



Quality of Work Life : A Review

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ABSTRACT

The quality of work life is one of the important component of individual life besides personal and social life. It is imperative for an individual to feel satisfied in order to perform better at the work place and it is equally important for the organization to look into various aspects of an individual employee to motivate him to do better at the work place. In order to achieve higher quality oriented production and to sustain in the globalization era, every organization is paying a due attention to it by initiating QWL programs. It is very comprehensive component at work place which abounding in innumerable vital aspects which deserve attention in all time periods. The present study is an attempt to orient about the views of various thinkers towards QWL and the various important factors of it which in case not considered would be a disaster on the part of management as well as employees. The present paper is based on secondary source of data. For the construction of the paper, the articles published in national and international journals were referred.

KEYWORDS

Quality of work life, Globalisation and Human Resources.

INTRODUCTION:

The quality of work life is buzz word. It has gained importance since from industrial revolution as a result of the contributions of certain eminent management thinkers like, Robert Owen, Charles Babbage, F.W.Taylor, Elton Mayo and so on. It has claimed a huge importance in the period of globalization where every organization is struggling to survive and prosper in a rapid changing moment where only the knowledgeable, talented and contented employees can only be the ultimate source of survival. So every organization across the globe are working hard to keep their employees contented by introducing and bringing required modifications in the existing Quality of Work Life programmes. The innumerable factors are taken into consideration while planning the QWL programmes. The present study is an attempt to orient about the views of various thinkers towards QWL and the various important factors of it which in case not considered would be a disaster on the part of management as well as employees. The present paper is based on secondary source of data. For the construction of the paper, the articles published in national and international journals were referred.

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE:

The term quality of work life has different meanings to different people. Some label it as a happiness programme, others especially trade unions name it as a subtle employee incentive or just another productivity device. The quality of work life has assumed increasing interest and importance in both industrialized as well as developing countries of the world. In India, its scope seems broader than much labour legislations 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. Thus, quality of work life refers to the level of happiness or dissatisfaction with one's career.

Those who enjoy their careers are said to have a high quality of work life, while those who are unhappy or whose needs are otherwise unfilled are said to have a low quality of work life.

Rose et al., (2006), opines that QWL is a philosophy or set of principles which holds that people are trust worthy, responsi-

ble and capable of making a valuable contribution to the organization. 'Treating people with respect' is the cornerstone of this philosophy. The elements that are relevant to an individual's QWL include the task, the physical work environment, the social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job. **Nadler and Lawler (1983)**, defines QWL as a way of thinking about people, work and organizations. Its distinctive elements are (a). concern about the impact of work on people as well as an organizational effectiveness and (b). the idea of participation in organizational problem-solving and decision-making. **Lau et al (2001)**, equated QWL to favourable working environment that supports and promotes satisfaction by providing employees with rewards, job security and career-growth opportunities. {According to **Tripathi (2003)**, the scope of QWL concept originally included only job design efforts based on the socio-technical systems approach. Today this concept encompasses a wide variety of interventions. The important among them are: Job enrichment, Stress-management, Job satisfaction, Promotion and Career planning, Quality circles, Suggestion schemes, Employee Participation, Empowerment, Autonomous work teams, Flexible organizational structure and Socio-technical work systems. **De (1976)**, pointed out that the quality of work life is an indicator of how free the society is from exploitation, injustice, inequality, oppression and restriction on the continuity of growth of man, leading to his development to the fullest.

According to **Richard Walton (1977)**, quality of work life is the work culture that serves as the corner stone. Hence, work culture of an organization should be recognized and improved to enhance the quality of work life of an organization. According to **Asit Narayan and Amarnath Jha (1992)**, quality of work life is a generic phase that covers a person's feeling about every dimension of work including economic rewards and benefits, safe and healthy working conditions, organizational and interpersonal relationship and its intrinsic meaning in a person's life. The **American Society for Training and Development** appointed a task force on the QWL in 1979. The task force defined quality of work life as "a process of work organization which enables its members at all levels to actively participate in shaping the organizations environment, methods and outcomes. This value based process is aimed to-

wards meeting the twin goals enhanced effectiveness of organization and improved quality of life at work for employees. According to this definition, quality of work life means a process of work organization designed to enhance the effectiveness of an organization and improve the quality of work life of its employees.

All organizational development initiatives and organizational effectiveness programs were part and parcel of QWL. Moreover, QWL was seen as a global concept and was frequently perceived as a panacea for all the problems which an organisation could face including the confrontation of foreign competition. **THE QWL PROGRAMS}** The review of the definitions of QWL indicates that it is as multi-dimensional construct, made up of number of interrelated, interdependent factors that need careful consideration to conceptualise and measure. It is associated with job satisfaction, job-involvement, autonomy, motivation, productivity, health, safety and well-being, job-security, competence development and balance between work and non-work life and realization of one's potentials.

COMPONENTS OR DIMENSIONS OF QWL:

1. Adequate and fair compensation:

The fundamental driving force behind work is to earn a living (Walton, 1973; Schreuder and Theron, 1997). Nirenburg (1993), appeals to consider adequate and fair compensation as a major component when QWL programs are implemented. Stein (1983) identified pay as being one five important components of QWL, although its categorical classification is somewhat different to Walton. The study conducted by Reid (1992) on clothing workers confirmed Walton's proposition that compensation plays a critical role in determining QWL.

2. Safe and healthy working conditions:

Orpen (1981) strongly argues that employees should not be exposed to working conditions that can adversely affect their physical and mental health. Many of the researchers in the domain of quality of work life believe that safe and healthy work conditions have significant impact of QWL. For most of the employees in the developed economics of the western countries, fair compensation and good working conditions function mainly as hygiene factors and not as motivators. But in India, they are hygiene factors because employees in India have not yet crossed the first two levels of needs as depicted in the need hierarchy theory of Maslow (1954).

3. Opportunity to use and develop competencies:

Employee's perception of the quality of their work life depends upon the extent to which jobs allow them not only to use but also to develop their competencies. Jobs should be designed in such a way that employees' higher level skills are utilized and higher level needs are satisfied and thus experience high level of quality of work life. Jobs should be designed on the principles of autonomy, skills variety, task significance and feedback, meaningfulness and completeness of a task (Oomens, Geurts and Scheepers, 2007).

4. Opportunity for continued growth:

Career advancement is a major concern of employees. This also relates to the idea of professional learning as a means for career development or succession possibilities (Bertrand, 1992).

5. Constitutionalism in the work organization:

The first is privacy, which refers to the right of individuals to personal privacy. It means matters they consider part of their private lives are not divulged to others without their permission. "Equity" is another right of the employees which means equitable treatment in all matters of the important on the job, such as compensation, status, security and advancement. Free speech is another right which includes the right of the individual to disagree openly with the ideas and opinions of their supervisors in the organization without fear of reprisal or subsequent victimization (Orpen, 1981).

6. Work and total life space:

This dimension of QWL refers to the extent to which there is balance between the role of work and the employee's other life spheres. This concept of a balanced role encompasses work schedules, career demands, and travel requirements that do not continually take up leisure and family time and advancement and promotion that do not require repeated geographical moves (Walton, 1973).

7. The social relevance of work:

Employees who feel that their organization is acting in a socially responsible manner, in terms of its products and services, will tend to value their work and careers more highly, which in turn is likely to enhance the self-esteem and well-being (Orpen, 1981). Organisations must ensure that its various actions are seen by its own members to be socially responsible in the broadest sense. This requires that the work organization at least know what actions its various members regard as socially responsible and irresponsible, in terms of the conceptions of what constitutes quality of life in general (Orpen, 1981).

8. Autonomy:

Autonomy suggests that a job should be designed in such a manner that it affords the employee a degree of independence and discretion in terms of how the job is carried out (Orpen, 1981). Newell (2002), is of the opinion that QWL involves providing employees with greater responsibility and autonomy. A job that lacks autonomy will result in low QWL.

9. Creativity and innovation:

According to Orpen (1981) an essential requirement for genuine psychological growth is the provision of something new or novel exposure to the employees. Creativity is defined as the generation of new and useful products, practices or services. Creativity is the prerequisite for an organisation's innovation, effectiveness and long-term survival and organization and an organisation's adjustment to shifting environmental conditions and to take advantage of emerging opportunities (Oldham, 2002).

The employer should foster employees' creativity in order to directly stimulate an organisation's effectiveness and promote employee's active mental health (Binnewies, Ohly and Niesen, 2008).

10. Role Clarity:

"Role clarity" refers to knowing what one's tasks are and also knowing what is expected from oneself. When the individual does not do certain tasks as the employer expects or when he or she does tasks that are part of another person's job, stress develops. This results in low QWL. Also, pressure demands via role ambiguity were bound to cause a significant increase in systolic blood pressure (Pollard, 2001). Tubre and Collins (2000) observed that the clarity with which individuals perceive their work roles is linked to several important organizational outcomes, including job performance, organizational commitment and job satisfaction.

IMPORTANCE OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

These days for an organization to be successful and achieve its organizational objectives it is imperative that its employees are satisfied with their work, since work occupies an important place in many people's lives, such conditions are likely to attract not only their physical but also a high level of social, psychological and spiritual well-being. It is well established in the literature that employees with high levels of psychological well-being are better, more committed and more productive than employees with a low level of psychological well-being. Nonetheless, employees are likely to have higher well-being if they are satisfied with their work and organization and they perceive their quality of work life (QWL) positively. Since an employee's experiences in the workplace and his/her QWL influence his/her health and psychological well-being. In today's work environment, organization need to be flexible and adopt a strategy to improve the employees "Quality of Work life" to satisfy both the organizational objectives and employee needs.

Effective quality of work life practices in organization makes its impact on employee performance and the overall organization performance. In the life of a working individual, quality of work life holds prime importance. Over a period of time, numerous opportunities have been created in the corporate world, each offering a more conducive work environment to the employees than the last. This has given rise to employees expectations, which coupled with the acceptance of the importance of employee retention, has forced employers to think even about the minutest parameters which influence the quality of work life.

Though the quality of work life has always been of paramount importance, its significance came into realization during late 1960's when various researchers (**Lawler and Porter, 1966**) expressed their viewpoints emphasizing the importance of understanding the factors influencing work life and its behavioural impact on performance of individuals. Since then organization have been continuously striving to understand the determinants of quality of work life (**Glasier, 1976; Elizar and Shye, 1990**).

Improving the QWL is an important thing because the contribution can increase organizational effectiveness and reduce the negative behavior of workers. In several empirical studies, the implementation of the quality of work life led to increased compliance and employee satisfaction, increased confidence, improving relationship between workers and supervisors, improving safety and health. In addition, can reduce labour complaining, reduce the conflict between labour and management, improving productivity and strengthen the organisation's position in market competition. The basic objectives of an effective QWL program are improved working conditions. QWL contributes to a company's ability to recruit quality people, it also enhances a company's competitiveness. Common beliefs support the contention that QWL will positively nurture a more flexible, loyal and motivated work force, which is essential in determining the company's competitiveness. **Hoque and Rahman (1999)** found that QWL is important for job performance, job satisfaction, labour turnover, labour management relations which play a crucial role in determining the overall well being of any industrial organization. They found in their study that workers of the private sector textile mills perceived significantly higher QWL than the workers of the public sector textile mills.

QWL programmes can lead to a greater self esteem and improved job satisfaction. Satisfied employees work harder and

provide better services. Implementation of QWL programs result in improved worker satisfaction, commitment and performance (**Nadler and Lawler, 1983**). High level of QWL has been found to be associated with high level of job satisfaction on many aspects of working life. QWL is a significant predictor of organizational commitment among managers (**Anuradha and Pandey, 1995**). There is a reduction in minor accident, grievance, absentee and turnover rates with the installation and institutionalization of QWL process (**Havlovic, 1991**). QWL programmes tend to increase employee participation and also reduce worker stress. QWL programmes have two objectives. One is to increase productivity and second to increase satisfaction of employees. It requires certain amount of investment in human resources, for its successful implementation. QWL depends on the factor affecting on it. (**Sarang Shankar Bhola, 2006**). QWL initiatives facilitates the release of human energy. Improving the employees quality of work life may have a number of positive effects on the organization ultimate performance (Elizur and Shye, 1990); As QWL is a response to environmental pressures, the efforts to cope with the pressures and what QWL represents will continue. The labels might change but the momentum of change will not (**Herman Gadon, 1984**).

CONCLUSION:

The Quality of Work Life is however, much debated and research area of concern but still attracts the attention of the researchers due to its everlasting significance in organizations irrespective of its size, nature and operations, etc., The organizations are striving hard to attract and retain the talented human resources by making use of innumerable incentives. Every attempt of an organization in this regard will have direct impact on the quality of work life the employees. Now-a-days, it has become challenge for every organization to improve their chances of survival by succeeding in retaining the new and existing employees in the organization for a long duration. The QWL would remain the matter of concern and continuous research for the researchers as well as the practitioners. Meanwhile, it is found to be low in public enterprises and high in the private ones. The government should also take some effective measures to improve the QWL of their employees and set an model to the private organizations. As the QWL depends upon various factors which have to be taken into consideration and ignorance of factor is definitely going to create the dis-contentment of the employee community. So this is a continuous and wise endeavour where the HR department has a pivotal role to play. Finally, it is equal important for every executive to look into the problems of their sub-ordi-

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