

The final article illustrates the successful Indianisation of Japanese manufacturing practices.

The purpose of the seminar as put forward by the editors in the preface, was to trigger a discussion on manufacturing and related issues. The outcome is a welcome addition to the field, however, a more balanced mix of speakers from industry and academics would have been helpful in bringing out the gap between the existing body of literature and practice. This would perhaps have the way for more such symposium on more focussed topics relating to manufacturing strategies for competitive advantage, wherein more case applications can be presented.

– Ashis Chatterjee
IIM Calcutta