

Full Length Research Paper

Teachers' quality of work life in secondary schools

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The purpose of this research as a causal-comparative design was to compare the rate of quality of work Life among technical and theoretical high school teachers in Kordestan province in Iran. Quality of work life is a process by which interest groups in the organization will learn how to work better together, how to determine for themselves what activities, changes and improvements are desirable and effective to the organization to be more efficient; as teachers at technical schools have different integration in the organization, work life and social dependence, overall living space from the other theoretical schools, thus, leading to different development of human capability and growth opportunities. Sample consisted of 410 high school teachers selected by cluster sampling. The questionnaire of quality of work Life (QWL) was used. The reliability of the instrument was calculated to be 0.98 by Cronbach alpha. The data were analyzed by using descriptive and inferential statistics. The results showed that (a) the quality of work Life among technical and theoretical high school teachers in Kordestan was average; and (b) there was no meaningful relationship between high school type (technical and theoretical) and quality of work life. There were no differences in types of high schools ' QWL and all technical and theoretical high schools in Kordestan province have the same quality of work life.

Key words: Quality of work life, organization health, high school teachers, technical schools, theoretical schools.

INTRODUCTION

Today in many organizations, employees are not satisfied with their work and they are after more meaningful duties. Quality of work life is one of the origins of organizational development. It is the combination of the interaction of science and art that comprise the social performance and the domain of scientific discovery. Recently, the quality of work life has been so important that it can be called an intellectual movement (Shirkovand, 2007).

The rapid and accelerated development of the environment and activities of different organizations have made them encounter complexities and uncertainty. Necessity of survival, preservation and development positions in such environment, have pushed organizations to open up to inevitable changes and to effectively and successfully cope with the external environmental changes. Quality of work life has become one of the organizational issues in the modern era.

Efforts to better the quality of life and develop healthy work environments have produced positive results not only in mental health of organizations, but also in participation rate and economic efficiency (Hertzberg et al., 1959).

Reyan (1995) believes that most studies done on the quality of work in 60s focused on psychology of individuals and their perception of the industrial environment. He sets forth that the term 'quality of work life' was proposed in an International Conference in New York in 1972 which emphasized a role for knowledge in creating a coherent theory on how to create better conditions for working life.

Huzzard (2003) also points out that the concept of 'quality of work life' in 80s was a general term to include a set of conditions in different fields such as organization, work environment, and partnership. This was an equivalent to concepts such as "humanization of work" in Germany, "improvement working conditions" in France, or "protection workers" in some Eastern Europe countries. These differences imply different views to aspects of

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quality of working life. In other words, in the 80s, the concept of quality of working life detached psychology and approached a social approach; which was a technical perspective of organization and team. Moreover, the concept of quality of work life is related to the social-technical systems in job enrichment which is associated with employees' participation and responsibilities in its own place.

As the ILO mentions in its global work report, there is no single definition for the concept of quality of working life which is accepted by everyone. Two important topics in the quality of work life are whether the quality of working life should be limited to work or it should be objectively evaluated. In UK the first topic has attracted most attention, especially among supporters of the modern theory of social-technical. In this domain the concept is mostly related to job content and embodies the results of job content and working relations (Tamjidi, 2007).

Quality of work life is a process by which all members of an organization have an open and suitable way designed in advanced to interfere in all issues that affect their working environment. Consequently their participation and job satisfaction increase and job-related traumas and stress decrease (Allameh 1999). In fact the quality of work life represents a kind of organizational culture or management style as a result of which the employees feel a sense of ownership, self-management, responsibility and self-esteem (Tusi and Saebi, 1997).

Components of quality of work life are different in the viewpoints of scientists. As this study assesses the quality of work life by Walton's model, its components are described according to Walton's theory (Abbas-Pour, 2005).

Adequate and fair compensation

The sum of money employees receive for their mental or physical work or both, according to social criteria, volume of work and similar jobs.

Safe and healthy working condition

A safe physical working condition and reasonable working hours.

Opportunity for condition growth and security

Improved conditions to provide opportunities for individual development and opportunities for utilizing acquired skills and providing job security and income.

The social relevance of work life

Staff's perception of social responsibility. Social

responsibility of an organization refers to organizations' commitment for ethical behavior as a social institution in its broad sense.

Total life space

Balance between employees' work life and life responsibilities.

Social integration in the work organization

Integration and social cohesion refers to creating working environment in a way that the staff has a sense of belonging.

Constitutionalism in the work organization

Freedom of speech for employees without the fear of revenge by authorities and penetration of law above human forces. So utilizing approaches that guarantee employees' right are necessary.

Human progress capability

To provide freedom and self-regulation, gain various skills and access suitable information for working.

As noted in the previous studies, the quality of work life is an important and crucial element of organizations in the present. The reason is that the rise in productivity is affected by many factors; the most important one is employees' arousal to do their assigned duties. Arousal of quality of work life supports the fact that meeting the needs of employees would lead to the organization's betterment and improvement of efficiency in long run.

So the main questions of this study are (a) whether the amount of quality of working life in technical and theoretical high schools is different; and (b) which type of high school (technical - theoretical) has a higher quality of working life.

METHODS

As the aim of this research is describing conditions and status of phenomena, that is, "quality of work life and organizational health", and the researcher will try to find out what it is without interference or mental inference, the descriptive research method causal comparative study is used. Statistical population of this study was all high school teachers in Kurdistan province in Iran in the academic year 2007 to 2008, that is, 3610 teachers. Simple random sampling was used to select 410 teachers as the sample of this study. Three hundred and twenty teachers worked in theoretical school and 90 teachers worked in technical schools. Data gathering tools is the questionnaire of quality of life which was adapted from other studies. The reliability and validity of this questionnaire were estimated by experts' consultant. Cronbach alpha of the present

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of quality of work life from teachers' standpoint.

Components	Respondents	Mean	SD	Variance
Adequate and fair Compensation	410	7.2	3.02	9.1
Safe and healthy working condition	410	8.5	3.04	9.26
Opportunity for condition growth and security	410	8.8	3.17	10.05
Constitutionalism in the work organization	410	13.1	4.16	17.28
The Social relevance of work life	410	9.2	2.96	8.8
Total life space	410	9.4	1.27	1.61
Social integration in the work organization	410	12.4	3.9	15.58
Human progress capability	410	11.8	3.94	15.49
Quality of working life	410	80.5	2.38	564.78

Table 2. Descriptive statistics of the quality of working life by school type.

Dependent variable	School type	Frequency	Mean	Mean differences	SD
Quality of work life	Theoretical	319	80.59	0.467	23.68
	Technical	90	80.12		24.19

questionnaire was calculated to be 0.98.

Quality of work life questionnaire

The questionnaire includes 27 items that measure the quality of work life using eight components of Walton's model. The questionnaire is an ordinal scale which uses a 5-point Likert scale. All questions of this questionnaire except the one that is related to the general hypothesis of the study (overall living space) are devised in a positive direction. The questionnaire was filled in by teachers and they chose items that are related to their work life on a 5-point Likert scale (very low, low, somewhat, high and very high). Scores "very low, low, somewhat, high and very high" from 1 to 5 is for positive items and the reverse for negative items.

Shahrashob (2006) calculated a Cronbach alpha of 0.87 for this questionnaire. Tamjidi (2007) also reported a Cronbach alpha of 0.95. Ghanbari (1998) calculated the reliability of this instrument by test-retest technique and reported a reliability rate of 0.90. Validation of the scale has been done by factor analysis and obtaining seven dimensions of the questionnaire in a pilot study (Shincheool 1990). Then factor structure and reliability of seven subparts of the scale were approved by utilizing factor analysis on 78 school samples (Alagheband, 1999, cited in Aminfar, 2007).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics of the quality of work life components are summarized in Table 1. The findings in Table 1 showed a mean of 7.2 for fair and adequate payment. This is lower than the mean (min = 3, max = 13, mean = 9) and implies that respondents' standpoint is in the lower level of fair and adequate payment.

Mean obtained from other items of quality of work life is almost equal with the mean score. This implies that in the respondents' point of view there is an average of workplace safety and health, security and continuous

growth opportunities, rule-centeredness, social dependence and work life, the overall living environment, integration and social cohesion and development of human resources in high schools.

To measure the quality of work life, eight dimensions were included in calculations (fair pay, rule-centeredness, providing continuous growth opportunities, social dependence, working life, development of individual capabilities, safety and health working environment, integration and social cohesion and environment of overall life). This variable consists of a total of 27 items, in ordinal scale and a 5-point Likert measurement. After summing up the ordinal items, an interval scale of 98 was obtained. The score 135 indicates a very high quality of work life and grade 27 indicates a very low quality of working life. By going through Table 2 it can be concluded that the level of quality of work life among teachers almost equals the mean (5.80).

To examine the relationship between quality of working life and high school teachers' place of working as a nominal variable, the t test technique was used.

The obtained means for quality of work life for teachers teaching in theoretical high schools (80.59) and those who teach in technical schools (80.12) are not different. This is a strong evidence to reject the main hypothesis of this study in a sense that there is no significant difference between teachers' type of school and the quality of work life.

DISCUSSION

Examining teachers' quality of work life and the type of high schools they work in (theoretical - technical)

revealed no difference between these two variables. Identical theoretical and technical school teachers, identical salaries and benefits, similar performances, identical teaching hours, similarity between school principals with regard to university degree and experience, school administration methods, and teachers who work in both types of schools are among the most important factors that affect the research results and caused the rejection of the main research hypothesis in the absence of significant difference in the rate of high school teachers' working life quality in technical and theoretical schools. Although there is no direct research about comparing teachers' quality of work life in different types of secondary schools, there are some researches that verified the importance of quality of employee's work life in schools and companies and the relationship of QWL with their performance.

Ramezani (2004) studied the relationship between principals' quality of life and their performance in high schools of the city of Hamedan in Iran and concluded that if the quality of working life increases, performance will improve. Shahrashob (2006) did his thesis on the "relationship between quality of work life and organizational commitment among high school teachers in Gonbadkavus city in Iran". The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between individual's quality of work life and organizational commitment. The result of another thesis done by Kharazian (2006) entitled the "relationship between quality of life and high school female principals' performance in Tehran" showed that there was a significant relationship between the quality of work life and principals' performance. Furthermore, the findings showed that the relationships among decision making, job security, working conditions, health and safety, field development, continuous learning opportunities and rule-centeredness were positively-yet moderately- significant.

Lau (2000) compared the performance of famous companies that had high quality of working life with other 500 companies. To evaluate a 5-year performance, sales growth trend, capital growth, growth of capital efficiency and the profit margin were considered. The result of his studies indicated that the quality of work life was an important factor to determine the performance of the organizations under study (cited in Shirkovand, 2007).

Ian (2000) has examined the relationship between employees' participation and the quality of work life. He concluded that employees like to participate in making decisions and they also believe that the quality of work life must be considered.

BetsAnn (2003) studied the population included eight schools that had independent structure and 82 teachers were studied qualitatively. Most teachers expressed that the organization conditions affect their work. These conditions were: 1- conditions that were imposed, 2- a condition that was created by teachers and principals cooperation and 3- the conditions that teachers created

themselves. The results showed that the best working conditions were the ones that were created by teachers and principals.

Lowe et al. (2003) concluded that if there are actual conditions of work in the environment, the staff really tries to understand the work health. Working conditions specified in their research included: responding the requests, intrinsic and external rewards, positive social support for staff, affective decisions of the work environment, and availability of resources for doing the job. On the basis of their finding they suggested that organization should not only consider the health of individual employees, but also focus on employment conditions and ways to organize work. These two factors are closely related to work health (Fortune, 2006).

Najafi (2006) in his thesis entitled "relationship between quality of life working with middle managers' productivity in National Iranian Gas Company" found out that the working environment variables and job design, participation in decision-making and democracy in the organization, training and educational opportunities, rights and benefits, services and facilities and treatment are in order of priority. Moreover, a significant relationship between quality of life and working with middle managers' productivity in the National Iranian Gas Company was found.

Shahrashob (2006) did his thesis on the "relationship between quality of work life and organizational commitment among high school teachers in Gonbadkavus city in Iran". The findings indicated that there was a positive relationship between individual's quality of work life and organizational commitment.

Shyrkvand (2007) carried out his thesis entitled the "relationship between quality of work life and the performance of managers of Insurance Company of Iran in Tehran". Statistical population of this study included 85 managers of insurance companies. The findings revealed that human development capabilities factors, rule-centeredness in the work organization, providing growth opportunities and continuous security, unity and social cohesion, social dependence, working life, workplace safety and health, fair payment and adequate living space were factors in the order of importance. In general, the total correlation between the quality of work life and performance was significant ($r = 0.49$).

The quality of work life depends on organizational conditions, thinking modes and their effect on staff welfare. Glason (1982) has examined some variables such as satisfaction, attention, health and safety. He concluded that the experience of quality of work life occurs when staff's competence is respected. This is based on three main sources: 1- Effect of work environment on employees, 2- the extent of work responsibility by employees 3- employees' level of experience coordination in work environment. So all of research finding emphasized on the effectiveness of quality of work life on the employees' performances, but

the environment of two types of theoretical and technical schools in Iran were the same because both types of schools were public secondary schools.

Conclusion

That research related to the quality of work life has investigated its relationship with the variables such as school effectiveness, performance, principals and decision-making methods. There is a dearth of research, though, with regard to comparing the quality of work life in different types of schools.

The results with regard to fair and adequate payment shows that in teachers' opinion this component is lower than the average and their salary is not satisfactory and is not associated with their job. This causes job dissatisfaction among teachers. It is quite clear that the development and prosperity of a society is related to the growth of its human resources. As a consequence, rethinking about the teachers' salaries and adjusting them with other professions (though has a financial burden for governments) would lead to efficiency.

The research results related to other components of the quality of work life indicate that from the represents' point of view their work environment and their schools are at the moderate level. Investment to raise employees' health and safety in order to promote the health level of organization would lead to higher efficiency of the organization. Perhaps the reason why teachers' point of view with regard to the safety of schools is moderate has its root in the old structure of schools and lack of facilities in them. Improving capabilities to provide individual development opportunities, increasing chances of utilizing acquired skills, job security and income, creating employment promotion system, in-service teacher education, creating opportunities for teachers' studies and training can help teachers to empower themselves professionally.

Considering employees' condition of living and providing opportunities for leisure and study for higher education can motivate them and increase their performance and efficacy. This would affect students ultimately. Mutual trust and confidence between employees would affect their performance and the educational system. High social dependence among high school teachers in Kurdistan is desirable and effective in relation with school health and fruitfulness.

Results from other components, that is, the amount of development of human resources, shows that the possibility of using skills, self-control and self-management and access to information related to field of work for planning are at an acceptable rate for teachers who work in the province of Kurdistan. Although education has been successful in developing human resources, more attention to this issue is required.

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