13 - QUALITY OF LIFE, QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE NR-17: BEYOND WHAT IS LEGAL

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1. INTRODUCTION

Changes made inside companies in the search of new technology, because of a demanding and competitive market has significant consequences of management in the organizations. The processes had been and continue being metamorphosised for international re-division of work. The globalized economic market, drawn for an irrational competition, produces a dynamic scene with multiple consequences in different in sectors.

In the middle of the process, and even more aware of it, we find the worker. With the technical and scientific revolution of the productive systems, the instruments and methods of work are sophisticated. The mechanical and manual work is substituted by no work or, in many cases, by the absence of work. The instruments that were invented to free the worker of the mechanical task have made this worker obsolete (SOUSA, 1989).

In a world where the Weberians think of as disenchanted, work is an important analytical category. For the Marxists, the category is central. In this reading, everything that is not work has a negative or compensatory connotation. Concepts like torture, suffering and drudgery, since the beginning of the humanity, have a direct relationship.

To Dejours (1994), the suffering in the workplace unfolds beyond the labor space, in measure where the suffering is not applied only to the processes constructed in the interior of the plant, the company or the organization. The suffering is increased by processes that uncurl outside of the company, in the domestic space and in the familiar economy of the worker.

With the advent of the after-capitalist society, which is the society of knowledge and organizations, the new wealth produced in organizations of knowledge are made up of sub utilized intangible active ones, the human capital and internal and external structural capital (PILATTI; BEJARANO, 2005). People have transformed themselves into the only true agents. With the change for the paradigm of knowledge a differentiated approach of the human capital became necessary: people are no longer generating costs or resources and have become generators of capital.

In practical terms, the people being the most important asset of the companies assume that the same ones must be valued as such. The idea of the quality of life of the worker is something present. With this approach, the present study argues the normative aspects, contained in the Norm Regulations 17, the NR-17, which must assure the health of the worker, having the backdrop of the quality of life and quality of life in the workplace (QLW).

2. HISTORICAL RUDIMENT

The concern with health in the workplace is not something new. To Couto (1995), it was during World War I, more specifically in the year of 1915, with the foundation of the Health Commission of Workers in the Ammunition Industry, that the concern took its first steps. This commission, which was composed by physiologists and psychologists, with the ending of the war, it was transformed into the Institute of Research of Industrial Fatigue and later it became known as The Institute Research on Health in the Workplace.

The initial field of performance was extended. The Institute started to carry out research on positions in the workplace, manual load, and election, training and ambient.

With World War II, the construction of more complex and more powerful warlike instruments started to demand a higher level of ability on the part of the workers. The ambient conditions and the tense scene produced by the battles were favorable to the process. The adaptation of the instruments for the reduction of the level of tension of the workers and the reduction of the risks of accidents became urgent.

During the postwar era, the Ergonomics Research Society appeared in England, a group of researchers interested in debating and conforming to a new branch of application of interdisciplinary science that had as a study object the labor environment. The society contributed to the diffusion of the ergonomics in the entire industrialized world. To improve the productivity and the conditions of life of the population, particularly of the workers, the backdrop of the research was knowledge acquired during the wars (IIDA, 1998).

At the present time, the ergonomics encloses five great applied areas of study to the workplace: ergonomics in the organization of heavy labor; biomechanics applied to the work; prevention of fatigue in the workplace; prevention of human error and ergonomic adequacy in the workplace (COUTO, 1995).

In many countries, the deriving knowledge of these areas of ergonomics has been converted into official norms. In Brazil, the norm that presents this purpose is the Norm Regulation 17 - Ergonomics (DUL; WEERDMEESTER, 1995).

3. NR-17

Looking to establish parameters that "allow the adaptation of the conditions of work to the psycho physiological characteristics of the workers, in order to provide a maximum comfort, security and efficient performance", the Ministry of Work and Social welfare instituted Section number 3.751, in 23/11/90, which lowered the Norm Regulations number 17(NR-17) that specifically deals with ergonomics.

The Norm presents parameters for the rank and organization of the work. The objective is to adapt the work conditions, giving an arrangement to the area of work for the economy of movements, reduction of manipulations and repetitions, improvement of the rhythm of work, adequacy of format to the operator, which makes possible the reduction of the muscular activity (BIRTH; MORAES, 2000). The obligation of the ergonomic analysis of the work for evaluation of the adaptation of the conditions of work to the characteristics of the worker, according to the norm, is of the employer. Of prompt form, the main ergonomic factors, health and security, with its respective goals and pointers established in the NR-17 are:

- Survey, transport and individual discharge of materials;
- Furniture of the work ranks;
- Equipment of the work ranks;
- Humidity, temperature, and ambient conditions;
- Organization of the task.

Noise, illumination, physical environment, ergonomics, repetitive rhythm and stress are evaluated factors and must serve as the beginning of action of improvement in the installations of the company and the prevention of occupational illnesses of its employees. The primary idea of the norm is the encouragement of a safe and healthy work environment.

4. QUALITY OF LIFE AND QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE WORKPLACE

The construction of the concept quality of life exists in different fields of knowing, which confers multiple meanings. Different variable are considered. In objective terms, the expression quality of life "was used for the first time by the president of the United States, Lyndon Johnson in 1964 when declaring that ' the objectives cannot be measured through the stability of banks. They can only be measured through the quality of life provided to the people ' "(GROUP WHOQOL, 1998).

For the World Organization of the Health, through the Division of Mental Health, three basic aspects are part of the concept: the subjectivity, the multidimensional and the presence of positive and negative dimensions (GROUP WHOQOL, 1998).

The Group WHOQOL (1998) defined Quality of Life as "the perception of the individual of its position in life, in the context of culture and system of values in which it lives and relation to its objectives, expectations, standards and doubts".

In practical terms, the group elaborated an instrument to evaluate the Quality of Life, with an international perspective, through a multi-centric supportive project. The WHOQOL-100 was a result of this project, an instrument of evaluation of quality of life made up of 100 items. The instrument evaluates different dominions of the QL (chart 1).

CHART 1 –AREAS AND FACTORS OF THE WHOQOL

AREA I – Physical Area
1. Pain and discomfort
2. Energy and fatigue
3. Sleep and rest
AREA II -Psychological Area
4. Positive feelings
5. Thinking, learning, memory and concentration
6. Self esteem
7. Corporal image and appearance
8. Negative Feelings
AREA III -Dependency Level
9. Movement
10. Activities of everyday life
11. Dependency of medication or treatments
12. Work capacity
AREA IV – Social Relations
13. Personal relations
14. Social support
15. Sexual activity
AREA V –Ambient
16. Physical security and protection
17. Home Environment
18. Financial Resources
19. Health and social: availability and quality
20. Opportunities and abilities to acquire new information
21. Participation in/and chances of recreation/leisure
22. Physical environment: (pollution/noise/traffic/climate)
23. Transport
AREA VI -Spiritual aspects/Religion/Personal beliefs
24. Spirituality/religion/personal beliefs

Source: Group WHOQOL

The QLW, in turn, can be seen as an indicator of the quality of the human being experience in the work environment. It is about a concept closely related to the employee satisfaction as to how much of their productive capacity in a safe work environment, with mutual respect, with chances of training and learning and the equipment and easiness adjusted for the performance of their functions.

Some basic concepts of the QLW are: participation of the employee in the decisions that affect the performance of their functions; reorganization of tasks, structures and systems so that these offer a greater freedom and satisfaction in the workplace; systems of compensations that value the work in fair way and in agreement to the performance; environment adequacy of work to the individual necessities of the worker; satisfaction with work (PILATTI; BEJARANO, 2005).

The QLW initiatives have two objectives: on one side, to increase the productivity and the performance, on the other, to improve the QLW and the satisfaction with the work. Many authors think that the two objectives are connected: a direct way to improve the productivity would be the improvement of the conditions of and satisfaction with the work, however, the satisfaction and the productivity of the worker does not follow parallel passages necessarily. This does not mean that the two objectives are incompatible, nor that they are totally independent of one another. Under determined circumstances, improvements in the work conditions will contribute with the productivity.

Actually, the QLW idea is a dynamic idea and which is being permeated for processed evolutions in different fields. Chart 2 illustrates, in pragmatic form, the evolution of this concept.

CHART 2 - EVOLUTION OF THE CONCEPT OF QLW

DEVELOPMENT CONCEPTION OF QLW	CARACTERISTICS OR VISION
1. QLW as one variable (1959 to 1972)	Reaction to the work. It was investigated how to improve the quality of life in the workplace for the individual.
2. QLW as an approach (1969 to 1974)	The focus was the individual before the organizational result; but, at the same time, a research which would bring improvements to the employee as to the employer.
3. QLW as a method (1972 to 1975)	A set of approaches, method or techniques to improve the work environment and make the work more productive and more satisfactory. QLW was seen as independent synonymous groups of work, position enhancement or drawing of new plants with social and technical integration.
4. QLW as a movement (1975 to 1980)	Ideological declaration on the work nature work and the relationship of the workers with the organization. The terms "administration participation" and "industrial democracy" frequently were sa id as a standard of the QLW movement.
5. QLW as everything (1979 to 1982)	As solution against the foreign competition, problems of quality, decreases in productivity taxes, problems of complaints and other organizational problems.
6. QLW as nothing (future)	In case some QLW projects fail in the future, it will not pass just as a transitory "idiom".

Source: Nadler and Lawler mentioned for Fernandes (1996)

The concepts quality of life and QLW, although multi-dimensional concepts, are improving. QLW without quality of life does not exist and vice versa. Using as reference the six areas of the WHOQOL, it is perceived easily that the one foreseen in the NR-17 is not enough to minimally guarantee levels of satisfaction in those areas.

Actually, the knowledge society lives a paradoxical situation: on one hand an absolute rationality is demanded; on another, the humanization of the worker, read as the intellectual capital of the organizations, is a requirement. In practical terms one is about a process that still requires adjustments or will be, as it suggested Nadler and Lawler (mentioned for Fernandes, 1996), an

idiom that can be transitory.

5. FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The investment in human capital, beyond a requirement, brings an enormous return to the level of quality and productivity of the company. The organization of the work environment is one of the important factors for the improvement of the worker's quality of life, who lives great part of their life directed to operational functions, which in some way intervenes with their state of health.

The operational way must obey the definitive norms, thus NR 17 of the Ministry of the Work, came to establish that the employer needed to carry through ergonomic analyses of the work rank evaluating the psychofisiological characteristics of the individual faced with the work environment.

It is true that the quality of life does not only include the factors directly related to health, such as welfare physicist, functionary, emotional, mental well-being, but, also, elements as work, friends and other circumstances of life. Instruments like the WHOQOL can be satisfactory to indicate the health status. However, clarity must be had when it uses an instrument to control the quality of life, the basic one is the notion that it is searching for an individual relative perception to health conditions and to other aspects that intervene with the private life.

A current law, certainly, is not enough to guarantee quality of life or to produce a humanized environment. The most basic necessities and higher aspirations of the worker must be attended to, thing that only one ergonomic analysis of the work will not allow. With this analysis it is possible to identify the work, to describe the operational ways, the aggravating ones, the communications, the collective one of the work, the abilities required for the functions and the employed abilities. Quality of life is more than the fulfillment of a norm. It is proclaimed that the organizations must humanize the work. The indications do not converge to such revolution.

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QUALITY OF LIFE, QUALITY OF LIFE IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE NR-17: BEYOND WHAT IS LEGAL

ABSTRACT

The present study will argue the normative aspects, contained in the Norm Regulations 17, the NR-17, which must assure the health of the worker, having as a backdrop the quality of life and quality of life in the workplace. One is about an exploratory study that had as research procedure a literature revision. It was verified that the current law, guideline in the organization of the labor environment, is insufficient to guarantee the quality of life of the worker. It was inferred that the humanization of the work is a necessity that will not be guaranteed only with a legal apparatus, more is necessary.

Key words: Quality of Life; Quality of Life in the Workplace; Norm Regulations 17 (NR-17).

QUALITÉ DE LA VIE, QUALITÉ DE LA VIE DANS LE LIEU DE TRAVAIL ET LE NR-17: AU-DELÀ CE QUI EST LÉGAL

SOMMAIRE

La présente étude discutera les aspects normatifs, contenus dans les Règlements de Norme 17, le NR-17, qui doivent assurer la santé de l'ouvrier, ayant comme contexte la qualité de la vie et la qualité de la vie dans le lieu de travail. On est au sujet d'une étude exploratoire qui a eu comme procédé de recherches une révision de littérature. On l'a vérifié que la loi courante, directive dans l'organisation de l'environnement de travail, est insuffisante pour garantir la qualité de la vie de l'ouvrier. On l'a impliqué que l'humanisation du travail est une nécessité qui ne sera pas garantie seulement avec un appareil légal, plus est nécessaire. Mots clés: Qualité de la vie; Qualité de la vie dans le lieu de travail; Règlements de Norme 17 (NR-17).

CALIDAD DE LA VIDA, CALIDAD DE LA VIDA EN EL LUGAR DE TRABAJO Y EL NR-17: MÁS ALLÁ DE LO QUE ES LEGAL

RESUMEN

El actual estudio discutirá los aspectos normativos, contenidos en las Regulaciones de la Norma 17, el NR-17, que deben asegurar la salud del trabajador, teniendo como contexto la calidad de la vida y calidad de la vida en el lugar de trabajo. Uno está sobre un estudio exploratorio que tenía como procedimiento de la investigación una revisión de la literatura. Fue verificado que la ley actual, pauta en la organización del ambiente de trabajo, es escasa para garantizar la calidad de la vida del trabajador. Fue deducido que la humanización del trabajo es una necesidad que no será garantizada solamente con un aparato legal, más es necesaria. Palabras claves: Calidad de la vida; Calidad de la vida en el lugar de trabajo; Regulaciones de la Norma 17 (NR-17).

QUALIDADE DE VIDA, QUALIDADE DE VIDA NO TRABALHO E A NR-17: PARA ALÉM DO APENAS LEGAL

RESUMO

O presente estudo discutirá os aspectos normativos, contidos na Norma Regulamentadora 17, a NR-17, que deve assegurar a saúde do trabalhador, tendo como pano de fundo a qualidade de vida e qualidade de vida no trabalho. Trata-se de um estudo exploratório que teve como procedimento de pesquisa a revisão de literatura. Verificou-se que a legislação vigente, pauta na organização do ambiente laboral, é insuficiente para garantir a qualidade de vida do trabalhador. Inferiu-se que a humanização do trabalho é uma necessidade que não será garantida apenas com um aparato legal, é necessário mais.

Palavras-chave: Qualidade de Vida; Qualidade de Vida no Trabalho; Norma Regulamentadora 17 (NR-17).