Chapter 19

Quality in Labor Market and Labor Relations as a Strategical Administration Aim

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, quality has become a concept not only used to evaluate the economic life but is also used to assess social and corporate life. The need to adapt to qualitative changes in product and service markets affects workforce market as much as quantitative changes. Workforce market is under quantitative effect of workforce cost reduction pressure, which trivializes workforce in respect to funds, and qualitative effect of the pressure to increase workforce quality, which increases related to creating innovations and innovative thinking. In this context, it is known that the flexibility in payment and hour of work to increase participation in workforce market and workforce productivity causes problems like wages inequality and discrimination. Demands for increasing product and production process quality causes changes both in the area of individual and collective work relations, and role of the government. It is observed all the applications toward increasing quality of product and production process do not affect work-life quality similarly so that it is vital to have a strategic management.

INTRODUCTION

Work-life quality is a very relative and broad concept. Therefore, there is no definite description on which a consensus is reached. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the universal application of quality in work-life is the international labor standards (ILO, 2004). There are national and international bases for labor standards, which are in mutual interaction. It can be said that they are created by the conventions of the International Labor Organization (ILO), adopted into national legislations by laws and improved through collective bargaining (Ponte & Gibbon, 2005).

The approach of work-life quality assumes that a one to one relationship between the welfare of employees and the performance of the business can be established (Huzzard, 2003). The well-being and

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improvement of employees, and their control over the activities are defined as the sustainability of self-respect in a sense (Standing, 1999). Therefore, the work-life quality has gained a technical context which is limited to occupational health and safety standards, and which can be measured merely by individual indicators, with the contribution of work psychology which increases the work satisfaction by protecting the physical and mental health of employees (Ingelgard & Norrgren, 2001). In the development of the concept, its association with the socio-technical approach, and particularly its interpretations in the Scandinavian countries have played an important role. The concept of work-life quality is increasingly integrated into a broader systemic view, which is not limited to the design of work. Contrary to Taylorist practices, classical and neo-classical economic theories which regard the employees as unavoidable cost elements to be controlled it has started to perceive employees as entities with social necessities, and workplaces as a social system. In this approach the more the socio-psychological well-being of the workers looked for in the use of control and monetary incentives, the more the performance of the business will increase (Huzzard, 2003).

The increasing importance of the work-life quality results from both the methods used in the production of quality products and the expectations it has created. While enterprises struggle to remain competitive and competitiveness is perceived as being attached to the quality of the products which are the outcomes of the work and the quality of the production process which guarantees the highest quality expectation punctually, the idea of quality will also reflect the needs and the expectations of employees. The work-life quality requires to design the quality of product and production process in a way that it will increase the quality of work and employment (Erdut, 2006). The work-life quality also requires the participation of the workers in decisions that affect their working conditions (Işık, 1991).

What is expressed by the concept of work-life quality is actually establishing the business conditions that will provide satisfaction to workers. The job satisfaction can affect not only the work-life quality but also the quality of social life (Adler, 1999). The factors which affect the work and work-life such as nature of work, wages and earnings, working conditions, management and organization of works, the technology used, satisfaction and motivation of workers, participation, employment security, social justice and social security, demographic structure and continuing training are regarded as the determinants of work-life (Can, 1991). While some intellects define the work-life quality as the job satisfaction that an individual receives from work-life (Sirgy et al., 2001), others define it as a way of meeting the important personal needs of the workers through their works (Bowlitch & Buono, 1994; Newstorm and Davis, 1997). Moreover, some thinkers have considered the concept of work-life quality as the humanization of work, and have put it forward as improving the working conditions of workers, taking into account their mental, psychological and social needs as well as their physical needs (Beh & Rose, 2007). The work-life quality involves the creation of an environment that allows them to acquire the sense that they contribute to their organization by meeting their basic needs, to recognize and develop their abilities (Otto & Bourget, 2006).

Having put forward the fact that there is a positive relationship between the work-life quality and the mental health much the same as between the work-life quality and job satisfaction (Schulze, 1998; Yüksel, 2004) the researchers have stated that the quality of work and social life is out of the question since life is a whole. Because it is known that there is a multifaceted and interactive relationship between work and social life conditions. The work-life quality plays an important role in ensuring mutual benefit through the participation of workers in the decision-making process of the management as a result of an effective and respectful relationship and co-operation between management and the workers (Bowlitch & Buono, 1994; Rose, 2003).