Quality Of Work Life

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Abstract
Although studies on the Quality of work Life (QWL) have been conducted since the early 20th century, there is no consensus about the real meaning of this term. Over the last years, QWL has been understood as the dynamic and comprehensive management of physical, technological, social and psychological factors that affect culture and renew the organizational environment. Quality of work life (QWL) and employee job satisfaction are increasingly being identified as progressive indicators related to the function and sustainability of business organizations. Typically, QWL is conceptualized as a general attitude toward an object, the job.

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Introduction
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According Robins (1990) QWL is “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”. The key elements of QWL in the literature include job security, job satisfaction, better reward system, employee benefits, employee involvement and organizational performance (Havlovic, 1991; Scobel, 1975). For the purpose of this study, QWL is defined as the favourable condition and environment of employees benefit, employees’ welfare and management attitudes towards operational workers as well as employees in general. Therefore, quality of life is sociological and psychological phenomenon, but sociologists are not putting their interest in industrial sector, where the workers are the core potential resource for organizational performance. In the workplace, the term ‘QWL’ is ‘work in excellence’ and ‘working conditions’ such as standards of living, life styles.

Just a quality of a product or a service is defined by its characteristics, perceived by the users as being of sufficient value which gives them satisfaction and happiness, similarly, quality of work of life (QWL) defines the characteristics of work, both intrinsic as well as extrinsic. The high quality of a product is measured by its satisfactory performance, its features, which are desirable by the customers, its reliability, meaning that the product will continue to be useful for a longer period of time as specified and its aesthetics. The aesthetics value is subjective in nature and it appeals to the customer’s five senses in some form or another.

Similarly, the quality of work life of a service is perceived and judge by the customer on the basis of the knowledge and skill as well as the attitude of the service provider. For example, when a person goes to a doctor, he will be happier if the doctor has patience with him and understands his problems well and gives advice in a friendly manner. Such a doctor would even be more respected if he is willing to make house calls and keeps on endearing about the patients’ health and welfare.

Quality of work life (QWL) is defined as an indicator of the overall quality of the human experience at the workplace. A commitment to QWL by the management of an organisation can be considered a cornerstone of organizational behaviour. QWL creates a workplace that enhances employee well-being and satisfaction. The general goal of QWL programme is to satisfy the full range of employee needs.

Origin of Quality of Work Life (QWL)
The term “Quality of Work Life” has appeared in Research Journals and press in USA only in 1970’s. The term quality of work life was introduced by Louis Davis. The first International QWL conference was held in Toronto in 1972. The international council for quality of work life was established in 1972. From 1980 onwards QWL was increasingly placed on employee centered productivity programs. In the mid 1990s till today faced with challenges of economize and corporate restructuring, QWL is re emerging where employees are seeking out more meaning where rising educational levels and
occupational aspirations in today’s slow economic growth and reduced opportunities for advancement, naturally, there are rising concerns for QWL and for career and personal life planning. In India, QWL offers a value frame and the social technology of organizational change leading to task effectiveness of micro entities through utilization and unfolding of human potential. Some evidence of the rising tide interest in the quality of work life issue is the fact that the second International Conference on quality of work life held in Toronto in 1981 attracted 1,500 participations. The 200 unionists and 750 management people combined outnumbered the, academicians, consultants and government officials in attendance. Quality is no more a specialized word but has become a necessary and a must work for the best survival. In this era, Quality of human inputs is the greatest asset to any organization. Maintaining the quality of such human inputs raises farm maintaining the quality of work life perfectly. A perfect quality of work life would help the organization. Rise in the quality of work life would help employees’ well being thereby the well being of the whole organization. This is an attempt to capitalize the human assets of the organization.

What is Quality of Work Life (QWL)
The concept of QWL took roots with the behavioural approach to management which emerged as a result of Hawthorne experiments (1924-1933), conducted by Elton Mayo and F.J. Roethlisberger. These experiments proved to be a milestone in changing the focus from productivity to people who are responsible for such productivity. These studies were primarily conducted to determine the effect of better physical facilities and material incentives on worker output. These studies showed that better physical activities or increased economic benefits alone were not sufficient motivators in increasing productivity. In effect, the emphasis shifted to psychological and social forces in addition to economic forces. May discovered that even workers are given special attention by management; the productivity is likely to increase irrespective of actual changes in the working conditions, even though working conditions should be such that they increase worker satisfaction.

QWL is actually more of work-life style balance. To create this balance in demands of work and family, some American companies such as SAS institute are offering child care assistance, family leave, flexible work schedules, telecommuting and so on. Similarly Hewlett-Packard is addressing the fundamental problems of how much time a job really demands and how to build a life beyond work by encouraging employees to set leisure goals and focus on developing their personal life. American banker’s insurance groups have sponsored schools at company sites that allow employees to visit their children during lunch time and after school. These measures can improve employees’ lives by making work a more enjoyable place to be.

Responsibility of the Organization towards QWL
The management of an organization has a responsibility to take all steps necessary to improve QWL of all workers. The management has to ask itself the following question: How will it organize the work, the communications patterns, the decision making, the norms and values, the ground rules, so that people’s individuals needs for self-worth, achievement, satisfaction and so on, are significantly met at the workplace?

The technical developments can always be handled by retraining workers and refining their technical skills. However, without the committed involvement of the human element, all technological advancements have limited meaning in today’s dynamic environment, the organic structure of the organization rather than the mechanistic and bureaucratic structure is more desirable.

Organizational development is more applicable to an organic structure which has limited number of hierarchical levels, wide span of control, decentralized decision-making, open communication, and interdependence among groups, high level of openness and trust and reliance on teams.

Objectives Of The Organization Towards Its Employees In This Respect Entails:

a) To build and enhance interpersonal trust. Communication, cooperation and support among all individuals and groups throughout the organization at all levels.

b) To encourage an analytical approach to problem solving in team spirit and openness where the problems and difference and confronted and resolved in team spirit and openness where the problems and difference and confronted and resolved in team spirit. The organizational goals become the goals of the members of the organization.

c) To increase a sense of belonging of the organization so that the organizational goals become the goals of the members of the organization.

d) To assign decision making and problem solving responsibilities to skilled and knowledgeable persons who are closer to the scene of operations and the sources of information, rather than to a person with a particular role at a particular hierarchy level.

e) To increase personal responsibility for planning and implanting the plans and be aware and responsible for the consequences. This will build enthusiasm individually and group wise and will involve open two-way communication, feelings, open competition as well as compromise, conflict resolution and so
on. This will increase a sense of self declaration for all people within the organization.

f) To help managers to manage according to the relevant objectives rather than depending upon ‘past practices’. The management should be goal oriented rather than process oriented.

**Improving the quality of work life can only be done after acceptance of the following:**

a) Most individuals have drive towards personal growth and development. However, the work habits are response to work environment rather than personality traits. Accordingly, efforts to change work habits should be directed towards changing how the person is treated rather than towards attempting to change the person.

b) Highest productivity can be achieved when the individuals’ goals are integrated with organizational goals. Also with such integration, the quality of the product is highly improved.

c) Cooperation is more effective than competition. Conflict and competition tend to erode trust, prohibit collaboration and eventually limit the effectiveness of the organization. In healthy organizations, efforts are made at all levels to treat conflict as a problem subject to problem solving methods.

d) The suppression of feelings adversely affects problem solving, personal growth and satisfaction with one’s work. Accordingly, free expression of feelings is an important ingredient for commitment to work.

e) The growth of individual members is facilitated by relationships, which are open, supportive and trusting. Accordingly, the level of interpersonal trust, support and cooperation should be as high as possible.

f) The difference between commitment and agreement must be fully understood. Agreeing to do something is totally different from being committed to do something. Sense of commitment makes it easy to accept change and the implementation of changes for the purpose of organizational development is even easier when such a commitment is based upon participation in the process.

g) If QWL is to succeed, it must be reinforced by the organization’s total human resources system.

**In brief the management has to address the following:**

a) Responsibility in relation to employment: This must be clearly understood that the employment is meant to be mutually beneficial for the employee as well as for the employer. Accordingly, the emphasis should not only be on what the employee can do for the company but also on what the company can do for employee. The employee contribution must be fully recognized. They must be assigned the right job as per their knowledge, experience, attitude and interests. The company should provide a social environment that foster personal identity, freedom from prejudice, a sense of community and upward mobility. It should further make sure that the personal privacy of employees is protected and that there is a due and just process for dissent and grievances.

b) Responsibility in relation to working conditions: The employees spend their major part of the day in the work environment. Accordingly, the working conditions must be conducive to work. These working conditions refer to physical facilities, which should provide safe and healthy environment. This physical condition must meet the accepted standards of cleanliness, light, heat, air-conditioning, ventilation, safety and sanitation facilities. In addition, provisions for social as well as athletic activities would make employee more dedicated. There should be easy access to supervisors, provision for suggestions which should be taken seriously by management and provision for psychological counselling which greatly reduce stress of work and help solve other personal problems.

c) Responsibility in relation to economic security: Economic security implies the continuity of the job in good times as well as bad times. A life-times employment brings about a shared responsibility which helps to build loyalty to the company. In addition to job security, the remuneration and fringe benefits must be adequate and fair. Some of the fringe benefits include life insurance and medical insurance, sick leave, family leave; profit sharing plans pension plans and retirement benefits, paid vacation, free education for workers, if necessary and for their children and so on.

d) Responsibility in relation to job satisfaction: Job satisfaction contributes heavily to the quality of work life. Job satisfaction refers to the employee’s self-fulfilment and happiness at the job. The conceptual environment should be such that as to enhance the employee’s confidence and faith in the company. The workers should be encouraged to participate in the company affairs as much as possible, especially in the formulation of procedures and policies affecting them. Other management policies include provisions for challenging opportunities, increased responsibility, and promotion and so on.

The degree of quality of work life is a function of the degree to which management fulfils its responsibilities with regards to employees’ welfare. The employees must be satisfied and happy with expectations of the job and their own ability and the availability of resources to meet those expectations. Job satisfaction is the degree to which the individuals feel positively about their jobs. It is an attitude or an emotional response to the work itself
and the work place. The job satisfaction can be viewed with two aspects. One is the feeling of belonging to the organization and the second is the feeling of responsibility for productivity. Strong feelings about these two aspects enhance the quality of work life.

Management can take and adopt some steps to makes the job more interesting for the worker. They can redesign the job and its requirements to make it more interesting and motivational for the worker. Job redesign involves revising job descriptions and changing the nature of work so as to induce higher level of motivation among workers. It involves alteration of specific of the job in a manner that would increase both qualities of the employee’s work experience as well as his productivity.

Job Enrichment
Work design can help to enhance the basic relationship between people and their jobs. The basic foundation of this relationship is that nature of work itself is a powerful influence on worker motivation and job satisfaction. People who are happy with their jobs are highly intrinsically motivated.

Job enrichment involves deliberate upgrading of responsibility and challenges at work. More and more works are being redesigned to make them more “meaningful” and in some case, job enrichment includes giving employees responsibility for the planning and control of work and operations. Some of the principles of job enrichment are advanced by Herzberg. These are:

a. Give the employee the freedom of operation and added responsibility. An opportunity to schedule one’s own work enhances a sense of achievement and motivation. Expand his authority while retaining some controls and accountability for his action and results.

b. To increase responsibility, give the worker a whole unit to operate. A person who makes an entire toaster feels much more satisfied than a person who simply makes a part of it. Such responsibility adds to the task importance for the worker.

c. Introduce new and more difficult tasks at each step, giving workers an opportunity to learn and specialize.

d. The employee must be given frequent feedback on his performance and on his handling of his own duties and responsibilities. This feedback will reinforce the learning and will continuously appraise the employee regarding his progress on the job.

The job and the human behaviour are directly related. Satisfaction with the job results in less resentment and a more positive attitude. Such attitudes reinforce behaviours which are desirable and more lasting. Work redesign opens opportunities to initiate changes in other areas such as managerial development programs.

Work redesign makes the organization a people oriented one and people experience feelings of worth, personal growth and development and aspire for higher levels needs such as self-esteem and self-actualization.

Job Rotation
When an organization has a series of routine jobs that cannot be combined or enriched, the employees may be shifted from one job to another in order to provide some variety so as to minimize the monotony and boredom. Even though job rotation does not necessarily provide any challenges to aggressive employees, it does broaden the range of range of experience and it is an effective training technique because a worker rotated through a variety of related jobs acquires a larger set of job skills, which is motivating in itself, and the organization develops a more flexible workforce.

Thus we can say that QWL aims in improving:

a. Improve employee satisfaction;
b. Improve physical and psychological health of employees which creates positive feelings;
c. Enhance productivity of employees;
d. Reinforce workplace learning;
e. Improved management of the ongoing change and transition; and
f. Build the image of the company as best in recruitment, retention, and in general motivation of employees

Conclusion
Quality of Work Life (QWL) is a comprehensive construct that includes an individual’s job related wellbeing and the extent to which work experiences are rewarding, fulfilling and devoid of stress and other negative personal consequences. The QWL has been increasing several factors. These include increase in education level and consequently job aspirations of employees; Association of workers; Significance of human resource management; Widespread industrial unrest; Growing of knowledge in human behaviour, and the like. The elements of QWL comprise of health and wellbeing, job security, job satisfaction, competence development and the balance between works with non work life. In this context, for improving the QWL different groups have been taken responsibility such as employers, workers, professional organisations, government, and managers. Therefore, quality circles, management by objectives, suggestion system and other forms of employees’ participation in management help to improve QWL in the industry circles. Techniques to improve quality of work life include job redesign, career development, flexible work schedules, job security and the like. If any organization prop-
erly adopts these techniques, the QWL will certainly be improved to the desired levels.

References


