INEVITABILITY OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE IN TODAY’S ORGANISATION

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ABSTRACT

The success of any organization is highly dependant 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. The term (QWL) refers to the favorableness or unfavourableness of a total job environment for people. QWL programs are another way in which organizations recognize their responsibility to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for economic health of the organization. The elements in a typical QWL program include - open communications, equitable reward systems, a concern for employee job security and satisfying careers and participation in decision making. It is assumed that if employees have more positive attitudes about the organization and their productivity increases, everything else being equal, the organization should be more effective.

This paper quantifies the effects of quality of work life on employees. It aims to gain an insight into current working life policies and practices, as well as work-life balance issues of employees. The results hold that all demographic factors and work related factors have significant relationship with perception of quality of work life. Different approaches have been developed to maintain the balance.

KEYWORDS: Quality of Work Life, Job Satisfaction, Work Related Factors, Demographic Factors, Work Life Balance, Human Relation.

INTRODUCTION

The quest for improved productivity through human resources has its beginning in the early 1900s. F.W Taylor’s scientific management principles created a new awareness regarding human resources, who were earlier considered as mere instruments of production, ready to work from dawn to dusk under whatever conditions and being motivated by the lure of money. From then, till today continuous research and experiments have been undertaken to understand human beings at work and then ways to improve their satisfaction, balanced with the aim of the
In order to achieve this twin objective, different approaches have been developed and applied. The concept of QWL has originated from this continuous research process.

**EVOLUTION**

Walton attributes the evolution of QWL to various phases in history. Legislation enacted in early 20th century to protect employees from job injury and to eliminate working conditions, followed by the unionization movement in the 1930’s and 1940’s were the initial steps. The emphasis was given on the following factors:

1. Working condition
2. Job security
3. Work place & economic gains
4. Positive relationship between morale & productivity
5. Equal employment opportunity
6. Human needs & expectations
7. Relationship between motivation & leadership

**MEANING**

In a deeper sense, quality of work life (QWL) refers to the quality of life (QL) of individuals in their working organizations—commercial, educational, cultural, religious, philanthropic or whatever they are. Modern society is organizational society. Individuals spend much of their lives in organizations. Hence, the importance of QWL is unquestionable. It has an ideological core comprising the perceptual gap across individuals about the real connotation of QL as well as QWL. The QWL movement aims at integrating the socio-psychological needs of employees, the unique requirements of a particular technology, the structure and processes of the organization. It is a set of methods, approaches and technologies for enhancing the work environment.

According to American Society of Training & Development, “It is a process of work organizations which enables its members at all levels to participate actively & efficiently in shaping the organization environment methods and outcomes. It is a value based process aimed towards meeting twin objectives.”

The definition by Serey (2006) 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.

AREAS OF QWL

Work plays a central role in the life of the workers engaged in a productive organization. The workers expect the following needs to be fulfilled by their organization:

1. **FAIR AND REASONABLE PAY**: QWL is basically built around the concept of equitable pay. The employees must be paid their due share in the progress and prosperity of the firm.

2. **FAVORABLE & SAFER ENVIRONMENT**: According to Walton, the QWL is nothing but the provision of a work environment absolutely free from various hazards arising out of natural & unnatural things.

3. **EMPLOYMENT BENEFIT**: Workers have raised their expectations over the years and now feel entitled to benefits that were once considered a part of the bargaining process.

4. **JOB SECURITY**: Employees don’t like to be the victims of whimsical personnel policies of the employers. The workplace should offer security.

5. **JOB DESIGN**: The design of jobs should be capable of meeting the needs of the organization for production & the individual for satisfying & interesting work.

6. **JOB SATISFACTION**: The workers are living beings. They want to work on the jobs that will utilize their talents and thus satisfy them.

7. **BETTER CAREER OPPORTUNITY**: Nowadays, workers are not concerned with their pay prospects, but also the scope for improving their technical and academic skills.

8. **SOCIAL INTEGRATION**: The elimination of anything that could lead to individuals not identifying with the groups to which they belong.

9. **PROTECTION OF INDIVIDUAL RIGHTS**: The introduction of specific procedures aimed at guaranteeing the rights of employees at work.
10. RESPECT FOR NON-WORK ACTIVITIES: Respect for the activities that people engage in outside the work place. The impact of work activities on private life should be recognized.

11. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To discuss the inevitability of Quality of Work Life in today’s world.

2. To explain the sustainable approaches of QWL.

3. To examine the significant relationship of all demographic factors and work related factors with perception of quality of work life.

4. To bring out a basic necessity of integrating QWL in the value charter of every organization.

METHODOLOGY

Information has been sourced from books, articles, various websites. This research paper is based on secondary data for finalization of views and opinions.

MAJOR ISSUES IN QWL

From last many years, there are various issues which were prevailing in the organization which are affecting the workers working. The major factors that are affecting the QWL are:

1. PAY: QWL is basically built around the concept of equitable pay. Employees must be paid their due shares in the progress and prosperity of the firm.

2. BENEFITS: Workers throughout the globe have raised their expectations over the years and now feel entitled to benefits that were once considered a part of bargaining process.

3. JOB SECURITY: Employees don’t like to be the victims of whimsical personnel policies and stay at mercy of employers. They should offer security of employment.

4. ALTERNATIVE WORK SCHEDULES: Employees demand more freedom at the workplace, especially in scheduling their work. It includes flexi time, staggered hours, compressed workweek etc.

5. OCCUPATIONAL STRESS: Occupational mental health programmes dealing with stress are beginning to emerge as new and important aspects of QWL programme in recent years.

6. WORKER PARTICIPATION: Employers have a genuine hunger for participation in organization issues affecting their lives. They demand for more participation in decision making process.
7. **SOCIAL INTEGRATION:** According to Walton, The work environment should provide opportunities for preserving an employee’s personnel identity & self-esteem through freedom from prejudice.

8. **WORK AND TOTAL LIFE SPACE:** A person’s work should not overbalance his life. All work schedules & job requirement should not eat too much into person’s leisure time and family life.

**IMPROVING QWL**

In order to improve the quality of working life, following approaches may be followed:

1. **FLEXIBILITY IN WORK SCHEDULES:** Employees demand more freedom at workplaces, especially in scheduling their work. It includes the flexi time, staggered hours, compressed week etc.

2. **AUTONOMOUS WORK GROUP:** Under this, each group of workers is given freedom of decision making on production methods, distribution of tasks, selection of team members and leaders so on.

3. **JOB ENRICHMENT:** It attempts to provide a person with exciting, interesting, stimulating and challenging work.

4. **OPPORTUNITY FOR GROWTH:** It is important for achievement oriented employees. If they are provided opportunities, they feel highly motivated.

5. **EMPLOYEE’S PARTICIPATION:** They must be allowed to participate in decision making process of that issue which is affecting their live.

6. **SUGGESTION SYSTEM:** Suggestion system satisfies psychological needs of the employees. This motivates them to be in search for something which may be of great use to organization.

7. **JOB SECURITY:** Employees should not have to work under a constant concern for their future stability of work and income.

8. **JOB DESIGN:** The design of the jobs should be capable of meeting the needs of the organization for production and individual for satisfying and interesting work.

**HOURS OF WORK & QWL**

In early industrial period, working hours remained 10 to 11 hours per day. Due to social & humanitarian consideration, a move towards the reduction of working hours originated.

A popular slogan of 1886 International Association of Working Men, “8 Hours work, 8 hours leisure, 8 hours sleep”.
In early 20th century, QWL movement achieved considerable attention and hours of work became a prominent concern to increase the quality of life through improved QWL.

ALTERNATIVE WORK ARRANGEMENTS

Various work arrangement have been made to make all the employees satisfactory with their organization. The various arrangements are as follows:

1. **HOURS OF WORK**: Normal or standard hours of work are defined by International Labor Conference as the number of hours fixed in each country by or in pursuance of laws or regulations, collective agreement or arbitration awards, the number of hours in excess of which anytime worked is remunerated at overtime rates or forms an exception to the recognized rules or custom of the establishment or the process concerned.

2. **FLEXIBLE HOURS SCHEMES**: Flexible hours schemes permit workers to start, finish and take meal breaks at time of their own choosing, subject to certain conditions. According to Cohen & Gadon, flexible working hours treat an individual as a whole person with a life outside work as well as in organization.

   Bandwidth- it is the total number of hours between the earliest permitted starting time & the latest permitted time for stopping work, the larger the bandwidth, the more flexible the programme is.

   Extended Bandwidth is divided into two types of time:

   (a) Core time: It represents those hours when everyone has to be in attendance.

   (b) Flexi time: It is also called as Flexible time, represents the hours within which employees can decide for themselves when to be present.

3. **PART TIME WORK**: The Tokyo department store in Japan, eg. Have added what they cal “free-time” employees to full time staff. Free time workers can choose for themselves the hours and days they work- though they have to work at least 8 hours a week and a minimum of 2 hours everyday that they come for work.

4. **JOB SHARING**: In this, two people agree to take responsibility for one job and share the income accordingly. It increases the skill & experience. Along with this, it also provides cover if one partner falls sick & other can work then.

5. **COMPRESSED WORK WEEKS**: It involves more hours of work per day for fewer days, per week. Most common compressed Work Week is:

   (a) Four days of 9 or 10 hours

   (b) Three 12 hours days

   (c) A week of working days alternating with week of 5 working days
6. **HOURS AVERAGING**: If the workers agree to hours averaging, they must work a fixed number of hours over a certain period- a week or a month or even a year but they must be prepared to change hours of actual working to cope with fluctuating demands.

7. **SHIFTS**: The management can combine shifts with some of the newer flexible working patterns to remove some of the inconveniences to workers, alter shift hours to produce shorter night shifts or perhaps finishing Friday shifts early.

8. **TELE-WORK**: Tele work allows the worker to work at home. According to Atkinson, “the greatest economic benefit for a company launching a tele-communication is the potential for sharing on current or additional building space.

It is of types:

(a) Full time work at home using electronic communication devices to send and receive dates & information.

(b) Part time work at home where individuals can spend part of regular working hours at home at the rest at the office.

**OBSTACLES TO QWL PROGRAMME**

It is not easy to implement QWL programme. Many hurdles do crop up from time to time.

1. **MANAGERIAL ATTITUDES**: QWL demands democratization at in work place. Managers must be willing to share decision making with employees But they may be reluctant to give a part of decision making power.

2. **UNION’S ATTITUDE**: Union may have a genuine feeling that QWL programme speed up work performance & achieve productivity without offering adequate returns to workers.

3. **COST CONSIDERATION**: The capital cost & day-to-day operational expenses of QWL programmes seem to be quite phenomenal beyond the reach of organization.

**FINDINGS**

1. The main Reason behind to start QWL is to have perfect output as everyone now are quality conscious.

2. Companies using Quality of Work Life are able to manage effectively the resources.

3. Some of the Companies policies are not in favor of employees and workers.

4. There are number of companies don’t want to follow QWL because of cost factor and those want to apply don’t have enough capital.

5. There is no effective implementation of QWL strategies.
6. There is no positive attitude from Management and Union side sometime.

7. Vicious exploitation of human resources.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Support of management & union required.

2. Improvement in rewarding & awarding policies.

3. Introduction of promotion policies.

4. More mutual relationship between workers is the expectation by employees.

5. High motivation from top management of company.

6. Initiative for implementing QWL must be from everyone from the organization.

CONCLUSION

To be successful, QWL programmes must be planned thoroughly. The aspirations and attitudes of workers must be examined closely before launching any programme. The work must be studied carefully and a congenial work atmosphere must be provided where the work itself provokes interest and workers genuinely desire to progress on their own.

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