Quality of Work Life Practices in a Multinational Company in Sydney, Australia

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Abstract

The advent of modern technology has created a significant shift in the value placed on the benefits of industrialization, leading to reckoning its costs in what is known today as quality of work life. The concept permits a focus on key concerns – the dysfunction in the individual experience between work and the rest of life. The pressures of modern life have led to the stunted growth and development of the person which adversely affects his life experiences.

It is within this purview that many companies today are increasingly more focused in providing quality of work to their employees. It is not a technique but rather a philosophy or concept adopted by many organizations today to balance business, human and social needs. It attempts to develop the individual while increasing productivity so that all sectors of society are benefitted. Coca Cola Amatil in Sydney, Australia espouses the core value of developing its people and rewarding performance. As a leading multinational organization, it takes pride with the fact that it conducts its operations based on the doctrine of developing and nurturing its people anchored on the principles of quality of work life.

Key Words: Quality of work life, developing human potential, social integration, growth and Security
1. Introduction

Understanding the challenge of continuity for the individual worker is basic to assessing the impact of the quality of working life movement. Changes it seeks to introduce call for major shifts in orientation of people at all levels of work structure. The underlying thrust of quality of work life is anchored on its premise to reduce the vulnerability of the individual to the demands and conflicts associated with maintaining the network of relationships that define life in his environment. Change efforts that do not take into account of their impact on the workers run the serious risk of placing the individuals into “binds” leaving no serious option other than resistance to change.

The paradox which confronts change efforts in the area of quality of working life is that, in order to move toward a work ethos permitting the individual to derive greater intrinsic satisfaction from his work, he must first abandon the scheme which he now employs to deal with the very discontinuities that the movement is directed at transcending [15]. This action cannot be done by the worker alone. Organizations need to revisit their human resource policies regularly to ensure that the weak links in them can be rectified to ensure that the company can provide opportunities to the employees where they can find the greatest expression for their innermost needs.

Coca Cola Amatil, just like any other firm is largely dependent on the capability of its human resources to sustain the operations of the firm. In some of its departments, there were reported cases of malpractices committed by its workers as a manifestation of their silent protests against certain policies of the firm which the employee perceived to be detrimental to them [16]. These incidents though viewed as isolated have created a rippling effect to the organization which belies the importance of nurturing a work environment where the worker derives a sense of satisfaction from his work.

To capitalize on the strengths and competencies of its people leading to the sustainability of Coca Cola’s operations, the management wanted to take a closer look on how its working conditions have influenced the commitment of its people to direct their activities in congruence with the organization’s vision, mission and goals. Thus, this study was undertaken.

2. The Concept of Quality of Work Life

Quality of work life is the favorableness or unfavorableness of a total job environment and working conditions that are excellent for people as well as for the economic health of the organization (Newstrom and Davis, 2005). Wilkinson (2009) who theorized that to attain effectiveness, a company must enhance the quality of work life through more challenging, satisfying jobs coupled with the involvement and commitment of their employees. This notion promotes understanding and responsibility which when combined with open communication can help an organization become more responsive [17].

The aim of quality of work life culture is to create a fear free organization in which employee involvement is pursued vigorously. It generates a high degree of reciprocal commitment between the needs and development of the individual, and the goals and development of the organization (Ivancevich, 2005). A quality of work life cultural underpinning anchors the development of total quality and is essential to a successful Total Quality Management (TQM) strategy (Thomas, 2006). In theory, quality of work life is simple – it involves giving workers the opportunity to make decisions about their jobs, the design of their workplaces, and that they need to make products or to deliver services most effectively. It requires management to treat workers with dignity (Schuler, 2004). It’s focus is on employees and management operating the business together. In essence, quality of work
life represents a desired end – state that emphasizes the importance of providing opportunities for employees to contribute to their jobs as well as to receive more from their jobs. It is an alternative to the control approach of managing people. This approach considers people as an “asset” to the organization and that people perform better when they are allowed to participate in managing their work and make decisions.

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Luthans (2005) consider quality of work life as an attempt to develop more satisfying work conditions through the collaborative efforts of management and employees. Many popular qualities of work life projects provide opportunities for growth in the workers’ personal and professional lives. Some popular quality of work life activities includes problem solving meetings with representatives of management, labor and members of product development teams.

2.1. Components of Quality of Work Life.

As an integral component of the organization’s culture, quality of work life constitutes the norms, standards of behavior and attributes that informal groups involve as a result of the organization systems, structures and processes that impinge on them. It reflects the employees’ reactions and feelings about how work is designed, the way it is distributed and organized, which later are communicated to organization members and finally coordinated to achieve organizational goals (Massie, 2004). Provisions for quality of work life facilitate the performance of gainful work. QWL is closely associated with the concepts of job satisfaction and morale, life survival, effectiveness and employee maintenance. Unlike the job enrichment and social information processing approaches, quality of work life is not based on a particular theory, nor does it advocate a particular technique. Work life is concerned with the overall climate of work (Luthans, 2005).

Certo (2004) believes that quality of work life is the degree of opportunity of workers to make decisions that influence their work situation. The greater the opportunity of workers to make such decisions, the higher the quality of work life is said to be. Workers would like to make decisions, that tend to create the following: 1) jobs that are interesting, challenging and responsible; 2) worker rewards through fair wages and recognition for worker contributions; 3) workplaces that are clean, safe, quiet and bright; 4) minimal but available supervision; 5) secure jobs that promote the development of friendly relations with other system members, and 6) organizations that provide for personal welfare and medical attention.
3. Dimensions of Quality of Work Life.

Provisions for quality of work life will facilitate the performance of gainful work. The concept is closely associated with the tenets of job satisfaction, morale, life survival, effectiveness and employee maintenance. Unlike job enrichment and social information processing approaches, quality of work life is not based on a particular theory, nor does it advocate a particular technique, work life is concerned with the overall climate of work (Luthans, 2005).

3.1. Adequate and Fair Compensation

In terms of the provision of measures for adequate and fair compensation, Coca Cola Amatil often provided this to their workers. The typical reason to work is to earn a living. Therefore, it is fundamental that the quality of work life is affected by how well this aim is achieved. Fairness for CCA’s employees means that the compensation they get is commensurate to the efforts they render to the firm. It implies that the economic fruits of productivity of an employee are recognized. As for adequacy, it is understood that the pay that the employees get meet socially determined standard of sufficiency and can assure the worker that he/she as well as the family can maintain a decent standard of living. The adequacy and fairness of pay are partly ideological questions. In essence, meeting socially determined needs and fair compensation can create an appropriate work environment (Weisboard, 2007).

High salary levels alone do not ensure a productive – motivated work force. A critical factor, then, is not how much a company pays its workers but, more importantly, how the pay system is designed, communicated, and managed. The appropriate salary is agreed by the employee and the employer. The government of the country will establish the rate of minimum salary, which the employer should not pay less than that to the worker.

3.2. Safe and Healthy Working Conditions.

With regard to safe and healthy working conditions, measures for this factor were likewise often provided by CCA. It is widely accepted that in any society, companies are expected to provide a work environment where workers should not be exposed to physical conditions or hourly arrangements that are unduly hazardous or detrimental to their health. Coca Cola Amatil makes sure that their working environment complies with legal legislation in terms of reasonable working hours, safe working conditions and workers meet the age limits or requirements set by law. This concept denotes provisions for a wholesome work environment that provides the basis for the employee to enjoy working (Cummings, 2007).

Many companies today improve quality of work life of employees by modifying the work environment. Under the law (Certo, 2004), each employer has a “general duty” to provide a place of employment “free from recognized hazards”. Furthermore, they also have the special duty “to comply with all standards of safety and health established under certain given provisions. While the laws safeguarding the employees’ physical and emotional well being are certainly an incentive, many employers are motivated to provide desirable working conditions by virtue of their sensitivity to human needs and rights.
3.3. Development of Human Capacities and Security

The management of CCA is very generous in providing opportunities for continued growth and security among their employees. The focus shifts from the job to career opportunities through self improvement schemes or company sponsored activities like trainings and education. These are not only intended to enhance the productivity of the workers, but most importantly to prepare them on possible movement in the organizational hierarchy. Job security involves the assurance of employment continuity in the future, if absent may lead to job dissatisfaction (Bohlander and Nell, 2007). In the area of the development of human capacities, the key informants stated that the company often provided measures for the realization of this factor. The company – CCA provides variations as to job design to enable the worker to use and develop his skills and knowledge, affecting his involvement, self-esteem, and the challenge obtained from the work itself. The job design is reviewed regularly to ensure that it allows for substantial autonomy and self control, permit the use of a multiple range of skills and enables the worker to obtain meaningful information about the total work that he is assigned to perform.

Many people have higher job satisfaction when they believe that their future prospects are good. These prospects may mean the opportunity for advancement and growth with their current employer or the chance of finding work with another employer. If people feel they have fewer opportunities with their current employer than they would like, then their job satisfaction may decrease.

3.4. Social Integration

Social integration is often manifested in CCA. Here, the nature of personal relationships becomes an important dimension of the working life. The company ensures that every worker in CCA if free from prejudices, there is no stratification in the company as to status symbols or hierarchical structures, create supportive primary groups to strengthen socio-emotional support and encourages interpersonal openness among organizational members. Social integration involves the process of changing or improving a job so that a worker is likely to be more motivated. It provides the employee with the opportunity for greater recognition, achievement, growth and responsibility, the lack of which can increase worker alienation (Ross and Winchall, 2007).

An essential component of social integration is the quality of social interaction. This quality factor is more subjective yet it is very powerful (Cascio, 2003). People have stayed at jobs they might otherwise have left because they felt the quality of the social interactions was so high that this outweighed other negative aspects of the job. Conversely, some people have left their jobs even if they like the work but disliked the quality of their social contacts on the job.

4. Conclusion

Taking into account the results of the study, it is evident that the management of Coca Cola Amatil of Sydney, Australia has consistently provided their employees with measures for creating quality of work life conditions. However, the dominant paradigm of this research on the quality of work life is based upon the assumption of the employees’ own experience of satisfaction or dissatisfaction moderated by his abilities, values and expectations. Hence, it is necessary that the company will undertake periodic reviews of the provisions of QWL in the work environment to ensure that those areas which need to be intensified leading to the existence of a totally motivated and committed workforce can be sustained. Through this, the management of CCA can ensure the existence
of a highly motivated and efficient workforce thereby creating a more humane work environment in the firm.

References