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Research Paper Human Resource Management



Quality of Work Life

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ABSTRACT

QWL is a process of work organization, which enables its members at all levels to participate actively and effectively in shaping the organization's environment, methods and outcomes. It is a value-based process, which is aimed towards meeting to twin goals of enhanced effectiveness of the organization and improved quality of life at work for the employees. To make it clear, we can say that the QWL is the degree to which employees of an organization are able to satisfy their personal needs through experience in the organization.

Keywords : Quality of Work Life

Introduction

Various domestic and international competition drive organizations to be more productive. Proactive managers and human resource departments respond to this challenge by finding new ways to improve productivity. Some strategies rely heavily upon employee relations practices. Human resource departments are involved with efforts to improve productivity through changes in employee relations. Some successful organisations reported one of the reasons for their success is that by tapping the ideas and enthusiasm of employees by providing employees with a good quality of work life (QWL).

Quality of work life means having good supervision, good working conditions, good pay and benefits. And another interesting one is challenging, and rewarding job. High quality of work life is sought through an employee relations philosophy that encourages the use of quality of work life efforts, which are systematic attempts by an organization to give workers greater opportunities to affect their jobs and their contributions to the organization's overall effectiveness. That is, a proactive human resources department finds ways to empower employees so that they draw on their brains and wits, usually by getting the employees more involved in the decision-making process. Perhaps the most crucial role for the department is winning the support of key managers. Management support particularly top-management support appears to be an almost universal prerequisite for successful quality of work life programs.

The management in every organization should sincerely invite their employees to suggest ways to improve their operation and the quality of their work life, only if these ideas are received in a spirit of appreciation. The employees should then be asked to participate in studying the feasibility and recommend appropriate means of implementing each suggestion that survives such review. The concept of inviting workers to have choice and influence in all aspects of a task, the setting up of a autonomous work team and providing of open channels of communication at all levels does mean giving up some of the conventional authority exercised by the company or union leaders. The quality of life at work probably would then be enhanced. There are generally two types of workers some accept the life as they find it, i.e., a job, which provides a living, is enough. But for some others, taking home a pay is job all they want a chance for self-fulfillment in workplace. Thus most of the employees in the organizations want this activity to be conducted, though a few reject the idea and do show alienation.

Today's aspirations for an improved work life, however, go well beyond continuing efforts to improve benefits and working conditions. Minority groups have fought for equal opportunities. Youth has gained greater degree of freedom from parents and other adult authorities. Citizen groups and environmentalists have called for more corporate responsibility, at the expense of profits, if necessary. Many companies are responding with thoughtful plans and tangible actions.

Quality of Work Life - Meaning and Development

In the earlier years working environment of the organizations was given least consideration. Employees used to work under adverse working conditions such as poor lighting, extreme temperatures, polluted airs, confined work spaces, no rest pauses etc. But with the passage of time, as the development of organizations took place, the working environment also improved. Research evidence indicated that even very small variations in temperature, noise, lighting or air pollution can considerably affect the employee performance and attitudes ultimately their overall quality of work life.

The HR function, concerned as it is with management and development of human resources, must address itself to the behavioral and attitudinal issues affecting productivity and employee satisfaction. An in-depth understanding of employees behavior in a wide variety of situations can lead to initiating search for alternative ways of channalizing human actions towards productive pursuits. A number of new job design concepts are being tried as part of productivity management programs. Many of these include attempts to improve the quality of work life (QWL). Quality of work life deals with various aspects of work environment, which facilitates the human resource development efficiently. Thus, quality of work life helps for development of human resources. In fact, QWL includes and motivates the employees to learn further for present and future roles.

One of the major problems facing the developing and the developed world is the quality of work life of a vast majority of employees engaged in productive pursuits. The quality of work life movement in a broader sense seeks to achieve integration among the technological, human, organizational

and societal demands which are often contradictory and conflicting. QWL is not based on a particular theory. It does not advocate a particular technique for application. Instead, it is more concerned with the overall climate of work and the impact that the work has on people as well as on organization effectiveness.

Direct participation of employees in problem solving and decision-making, particularly in areas related to their work, is considered to be a necessary condition for providing greater autonomy and opportunity for self-direction and self-control. The ultimate objective is of upgrading the quality of life at work. The recognized purpose is to change the climate at work so . that the human-technological-organizational interface leads to a better quality of work life and eventually to an improved quality of life in community and society.

QWL has assumed increasing interest and importance in both industrialized as well as developing countries of the world. In India, its scope seems to be broader than much labour legislation enacted to protect the workers. It is more than a sheer work organization movement, which focuses on job security and economic growth to the employees.

More and more employees and managers are interested in and concerned about the quality of work life, a concept that encompasses the entire range of organizational life -particularly as it is reflected in human resources management. The term quality of work life aims at changing the entire organizational climate by humanizing work, individualizing organizations and changing the structural and managerial systems. It takes into consideration the socio-psychological needs of the employees. It seeks to create such a culture of work commitment in the organizations, which will ensure higher productivity and greater job satisfaction for the employees.

There are two ways of looking at what quality of work life means. One way equates QWL with a set of objective organizational conditions and practices such as promotion-from-within policies, democratic supervision, employee involvement, safe working conditions etc. The other way equates QWL with employees' perceptions that they are safe, relatively well satisfied, and able to grow and develop as human beings. This way relates QWL to the degree to which the full range of human needs is met. In many cases these two views merge. Workers who like their organizations and the ways their jobs are structured will feel that their work fulfills them. In such cases, either way of looking at one's quality of work life will lead to a common determination of whether a good QWL exists. To make it clear, we can say that the QWL is the degree to which employees of an organization are able to satisfy their personal needs through experience in the organization. Its main aim is to create a work environment where employees work in cooperation with each other and contribute to organizations objectives.

Principles of QWL

QWL influences the productivity of the employees. Researchers have proved that good QWL leads to psychologically and physically healthier employees with positive feelings. A number of attempts have been made to identify various dimensions of this concept.. Some have emphasized the improvement in work conditions; leading to better quality of life, while others feel a fair compensation and job security should be emphasized. Experts identified there are four basic principles, which will humanize work and improve the QWL.

These are mentioned below:

- The principle of safety and security has to be provided to employees at the work place to avoid the fear and stress in the minds of people.
- One principle of equity, which tells every one equal under the law as per as rewards are concerned. Hard work will be considered for rewards.
- The principle of individualism, which indicates that the organization has to provide opportunities to improve the individual personality and potentiality of the people.
- The principle of democracy and in this context there should be a meaningful participation of people in the decision making process.

Increasingly, people at all levels in the work force have higher expectations about these principles. In turn, these expectations influence how contemporary organizations are managed; and particularly how human resources are managed. The philosophy behind QWL seems to be what is often referred to as the Theory Z approach to managing, which includes:

- Long term employment
- Consensual decision-making
- Individual responsibility
- Slow evaluation and promotion
- Informal control
- Holistic concern for employees

This philosophy is a blending of Japanese and traditional American management styles. Perhaps the best examples of what QWL advocates espouse are Japanese-run American subsidiaries. Japanese managers have achieved success with American workers, sometimes where American managers have failed.

QWL is a complex and multifaceted concept implying a concern for the members of an organization irrespective of the level they belong to. It includes job factors like wages and hours of work land also the nature of work itself. With the encouragement of International Labour Organization and active lead taken by National Institute of Labour, Delhi, the QWL as a movement has started attracting the attention of both academicians well as practitioners in India. In India, the concept of QWL seems to manifest itself in a variety of operational systems like workers participation, job enrichment, quality circles, etc.

The factors that seem to have led to the movement can be listed as follows:

- The profile of Indian industrial worker has substantially changed over time.
- Of late growing emphasis is placed on the significance of human resources in India.
- Working population is increasing very fast because of increasing educational facilities, which enables the people to acquire required skills and competencies.
- As the body of knowledge in human behavior, it became easy to predict and prepare techniques to control the human behavior.

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