A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

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Abstract

Human resource departments are involved with efforts to improve productivity through changes in employee relations. QWL means having good supervision, good working conditions, good pay and benefits and an interesting, challenging and rewarding job. High QWL is sought through an employee relations philosophy that encourages the use of QWL 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 resource 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. The role of human resource department in QWL efforts varies widely. In some organizations, top management appoints an executive to ensure that QWL and productivity efforts occur throughout the organization. In most cases, these executives have a small staff and must rely on the human resource department for help with employee training, communications, attitude survey feedback, and similar assistance. In other organizations, the department is responsible for initiating and directing the firm’s QWL and productivity efforts.

Key Words: Basic elements of quality of work life, factors of quality of work life, approaches to improve quality of work life, impact of quality of work life and effects of quality of work life.

I. INTRODUCTION

The term Quality Of Work Life (QWL) refers to the favorableness or unfavorableness 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. Many early QWL efforts focus on job enrichment. In addition to improving the work system, QWL programs usually emphasize development of employee skills, the reduction of occupational stress and the development of more cooperative labor-management relations. The basic purpose is to develop jobs and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for economic health of the organization. QWL provides more humanized work environment. It attempts to serve the higher order needs of the workers as well as their more basic needs. It seeks to employ the higher skills of workers and to provide an environment that encourages improving their skills.

Q – Quest for excellence
U – Understanding
A – Action
L – Leadership
I – Involvement of the people
T – Team spirit
Y – Yard stick to measure progress

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a philosophy, a set of principles, which holds that people are the most important resource in the organization as they are trustworthy, responsible and capable of making valuable contribution and they should be treated well.
The elements that are relevant to an individual’s quality of work life include the task, the physical work environment, social environment within the organization, administrative system and relationship between life on and off the job. QWL consists of opportunities for active involvement in group working arrangements or problem solving that are of mutual benefit to employees or employers, based on labour-management cooperation. People also conceive of QWL as a set of methods, such as autonomous work groups, job enrichment, and high-involvement aimed at boosting the satisfaction and productivity of workers.

It requires employee commitment to the organization and an environment in which this commitment can flourish. Thus, QWL is a comprehensive construct that includes an individual’s job related well-being and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences.

Taylor (1979) more pragmatically identified the essential components of quality of working life as basic extrinsic job factors of wages, hours and working conditions, and the intrinsic job notions of the nature of the work itself. He suggested that a number of other aspects could be added, including:

- individual power,
- employee participation in the management,
- fairness and equity,
- social support,
- use of one’s present skills,
- self development,
- a meaningful future at work,
- Social relevance of the work or product, effect on extra work activities.

The basic elements of QWL:

- Open communication
- Equitable reward system
- A concern for employee job security
- Participation in job design - job enrichment & organisational design
- Employee skill development
- Reduction of occupational stress
- Good employer-employee relations
- A challenging job
- More opportunity for growth
- Encouraging creativity and innovation in employees
- Alternate work schedule
- Workers participation in management
- Supportive leadership
- Autonomy and delegation of authority
- An atmosphere based on fairness, integrity and trust
- Continuous development of employees
- Good appraisal system

Factors of QWL

- Job and Career Satisfaction (JCS)
- Working Conditions (WCS)
- General Well-Being (GWB)
- Home-Work Interface (HWI)
- Stress at Work (SAW)
- Control at Work (CAW)

Job and Career Satisfaction

Job and Career Satisfaction is a very important factor in overall quality of working life. How you score on the Job and Career Satisfaction factor relates to whether you feel the workplace provides you with the best things at work - the things that make you feel good, such as: a sense of achievement, high self esteem, fulfilment of potential, etc.

Within the Work-Related Quality of Life measure, It is reflected by questions asking how satisfied people feel about their work. The Positive Job Satisfaction factor as measured within the QWL model is influenced by clarity of goals and role ambiguity, appraisal, recognition and reward,
personal development career benefits and enhancement and training needs.

**Working Conditions**

The extent to which you are satisfied with the conditions in which you work Factor indicates the extent to which you are satisfied with the fundamental resources, working conditions and security necessary to do your job effectively. This includes aspects of the work environment such as noise and temperature, shift patterns and working hours, pay, tools and equipment, safety and security.

**Stress at Work**

The UK Health & Safety Executive (HSE) define stress at: “the adverse reaction people have to excessive pressure or other types of demand placed on them”. Work pressures and demands can be a positive aspect of our work experience, providing challenge and stimulation, but where we see them as excessive and beyond our ability to cope, we are likely to feel overloaded and stressed.

**Control at Work**

Control at Work reflects the level to which you feel you can exercise what you consider to be an appropriate level of control within your work environment. That perception of control might be linked to various aspects of work, including the opportunity to contribute to the process of decision making that affects you. Leading authors in the field suggest that perception of personal control can strongly affect both an individuals’ experience of stress and their health. Research also suggests that there is a strong link between personal control and job satisfaction.

**Approaches to Improve QWL**

**Flexibility in work schedule**

Employees want flexibility in work schedule. There may be three aspects of flexibility: flexi time—a system of flexible working hours, staggered working hours-different time intervals for beginning and end of working hours, and compressed work-week-more working hours per day with lesser number of working days per week.

**Autonomous work group**

Creation of autonomous work group helps in creating positive feelings among employees. They may be given freedom to choose their own teams; there should be freedom of decision making regarding the choice of methods for work, distribution of tasks among group members, and designing of work schedules.

**Job Enrichment**

Job enrichment attempts to design a job in such a way that it becomes more interesting and challenging so that the job holder makes meaning out of that. The degree of job enrichment determines the degree of QWL.

**Opportunity for growth:**

An employee, particularly the achievement-oriented one, seeks growth through his work. If the work provides him opportunity for personal growth and to develop his personality, he will feel committed to the job and the organization.

**Participation:**

Participation in decision making, particularly on the matters directly concerned with an individual’s working, has an important bearing on his satisfaction and performance.

**Communication:**

Employees would receive information about the various aspects of the organization, particularly that which concern them, instruction about job performance and how the job is related to the entire organizational framework, and other specific communication, employees can share their views, grievances and how to overcome these, and suggestions for improving the work performance.
Impact Of QWL

Effects of QWL

Job Involvement:
Job-involved people spend more time on job and turn out performance. Challenging jobs which have skill variety, influence employees to get involved with their jobs. Similarly, people with high need for achievement and high work ethic feel involved in jobs.

Sense of competence:
Sense of competence denotes the feelings of confidence that one has in one’s own competence. Jobs design affects the sense of competence. By engaging in a work that calls for a variety of skills, abilities, and talents, individuals gain mastery over their work environment.

The department also has both a direct and indirect influence on employee motivation and satisfaction.

III. Conclusion

The study is focused mainly on aspects like employment factors, interpersonal relation, and motivation factor, working hours and environment as the dimensions which are related to the Quality of Work Life. These dimensions were found equally important in determining and framing the quality of work life policies. Quality of work life is being used these days by organizations as a strategic tool to attract and retain the talent. The strategies must be framed in such a way as it gives more emphasis on
promotion criteria, motivation of the employees, training programs, fringe benefits and the suggestion schemes.

IV. CONCLUSION

