

A TOOL FOR EVALUATING QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

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Abstract. It is necessary to adopt a vigilant posture against all of the unhuman practices at work. By implementing the program of Quality of Work Life, presented by Walton, we will be able to carry out a critical analysis regarding the real causes of human degradation and take the appropriate actions to mitigate them, providing a better life condition for workers and contributing towards their formation as workers who can live better in their own way.

Keywords. *Life quality, work, leadership, respect*

1. Introduction

From the principle that we spend most of our lives in organizations, it would be ideal if we could make them more pleasant and healthy places for us to do our jobs. Places where we could spend some hours creating and performing our tasks with satisfaction and joy.

Is it necessary to change? Today, the Human Resources professionals assume a key-position in organizations. Among several challenges, one of the most important regards people's commitment to their work. People's engagement has become a necessary factor and organizations must encourage their employees to assume two kinds of behavior: engagement and will to act.

The individual must be the Human Resources' main focus.

The people are the ones who assure the level of flexibility, how well and how fast the company will fit in new scenarios. They aggregate values to products and services in terms of quality and productivity, and also, they are responsible for the learning process and for the level of innovation in the organization.

As all the processes involved in the daily organizational routine search for efficiency – from decision making to operational processes – they need a participative and motivated behavior from all of their employees. It would be naive to think that the companies would be able to achieve their efficiency goals without relying on motivated people (Haak, 1995).

Nothing can be done in a “still water environment”, where people work routinely without creativity and without an authentic need to reawaken and evolve. It is amazing to see how fast a person can shift from the good will to collaborate to the complete denial of his/her responsibilities at work (Bergamini, 1987).

According to (Limongi e Assis, 1995:28), philosophically, everybody thinks the implementation of QWL programs is important, but, practically speaking, the immediateness prevails and medium and long-term investments are forgotten. Does everything need to be done? Most of the QWL programs start at security and health activities at work, and many of them are not associated with total quality programs or programs to improve the organizational atmosphere. QWL just makes sense when it is not restrict to health or leisure internal programs, but, on the other hand, is discussed in a broader scope, including the quality of the relations at work and their consequences in relation to the people's and the organization's health.

Through a bibliographic review, this study intends to emphasize a tool, a classic one, to evaluate Quality of Work Life in the industrial and service sectors, where a lot has been achieved since 1973.

The model selected for this study was presented by Walton, and it is widely used for evaluating Quality of Work Life because of its large range of criteria attending both internal and external factors, giving priority to hygiene and motivational factors.

Walton's model was used by Lima (1995) in a dissertation that evaluated the level of satisfaction of workmen of two small-sized civil construction companion in Porto Alegre/RS and Florianópolis/SC. These companies were involved in management and technological support projects of the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul. The research had two stages where a questionnaire and an interview were carried out in order to identify the employees' level of satisfaction. According to the researcher the staff's level of satisfaction is directly related to the improvements implemented by the companies at their working sites. The author noticed that the companies that implemented these improvements presented higher levels of satisfaction regarding Quality of Work Life than the companies that didn't or just implemented small interventions.

In 1996, a research, using Walton's model, carried out by Valle and Vieira in order to evaluate the perception of UFMG's administrative-technicians in relation to the eight criteria of quality of work life (QWL), based on the attained

data, dimensioned these factors in term of institutional priorities referring to administrative-technicians human resources.

Another research was carried out by Rocha (1998), a case study in the textile sector in the state of Santa Catarina, was able to identify that “the dimensions regarding social needs (...) are satisfied”. On the other hand, dimensions regarding the individual’s professional profile were considered negative, interfering with the “Companies results, mainly with its productivity.”

Detoni (2001), in his study “Strategies for Evaluating Quality of Work Life – Case Study in Agro-industries”, tried to identify the worker’s level of satisfaction regarding factors associated with Quality of Work Life in four companies, which produce animal rations, that belonged to the cooperationist segment in the west of the state of Paraná. His study was based on Walton’s analytic-descriptive model, which was well-adapted to the investigation. Besides the good receptivity shown by the companies’ directors, it was also observed the interest and availability demonstrated by the workers, who were willing to participate in an investigation where they could express their perception about several issues and talk about their expectations. In this sense, a non-structured interview allowed a deeper discussion of the proposed criteria, of the several factors that form each them and their modeling according to each interviewee’s understanding. It was possible to perceive through the research that workers, in general, have a common critical sense about the issues that were approached, and that they also have expectations in relation to the improvement of the levels of satisfaction in all the companies. This research is a good contribution to studies about quality of work life for it establishes that it is possible to investigate the level of satisfaction of agro-industry workers from a set of factors inherent to the theme.

In 2003 a research developed by Pereira evaluated the perception of office workers at Federal University of Itajubá – UNIFEI – in relation to Quality of Life Work. This research resulted in the implementation of several improvement programs developed by the researcher, together with the human resources department and a team of psychologists.

As we can observe, the classic model proposed by Walton, which is emphasized by this document, has been resisting so far.

2. Evolution of the concept of Quality of Work Life

According to Rodrigues (1994) Quality of Work Life has been a concern since the early days of mankind. It has had other titles and appeared in other contexts, but its purpose has always been to facilitate or bring satisfaction and welfare to the workers while they are carrying out their assignments. In the 50s, the relation individual x work x organization was studied, and according to Rodrigues (1994) this new technique received the name "Quality of Work Life – QWL”.

However, Rocha (1988) comments that in the early 70s, the studies about quality of work life went through a period of stagnation, mainly because of the energy crisis and the high inflation that fell upon the USA and other Western countries. Japan’s ascendancy as a powerful nation has also made Western organizations begin focusing on management techniques only, drifting their attention from studies about quality of work life, which was kept aside from the discussions until late 70s.

According to Bom Sucesso (1998 : 29) “in the 90s, the expression “quality of work life” invaded every single space, becoming part of the academic speech, the literature concerning the behavior in organizations, programs of total quality, informal talks and the media in general.” This makes it clear that it is now a widespread theme whose goal is to fulfill the worker’s psychosocial needs in order to elevate his level of satisfaction at work, according to Detoni (2001).

Within the society evolution, the improvement in the Quality of Work Life is one of the experts’ concern, for it comprises not only material aspects like compensation, health and security, but the humanization of work as a whole, including the sharing of responsibility, self-control, autonomy, participation in the management and in the results, and the complete development of the personnel through assignments that offer possibilities of progress. The interesting and challenging nature of the position itself characterizes a good QWL, according to Lima (1995).

According to Rocha (1988) the improvement in the quality of work life is a concern within the academic boundaries, not only because of the material aspect, emphasized by health and security, but because of its humanization aspect. Quality of Work Life creates opportunities for the worker, giving him responsibility, autonomy, participation in the decision making process, in the results and in his complete development. This way, the individual will be personally fulfilled and will achieve progress in his work.

Several experts are working and amending the concept of Quality of Work Life by developing models and creating criteria from their evaluation. Among these authors, we can highlight Walton, Hackman & Oldham, Westley and Werther & Davis. They have all presented proposals that emphasize the importance of the individual’s satisfaction in relation to the working environment conditions and the work he performs.

Nowadays, Quality of Work Life has been broadly researched in several countries like England, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Canada, Mexico and India (Rodrigues, 1994).

The following table presents a comparison of the evolving process of the concept of Quality of Work Life since the 50s.

Table 1: Evolution of the concept of Quality of Work Life

QWL evolving concepts	Characteristic or View
1 – QWL as a variable (1959 to 1972)	The reaction of the individual in relation to his/her work. It was investigated the way to improve the individual's quality of work life.
2 - QWL as an approach (1969 to 1974)	The focus was on the individual and not on the organization's results; but at the same time, it tended to bring improvements to the employees and to the high administration as well.
3 – QWL as a method (1972 to 1975)	A set of approaches, methods and techniques for improving the working environment and make the work more productive and satisfying. QWL was seen as a synonym of autonomous working groups, position enrichment or the design of new plants with social and technical integration.
4 – QWL as a movement (1975 to 1980)	Ideological declaration about the nature of work and the relation between the workers and the organization. The expressions like participating management and industrial democracy were frequently said to be the movement's ideals.
5 – QWL as everything (1979 to 1982)	As a panacea against foreign competition, quality problems, low productivity rates, complaints and other organizational problems.
6 – QWL as nothing (future)	In case some QWL projects fail in the future, QWL will be just something that was "in fashion" for a period in the past.

Source: Nadler & Lawler (apud Fernandes, 1996: 42)

3. Some concepts of Quality of Work Life

In spite of the prevalence of the welfare and satisfaction at work, the literature presents several approaches, which try to value the elements that are thought to be the most relevant.

According to Walton (1973) the expression Quality of Work Life has been used more frequently to describe certain environment and human values that were neglected by the industrial society in favor of technological advances, productivity and economic growth. In his opinion Quality of Life Work is the direct result of a combination of several basic dimensions of performing activities, and of other dimensions that do not depend directly on the assignments, which are able to produce motivation and satisfaction at different levels, besides resulting in several types of activities and attitudes of the individuals that work at an organization.

Quality of Life Work, according to the professors Albuquerque and França (1998), is a set of actions, carried out by a company, involving diagnosis and the implementation of improving and innovating management, technological and structural programs inside and out of the working environment in order to provide optimum conditions for the development of the human being for and during the fulfillment of their assignments.

Detoni (*apud* Rodrigues, 1999:76) states that there are a lot of interpretations for Quality of Work Life. They go from a doctor's point of view, diagnosing the individual's diseases, to the requirement of structural elements for the development of a productive activity. Although it is a very remote concern of the human being, the idea "has always been about facilitating or bringing satisfaction and welfare to the workers while they are carrying out their assignments".

Rocha (*apud* Davis 1996:38) says that QVT "is a set of favorable conditions the workers can find at their working environment", and it is restricted only within those environment conditions.

Walton, (1973) highlights that Quality of Work Life is used for designating innovating experiences carried out in an attempt to regain "humanistic and environmental values that were neglected by the industrial society who favored technological, industrial productivity and economic growth advances", and "fulfilling the worker's needs and aspirations, including aspects related to a more expressive participation in the decisions that affect him, orienting himself towards industrial democracy, humanization of work, emphasizing the social responsibility of the companies".

It is possible to observe, among the various concepts of Quality of Work Life, several dimensions, which, for example, we could mention the restructuring of the position structure and new ways to organize the work; the formation of semi-autonomous or self-managed work teams; and the improvement of the organization's environment (Fernandes, 1988). It is also important to highlight that QWL has many definitions, however, worker's satisfaction and expectations are the pivotal point for a life quality program to be successful.

Rocha (*apud* Corrêa 1991:249) says that "quality of work life is a complex phenomenon that has many facets".

Without intending to exhaust all the concepts about Quality of Work Life, we still can introduce Pereira's (2003) concept. According to him "Quality of Work Life is only possible if there is respect for one another, creating a more

humanized environment represented by better relations between bosses and their subordinates. Besides, knowing oneself and the other will facilitate or make relations more difficult". Based on studies carried out by professor Limongi (2003) conceptualizing QWL comprises "choices for welfare at work, guided by the search and guarantee of development in the working environment, must come together with the objectives, policies and organization culture.

Based on the points of view of the several authors that were studied, it is possible to notice that the conditions that would improve Quality of Work Life are approached in a way that contemplates the following aspects: Appropriate and satisfactory salary; security and health at work (working conditions that reduce the risk of occupational diseases and accidents); the development of human capacities; autonomy at work; multiple skills; information and perspectives regarding professional growth; space for the development of the worker's potentialities; social integration and a feeling of community in the organizations; respect for each worker's individuality; a fair treatment; and space for life inside and outside the working environment.

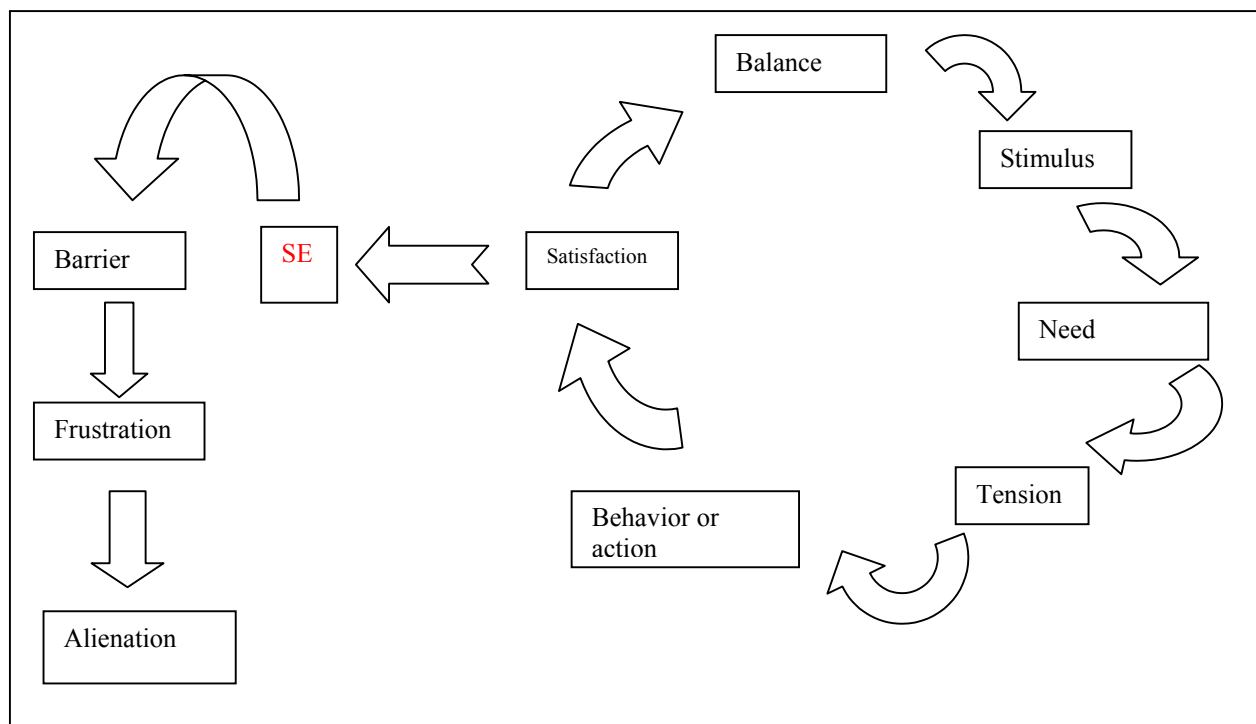
4. Important Considerations

QWL has always aimed at facilitating or bringing satisfaction or welfare to the workers while they are carrying out their tasks.

According to Chiavenato (1999) being satisfied is being in balance. In order to achieve a level of psychological balance, every individual must go through a motivational cycle.

The human organism remains in a state of psychological balance until it is broken up by a stimulus creating a need. This need causes a state of tension, leading to a behavior or action that is capable of, somehow, satisfying that need.

Figure 1: Motivational Cycle



Source: Adapted from Chiavenato (1999)

When the individual's behavior or action faces a barrier, this barrier will cause frustration, which, in turn, reflects on:

- a) behavioral disorganization;
- b) aggressiveness;
- c) emotional reactions;
- d) alienation and apathy.

If on one side work is an alienating factor, on the other it may fulfill several of the needs the individuals have, pushing them forward and towards their needs, making pressure, so that the work relations are changed to meet their most important needs of realization and development, Alves (2001) points out.

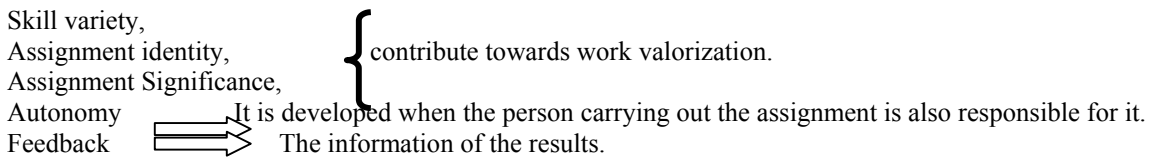
If the individuals are constantly frustrated, they will pass all the arrogance to the society, affecting the image of the institution in the process.

5. Some models for Quality of Work Life evaluation

This item will show a brief scheme of some QWL evaluation models.

5.1. Hackman & Oldham (1975)

Their model is based on three factors that express the worker's opinion. Rodrigues (1994).



These five factors will only be present if the significance and responsibility are noticed, and the results are known.

As a result, they would provide: High internal motivation, satisfaction, good quality performance, low rate of rotation and absences.

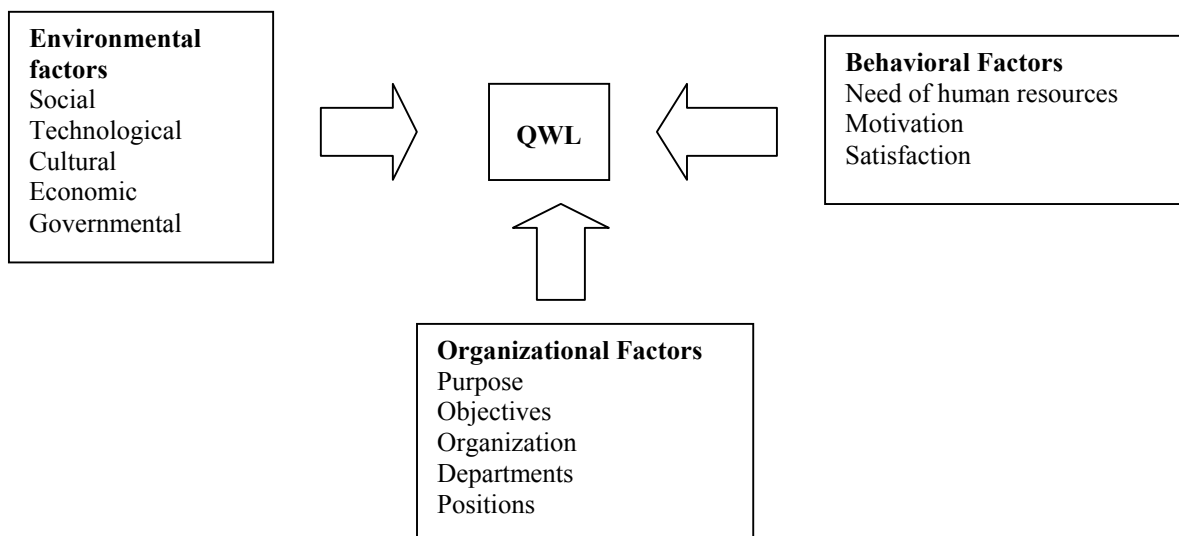
5.2. Westley (1979)

According to Rodrigues (1994) Westley classifies and analyzes four problems that affect QWL directly.

PROBLEMS	SYMPTOMS
Economic	Injustice
Political	Insecurity
Psychological	Alienation
Sociological	Anomy

5.3. Davis & Werther (1983)

This model is based on a position project that considers environmental, organizational and behavioral factors. Rodrigues, 1994.



5.4. Nadler & Lawler (1983)

They present four factors to measure QWL: Rodrigues (1994)

- Participation in the decisions;
- Work restructuring through the enrichment of assignments and autonomous work groups;
- Innovation in the rewarding system;
- Working environment improvement.

5.5. Huse & Cummings (1985)

Rodrigues (1994): A model for the verification of the level of QWL was developed based on the concern about the worker's welfare, organizational efficiency, the participation of the worker in working decisions.

Workers participation, position project, rewarding system innovation and improvement in the working environment.

5.6. Quirino & Xavier (1987)

They identified two ways to measure QWL: Rodrigues (1994)

Objective approach (material conditions, equipment availability, salary standards, physical environment) and subjective approach (the measurement of the level of satisfaction regarding the objective conditions).

5.7. Siqueira & Coletta (1989)

The identified determining factors of QWL: Rocha (1998)

- Policy of human resources;
- Work (healthy environment, enriched assignments);
- Personal interactions;
- Individual (assiduity, work satisfaction);
- Company (favorable image within the society).

6. The research model

Richard Walton (1974), is the only researcher that emphasizes elementary questions regarding the fulfillment of work prioritizing hygiene factors, physical conditions, aspects related to security and remuneration, without discarding other elements mentioned by other experts.

The extension of this model (considering internal and external factors related to the organization) allows the investigator to have better conditions to investigate the level of QWL. That is the reason why this model was chosen as a theoretical reference for the elaboration of this research.

It presents eight dimensions followed by indicators that affect people at their work. However, the author calls our attention to the fact that the group of workers that was studied, as well as a differentiated environment, may generate a distinct set of criteria, that is, changing the context, the hierarchy, and the importance of the criteria and dimensions that have influence on the quality of work life, the results may be different.

It is necessary to highlight that, for Walton, regardless of the hierarchic position, there are many workers who are dissatisfied and alienated face several deficiencies that were noticed in the working environment that affect QWL directly.

Table 2: Walton's model for the evaluation of Quality of Work Life

Dimensions	Factors
1 – Adequate and fair compensation	a - Income in accordance with the work b - Internal equity c - External equity
2 – Working conditions	a - Working hours b – Safe and Healthy environment
3 – Opportunity for using and developing capacities	a - Autonomy b - Assignment significance c - Assignment identity d - Skill variety e - Feedback
4 - Opportunity for growth and security	a - Career prospects b - Professional growth c - Job security
5 - Social integration at work	a - Opportunity equity b - Relations
6 - Constitutionalism	a - Respect to the laws and workers' rights b - Personal privacy c - Freedom of speech d - Rules and routine
7 - Work and total life space	a - Balanced role of the work
8 - Social relevance of working life	a - Image of the company

Source: Walton (1974 *apud* Vieira, 1996:4)

Fair and Appropriate Compensation: it refers to the worker satisfaction in relation to his pay when it is compared internally and externally. Walton (1974) states that the pay received for a certain work may be analyzed under different aspects: through the relation between salary and physical or mental effort, or through the workers' experience and the responsibility the position requires.

- a. *Income in accordance with the work*: the salary earned by the worker is fair if compared to the assignments he carries out. Besides, it is important to verify if the level of remuneration is appropriate for the degree of effort, qualification, skills and responsibility the work requires.
- b. *Internal equity*: It verifies whether there are differences in relation to pay among workers that carry out identical or very similar assignments within the organization.
- c. *External equity*: The pay of workers from other organizations of the same size and sector is the same as or similar to the pay received by the employees of the organization studied when they carry out similar assignments.

Working Conditions: The worker's satisfaction is related to the adoption of reasonable timetables, working conditions that reduce the risk of diseases and physical injuries or that impose age limits when the work is harmful for the welfare of people above or under a determined age. (Lima, 1995).

- a. *Working Hours*: The working hours within the organization follow the legislation in force and do not cause fatigue, stress, physical or mental exhaustion.
- b. *Healthy and Safe Physical Environment*: The organization respects security laws making the employees wear equipment for personal protection, trying to reduce the possibility of accidents, in addition to watching over the workers' physical and mental integrity, and consequently, their health and life quality.

Opportunity for Using and Developing Capacities: It refers to the opportunities the worker will have for using his knowledge and skills, developing autonomy and obtaining information about the work he is performing and the productive process it belongs to. However, Walton (1974) states that the level of the worker's maturity, his background and his capacity of taking decisions will determine to which extent these factors will be considered. It is important not to forget that some people want a job that is strictly controlled or requires little skill.

- a. *Autonomy*: The organization allows the worker to solve problems related to the assignments he is carrying out, but only to a certain extent.
- b. *Assignment Significance*: The worker finds fulfillment in carrying out his activities.
- c. *Assignment Identity*: It measures the level of satisfaction presented by the worker in relation to the assignment he carries out.
- d. *Skill Variety*: The assignments require different knowledge and skills, which makes them more attractive and dynamic, not tiring and repetitive.
- e. *Feedback*: the organization continuously informs the employees about their performance, their work and the product they develop.

Opportunity for growth and security: Walton (1974) focus basically on the carrier opportunity granted to the worker, as well as the difficulties he faces. He does not excludes his own limitations, on the contrary, he tries to emphasize those limitations related directly to formal education that, sometimes, prevents the employee from reaching higher positions. According to this thought Walton (*apud* Lima, 1995:67) "*proposes the evaluation of the worker's expectations in relation to the use of his recently acquired knowledge and skills, the extent to which the worker's assignment contributes to maintaining and expanding his capabilities, rather than leading to his obsolescence; the availability of opportunities to advance in organizational or carrier terms which peers family members, or associates recognize.*"

- a. *Carrier Possibility*: It verifies the existence of a Human Resources Policy (a program dealing with position and salary) that grants the workers who are appropriately capable the opportunity for professional ascension within the organization.
- b. *Professional Growth*: Through a program for the workers' development and capacitation, the company offers the opportunity for improving or acquiring knowledge for all of its employees.
- c. *Work Security*: The organization has a solid Human Resources structure that provides a feeling of security for the employees in relation to keeping their jobs.

Social Integration at Work: Walton (1974) highlights the importance of interpersonal relations to verify to which extent the worker identify himself with the organization and, therefore, his level of satisfaction with the Quality of Work Life. This can be evaluated by the sense of community and the absence of prejudice and significant hierarchic differences making the worker feels integrated to the group and to the company.

- a. *Opportunity equity*: It is the absence of favoritism and preferences among the workers. The ideal scenario would be the one where workers who have been promoted, transferred or even hired go through a selection, which respects their qualification, skills and merit.
- b. *Relations*: It tries to verify the existence of a good interpersonal relation and a good team spirit among the workers and the organization, so that there is a good mutual commitment among these individuals.

Constitutionalism: Based on the worker's rights and duties, this is another important factor to assure Quality of Work Life.

- a. *Respect for the Laws and Worker's Rights*: The organization observes and fulfills all of the worker's rights according to the laws, such as holidays, 13th salary, working hours and other rights assured by the constitution.
- b. *Personal Privacy*: The company respects the worker's privacy, once his behavior does not interfere with issues related to his work.
- c. *Freedom of Speech*: The worker is able to talk and manifest his ideas freely to his superiors.
- d. *Rules and Routine*: The rules and routines of the organization are known, clear, defined, understood and accepted by all the workers.

Work and Life Total Space: Walton (1974) says that the worker's experiences may interfere positively or negatively in his personal and social life; That is the reason why the author recommends the search for a balance by means of working schemes and professional growth. It is necessary to evaluate the worker's level of satisfaction in relation to the influence of the work on his private life. This evaluation is carried out through his opinions in relation to the working hours, shift stability and geographic changes that may affect the availability of the time for leisure and the time he spends with his family.

a. *Balanced Role of Work:* It nothing more than the satisfactory balance between the work and other activities of the worker's life.

Social Relevance of Working Life: According to Walton (1974) a company acting in an irresponsible way makes some workers depreciate their work, affecting their self-esteem and consequently affecting productivity. However, according to Lima (1995:68) "changes in the organizational conditions take place in a slower pace than the increase in the workers' expectations, and this tends to cause a greater alienation".

a. *Image of the Company:* It is important for the organization to maintain an excellent image for their workers, clients, suppliers, the community and the media, among others.

7. Conclusions

It is possible to achieve Quality of Work Life? Yes. By re-thinking it!

With the implementation of a program of Quality of Work Life, the eight Walton's criteria suggested here, widely distributed, the worker will have conditions to find greater pleasure and satisfaction at work, and consequently less dissatisfaction.

According to Silva and De Marchi, 1997 (*apud* Vasconcelos, 2001) the adoption of life quality programs and the promotion of health could give the individual a better resistance against stress, better emotional stability, greater motivation and efficiency at work, a better self-image and better relationships. On the other hand, the companies would benefit from a healthier working team, less absenteeism/rotation, smaller number of accidents, smaller cost of health assistance, a greater productivity and a better working environment.

We believe that the moments of organizational transformation are an opportunity to reorganize the work in such a way that life quality and organizational efficiency can be improved, that the characteristics given to a certain work may guide the decisions and the interventions of those who are responsible for the organizational transformation processes.

According to Albuquerque (1995) Quality of Work Life just makes sense when it is not restrict to health or leisure internal programs and begins to be discussed in a more wide way, including the quality of working relations and their consequences on the people's health and the organization's as well. It is an evolution of Total Quality. The only effort one has to make is to develop awareness and the preparation to achieve a posture of quality in all its senses. It means having appropriate conditions and the challenge of respect and being respected as a professional.

The effects of the supervision over the employees' behavior have a great influence of the professionals' performance. The leader's essential task is to provide the existence of working conditions and methods, so that the people can achieve their own objectives by orienting their efforts towards the goals of the company. With the establishment of well-elaborated and mutually defined objectives, the employees will have their own encouragement to achieve a good performance, generating the fulfillment of the personal objectives and of the companies' as well.

It is important to remember that in the heterogeneous environment where we work, there are no individuals who are constantly motivated nor assignments that are motivating for everybody. The administrators must act over the external factors to prevent dissatisfactions, which may lead to discouragement, from appearing. The work must have significance to be carried out willingly. Another tool that can be used is the reorganization of the assignments to increase the significance of the work for those who will carry it out.

According to Terra (2000) there should be investments in capacitation to increase the creativity within the organizations. Creativity is directly related to motivational aspects: What distinguishes creative people is an intrinsic motivation towards the work; they are people who work hard, they prefer to define their own ways, struggle to be original and show great flexibility to find solution for the problems. Creative people are characterized by: great motivation for working and taking actions, good ability to analyze and simplify a problem, capacity of transferring concepts from one area to another.

Self-evaluation and feedback are necessary, at least once a year, to evaluate how the workers are feeling in relation to their own work and their working environment.

We must rethink our companies in the light of humanization. A humanized company, which takes care of its employees, aggregates other values, promote the improvement of life quality and work quality aiming at building more democratic and fair relations, mitigates inequalities and differences regarding race, gender or belief, besides contributing towards personal development and growth.

Quality of Work Life, yes. If we believe, as Paulo Freire (1997) did, that we are historical subjects, history is for us a possibility, not a determination. The world is not finished. It is still being constructed. We are subjects of occurrences, not only objects of history. This principle must be our starting point: changing is difficult, but it is possible!

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