The Quality of Working Life of Staff Members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

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This research aims to study the quality of working life of staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University and the influence of the staff members’ demographic factors on their quality of working life. The study was conducted for a five-month period between March and August 2017. A quantitative research approach was utilized in this study. The data were drawn from 185 staff members of the university. The sample group was selected using simple random sampling. A questionnaire was used as a data collection method. The data were analyzed with descriptive and inferential statistics. The research result showed that the overall quality of working life of the staff members was at a high level. When considering in each dimension of the quality of working life, it was found that the dimension that was ranked the highest was gaining appropriate amount of salary, followed by good relationship with colleagues, work-life balance, opportunity to develop their abilities and skills, good governance, job security and career progression, respectively. All of these dimensions were ranked at the high level. Moreover, the study also showed the demographic factors including gender, age, working period, marital status, average income per month, working position and job characteristics all had an influence on the quality of working life of the staff members.

Key Words: Quality of working life; Staff members; Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University; Demographic Factors

Field of research: Management

1. Introduction

One of the most important activities in human life is working. Due to working is a responsibility of foundation to people in the present society for several reasons. The first reason is for survival because working is a source of income, which is a factor of life. The second reason is for work status and social role of a person whether in a workplace or in the society in general. The third reason is to build connection with people within an organization or others. The fourth reason is to organize the person’s life activities to be concordant with his working role by putting in order of where, when and how in his life. And the last reason is to gain valuable life experience and exposed to receive knowledge and the opportunity to be creative. Hence, working is an important part of life. If the person is with a job that he is satisfied, it will be good for his mental and physical health as well. Furthermore, it will make the person feel life is worth for living, due to having the interesting job, progression, stability and security, time with family and no things to be stressed out (Bunsang Chivapakorn, 1990).

In the era of globalization where there is an intense competition in terms of merchandise, investment, management, as well as information technology that is quickly spread everywhere. Consequently, it caused a changing in Thailand’s development in economy,
society and politics to be equal to other countries. The main purpose of the development is to make people in the society have a good life with no sickness, which is considered as a good quality society (Apichai Srimueng, 2005, 12). The changing in the development can subsequently change the people’s life in the society with affects their responsibility and quality of working life. Therefore, supporting the quality of working life will have an effect on work performance in many ways such as making it feel good about them, work and the organization. Besides that, it also supports in having good health physically and mentally, being progressive and developing themselves to be quality personnel in the organization. Furthermore, it helps reducing the problems like missing work, quitting job, accident and also encouraging quantity of production and good quality service. Basically, it can say that improving the quality of working life is another way to develop the organization. This has a direct effect to the personnel who work in the organization, due to human is a very important resource for the organization to exist and also a factor to keep the organization going in order to achieve their goal (Saji Anunnopkun, 2006, 8).

In Thailand where democracy is the political system, the main ideology of democracy is “Decentralization”. All of the governments must encourage autonomous form of people in each community as completed as possible. This is for local administrative organization to be a basic political institution in order to train the people to understand mechanism in political process, democracy and lighting up government burden for responding to the need of the local people efficiently, as well as municipality in the form of local administrative organization. That was the one that has evolved for a long time and has democratic structure following provisions of the constitution the most. As a result, there was a development in both form and operational aspects. There has been amendment in municipal law for several times in the half past decade. It is well accepted that the municipal government is the foundation of democracy. It is a way of opening opportunity for the people to learn about the municipal government by themselves in order to lead to peace for the Thai society. The Thai society is based on living life on sufficiency and independence by aiming at the people, communities and the municipal government to be the center of development to have more responsibility and cooperation. With the responsibility for the benefits that they will receive, it can eventually further help managing the communities, the society and the country.

In this study, the researcher had an interest in studying about the quality of working life of the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Due to the university is located in the community where it has well developed for the past ten years. There was the changing in increasing of housing development, buildings, shops, shopping malls, public utilities and facilities, as well as extending a route in order to support the development of the city. There is the number of people moving in including permanent and temporary residents. However, the following problems regarding these things are waste, sewage, traffic jam, pollution and so on. It has become the staff members of municipality’s responsibility to manage and solve the problems following the policy of administrator that was elected by citizens. The majority of the staff members are not local people, who happen to work in this area. As a result, there is a problem regarding high cost of living. Besides that the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University have limitation in career progression due to the low rate of workforce. The only way to level up their work position is to move to other universities, which must be considered from the administrator first. There is a high level of political argument in the area of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Thus, it is interesting to know what the quality of working life of the staff member here is like and if there is any management for supporting the quality of working life of the staff members. Due to the strategic plan for improving development efficiency of the staff members at the university in order to perform their work at its best is an important thing to be done already. This can be done by emphasizing on developing the staff
members to be knowledgeable, skilled at their work, ethical to provide service to the people, as well as ready to devote themselves to that and strength in support and intelligence to work, this was found to be an important information for developing the quality of working life. This is in order to have the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University to performance their work with the highest efficiency and achieved the goal to benefit the people from various kinds of service systematically, fast and fairly for all the benefits to the overall people and the society.

2. Literature Review

Related concepts and theories of participation

The word “Quality of working life” separated from 3 words, quality, life and working. Quality means the level of quantity in excellence. It is a characteristic of being good of an individual, society or a characteristic of outcome from an action of the working process that turns out to be excellent. To assess the excellence, it compares the result of the action and the standard that each profession has set. Life means the existence of an individual human being and working means the action of doing work that one has to do. Therefore, when combining the meanings of these 3 words, it is the quality of working life where its overall meaning can be considered as doing a responsibility for life or the state of excellence, which are assessed by the comparison of the action and the standard or index that are determined (Bunsang Chivapakorn, 1990, 3).

The concept of the quality of working life has been spread everywhere in industrialized countries where using English as the main language. At the same time, other non-English speaking countries also have the similar concept about the quality of working life. For example, “Humanization of Work”, which means similarly to the quality of working life or improvement of working conditions used in France, “Work Environment” where used in Scandinavian countries and “Hatarakigai” where commonly used in Japan (Apichai Srimueng, 2005, 14). The concept of the quality of working life has made a significant effect in changing the work system. During 1930-1940, the quality of working life depended on the stability of the work, good governance and economic condition of the worker. The following decade in 1950-1960, this concept was more expanded by a psychologist in that period, which added the topic about the positive relationship between work support and production. This encouraged the people to build relationship in their work, which is another thing that shows about the quality of working life. In 1960-1970, there was a study about opportunity of social equality and suitable work plan in work that is satisfactory to worker. Since 1970, there has been a serious study focusing on effectiveness of organization and adding experience spontaneously of an individual by physically and mentally. The quality of working life was first used by Davis, Lois F and colleagues (1997), who defined it as the quality of relationship between workers with the overall environment of their work and dimension about humanity that is often neglected from technical and economic factors in designing the work (Sutin Saisanguan, 1995, 3)

The easiest definition to understand about the quality of working life, it is the feeling of staff members on their work and everything that is related with their work. If the staff members’ needs are responded, it will create satisfaction in their work and happiness in
working. This will eventually lead to efficiency in work performance of the staff member and also organization. The efficiency in the organization can happen from vision and leadership of administrator on the process of work and management clearly along with friendly environment that can motivate and satisfy the work and belief in the organization (Banthit Pungnirund, 2007). The definition of satisfaction of the staff members means the satisfaction of employees with their compensation, fringe benefits, employment condition, hours of working, security, health and being fairly treated and respected. However, the employees must not be taken advantage, hence, they have to freedom in their work and also participation in decision making and problem solving in their work (Supanna Pratumwan, 2001, 14).

It can be concluded that the quality of working life means the working condition of an individual being responded to their needs physically and mentally. It satisfies the individual to be happy and has the ability to live as they like. Eventually, it will create beneficial impacts to the individual and work performance that can achieve its goal efficiently, as well as, better life of the individual.

Related theories of the quality of working life

This study, the researcher applied the concepts and approaches to motivation, which is the theory about the needs of human. There were 4 theories as follows, 1) Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, 2) Alderfer’s Modified Need Hierarchy Theory, 3) Frederick Herzberg’s Needs Two-Factor Theory and 4) McClelland’s Achievement Motivation Theory.

3. The Methodology and Model

Identifying population and sample

The researcher set the population in the research to be 185 staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. The researcher studied from every single population.

Research Instrument

In this research, the researcher used questionnaire as a research instrument for data collection. The detail for creating the instrument is shown as follows.
1. Studied and reviewed related theories and concepts from research document and books about the quality of working life as the process for creating questions in the questionnaire.
2. Reviewed way of research and technique of public administration science for designing the questionnaire.
3. Created the questionnaire by setting content for the questions to cover exactly to the topic of the research from synthesis of the quality of working life and index.

The structure of the questionnaire designed by the researcher had 3 parts: 1st part is general questions about demographic factors such as sex, age, working period, education, marital status, average income per month, job characteristics. And 2nd part is
questions regarding the quality of working life made by using Likert scale. The questions are either positive or negative about 43 of them as follows.

1. Appropriate amount of salary  6 questions from 1-6
2. Job security     4 questions from 7-10
3. Relationship with colleagues  7 questions from 11-17
4. Good governance    5 questions from 18-22
5. Career progression    5 questions from 23-27
6. Opportunity to develop abilities and skills 8 questions from 28-35
7. Work life balance    8 questions from 36-43

For the questions in the 2nd part, each question has 5 levels for evaluation as follows.

1. Positive question
   Strongly agree equals to 5
   Agree equals to 4
   Uncertain equals to 3
   Disagree equals to 2
   Strongly disagree equals to 1
2. Negative question
   Strongly agree equals to 1
   Agree equals to 2
   Uncertain equals to 3
   Disagree equals to 4
   Strongly disagree equals to 5

3rd part is for opinion and general suggestion regarding the quality of working life.

Statistics used in data analysis

Due to it is the study from the entire population, the researcher decided to qualify the data analysis using parameter by separating following the level of measurement.
1. Individual data analyzed by using frequency and percentage.
2. Data regarding support of working analyzed by using mean (μ) and standard deviation (σ). The mean was divided as interval and had results of the interval as level of opinions. The interval calculation has a formula as follows.

\[ \text{Mean} = \frac{(\text{the highest score} - \text{the lowest score})}{\text{number of classes}} = 0.8 \]

From the mentioned interval, it can use for arranging the level of score and had the results as follows.
Mean score at 1.00-1.80 is the interval that determines the quality of working life as very low.
Mean score at 1.91-2.60 is the interval that determines the quality of working life as low.
Mean score at 2.61-3.40 is the interval that determines the quality of working life as medium.  
Mean score at 3.41-4.20 is the interval that determines the quality of working life as high.  
Mean score at 4.21-5.00 is the interval that determines the quality of working life as very high.

4. The Findings

The result of the data analysis about demographic factors of the population

The majority of the university staff members were 75.7% female, followed by 49.7% were at the age 31-40 years old, and 23.8% were at the age 41.50 years old. 51% had working experience of 11-20 years, followed by 42.2% for 10 years of working experience. For the educational level, there was about 80.5% graduated with a bachelor degree, followed by 13% graduated with a lower degree than the bachelor degree. While marital status, the majority of the staff members about 62.7% were married, followed by 38.4% were single and only 4.3% were widowed, divorced or separated, respectively. In the salary aspect, the majority was 38.4%, which had the amount of salary of 10,000 baht, followed by 36.2% had the amount of salary between 15,001 – 20,000 baht. Considering work position, the majority of the staff members were about 55.1% at level 4, followed by 38.4% at level 5-6. The majority of job characteristics were at 21.1% was in department of education, while 16.8% was in finance.

The result of the data analysis about the quality of acknowledgment of the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University on the quality of service of the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University

The university staff members had the overall quality of working life at a high level (mean = 3.9560). When considering each aspect, it was found that the highest level of the quality of working life was gaining appropriate amount of salary (mean = 4.1027), followed by the level of mean from most to least such as good relationship with colleagues (mean = 4.0826), work-life balance (mean = 3.9092) and opportunity to develop their abilities and skills (3.9730). However, the lowest level of the quality of working life was career progression (mean = 3.7968).

Hypothesis testing

It was fond that the staff members of Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University from all types of job had the overall high level of the quality of working life (mean = 3.6493, 3.8652, 4.1561, 3.9987, 3.8701, 4.1632 and 3.9803, respectively.). When considering by each aspect, it was found that the staff members of municipality of finance division, health and environment division, technical services and planning division, internal audit division and health promotion and disease control center also all had the high level of the quality of working life in every aspect. The staff members of office of the municipal clerk had the level of the quality of working life at medium in 3 aspects like work-life balance, career progression and opportunity to develop their abilities and skills (mean = 3.3750, 3.4000 and 3.3750, respectively). However, the other aspects were all at the high level. The staff
members of municipal division of public works had the very high level of the quality of working life in 4 aspects such as appropriateness of amount of salary, good relationship with colleagues, opportunity to develop their abilities and skills and work-life balance (mean = 4.3261, 4.3168, 4.3478 and 4.2671, respectively). While, the other 3 aspects were at the high level. The staff members of municipal division of education had the very high level of the quality of working life in 3 aspects such as gaining appropriate amount of salary, good relationship with colleague and work-life balance (mean = 4.2356, 4.4631 and 4.3103, respectively) and the high level in the other aspects. The staff members of municipal division of social welfare had the high level of the quality of working life in 7 aspects and the very high level one, which was gaining appropriate amount of salary (mean = 4.3333).

5. Conclusions

Suggestion on policy
1. There should be an improvement in unsupportive regulation that is on salary and fringe benefits by considering the environment of economy and cost of living.
2. There should be a training, seminar and constantly additional support on learning in order to develop potential for the staff members. There should also be an honorary ceremony and award for the staff members who have excellent work performance that achieved the organization’s goal.
3. It should be a priority for treating the university staff members equally by providing an opportunity for them to freely express their opinions.
4. Job promotion should be according to skill and related exactly to an individual’s field of work and also, avoidance of political argument in order to support and inspire working.

Suggestion on operation
1. Working as a team, cooperation and activities to building relationships among the university staff members and the people in general.
2. There should an appropriate work-balance for the university staff members and make a perfect understanding with family about their job characteristics.
3. There should be a potential self-development all the time of the university staff members by additional study in order to improve their own skill, attending training and seminar, as well as constantly learning for stability and career progression.

Suggestion on research
1. There should a participated research about operation in order to find way of management of the quality of working life of the university staff members to be better. Due to they are the people who have to work closely with providing service to other people.
2. Researchers who have common interest in this particular topic should distinguish deeper on the quality of working life aspects such as working environment, social participation, as well as studying about other free aspects like origin, religion and so on. Besides that, there should be a study about comparison of which factors affecting the quality of working life. In the aspect of the research instrument, it maybe should have used other instruments to measure the level of the quality of working life efficiently and closest to reality.
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