



QUALITY OF WORKLIFE - AN OVERVIEW

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Abstract

Quality of work life Movement initially a loosely organized network of a few dozen academics in the early 1970's, the QWL Movement had grown by the 1980's into an international grouping of trade union officials, personal managers and social scientist generally. QWL will have direct and indirect relationship with the economic and social well-being of large portion of population which lies beyond the domain of Industry. Improved QWL naturally helps to improve the family life of the employees and world also improves the performance of the Industry/ enterprises.

This article reviews the meaning/introduction of QWL, various definition of QWL and determinant of QWL based on the reviews. Improving the Quality of Work Life, barriers and Issues of QWL described.

Introduction of Qwl

Quality of Working Life, an employee is said to be satisfied if he has quality life with better standard of living, better lifestyle and good work life balance. During the past few years researchers focused on QWL more from the perspective of the employees and fulfilment of their needs rather than focussing on the differentiated work culture from the place of actual work.

Various Definitions of Quality of Work Life

- First definition 1969-1972 Quality of Work Life = Variable
- Second definition 1969-1975 Quality of Work Life = Approach
- Third definition 1972- 1975 Quality of Work Life = Methods
- Fourth definition 1975-1980 Quality of Work Life = Movements
- Fifth definition 1979-1982 Quality of Work Life = Everything
- Sixth definition Quality of Work Life = Everything

The term “ Quality of Work Life” has different connotation to different persons. And also Robbins (1989) defines QWL as “a process by which an Organization responds to employee needs by developing mechanisms to allow them to share fully in making the decisions that design their lives at work.”

Literature Review

Cohen and Rosenthal (1980) describes QWL as an intentionally designed effort to bring out increased labour management, and co-operation to jointly solve the problem of improving organizational performance and employees satisfaction.

According to Walton, (2005). He proposed eight major conceptual categories relating to QWL as (1) adequate and fair compensation, (2) safe and healthy working conditions, (3) immediately opportunity for continued growth and security, (4) Opportunity to use and develop human capacities, (5) Social integration in the work organization, (6) Constitutionalism in the work organization, (7) Work and total life space and (8) Social relevance of work life. Several published works have addressed the constructs that make up the QWL domain and key elements of QWL programs. Cherg.S says in a High Quality of work life there should be a positive impact on personal life, an opportunity to be involved in decision as well as acceptable level of physical comfort.

“The quality of a person's life is in direct proportion to their commitment excellence, regardless of their chosen field of endeavor.” - Vincent Lombardi Hack man and Oldham (1976) drew attention to what they described as psychological growth needs as relevant to the consideration of Quality of working life. Several such needs were identified: Skill variety, Task Identity, Task significance, Autonomy and Feedback. They suggested that such needs have to be addressed if employees are to experience high quality of working life.

QWL in India

The quality of work Life (QWL) Apart from ensuring fair pay, the fair treatment of employees and safe working conditions, many companies respond to specific employee needs.

In India, some of the companies that emphasize the quality of work life are Hewlett-Packard, Smith Kline Beecham, American Express, Colgate Palmolive, Gillette, Dr.Reddy's Laboratories, Reliance and Maruti Udyog Limited. HP allows



flexible working arrangements for its employees and follows certain innovative practices such as allowing employees to avail leave for special occasions (marriage, exam preparation, adoption of a child, bereavement in the family, and paternity). QWL in India has emerged as a movement.

Following are the factors that led to the QWL movement in our country:

1. Changing profile of the Indian worker from and illiterate, rural, low caste individual to educated, urban and essentially belonging to upper strata of caste structure has made him/her more concern for own hopes and aspirations.
2. That worker is not just like other factors of production such as, machinery, land, and capital but a human being with feelings and emotions, has made organizations behave with workers accordingly. The establishment of a separate Ministry of Human Resource Development by the Government of India is a testimony to such realization.
3. In India, around 10 per cent of workers in organized sector are unionized. The past record.
4. relation to labour unions lends enough evidence that the unionized work force has been much vocal for demands of one type or other.
5. That human behavior is highly unpredictable and complex underlines the need for the study of organizational behavior. QWL is one of the newer concepts experimenting how to make effective utilization of human resources.

QWL in India seems in practice in a variety of operational systems like workers participation, job enrichment, quality circles, etc. Here, an attempt has been made to give an overview of these in terms of their broad coverage and experiences of Indian organization with them.

Why Need Quality of Work Life?

In current scenario every organization wants more output in comparison of less input, it can be possible when working employee find its working place comfortable as per the job requirement. So its very important for an organization to make a Quality relationship between its employees and working environment. Now-a-days, there is no balance between the family and work life due to job pressure and conflicting interests and over-socialization that lead to too much of interest about the co-workers for satisfaction of their ego, creating problems in the minds of neighbors.

The work-norms impose on workers too much of burden and control by their bosses. And the rules are for workers or employees. They have to follow, and the employer has right to layoff the worker due to marketing and technological factors. The Indian workers and their Unions are now on the defensive. They are now more interested in the question of how to retain their jobs than in the question of how to improve their Quality of Life in the work place.

It is therefore not difficult to understand why the question of improving Quality of Work Life has lost its importance in our country. The Quality of Work Life movement which draws "attention to workers" need for meaningful and satisfying work and for participation in decisions that affect their work situation. And work is a major formation experience which can either promote or limit a man's growth in ways which affect the whole man and which therefore shape .

The Richard Walton, an American Professor, played a major role in developing the concept of Quality of Work Life. The eight factors he proposed to measure Quality of Work Life has made the task easy worldwide.

1. Adequate and Fair compensation
2. Safe and healthy working conditions
3. Opportunity to develop human capacities
4. Opportunity for career growth
5. Social integration in the workforce
6. Constitutionalism
7. Work and Quality of Life
8. Social relevance

Measures to Improve Qwl

A) QWL through Employee Involvement (EI): One of the most common methods used to create QWL is employee involvement. Employee involvement (EI) consists of a variety of systematic methods that empower employees to participate in the decisions that affect them and their relationship with the organization. Through (EI), employees feel a sense of responsibility, even 'ownership' of decisions in which they participate.

To be successful, however, EI must be more than just a systematic approach; it must become part of the organization's culture by being part of management's philosophy. Some companies have had this philosophy ingrained in their corporate structure for decades; Hewlett-Packard, IBM, General Motors, Ford, etc.



B) Quality Circles: Quality circles are small groups of employees who meet regularly with their common leader to identify and solve work-related problems. They are a highly specific form of team building, which are common in Japan and gained popularity in North America in the late 1970s and early 1980s. By the 1980s most medium- and large-sized Japanese firms had quality control circles for hourly employees. This effort began as a quality improvement program but has since become a routine procedure for many Japanese managers and cornerstone of QWL efforts in many Japanese firms. Several characteristics make this approach unique.

C) Socio-Technical Systems: Another intervention to improve QWL is the use of socio-technical systems. Socio-technical systems are interventions in the work situation that restructure the work, the work groups, and the relationship between workers and the technologies they use to do their jobs. More than just enlarging or enriching a job, these approaches may result in more radical changes in the work environment.

D) Autonomous Work Group: A more common, still rare, approach to employee involvement is the use of autonomous work groups. These are teams of workers, without a formal company-appointed leader, who decide among themselves most decisions traditionally handled by supervisors. The key feature of these groups is a high degree of self-determination by employees in the management of their day-to-day work. Typically this includes collective control over the pace of work, distribution of tasks, organization of breaks, and collective participation in the recruitment and training of new members. Direct supervision is often necessary.

Barriers to QWL

- Resistance to change both by management and employees.
- There is a general perception that Q.W.L. implementation will cost much to the organization.
- Continuous increase in QWL may result in less productivity, i.e., after a certain level the productivity will not increase in proportion to the increase in QWL.
- Widespread unhappiness due to comparison with colleagues.
- Regional prejudice.
- Skepticism about the performance appraisal system and promotion criteria.

How to Improve the QWL?

In our country, recently many changes have introduced in the Government policies like privatization. The Government organizations are mismanaged incurring heavy loss on public money either due to corruption by bureaucrats' intervention of politicians and Trade Union leaders and their affiliated political parties with the motives of winning elections. The scope for transfer of technology has increased and inflow of investments from non-resident Indians allowed. The privatization created many avenues for many unemployed people by reducing severity of the problem. Hence, it is absolutely necessary to improvement in the Quality of Work Life of our country.

Following are some suggestions that can help, to a large extent, improve Quality of working life in India:

The Employers Should

- Provide physical amenities at the work place, health and safety and welfare provision.
- Involve workers in decision-making on all matters.
- Initiate suitable forms of work design
- Formalize QWL experience for future use.
- Develop an appreciation of changing environment.

The Unions and Workers Should

- Educate and make workers aware of QWL.
- Identify areas of collaboration with management.
- Encourage workers to participate in QWL activities.

The Professional Organizations Should

- Organize workshops and seminars to bring about greater awareness of QWL.
- Initiate specific research projects in this field.
- Provide professional assistance to organizations to help generate internal competence.
- Develop state-of-art profiles on QWL.

The Government Should

- Legislate standards and norms in newer areas.



- Execute in policy to provide greater autonomy experiment with QWL.
- Execute actions to ensure implementation of legislated facility.

Top Ten Tips to Improve Quality of Work Life (by Judy Worrell & Brian Ward)

The following ten tips are designed to get one thinking. They apply as much to the CEO as they do to the front line worker:

1. **Having a Personal Vision** - of who you want to be and what you want to do - keep in mind that if you do not have one for yourself, you will likely become part of someone else's vision!
2. **Test Out One's Own Personal Vision** - with that of your organizations – in how many ways do they support each other? Ask questions to better understand your organization's mission, vision, and values.
3. **Learn, and Keep on Learning** - go training sessions and in-services, enroll in college courses, read books. Know why, not just how.
4. **Buddy-Up** - find ways to share the load with other team members. Sharing the load makes work easier to manage and less stressful.
5. **Share Your Successes** - this allows you to learn from the successes of others, as well as giving you a boost when you need
6. **Get it off Your Chest-** talk things over with your buddy, friend, supervisor when things trouble you, don't keep it bottled up inside.
7. **Find Joy in Being of Service to Others** - think about how the person you are serving is better off as a result of your work, rejoice in that knowledge.
8. **Take Time for Breaks** - pay particular attention to the need to refresh body, mind and spirit.
9. **Try Out New Ideas** - to innovate is to grow. By using your creativity and innovation life becomes exciting and fulfilling.
10. **Have Fun at Work** - laughter is the best medicine, but use only appropriate humor. Damaging someone else's self esteem for the fun of it is no laughing matter.

QWL as a Philosophy

As a Philosophy QWL views people as “assets” capable of contribution skills, knowledge, experience and commitment rather than as “cost” that are merely extensions of the production process. It argues that encouraging involvement and providing the environment in which it can flourish produces tangible rewards for both individuals and organizations.

Countries Practicing Q.W.L.

- Sweden
- Denmark
- Holland
- Switzerland
- India
- Australia
- USA

Companies Practicing Q.W.L.

General Motors - Faced labour problems like high ratio of absenteeism and labour turnover and also high cost of operations.

Ford Motors and Chrysler- It gave the excellent results like absenteeism and labour turnover and also high cost of operations.

- **BHEL**
- **Hardwar**
- **TISCO**

Conclusion

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., Improved Quality of Work Life leads to improved performance. Performance means not only physical output but also the behaviour of the worker in helping his colleagues in solving job related problems, team spirit and accepting temporary unfavourable work conditions without complaints. An assured good Quality of Work Life will not only attract young and new talent but also retain the existing experience talent.

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