

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE - AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

The world is moving with very high speed and managing an organization has become more complex than ever before. There is a competition going on between companies to attract and retain quality human resource in order to be ahead of its competitors in a particular industry. At this backdrop, Quality of Work Life (QWL) has emerged as one of the most important aspect of job that ensures long term association of the employees with the organization.

This paper aims to gain an insight into current work life policies and practices. It includes everything that an organization provides to his/her employee in and away from the office based on his performance. The study is to provide better career opportunity for the employees by providing a better QWL to the employees. The employers need to frame policies that would minimize the work load of employees without affecting the productivity of the organization, for achieving successful work-life balance.

KEYWORDS: QWL, Quality of Work Life, Employees, Organizations, Growth and Development, Work Environment

INTRODUCTION

The concept of quality of work life (QWL) deals with the issue of how rewarding or satisfying the time spent in the workplace is. As such, QWL may reflect working conditions and contextual issues such as relationships with work, colleagues and the intrinsic satisfaction of the job itself. A movement focusing on employee perceptions of job satisfaction and job challenges, health and safety at work, job fulfillment and working conditions and the balance between work and non-work.

The movement has promoted such things as flexitime, autonomy, employee participation in decision-making, etc. Underlying this use of QWL is the belief that it enhances employee performance and productivity; however, empirical proof of this relationship is not conclusive. Quality of work life is dependent on the extent to which an employee feels valued, rewarded, motivated, consulted, and empowered. It is also influenced by factors such as job security, opportunities for career development, work patterns, and work life balance.

Richard E. Walton explains quality of work life in terms of eight broad conditions of employment that constitute desirable quality of work life (QWL). He proposed the same criteria for measuring QWL. Those conditions/criteria include:

Adequate and Fair Compensation

- Safe and healthy working condition.
- Opportunity to use and develop human capacities.

- Opportunity for career growth.s
- Social integration in the work force.
- Constitutionalism in the work organisation.
- Work and quality of life and
- Special Relevance of Work

Work is an integral part of our everyday life, as it is our livelihood or career or business. On an average we spend around twelve hours daily in the work place, that is one third of our entire life; it does influence the overall quality of our life.

It should yield job satisfaction, give peace of mind, a fulfillment of having done a task, as it is expected, without any flaw and having spent the time fruitfully, constructively and purposefully. Even if it is a small step towards our lifetime goal, at the end of the day it gives satisfaction and eagerness to look forward to the next day.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Quality of Work Life incorporates a hierarchy of perspectives that not only include work-based factors such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with pay and relationship with work colleagues, but also factors that broadly reflects life situation and general feelings of well being.

The term “quality of work life” (QWL) was first introduced in 1972 during an international labour relations conference. QWL received more attention after United Auto Workers and General Motors initiated a QWL program for work reforms. According to Goodman QWL is “an attempt to restructure multiple dimensions of the organisation and to institute a mechanism which introduces and sustains changes overtime”.

According to Glacier, QWL requires an Organisational climate and structure that really encourages, facilitates, rewards, questions, challenges or suggest ways to improve the existing modes operating anyway. According to Luthans (1973) QWL is more concerned with overall climate of work. It is a concern about the impact of work on people as organisational effectiveness and an idea of participation in organisational problem solving and decision making.

According to Keith (1989), Quality of Work Life refers to “the favourableness or unfavourableness of a job environment for people”. The basic purpose in this regard is to develop jobs aiming at Human Resource Development as well as production enhancement.

Gani (1993) in his study stated that the core of the Quality of Work Life concept is the value of treating the worker as a human being and emphasizing changes in the socio-technical system of thorough improvement, in physical and psychological working environment, design and redesign of work practices, hierarchical structure and the production process brought with the active involvement of workers in decision making.

The factors that Influence and Decide the Quality of Work Life are,

- Attitude
- Environment
- Opportunities

- Nature of Job
- People
- Stress Levels
- Career Prospects
- Challenges
- Growth and Development
- Risk Involved and Reward

Attitude

The person who is entrusted with a particular job needs to have sufficient knowledge, required skill and expertise, enough experience, enthusiasm, energy level, willingness to learn new things, dynamism, sense of belongingness in the organization, involvement in the job, inter personnel relations, adaptability to changes in the situation, openness for innovative ideas, competitiveness, zeal, ability to work under pressure, leadership qualities and team-spirit.

Environment

The job may involve dealing with customers who have varied tolerance level, preferences, behavioral pattern, level of understanding; or it may involve working with dangerous machines like drilling pipes, cranes, lathe machines, welding and soldering machines, or even with animals where maximum safety precautions have to be observed which needs lot of concentration, alertness, presence of mind, quick with involuntary actions, synchronization of eyes, hands and body, sometimes high level of patience, tactfulness, empathy and compassion and control over emotions.

Opportunities

Some jobs offer opportunities for learning, research, discovery, self-development, enhancement of skills, room for innovation, public recognition, exploration, celebrity-status and loads and loads of fame. Others are monotonous, repetitive, dull, routine, no room for improvement and in every sense boring. Naturally the former ones are interesting and very much rewarding also.

Nature of Job

For example, a driller in the oil drilling unit, a diver, a fire-fighter, traffic policeman, tram engine driver, construction laborers, welder, miner, lathe mechanic have to do dangerous jobs and have to be more alert in order to avoid any loss of limb, or loss of life which is irreparable; whereas a pilot, doctor, judge, journalist have to be more prudent and tactful in handling the situation; a CEO, a professor, a teacher have more responsibility and accountability but safe working environment; a cashier or a security guard cannot afford to be careless in his job as it involves loss of money, property and wealth; a politician or a public figure cannot afford to be careless, for his reputation and goodwill is at stake. Some jobs need soft skills, leadership qualities, intelligence, decision making abilities, abilities to train and extract work from others; other jobs need forethought, vision and yet other jobs need motor skills, perfection and extreme carefulness.

People

Almost everyone has to deal with three set of people in the work place. Those are namely boss, co-workers in the same level and subordinates. Apart from this, some professions need interaction with people like patients, media persons, public, customers, thieves, robbers, physically disabled people, mentally challenged, children, foreign delegates, gangsters, politicians, public figures and celebrities. These situations demand high level of prudence, cool temper, tactfulness, humor, kindness, diplomacy and sensitiveness.

Stress Level

All these above mentioned factors are inter-related and inter-dependant. Stress level need not be directly proportional to the compensation. Stress is of different types - mental stress/physical stress and psychological or emotional stress. A Managing Director of a company will have mental stress, a laborer will have physical stress, a psychiatrist will have emotional stress. Mental stress and Emotional stress cause more damage than physical stress.

Career Prospects

Every job should offer career development. That is an important factor which decides the quality of work life. Status improvement, more recognition from the Management, appreciations are the motivating factors for anyone to take keen interest in his job. The work atmosphere should be conducive to achieve organizational goal as well as individual development. It is a win-win situation for both the parties; an employee should be rewarded appropriately for his good work, extra efforts, sincerity and at the same time a lethargic and careless employee should be penalized suitably; this will motivate the former to work with more zeal and deter the latter from being so, and strive for better performance.

Challenges

The job should offer some challenges at least to make it interesting; That enables an employee to upgrade his knowledge and skill and capabilities; whereas the monotony of the job makes a person dull, non-enthusiastic, dissatisfied, frustrating, complacent, initiative - less and uninteresting. Challenge is the fire that keeps the innovation and thrill alive. A well-accomplished challenging job yields greater satisfaction than a monetary perk; it boosts the self-confidence also.

Growth and Development

If an organization does not give chance for growth and personal development it is very difficult to retain the talented personnel and also to find new talent with experience and skill.

Risk Involved and Reward

Generally reward or compensation is directly proportional to the quantum of work, man-hours, nature and extent of responsibility, accountability, delegated powers, authority of position in the organizational chart, risk involved, level of expected commitment, deadlines and targets, industry, country, demand and supply of skilled manpower and even political stability and economic policies of a nation. Although risk is involved in every job its nature and degree varies in them; All said and done, reward is a key criteria to lure a prospective worker to accept the offer.

Specific Issues in QWL

Besides normal wages, salaries, fringe benefits etc., the specific issues are being identified by the human resource managers on regular basis. Following issues are highly relevant and determine the Quality of Work Life in any organization;

- **Pay and Stability of Employment**

Good pay dominates most of the factors in employee satisfaction. Alternative means of providing wages should be developed to increase the cost of living index, profession tax etc.,

- **Occupational Stress**

It's a condition of strain on employee emotions. Stress is caused due to irritability, hyper excitation or depression, unstable behavior, fatigue, stirring heavy smoking and drug abuse has to be identified.

- **Organizational Health Programme**

It helps to aim at educating about health Programmes, means of maintaining and improving of health.

- **Alternative Work Schedules**

Includes flexi times, work at home, staggered hours, reduce work hours, part time employment.

- **Participative Management and Control of Work**

The trade unions and workers believe that workers participation in management and decision - making improves QWL.

- **Recognition**

Rewarding system, congratulating the employees for their achievement, job enrichment, offering membership in clubs or association, vehicles, etc recognizes the employees.

- **Congenial Worker-Supervisor Relations**

This gives the worker a sense of social association, belongingness, achievement of work results etc.

- **Grievance Procedure**

Employees will have a fair treatment when the company gives them the opportunity to ventilate their grievances and present their case sincerely rather than settling the problem arbitrarily.

- **Adequacy of Resources**

Resources should match with states objectives; otherwise employees will not be able to attain the objectives.

- **Seniority and Meriting Promotions**

Seniority is considered as basis for promotion. Merit is considered as the basis for advancement for managerial people.

- **Employment on Permanent Basis**

It gives security and leads to higher order QWL.

CONCLUSIONS

Quality of Work Life plays a vital role in Human Resource Management. QWL creative awareness of workers in successful Organization. QWL in India can be improved through a variety of instrumentalities like Education and Training,

Employee communication, Union participation, Research projects and Appreciation of changing environment. A good human resources practice would encourage all employees to be more productive while enjoying work. Therefore, QWL is becoming an important human resources issue in all organizations. The Quality of Work Life intends to develop, enhance and utilize human resource effectively, to improve Quality of products, services, productivity and reduce cost of production per unit of output and to satisfy the workers' psychological needs for self-esteem, participation, recognition, etc., **In a nutshell, improved Quality of Work Life leads to improved performance.**