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Ways of shaping the Lean culture in enterprises in Poland

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1. Introduction

Lean Management has been gaining popularity since the early 1990s, but it is still not appreciated in practice as it deserves. Especially in non-production organizations (Bertagnolli, 2022). Lean Management is a concept of management (and even a philosophy of thinking and acting in business) based on the use of such methods of business activity to achieve the best results with the lowest possible expenditure in given technical and organizational conditions, especially from the side of creating added value for the final customer. In this concept, this is achieved primarily through the comprehensive elimination of all kinds of waste (muda in Japanese), which operating entities try to eliminate not only from the production system and, in the long term, from the entire organization but also the entire logistics chain related to the company's operations (Walentynowicz, 2013). The results of various types of research prove that proper company management based on the assumptions of this concept can bring many benefits. Both from the organizational, economic, and financial sides and its competitive position. They also

prove that a cultural change should accompany a well-implemented Lean concept. Without sound effects in this field, it is not possible to achieve the fully expected results of using Lean Management (Balle and Balle, 2012; Byrne, 2013; Drzewiecki, 2018; Hines, 2010; Mann, 2014; Piątkowski, 2009; Rother, 2011; Shook, 2010; Urban, 2015; Womack and Jones 2008). Therefore, in the recent period in the science and practice of management, interest in shaping the right organizational culture in enterprises using Lean Management has been growing. With this publication, the authors want to follow these trends, especially in terms of the results of empirical research.

The main objective of this article is to present basic information on the ways of shaping appropriate organizational cultures in Lean managed enterprises in Poland, resulting from literature studies and empirical research of the authors. The basic research questions posed by the authors at the beginning of the study were:

1. How (with what methods) can you effectively change the organizational culture in a company?
2. What are the main methods of changing the organizational culture towards a Lean culture in companies managed in the Lean style in Poland?
3. What are the results of this?

The authors hope that the results of the study will prove useful for both management science and practice.

2. Possibilities of shaping the Lean organizational culture in the light of the literature on the subject

In the literature on the subject, there have already been so many considerations on the concept of organizational culture that, due to the purpose of this study, they will be omitted[1]. On the other hand, lean culture is a new type of organizational culture that results from applying the Lean concept in an organization at a high level of professionalism. It makes it easier for the company to achieve good, often above-average results, desirable from the point of view of modern goals (Walentynowicz, 2014; Urban, 2018, p. 156). The prototype of this culture is a set of values, attitudes, behaviours and functioning mechanisms characteristic of the Japanese company Toyota,

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1 The authors refer interested parties to such publications as: (Czerska, 2003a; Hofstede, 2007 or Schein, 2004).

whose management system (TPS-Toyota Production System) is the basic model for the Lean concept (Liker and Houseus, 2006; Liker 2022).

Contrary to the belief that changing organizational culture is a daunting task, research by A. Brown (1995), T.H. Fitzgerald (1988), and E. Ogbonny and B. Wilkinson (2003) suggests otherwise (also Sitko-Lutek, 2014). The literature on Lean Management and other scientific works by K.S. Cameron and R. Quinn (2003), L. Clarke (1997), M. Czerska (2003a), J. Kotter (1995), S.P. Robbins and T.A. Judge (2011), Ł. Sułkowski (2001), and M. Alvesson and S. Sveningsson (2008) indicate, organizational culture can and often should be changed (shaped, modified).

So, how do you effectively change your organizational culture into a Lean culture? Aspects concerning the characteristics of Lean culture and the theory of its formation have already been discussed in more detail by the authors (Walentynowicz, 2014; Walentynowicz and Szreder, 2022; Walentynowicz, 2024: Omiotek 2024), which in this article allows us to focus on the unique aspect of the practice of shaping the Lean organizational culture, using the empirical data collected as part of the described study. Therefore, these topics will not be developed in this article. Only as part of creating a foundation for the correct analysis and interpretation of the results of the study, various ways of influencing the change of attitudes and behaviours of people in organizations, and even their values and ways of thinking, both in the classic and new styles[2], will be listed. Successfully shaping a Lean culture can lead to a more efficient and productive organization, improved employee satisfaction and engagement, and a competitive advantage in the market.

The main actions to change the organizational culture proposed by the representatives of the classical approach are (cf. J. Brillman, 2002; Clark, 1997; Czerska, 2003a; Hofstede, 2007; Robbins and Judge, 2011; Sułkowski, 2001):

- Modification of various organizational artefacts (physical - interior design, clothing and equipment; behavioural - patterns of behaviour or rituals in the organization; linguistic - ways of communication, organizational myths or legends).
- Modifying organizational regulations - in the form of new organizational standards or regulations for rewarding behaviour by the new values.

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2 An explanation of the difference between the terms "classic style" and "new style" can be found in: (Walentynowicz, 2023).

- Modification of the employee recruitment and promotion system - adapting them to new cultural assumptions.
- Modification of the system of periodic evaluations: This will help shape attitudes and behaviours in line with the expected ones.
- Modification of the employee motivation system – towards enhancing desirable behaviours (e.g. high quality, efficiency or organizational commitment) and limiting undesirable behaviours (absenteeism, accidents at work or organizational insubordination).
- Modification of the management system's mechanisms —e.g., management or decision-making styles, ways of communicating, or exercising organizational authority.
- Modifications and changes in organizational structure, processes and operative procedures.
- Wide promotion of new values or cultural assumptions through various formal channels – information boards, internal publications or Intranet, or informal – direct persuasion of the manager-employee or employee–employee.
- Training on the new principles of the organization's functioning, aimed at changing the attitudes and behaviours of both managers and regular employees.
- Reward the supporters of the new organizational culture by promoting them to managerial positions or granting various types of perks.
- Getting rid of opponents of the new organizational culture - especially open opponents or those who do not want to fit into it.

On the other hand, shaping organizational culture in a newer (leadership) way includes (Alvesson, 2002; Beer, 2000; Balle, 2008; Balle and Balle, 2012, 2017; Hines, 2010; Koter, 1995; Mann, 2014; Piątkowski, 2008; Shook, 2010, 2012; Rother, 2011):

- Creating a set of new organizational values and promoting them extensively – e.g. during the implementation of improvement projects (Lean/Kaizen projects) or during training.
- Broad and effective communication of the vision of changes and the new organizational culture by members of the top management.
- Positive example of management - both top and lower levels of management (the so-called "top example") regarding compliance with new organizational rules and values (i.e. non-application of the so-called double standards, personal involvement in organizational changes, functioning of the Gemba[3], etc.).

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3 Gemba - in Japanese, the main area where added value is created for the final customer. According to Lean theory, it is the most important place in any organization.

- Change management styles - to leadership and participatory, i.e. lean.
- Changing decision-making styles - towards participatory (consultative), fact-based (and not under the influence of information obtained "from behind the desk") and consensual (win-win), based on a long-term vision and strategy of the organization (from Japanese in nemawashi and genbutsu gemba styles).
- Coaching of managerial behaviours – teaching lower-level managers appropriate, desirable behaviours from the point of view of the requirements of the new organizational culture.
- One of the key aspects of shaping a Lean organizational culture is the active inclusion of regular employees in enterprise transformation (Lean transformation). Their participation in improvement projects and implementation of developed solutions is not just encouraged, but valued and integral to the change process.
- Acquisition of positive experiences through participation in the process of change or direct observation of the positive effects of this process.
- Shaping employees' awareness of the purpose and sense of what we do and learning methods supporting moving in this direction directly by superiors (coaching). This may concern standardized work (TWI training), the functioning of the 5S system, self-control, problem-solving skills or searching for proposals to improve the company.
- Positive influence of group members on the unit (the so-called associative effect), where, as a result of activities carried out under point 6 and point 7, individual employees become ambassadors of the new way of functioning of the organization and encourage others to join these processes.
- The facilitation effect of the participation of the company's staff in programs for the collective improvement of the organization (the so-called suggestion systems) or intentional motivation in this direction is also significant. This aspect is described in detail in (Walentynowicz and Szreder, 2020).

As seen, there are many potential ways to influence attitudes or behaviours or how people in organizations perceive and think. The authors believe that the more methods and techniques presented above we use in this process, the greater the probability of obtaining the desired result (cf. Hines, 2010). However, if we want to be effective, it is essential to do it in a purposeful and consistent manner while setting a positive example because this process, unfortunately, takes many years.

3. Research methodology

The survey was conducted between January 2022 and January 2023. The invitation to the survey was posted on thematic Internet forums, directing it to over a thousand potential respondents (from Lean companies and knowledgeable about the topic). However, it turned out very quickly that the percentage of responses obtained in this way was small, and it was necessary to ask respondents known to the survey implementers to participate in the study, often sending an invitation several times. Ultimately, most of the answers were obtained conveniently, supported by the snowball method. However, thanks to this, the implementers ensured that the right people participated in the study. This gave the authors confidence that the right people were involved in the study. Finally, responses were obtained from fifty-five respondents, five representing micro, five small, nine medium-sized and thirty-five large enterprises. Only six of them were service companies; the rest represented manufacturing companies. Answers were mainly provided by senior managers (including business owners) and Lean process leaders.

The research questionnaire consisted of four parts. In the first one, respondents were asked to rate the functioning of various aspects of Lean Management in their companies (on a scale of 1-7). The 1 grade indicated organizational behaviours that were very similar to management in the classic (Taylor) style. The grade of 7 indicated organizational behaviour in the Lean style, the model of which is the organizational culture and employee behaviour of the Toyota company. This part of the questionnaire was developed based on a template from the consulting company TBM. In the second part of the survey, respondents rated the level of different aspects of Lean culture in their companies on the same scale. This part of the questionnaire was developed based on M. Czerska's organizational culture assessment tool (Czerska, 2003b, p. 551-552). The third part of the study concerned the organizational culture present in companies before implementing Lean Management. Cameron and Quinn's OCAI sheet was used for this (Cameron and Quinn, 2015). The fourth part concerned the ways of shaping the Lean culture in the surveyed companies. Respondents could choose a few of the twenty sample methods and enter suggestions other than those included in the form.

The respondents also declared at what stage of implementation/application of Lean Management their company is. Initial phase: Management has just started their adventure with Lean. Intermediate phase: Some of the planned Lean activities have been implemented, but much remains to be implemented.

Advanced phase: Most of the planned solutions were successfully implemented, and the management moved to the stage of continuous improvement of the company.

The results of the study were compiled using an Excel spreadsheet.

4. Ways of shaping the Lean organizational culture in the surveyed enterprises

The main research problems considered in the study were questions about how the Lean organizational culture is shaped in practice in enterprises in Poland and whether there are any significant differences in this process depending on the stage of advancement of enterprises in the process of applying Lean Management. Table 1 summarizes the answers to the questions included in the fourth part of the questionnaire.

**Table 1. Ways of shaping the Lean organizational culture
in the surveyed companies**

The way of shaping the organizational culture	Beginner answers (Nb=13)	Inter-mediate answers (Ni=22)	Advanced answers (Na=20)	Total responses (Nt=55)
1. Changing the work environment towards Lean	6	11	9	26
2. Changing the rules of organizational behaviour towards Lean	1	3	7	11
3. Changing the incentive system towards Lean	6	4	10	20
4. Changing the system of periodic assessments towards Lean	3	4	8	15
5. Changing the system of employee recruitment and promotion towards Lean	2	4	5	11
6. Change of equipment elements of facilities	2	6	9	17
7. Communication and promotion of new cultural assumptions	4	12	12	28

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	Nb	Ni	Na	Nt
8. Lean training for managers	8	12	17	37
9. Lean training of employees	6	12	15	33
10. Rewarding the supporters of the new management system (Lean)	3	3	6	12
11. Changing styles of targeting lean (leadership, genbutsu gemba)	3	9	9	21
12. Positive "example from above"	3	12	11	26
13. Including employees in the Lean transformation process through participation in team Lean projects	4	9	11	24
14. Including employees in the Lean transformation process through participation in suggestion systems	4	13	12	29
15. Consistent and uncompromising application of the principles and organization of Lean Management	1	0	9	10
16. Acquiring positive experiences by employees	4	10	8	22
17. Positive influence of group members on the individual	4	6	6	16
18. Coaching sessions	2	2	4	8
19. Using consultations with consulting companies involved in the implementation and maintenance of Lean	3	7	4	14
20. Change of attitudes and behaviour of employees forced by the organizational regulations or the incentive system	1	5	3	9
Total	70	144	175	389

Legend: Nb - numbers of beginners, Ni -numbers of intermediate, Na-numbers of advanced, Nt - numbers of total responses)

Source: own elaboration based on research results

The first conclusion from the data analysis presented in the Table above is that the surveyed companies use practically all the instruments of shaping organizational culture presented in theory. Most often, managers and employees of the organization are trained in the assumptions of the Lean concept, and new cultural assumptions are widely communicated and propagated. Other frequently used methods include changing the work environment towards Lean attitudes and behaviours (e.g. 5S), involving employees in the Lean transformation process through their participation in various projects and suggestion systems, and a positive example from above. These methods are evident in advanced and intermediate lean management companies. In these companies, the Lean culture is also developed by: "communicating that this is not a culture change, but its development, the next step in our success" and "involving everyone in solving problems and using TPS tools naturally" (Quotations of answers to the open question for methods other than those listed in the questionnaire). On average, in the surveyed enterprises, the organizational culture towards Lean is created in 7 ways (8.7 in enterprises advanced in using Lean Management, and 6.5 in medium-advanced enterprises). The leaders of this process use several methods (17, 16, 14, 13, 12). In start-up enterprises, on average, 5,4 methods are used. Therefore, it is clear that these companies also pay attention to this issue, but the possibility of increasing the intensity of this process is still high. Additional answers that they try to do it in a way: "softly, without rigid frames"; "the Lean spirit was already in place because the boys were largely piece-workers" only reinforce this belief.

As far as the issue of creating organizational cultures in a classic and modern (leadership) way is concerned, based on the analysis of the results of the study, it can be concluded that managers of advanced and medium-advanced enterprises in the process of applying Lean Management much more often than the management of beginner enterprises use methods classified as modern (item 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16 and 17). At the same time, they are also leaders in solutions 1, 8 and 9 listed in table 1. However, since in management every positive method that gives the expected result is good, creating organizational culture in a classic way should not be considered wrong. As long as it is effective. This underscores the importance of both classic and modern methods in shaping organizational culture, respecting the diversity of approaches in different enterprises.

At the same time, the study concludes that in practice, companies starting their "adventure" with Lean need to pay more attention to the conscious

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and planned shaping of organizational culture, especially based on modern (leadership) methods.

5. The level of Lean organizational cultures in the surveyed enterprises

In the previous part of the study, conclusions were drawn regarding the number of methods used to shape organizational cultures in companies using Lean Management in Poland. But what are the results of this process? Table 2 presents the effects of measuring the level of organizational cultures in the context of Lean in relation to the group of all surveyed companies.

**Table 2. Assessment of the level of various attributes
of Lean organizational cultures in the surveyed companies**

Lean culture dimensions	On average	Standard deviation	Median
1. Attitudes of top management (leadership)	4.41	1.53	5
2. Attitude of management to experiments and news	4.59	1.42	5
3. Right to bear the risk	4.12	1.57	4
4. Engagement of the executive staff in improvement activities	4.45	1.40	5
5. Supervisor-subordinate relations	4.76	1.29	5
6. Communication in the supervisor-subordinate system	4.63	1.25	5
7. Communication between organizational units	4.22	1.55	5
8. Collaboration between cells	4.22	1.42	4
9. Attitude to organizational problems	4.18	1.63	4
10. The level of teamwork	4.55	1.49	5
11. The source of exercising power (formal authority - authority)	4.27	1.65	5
12. Attitude to differences of views	4.75	1.52	5
13. Attitude to organizational changes	4.37	1.37	4

14. The attitude of employees to the workplace	4.47	1.51	5
15. Compliance with organizational standards	4.33	1.61	4
16. Employees' care for the quality of products and services, the effects of their work	4.98	1.64	5
17. Attitude towards customers	5.41	1.37	6
18. Relationship with business partners	5.14	1.28	5
19. Lean criteria for assessing the effectiveness of the organization and its participants	4.14	1.51	4
20. Level of implementation of Lean organizational solutions	4.10	1.58	4
21. Attitude to health and safety and ecology in the organization	5.29	1.39	6
On average	4.54	1.48	5

Source: own elaboration based on research results

The final assessment of the level of Lean organizational cultures in the surveyed companies was 4.54 (on a scale of 1-7), with a standard deviation of 1.48 on average, which is a satisfactory result. This result, exceeding the hypothetical level assumed at the beginning of the study by the authors, is a positive outcome. However, it is crucial to consider the potential lack of objectivity4 in the respondents' questionnaire responses and the methodological correctness of averaging the final result in a group of diverse companies. Therefore, the need for subgroup analysis, particularly in understanding the level of Lean organizational cultures in individual subgroups, becomes more apparent. Hence, Table 3 presents the assessments of individual attributes of Lean organizational cultures based on the degree of advancement of Lean Management implementation in the surveyed companies.

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4 The best results in the study of organizational cultures are achieved by the anthropological method – the researcher's personal presence and direct social interactions within the studied subject. However, it is highly difficult to conduct quantitative research based on this method.

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Table 3. Rating of the level of occurrence of the Lean culture in the surveyed enterprises depending on the advancement of the concept application

Lean culture attributes*	Beginner (Nb=13)			Intermediate (Ni=22)			Advanced (Na=20)		
	On average	Standard deviation	Median	On average	Standard deviation	Median	On avera ge	Standard deviation	Median
	3.31	1.75	3	4.48	1.12	4	5.18	1.33	5
	3.77	1.64	3	4.67	1.32	5	5.12	1.11	5
	3.46	1.71	2	4.10	1.48	4	4.65	1.46	5
	3.46	1.05	3	4.67	1.28	5	4.94	1.48	5
	4.08	1.66	4	4.76	1.22	5	5.29	0.77	5
	4.00	1.29	4	4.62	1.32	4	5.12	0.93	5
	3.46	1.51	3	4.29	1.35	4	4.71	1.69	5
	3.15	1.21	3	4.38	1.28	4	4.82	1.33	5
	3.38	1.71	3	4.19	1.69	4	4.76	1.30	5
	3.31	1.25	3	4.81	1.33	5	5.18	1.33	5.5
	3.00	1.41	2	4.52	1.66	5	4.94	1.30	5
	3.85	1.52	4	4.81	1.54	5	5.35	1.22	5
	3.46	1.27	4	4.43	1.40	4	5.00	1.06	5
	3.54	1.85	3	4.62	1.32	4	5.00	1.17	5
	3.38	1.76	3	4.24	1.45	4	5.18	1.29	5.5
	4.00	1.63	4	5.05	1.47	5	5.65	1.58	6
	4.69	1.55	5	5.19	1.33	6	6.24	0.83	6.5
	4.38	1.39	4	5.14	1.15	5	5.71	1.10	6
	2.92	1.19	2	4.05	1.40	4.5	5.18	1.13	5

	2.54	1.20	2	4.05	1.02	4	5.35	1.32	5.5
	4.69	1.65	5	5.14	1.11	5	5.94	1.30	6.5
On average	3.61	1.49	3	4.58	1.34	4.5	5.21	1.24	5.00

* Description of individual attributes as in table 2.

Legend: Nb - numbers of beginners, Ni -numbers of intermediate, Na-numbers of advanced responses)

Source: own elaboration based on research results

Based on the information presented in Table 3, it is visible how the level of assessment of various aspects of organizational cultures of the surveyed enterprises increases depending on the degree of advancement of the application of the Lean concept. In this case, the result of the study is more in line with the authors' predictions. In companies just starting their adventure with Lean, the average level of organizational culture attributes favourable to Lean Management could be better (3.61, median 3). This confirms the conclusion drawn in the summary of the previous part of the research, about the need to increase the number or intensity of activities in the area of shaping organizational culture in the direction desired in these enterprises. On the other hand, the results of the measurement in the medium or highly advanced companies in applying the Lean concept are much more satisfactory (average score of 4.58 and 5.21, and median of 4.5 and 5.0, respectively). This means that in these companies the Lean culture is characterized by attributes above the value of the middle scale. However, these companies can continue shaping the right organizational culture and be satisfied with the results. Contrary. Entering the Lean path means that the company does not stop pursuing the ideal of continuous improvement, and the same conclusion should be drawn regarding creating the right organizational culture (Lean culture).

6. Summary

The article presents the results of empirical research on the level of leanness of organizational cultures in companies using Lean Management in Poland and the ways of shaping these cultures. The first part of the study presents the theoretical framework of the analysed issue. The second part presents the results

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of empirical research in response to the formulated research problems: What methods are used in enterprises in Poland to change the organizational culture to achieve the desired effects from the point of view of the Lean concept, and what results does it give?

When it comes to changing organizational cultures used in the surveyed enterprises, they use practically all of the methods recommended in the literature on the subject. Leaders of this process use several methods (12-17), while in other enterprises, on average, several (5-8) are used. It follows that the knowledge or intuition of the managers managing this process is good and in line with the theoretical recommendations. The most commonly used methods include:

- training of Lean managers,
- Lean training of employees,
- communication and promotion of new cultural assumptions,
- change of work environment towards Lean,
- involvement of employees in the Lean transformation process through participation in team improvement projects,
- employee involvement in the Lean transformation process through participation in Lean Suggestion Systems,
- positive "example from above",
- gaining positive experience as a result of participation in the Lean transformation process of the company,
- changing targeting styles to Lean.

Most surveyed companies have a good level of Lean organizational culture. On average, 4.58 in the group of medium-advanced enterprises in the application of the Lean concept, and in the group of advanced enterprises, on average, 5.21 (on a scale of 1 to 7). At the same time, there is a big difference between the level of occurrence of the desired features of organizational cultures in companies just starting their adventure with Lean (3.61) and in companies that are more advanced in this process. Therefore, beginner enterprises need to increase the intensity and effectiveness of the process of shaping the organizational culture towards the Lean culture. How to do it? – the basic assumptions of the methodology for implementing this process have been presented in the literature part of this article or the literature cited.

At the same time, companies that achieve better results in this process have great potential for further improvement.

The presented study has some limitations, which may affect the generalization of the results. Given that the survey was conducted in Poland, its results may

need to be toned to be fully translatable into the cultural contexts of companies operating in other countries. In addition, using respondents' declarations alone may introduce a certain degree of subjectivity in assessing the level of Lean organizational cultures in Poland. Future research could use a more direct data collection method, such as the case study method[5]. Thanks to it, there can be a deeper understanding of the nuances of the complex process of cultural transformation of enterprises, or the best examples can be benchmarking models for others.

Abstract

As we know from many publications, it is worth using Lean Management in modern enterprises. On the other hand, as scientists and practitioners emphasize, developing an appropriate organisational culture is necessary to obtain the proper results as part of Lean Management. Therefore, in parallel with the organisational changes related to implementing the Lean concept in the enterprise, various activities should be carried out to change the organisational culture into a culture favourable to Lean. There are many studies on how to change an organisation's culture, although it takes much work. Also, many publication threads in the recent period concern the features of the Lean organisational culture (the culture of a lean organisation) or the potential ways of creating this culture. However, knowledge on this subject still needs to be improved, especially from the point of view of management practice.

Therefore, the main purpose of this article is to present basic information on the ways of shaping Lean organizational cultures in enterprises in Poland, with particular emphasis on manufacturing companies, based on literature studies and the results of empirical research carried out as part of the doctoral dissertation of one of the authors. The survey was conducted in 2022, using the CAWI method, on a sample of 55 companies. The presented results can be a valuable contribution to understanding the phenomenon of creating a Lean culture in enterprises in Poland. They can be the basis for further research or analysis in this area and the world.

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5   As part of the next stage of their research, the authors are already using this method effectively.

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Keywords: *Lean Management, organizational culture, methods of changing organizational culture, methods of changing organizational culture towards Lean culture, results of empirical research.*

JEL
Clarification: L20, L23, D23.

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