



Quality of Work Life Initiatives: Examples from Indian Companies

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ABSTRACT

The QWL approach considers people as an 'asset' to the organization rather than as 'costs'. It believes that people perform better when they are allowed to participate in managing their work and make decisions. This approach motivates people by satisfying not only their economic needs but also their social and psychological ones. To satisfy the new generation workforce, organizations need to concentrate on job designs and organization of work. In this process, organizations are coming up with new and innovative ideas to improve the quality of work and quality of work life of every individual in the organization. Various programs like flex time, alternative work schedules, compressed work weeks, telecommuting etc., are being adopted by these organizations. This paper discusses few examples of such initiatives taken by organizations in India.

KEYWORDS : QWL, innovation, initiatives, performance

INTRODUCTION:

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts recruits, motivates, and retains its workforce. Today's organizations need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their workforce and enjoy their commitment. Therefore, organizations are required to adopt a strategy to improve the employees' quality of work life (QWL) to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. Quality in the workplace comes from understanding and then fully meeting, the needs of all your internal and external customers, now and into the future and doing so with continual improvement in efficiency and effectiveness. QWL refers to the favorableness or unfavourableness of a total job environment of the people. The basic purpose is to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for the economic health of the organization.

OBJECTIVES and Methodology:

The major objective of this paper is to make an in-depth study of literature in the area of Quality of Work Life and bring about the significant contributions it has in improving organizational performance. This paper also intends to highlight the practices and initiatives adopted by different organizations and the benefits that they get there of.

This study is purely done from secondary data made available from the respective organizations discussed in the paper.

Literature Review

The success of any organization is highly dependent on how it attracts (Dubey A. et al.) recruits, motivates, retains work force. Today's organizations need to be more flexible so that they are equipped to develop their workforce and enjoy their commitment. Therefore, organizations are required to adopt a strategy to improve the employees' quality of work life (QWL) to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs. The term QWL refers to the favorableness or un-favorableness of a total job environment for people. Through quality of work life programme organizations recognize their responsibility to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for economic health of the organization. To improving the work system, QWL programs usually emphasizes development of employee skills, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more co-operative labor-management relations.

The recent definition on QWL is quite conclusive and best meet the contemporary work environment. The definition is related to meaningful and satisfying work which emphasizes 4 C's i.e. concern, consciousness, capacity and commitment. It includes: (i) an opportunity to exercise one's talents and capacities, to face challenges and situations that require independent initiative and self-direction; (ii) an activity thought to be worthwhile by the individuals involved; (iii) an activity in which one understands the role the individual plays in the achievement of some overall goals; and (iv) a sense of taking pride in what one is doing and in doing it well.

This review on the definitions of QWL indicates that QWL is a multidimensional construct, made up of a number of interrelated factors that need careful consideration to conceptualize and measure. It is associated with job satisfaction, job involvement, motivation, productivity, health, safety and well-being, job security, competence development and balance between work and non-work life as is conceptualized by European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Conditions.

Communication (Pocock B et al.) is a key to organizational excellence. Effective communication plays an important role in increasing employees' understanding in developing co-operative & productive relationship between employees & management, & developing employee's satisfaction & quality of life at the work place.

Relating to emotions, the current work will study organizational communication not only its systems and processes but also organization members' feelings, perceptions, and emotions in the workplace. This research will examine communication climate and superior-subordinate relations. Communication climate associates with employees' perceptions and feelings about the quality of relationship, communication in the organization and their degree of participation. And finally all these leads to a better, qualitative work life.

QWL practice involves acquiring, training, developing, motivating and appraising for the best performance of the employees as per organizational objectives. Indeed, core elements of QWL are of working conditions, employee job satisfaction, employees' behavioral aspects, and employees' financial and non-financial benefits, growth and development, and supervision.

A Quality of Work Life Survey finding that was particularly striking and disturbing was that 33% of respondents experienced some form of harassment in their workplace, an environment in which many of us might think such a thing would be unlikely to occur. Reasons cited include gender issues, sexual orientation and racism. Also, of concern was the finding that a significant number of these respondents were uncertain about whether or not what they were experiencing could be defined as harassment, although these experiences contributed to stressful work environments. This was identified as an area requiring further analysis to define these experiences and identify potential mechanisms to address them.

QWL: Examples from Indian Companies

As India continues to emerge as a global economic power, understanding the dynamics between work and personal lives specific to this culture is increasingly important. In India, the work-life agenda is very much aligned with the social and institutional context of the country. This briefing provides background for understanding how work-life issues are perceived and researched in India, and offers recommendations for Indian organizations seeking to implement work-life initiatives there.

The Tata Group has a culture of investing in several community

development programs that have the theme of women's empowerment. In the Tata Motors plant at Pune there are several cooperatives managed and run by the wives of company employees. These cooperatives, called grihiniudyogs, provide the company with a variety of products ranging from cables for vehicles to chapattis (Indian bread) for its cafeteria. The cooperatives provide extra income for employees and their families. The women are paid the government-prescribed minimum wage and they also receive all statutory benefits. Most of the cooperatives' products are sold to Tata Motors, though some — like pickles, condiments and bags — are also sold in the open market

Two examples of well known Indian companies offering wellness initiatives to their employees to help manage stress are Infosys Technologies and Wipro.

Infosys Technologies, a leading IT service provider, has a wellness initiative called Health Assessment Lifestyle Enrichment (HALE). The initiative consists of a portal for online dissemination of information on various stress-related issues and a hotline whereby employees can directly receive counseling and expert opinions. The data from the portal and the hotline help the HR department to track key indicators like absenteeism rates and link them with causes and resultant billing losses. These data also help to measure the effectiveness of the initiative in terms of improvement in productivity. Based on these inputs, HR takes suitable actions to deal with the prevalent wellness issues in the organization.

Wipro, a leading player in both the IT & BPO sectors, encouraging employee wellness is an integral part of the corporate culture. This is reflected in Wipro's numerous health and safety initiatives which supplement health-related benefits. Some of these are nutrition consulting, health centers, medical camps, and regular well-being events like the annual Wipro marathon. The most successful Wipro project is one called Mitr which means 'friend' in Hindi. In this program, 28 employees, all volunteers, were trained to counsel fellow employees to manage stress. Mitr signifies to employees that they do have a friend in Wipro and that they should be able to confide and share their problems with a safe ally in the company.

Johnson & Johnson India established the Women's Leadership Initiative (WLI) in 2002 with the support of top management. WLI is aimed at removing barriers to the advancement of women within the company and at attracting and developing women leaders in the company. The organization is committed to fostering a culture of inclusion by building the much needed sensitivity around the topic of gender inclusion in the workplace. WLI has task forces created to work on areas of work-life integration, policy development, learning and career development, and networking. J&J India also undertakes several community initiatives focused on improving awareness of health issues surrounding diabetes and AIDS, providing support to street children, orphans and tribal girls, and providing maternity and gynecological care to women in need.

RESTART is a program initiated at **General Electric's** Technology Centre in Bangalore (John F. Welch Technology Centre) oriented at hiring women technologists who are on a career break. RESTART contains a detailed flex program and manager training, access to a daycare facility through collaboration with another GE business, and special pre- and post-maternity programs such as a 'Mom to be' relaxation room, 'Mom to be' car park, and a lactation room. RESTART hires are provided with mentors to guide them in "re-learning" the organization. After launching the RESTART campaign, GE has had 1.3 million web site hits, received over 1500 applications, and to date has already hired four RESTART technologists. In 2008, GE won the Smart Workplace Award, which is a national award provided to organizations with effective flex environments.

Other companies, such as **PricewaterhouseCoopers Pvt Ltd.** offers support for commuting and have programs covering fun at work, health, and stress reduction. Gymnasium facilities are provided at major office locations. The company encourages employees to participate in community sport events such as cricket matches, marathons etc. As a part of Corporate Social Responsibility, PWC has recently taken initiatives in the area of education and sustainability. NGOs at each of the locations have been identified. In addition to committing financial resources, the idea is to have a structured approach to voluntary participation by employees in such projects. PWC has also put in place a women's network for senior women. This is aimed at empowering them to manage work-life balance better. One of the programs, titled "My Mentor," aimed at self motivation and taking charge of one's work and life, has been very well received by participating women employees.

Procter & Gamble India has been offering work from home for its employees, and reduced work schedules, both of which have been a great enabler in maximizing productivity and helping manage work-life balance.

Conclusion and Discussion

Quality of work life covers various aspects under the general umbrella of supportive organizational behavior. Thus, the QWL should be broad in its scope. It must evaluate the attitude of the employees towards the personnel policies. The research will be helpful in understanding the current position of the respective company. And provide some strategies to extent the employee satisfaction with little modification which is based on the internal facilities of the company. This research can be further used to evaluate the facilities provided by the management towards the employees.

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