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## **Union and Quality of Work Life-Indian Perspective**

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### **Abstract**

Union and quality of work life (QWL) are closely related. Various concepts came in the catchshell of QWL; Implementation of QWL requires to introduce few reforms. These reforms bring changes in the organization, which is likely to resist by the workers or unions, on the magnitude of the suspicion developed in the mind of workers due sudden change in the attitude of management. The concepts viz. union, QWL, unions concern, union and QWL, implementation of QWL in union, has discussed in the present article. The allegation generally found between employer and employees that, employer state workers are more conscious about their rights and not responsibilities and vice versa. In fact, both workers and management are equally aware of their rights and responsibilities. Management has their own concerns towards workers as well workers have few concerns towards management. Besides paving these concerns, the suspicious and bickering environment widen the chasm of misunderstanding, and adversely affects on industrial relations. Union is the better vehicle that management can use to strengthen the industrial relations and improve QWL. In fact, union plays pivotal role to improve QWL in the organisation by various ways; few to quote that, union open up channel for upward communication to reach top management with its problems and demands. These problems are

generally consisted safety, improvement in working environment and increase in monetary compensation. Improvement in such aspects leads to improve QWL.

The article depicts about union and quality of work life (QWL) necessarily entrenched the relations of union and quality of work life in Indian scenario.

### **Introduction :**

Business organisation operates within a dynamic environment. Social, political, technical, conceptual and economic factors, which originate to change policies and procedures in organisation since these environmental factors are subject to continuous change. Management may find one of these factors as strength, weakness or opportunity and threat. But anyhow management needs to manage the change effectively to ensure organizations long-term survival. The strength and weakness of an organisation are determined largely by the quality of its human resources because it is the people who constitute the core of an organisation; it is the people who work. People play a vital role in using organizational resources efficiently.

### **Union :**

Very few labourers in India in different industry have unionized. The number of workforce which has fall under non unionize sector is large so having less bargaining power. Several factors motivates to construct the union in organisation, prominent among those include, political, social and economical.

A labour union is an association of employees for the primary purpose of influencing their employer's decisions about their conditions of employment. It may also engage in fraternal activities, political action and related activities. It is a social group, and it brings to the work environment the second Journal organisation.

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Unions being shaped as parallel organisation, it leads to take their own decisions. The decisions may or may not in the favour of an organisation because it includes the interest of workers.

### **Concept of QWL :**

The theme for QWL has been wide and varied in nature. For more than two decades a sizable volume of literature has developed on QWL hence there is no consensus on a definition of the term, researcher and scholars have defined the term with different perspective.

QWL is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry and action confining industrial engineering, organization theory and development, motivation, leadership and industrial relations. Obviously, the studies and researches in social sciences can not be divorced from its socio-economic reality. QWL has considerable impact on the quality of life of employees.

Various organizations have attracted to QWL as a means of increasing productivity and reducing inflation and as a way of obtaining industrial democracy and minimizing labour disputes.

"QWL refers to the level of satisfaction, motivation and involvement and commitment individual experiences with respect to their lives at work."<sup>1</sup>

QWL install in employees the feeling of security, equity, pride, family, democracy, ownership, autonomy, responsibility and flexibility.

Richard E. Walton, states much broader concept of QWL proposing eight conceptual categories comprises, adequate and fair compensation, safe and healthy working conditions, immediate opportunity to use and develop human capacities, future opportunity for continued growth and security, social integration in the work organization, constitutionalism in the work organization, balanced role of work in the total life space, and social relevance of work.

After examining the literature on QWL, we find the narrow concept and also much broader concept of QWL. The narrow concept of QWL comprises mainly, increasing productivity, reducing inflation, way of obtaining industrial democracy, minimizing labour disputes and level of satisfaction, motivation etc. besides the broader concept comprises the conceptual categories of QWL which enveloped several concepts or aspects related to work life. The economic circumstances and environment forces differ from nation to nation so it is relevant to examine the alternative concept of QWL in their own environment perspective. This is one of the reasons why the consensus did not find on the definition of QWL.

Much of the aspects are of intrinsic value to both management and unions as far as the study of QWL is concerned. This also reflects from the definition forwarded by the staff of the American Center for the QWL in 1977.

"An activity which takes place at every level of an organisation which seeks greater organizational effectiveness through the enhancement of human dignity and growth a process through which the stockholders in the organization - management, unions and employees learn how to work together better to determine for themselves what action changes and improvements are desirable and workable in order to achieve the twin and simultaneous goals of an improved quality of life at work for all members of the organization and greater effectiveness for both the company and the unions."<sup>2</sup>

The aspects like industrial democracy, labour dispute, adequate monetary compensation, safe and healthy working conditions and autonomy etc. has been discussed in few definitions of QWL which achieves the objectives of management as well as of unions.

Much has not been written on the union and QWL. In fact, unions are most neglected from the study of QWL.

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### **Unions Concerns :**

It is very important to understand the unions concern before implementing any managerial or economic reforms in the organisation. The reform mostly requires the involvement of employees in the organisation. If the reforms are not serving the concern of individual worker or union then the co-operation to implement the reforms is unlikely. It has seen in most reforms which have been directly taken from western, European and Japanese nations and implemented in Indian organizations, did not cut enough ice, it is because those reforms were formed suited to their respective environment and which was needed to alter to fit into Indian environment. This has not done, in such situation co-operation from the labour is unlikely.

### **Few of unions concerns in India include :**

1. Achieving higher wages and better working and living conditions for the members.
2. Acquiring control of industry by workers.
3. Minimizing the helplessness of the individual workers by making them stand up unitedly and increasing their resistance power through collective bargaining, protecting the members against victimization and injustice by employers.
4. Raising the status of the workers as partners of industry and citizens of society by demanding an increasing share for them in the management of industrial enterprises.
5. Generating the self-confidence of the worker and a feeling that he is not simply a cog in the machine.
6. Encouraging sincerity and discipline in workers.
7. Taking up welfare measures for improving the morale of the workers.

Almost every month the industrial dispute takes place in

any corner of India. 'Indian Labour Journal' the monthly publication of Ministry of Labour, Government of India states the number of industrial disputes with their reasons state wise and the mandays lost. Most of the strikes and lockouts taken place due to monetary reasons viz. wages and allowances, bonus, financial stringency and non-implementation of awards etc. Hundreds of workers involved and thousands of mandays lost due to the same. This is the situation with unionized sector. Under such circumstances unions prime concern would be to get the commensurable monetary compensation. This may not be the situation with the workers in economically developed nation. Their demand would be the better working conditions, improved work environment etc. so the concern of union and workers in non-unionized organizations matters before introducing reforms.

#### **Union and QWL :**

The allegation strongly found between employer and employees is that, employer state workers are more conscious about their rights and not responsibilities and vice versa. Such allegation grows suspicious and bickering in the work environment. This suspicious environment not only found in unionize organizations but in non-unionize organisation, also the intensity of suspicion differs organisation to organisation and situation to situation, also depends on the previous experiences of union management relations and the implementation of agreement signed on. All these aspects developed the attitude of management and union to look at each other in hostile way, which leads to complexity in the work environment.

Union play pivotal role in the sustained development of organisation in following way.

1. Union open up channel for upward communication to reach top management with its problems and demands.
2. Union also enters into widespread discussion with management to resolve issues and negotiations in a

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problem solving atmospheres, which is nothing but the vehicle for participation in management and decisions.

3. Union is book from which management could learn especially the work - related problems, problems of working conditions, safety requirements etc.
4. The grievance procedure itself reflects good communication channel, which help to improve understanding between management and union and opportunity to workers to participate in management.

### **Implementation of QWL in Unionized Organisation :**

The characteristics of a number of successful business organizations, which have enjoyed peaceful relations, are acceptance of collective bargaining and the union. The success of implementation of QWL in terms of results depends upon various factors prime to consider the union management relations. There arise suspicion in the mind of workers and union leaders regarding the sudden change of management towards the workers as far as improvement in wages, welfare aspects and work environment variables are concerned. Workers feel that management may have some object in mind to increase productivity or something else. Few mechanisms can be suggested to bridge this chasm of misunderstanding.

### **Resolve present problems -**

Workers may be working under the shadow of several problems. The problems may relate to the monetary compensation, fringes, work-related problems, safety problems etc. These problems should be attacked first to gain the confidence of workers vis-a-vis unions demands should be considered. In fact, most of the unions and workers individual demands generally would co-inside. Under few conditions, improvement of QWL program may began with the monetary issues.

### **Joint management committee :**

It is expected to established the separate joint committee for QWL. The programs of QWL would be discussed and implemented with the joint effort. It is expected that joint committee should think of the diagnosis of the problems and suggest remedies to conquered the problem.

At most of the places the joint management committee did not find in the unionized organization. Such committee is essential as far as implementation of QWL programs is concern. Most of the places joint committee featuring as bargaining committee. No doubt bargaining is an important function of committee besides enlarge opportunities for promotion, training, provide education, culture and recreational facilities, improving level of production, discipline and high standard of quality should be thought off. In general overall development of systems is the organisation leads to achieve objectives in more efficient manner leads to the development in the quality of individual life in the organisation since the QWL is a function of socio-technical system.

### **Experimentation and assessment :**

The programs of QWL should start with the experimentation. The concept can be tried on a particular department or group and assessment of the outcome can be measured in form of result, workers satisfaction, involvement and workers consent to the program. The results of assessment would define the need of alteration of program.

### **Consultation :**

Outside consultaions can be entertained in QWL programs. consultants may coin new approaches to the problems related to QWL. Even the consultants would be helpful to provide training.

### **Training and development :**

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changes of workers, enlighten workers on managerial and economic reforms functioning globally so as to make workers ready for the change and which can be achieved by QWL programs. Training and developmental programs would also provide good dais to take thoughts of management regarding QWL to workers.

### **Involvement of individual worker :**

Involvement of individual worker is imporving work environment variables is necessary. Workers are one who directly related to production and service they know better the developments of job and procedures to work. The workers can better suggest the lacunas in the work. These suggestions should be taken and thought on, the best suggestion should be implemented, and that worker should be awarded monetarily. Workers can bring the continued stream of work related problems which ultimately leads the system zero defect. Total employees involvement is must.

Besides these mechanisms, it is doubtful how will union react to the QWL proposals. It is largely depend upon the leadership of union and managment and their relations. Management should make sure that the workers monetary needs have been considerably fulfilled and then the need of personal development, career opportunities, participation in job design, decision making should now be given priority. This can be simply explained in words of Herzberg's two factor theory. Managment should ensure that the maintenance factors i. e. salary, job security, working conditions, company policy and interpersonal relations has been sound enough and then the need of motivational factors should be given priority viz. challenging work, achievement, growth of job and advancement.

Where the relation of union and management are sound and trustful the same will carry forward as far as QWL program is concern unless thses programs will carry the suspicion and

resistance. Issues about the QWL always provide an opportunity to improve the labour relations.

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