

Conceptualising the Quality of Working Life (QWL) —No. IV—

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<p>In <i>Rikkyo Keizaigaku Kenkyu</i>, Vol. 32, No. 4, March, 1979</p>	}	<p>I. Introduction.</p> <p>II. Evaluating the Term "QWL" and/or "Humanisation of Work" and Its Synonym.</p> <p>III. Defining the Concept of the "QWL".</p> <p> 1) The Criteria for the "QWL".</p> <p> 2) Historical, Philosophical and Methodological Background of the "QWL".</p>
<p>Ibid., Vol. 34, No. 1, June, 1980</p>	}	<p>IV. Outline of Practical Countermeasures of the "QWL".</p> <p> 1) International Level.</p>
<p>Ibid., Vol. 36, No. 2, December, 1982</p>	}	<p> 2) Governmental Level.</p> <p> 3) Enterprise and/or Workshop Level.</p>
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IV. Outline of Practical Countermeasures of the "QWL"

4) Trade Union Level.

When unions take countermeasures to meet the QWL, their attitudes and/or reactions are various depending on environmental situations and their own policies.¹⁾

In this paper, however, the view of Professor Koji Okubayashi (Kōbe University) will be cited as follows. He classifies countermeasures of labor unions into four groups, according to two premises, i.e., 1) whether unions accept the capitalist system or not, and 2) whether they cooperate with the QWL or not.

(Group I) Unions which admit the capitalist system and cooperate with the QWL : the LO in Norway and UAW in the U.S.

The LO has cooperated with the employer's association (the NAF) and has participated in joint committee with the NAF since 1962. In 1973, the UAW and the leading automobile industries added to the collective agreement a clause to the effect that they would establish a joint labor-management committee.

(Group II) Unions which accept the capitalist system but don't cooperate with the QWL.

A typical example of this type is the AFL-CIO in the U.S., which admits the rights of management but challenges management through the collective bargaining.

(Group III) Unions which don't admit the capitalist system but cooperate with the QWL : The CFDT in France and the FLM in Italy.

The CFDT denies the capitalist system and intends to establish autonomous management by labor. The CFDT regards improvement of working conditions introduced unilaterally by the employer as a means to strengthen the exploitation of labor. However, the CFDT admits the improvement of working conditions introduced at labor's initiative, e.g., autonomous working group, job enrichment, etc. The FLM has almost the same principles as the CFDT. The FLM does not admit basically the capitalist system but intends to shift the initiative for the improvement of working conditions on the labor.

(Group IV) Unions which deny the capitalist system and don't cooperate with the QWL.

A typical example of this type is the CGT in France. The CGT cooperates with the Communist Party and aims to transfer the

ownership of the means of production from employer to labor through class struggle. Therefore, the CGT regards job enrichment as a means of capitalistic exploitation.

(Footnote)

- 1) R. Tchobanian, "Trade Unions and the Humanisation of Work," *International Labour Review*, March, 1975, pp. 205f; Japan QWL Committee (ed.), *QWL Report I*, pp. 29f; S. Mihara, "Rōdō Ningenkā to Rōdōkumiai," in *Keiei to Keizai*, edited by Nagasaki University, April 1979, pp. 33f.

5) Academic Level.

On 24-29 September 1972, an international conference on the QWL was held at Columbia University in New York. This conference was one of the most important departures of their research and study on the QWL in order that the International Committee on the QWL be established at the conclusion of the conference. Many well-known researchers, e.g., E. Thorsrud (Norway), L. Davis (U.S.A.), Y. Delamotte (France), S. Takezawa (Japan), etc., have taken part in the committee, and a number of them published *The Quality of Working Life*¹⁾ in 1975. In this publication, the research and study of the QWL is systematized internationally and plays an active role in various levels, e.g., international, national, industrial, enterprise, workshop, union, etc.

"In co-operation with the French Industrial Relations Association, the Institute (International Institute for Labour Studies) held a meeting in Paris on 26-27 January, 1973 on «Experiments on the more Human Organisation of Work». The meeting was organised under the Social Perspectives Programme of the Institute, which provides opportunities for the frank, uncommitted discussion of

emerging issues and problems in an informal atmosphere free of the pressures of negotiation or decision-making. Approximately sixty persons attended the meeting (25 from trade unions, 25 from managerial and employers' circles, and 10 from government or academic organisations).²⁾

A report of this meeting was published with the editorship of J-M Clerc, *Experiences en Vue d'une organisation plus humaine du travail industriel*, Librairie Armand Colin, Paris, 1973.

After the keynote speech by Y. Delamoote, the participants heard the reports of practical experiences in the more human organisation of work.

"Olivetti experiment : a paper by Professor Francesco Novara, head of the company's psychological centre ; a trade union view was given by Mr. Giovanni Avonto of the Italian Engineering Workers Federation (affiliated both to the WFTU and ICFTU).

B.S.N. experiment : a paper by Mr. Jean-Leon Donnadieu, director of human relations of the Boussois-Souchon-Neuvesel company, followed by trade unionists concerned with the experiment, whether company employees or not.

The Atlas-Copco experiment was presented by Mr. Lars Bjork who is a member of the development council for co-operation questions run jointly by the Swedish Employers' Federation (SAF), the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Central Organisation for Salaried Employees (TCO).

Mrs. Pisareva, who presented the Soviet experiments, in on the USSR Central Council of Trade Unions."³⁾

In the U.S., in addition to public institutes (the National Center for Productivity and Quality of Working Life, etc.), there are a number of private institutes.

"In addition to a number of university social science research groups that are particularly active in the field, such as the Institute of Social Research at the University of Michigan, there are three

non-governmental institutions specifically concerned with quality of working life programmes. Two of them, namely the National Center for Quality of Work in Washington, DC, and the Work in American Institute in Scarsdale, New York, are private non-profit organisations. The third is the Center for Quality of Working Life, Institute of Industrial Relations, University of California, Los Angeles."⁴

Moreover, "two university institutions namely the University of Wisconsin College of Engineering in Madison and University of California Graduate School of Management in Los Angeles, now offer advanced degrees in the theory and practice of integrated organisation-plant design. Quality of working life courses are being given at Augustana College and at the universities of California, Southern California, Case Western Reserve, Georgia State, Harvard (Business School), Massachusetts, Oregon, Pennsylvania (Wharton School), Pennsylvania State, Utah State, Wisconsin, and Yale.

In addition, research is being carried out at the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations on new systems of work and participation; at Yale University on work systems, job enrichment, and job satisfaction; at Case Western University on work, productivity and job satisfaction; at the University of Pennsylvania Wharton School and the Pennsylvania State University Business School on the above-mentioned Rushton Mining Company project; at the University of Michigan Institute of Social Research on the evaluation of quality of work change studies; at the Harvard Business School on integrated organisation-plant design and union-management issues; at the University of Oregon on new plant design; at Utah University on job enrichment; and at New York University on work, productivity and job satisfaction. Many other projects are being developed, some well known, other very little publicised so that it is difficult to maintain a complete inventory. Nevertheless, some 50 are known to the Center for Quality of Working Life."⁵

On the other hand, the socialist countries are also much

interested in the QWL. The Soviet union has the Scientific Research Institute for Labour and Poland has the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology (Polska Akademia Nauk).⁶⁾

The following is a list of key institutions, in all regions of the world, that are concerned with conditions of work and the quality of working life, it provides up-to-date information about them.⁷⁾

- ①. African Regional Labour Administration Centre (ARLAC) in Keniya.
- ②. Asian Network For Industrial Technology Information And Extension (TECHNONET ASIA) in Singapore.
- ③. Asian Productivity Organization (APO) in Japan.
- ④. Centre Regional African D'Administration Du Travail (CRADAT) in Cameroon.
- ⑤. Centro Interamericano De Administration Del Trabajo (CIAT/OIT) in Peru.
- ⑥. Confederation Europeenne Des Syndicats (CES) in Belgium.
- ⑦. European Association of National Productivity Centres (EANPC) in Belgium.
- ⑧. European Centre For Work And Society in Netherlands.
- ⑨. European Foundation For The Improvement Of Living And Working Conditions in Ireland.
- ⑩. Federacion Interamericana De Trabajadores De La Industria Textil Vestuario Y Cuero (FITITVC) in Colombia.
- ⑪. Consejo Latinoamericano De Ciencias Sociales (CLACSO) in Argentin.
- ⑫. Institute Europeen Pour Concepteurs Industriels (IECI) in France.
- ⑬. Institute Syndical Europeen (ISE) in Belgium.
- ⑭. International Council For The Quality Of Working Life (ICQWL) in United Kingdom.
- ⑮. International Ergonomics Association (IEA) in the U.S.
- ⑯. Internationales Institut Fuer Vergleichende Gesellschaftsforschung

Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (IIVG SP II) in Berlin.

- ⑰. Working Conditions And Environment Department, International Labour Office (ILO) in Switzerland.
- ⑱. Working Conditions And Housing Division Directorate : Working Conditions/Migrant Worker Policies, Directorate-General For Employment And Social Affairs, Commission Of The European Communities (DG V/D/1) in Belgium.

(Footnote)

- 1) L.E. Davis and A.D. Cherns (eds.), *The Quality of Working Life*, Vol. I and II, Free Press, 1975.
 - 2) J.M. Clerc, "Experiments in Humanising the Organisation of Industrial Work: Some Points from a Symposium", in *IILS Bulletin*, No. 11, 1974, p. 15.
 - 3) *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.
 - 4) L.E. Davis, "Enhancing the Quality of Working Life: Developments in the United States", in *International Labour Review*, Vol. 116, No. 1, July-August 1977, p. 62.
 - 5) *Ibid.*, p. 64.
 - 6) L. Stoddart (ed.), *Conditions of Work and Quality of Working Life: A Directory of Institutions*, ILO, 1981, pp. 173 and 241.
 - 7) *Ibid.*, pp. 1f.
- 6) Certain Trends of the QWL in Japan.

The QWL in Japan might be at a germinal stage compared with that in Western countries. However, in Japan, there have been some countermeasures of the QWL including some with unique Japanese styles. *First*, at the international level, the ILO branch office in Tokyo has introduced various cases of the QWL in foreign countries. *Second*, at the national level, the Ministry of Labour explored the QWL in the Monthly Labour Statistic Research Review of December 1976, and published two Reports in 1969 and 1974.¹⁾

According to the above mentioned reports by the Ministry of

Labour (see Table VI-6-1, VI-6-2, VI-6-3, and VI-6-4), it seems that the needs of the QWL have grown with a rise in the percentage of employees including dissatisfaction (no answer in Table VI-6-1 and VI-6-2). On the other hand, according to Table VI-6-3 and VI-6-4, labor's needs (and/or expectations) of future working life conditions concentrate on "wage" and "working hours" rather than other factors, such as for e.g., "security about getting job that suits one's qualification," "development of knowledge and skill throughout one's working life," "industrial injury prevention and good workshop environment," etc., both in 1969 and 1974. *Third*, since the QWL committee in Japan was established in 1973, *QWL Research Report*, *QWL Report*, etc. have been published by the committee, and research on the QWL has become popular in universities, research centers, enterprises, labor unions, etc.

Fourth, research and actual cases of practical countermeasures of the QWL in industries, enterprises and workshop can be cited,

On the industry level, certain research reports have been published, e.g., research on 200 manufacturing industries and research on shipbuilding, automobile, electric, transportation, steel, and other industries.²⁾

On the enterprise and workshop level, typical cases are the Nakatsugawa Factory of Mitsubishi Electric Company, Nihon Radiators, Tokyo Gas, Kanto Seiki, TEAC Seiki, Toyo Tsūshinki, Honda, Fuji Heavy Industry, etc. Some of them can be mentioned as follows :

一八三 (A) Some Cases in Enterprises.

①. Self-management (autonomous work organisation) system at the Nakatsugawa Factory of Mitsubishi Electric Company.

Field Supervisors in this factory carry out the following methods to improve the quality of a new product (an electric heater).

a) Small groups with each person having responsibility for quality

**Table VI-6-1 : Responses on Labor's Feeling about
Job Satisfaction, in 1969.**

	Number of persons	Yes (job satisfaction)	No (job dissatisfaction)	Neutral	Unknown
1. Total	26,058	37.1%	21.4%	40.9%	0.6%
2. Managers	1,416	61.4	12.8	25.4	0.4
3. Specialists (including researchers)	2,043	52.7	16.1	30.8	0.4
4. Office white-collar /clerical workers	7,361	28.5	23.9	47.0	0.5
5. Engineer supervisors	1,369	57.8	12.3	29.6	0.4
6. Skilled engineers	5,164	43.1	20.3	36.3	0.3
7. Blue-collar workers	3,922	32.3	23.6	43.4	0.8
8. Sales and service workers	2,331	30.8	24.5	43.9	0.9
9. Others	2,293	25.1	24.7	49.5	0.7
10. Unknown	159	33.3	21.4	37.7	7.5

Table VI-6-2 : The Same as Above (Table VI-6-1) in 1974.

	Number of persons	Yes (job satisfaction)	No (job dissatisfaction)	Neutral	Unknown
1. Total	39,093	36.9%	23.5%	38.9%	0.6%
2. Managers	2,710	60.1	15.1	24.1	0.7
3. Specialists (including researchers)	2,172	46.2	21.4	32.1	0.3
4. Office white-collar /clerical workers	11,157	28.0	27.2	44.4	0.5
5. Engineer supervisors	1,675	56.6	18.3	24.5	0.6
6. Skilled engineers	2,889	44.0	22.9	32.6	0.5
7. Blue-collar workers	10,664	37.0	23.2	39.2	0.6
8. Sales and service workers	3,982	34.9	23.6	41.0	0.5
9. Others	3,591	28.7	24.1	46.3	0.9
10. Unknown	253	—	—	—	—

Table VI-3 : Labor's Needs (and/or Expectations) about Future Working Life in 1969.

	Number of persons	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	Others
1. Total	26,058	63.7	9.4	39.7	18.8	12.5	10.0	19.3	14.2	5.3
2. Managers	1,416	53.3	19.4	29.9	20.4	16.6	8.0	25.8	12.0	5.1
3. Specialists (including researchers)	2,043	62.5	8.7	38.8	22.5	20.5	6.1	19.9	11.4	3.9
4. Office white-collar/ clerical workers	7,361	58.5	6.4	48.3	23.1	14.4	6.2	14.2	15.9	5.6
5. Engineer supervisors	1,369	61.0	18.6	29.7	14.0	13.7	14.9	27.2	12.6	3.4
6. Skilled engineers	5,164	68.8	9.5	35.7	16.3	11.0	13.7	22.9	13.3	3.7
7. Blue-collar workers	3,922	69.5	11.2	37.0	15.2	7.7	14.0	19.8	13.9	5.1
8. Sales and service workers	2,331	64.7	5.9	39.6	18.9	13.3	6.9	20.4	14.3	6.6
9. Others	2,293	67.1	8.9	39.7	14.7	7.6	11.6	16.6	16.1	10.2
10. Unknown	159	61.6	7.5	32.7	20.1	10.7	9.4	15.1	10.7	3.1

(Footnote) (1) : Wage raise, (2) : Raise in the retirement age, (3) : 2-days weekly rest system and reduction of working hours, (4) : Security in getting a job that suits one's qualifications, (5) : Development of knowledge and skill throughout one's working life, (6) : Industrial injury prevention and good workshop environment, (7) : Home purchasing plans, Saving plans, etc., (8) : Improvement of welfare facilities.

Table VI-6-5 : Transition of the Introduction Ratios of the Small Group Activity⁷⁾

Investigators	1968 Nihkeiren (Japan Federation of Employers' Association)	1970 Kansai Employers' Association	1971 Japan Produc- tivity Center	1972 Ministry of Labour	1974 Kansai Produc- tivity Center	1977 Ministry of Labour
Objects (number of establishments)	875	262	258	3,000	160	3,000
ZD (Zero Defect) circles	23.2%	30.5%	37.0%	—	—	—
QC (Quality Control) circle	26.1	26.7	54.3	—	—	—
New Life Movement	—	—	5.4	—	—	—
Suggestion system of improvement	82.7	72.9	—	68.8	75.0	74.1
Management by objective	36.8	38.9	—	47.0	33.0	30.3
Workshop conference	64.2	63.0	64.6	—	—	—

control.

- b) Decision-making capacity concerning pace of work and matters necessary for the execution of operations.
- c) Adoption of Job Enlargement System instead of the Stepper Conveyor System. As the result of these methods, work errors and/or percent of defective products decreases to one-eighth.

The working hours invested in such measures saves two-third.³⁾

②. The Modules Method at Kanto Seiki.

The auto parts maker, Kanto Seiki (2,800 employees), introduced small-group modules in its speedometer department, where speedometers are assembled by 17 workers per line along a belt conveyor. Experiments were conducted with 7-worker, 4-worker and 3-worker modules. Productivity increased by 70 to 90 percent and absenteeism decreased in view of the results so far achieved.⁴⁾

③. TEAC Seiki.

TEAC Seiki, a tape recorder manufacturer with 1,400 employees, installed six round worktables instead of belt-conveyors. This new-method resulted in greater productivity, fewer rejects and higher attendance records, although management had held little concern for these aspects from the beginning.⁵⁾

(B) General Tendencies in the QWL at the Enterprise and Workshop Levels.

According to a study of Takao Kondō,⁶⁾ the QWL at enterprises and at workshop levels in Japan show some trends. Manufacturing industries (particularly, light electric industries) frequently adopt improvements in the work organization at the workshop level, which is one of the typical countermeasures of the QWL. Establishments which installed improvements in the assembling process from 75 per cent of the surveyed establishments in Japan (33 per cent in the U.S.). There are few cases of improvements in process operations in machinery industries and capital-intensive industries. The

practical countermeasures of improvements in the workshop level are mostly so-called "job redesign" (e.g., job enlargement, job enrichment, job rotation, modules method, organization development, etc.).

Although the above-mentioned countermeasures are enforced generally in the Western advanced countries, Japanese countermeasures are based not on individuals but on small groups in workshops with strong group spirit. The person in charge of the improvements of work organization is the line management or field engineer in Japan compared with the staff in personnel departments in Western advanced countries.

(C) Japanese QWL : Small Group Activities.

Professor Manabu Mine states that Japanese small group activities (e.g., "Quality Control Circle," "Zero Defect Movement," etc.) are not QWL but the border-line in a strict sense because employees in Japan are not independent from management. However, the concept of the Japanese employee's relative independence from management is ambiguous and not able to be compared with situations in foreign countries. It is this author's opinion that the Japanese small group activities are one type of typical countermeasure of the Japanese QWL at the workshop level. The historical transition of the Japanese small group activity at the workshop level is indicated in the following table.

On the other hand, according to an investigation of the Japan Productivity Center, "the actual condition and issue of the small group activity in 135 establishments" is as follows :

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The enforcement ratio of the small group activity is 67.4 per cent, preparing for enforcement is 11.1 per cent and non-enforcement is 19.3 per cent. According to industrial classification, the enforcement ratios of the small group activity in paper and pulp, steel, transport machine, precision machine, etc. are 100 per cent and electric

industry is about 90 per cent. With classification by the size of the undertaking, the ratio is higher in the large enterprises than in the medium and small enterprises. With regard to the purpose of the small group activity, human relations is 37.4 per cent, management strategy is 29.7 per cent and technical improvement is 23.1 per cent.

(Footnote)

- 1) *Gendai Rōdōsha no Ishiki Kōzō* (the Labor's Opinion Census), edited by the Ministry of Labour, 1969; *Rōdōsha Fukushi Sōgō Chōsa Hōkoku* (The Report on Labour Welfare), edited by the Ministry of Labour, 1974.
- 2) See *The Monthly Journal of the Japan Institute of Labour*, No. 232, 236 and 240; *The Working Conditions in the Transportation Industries*. Unyu Keizai Kenkyu Center, 1981; *The QWL Research Report*, Spring 1976.
- 3) *Rōdō Tōkei Chōsa Geppō*, edited by Ministry of Labour in Japan, December 1976, pp. 8-9.
- 4) S. Takezawa, *The Quality of Working Life: Trends in Japan*, IILS Research Series, No. 11, 1976, pp. 10-12.
- 5) *Ibid.*, p. 14.
- 6) T. Kondō, "Rōdō no Ningenka o Mezasu," in *Rōmu Kenkyu*, Feb. 1977, pp. 2f. (this report includes 21 cases and research on 17 companies, e.g., electric, heavy industries, etc.)
- 7) Toshio Ueda, *Seisansei to Shōshūdan Katsudō* (Productivity and the Small Group Activity), Japan Productivity Center, 1980, p. 61.

V. Brief Concluding Remarks.

In this series of papers, I have presented the concepts and practical countermeasures of the Quality of Working Life (QWL) and/or the Humanisation of Work. Arguably, it seems that the QWL is a new tendency and/or paradigm because of the use of

the term "humanisation" and/or the use of two terms—work and life—, which have been contradictory concepts in the Judeo-Christian ethic. As I mentioned in Chapter III, the QWL is intended to redefine the "meaning of work," "total system of work" and "voluntary motivation of worker" in the working life which have become confused as a result of the evolution in the specialization (division of work), mechanization and monopolization.

It seems, however, that the QWL aims at reorganization of new working systems in the advanced capitalist countries which have experienced economic, social and political crises (e.g., "counter-culture," "oil crises," "stagflation," etc.) and even in the advanced socialist countries which have also undergone economic and social crises since the end of the 1960s. This means that the QWL seems to be a "new efficiency movement," instituting a "new labor control system" in order that the "meaning of work," "total system of work," "voluntary motivation of workers," "increase or decrease of labor's compensation," etc. be actually manipulated in the interest of managers and/or bureaucrats.

In short, the main subject of the QWL which I exemplified in the above parts, is one means of increasing work efficiency.

It is very difficult to develop the humanisation of work by workers themselves, and to establish a QWL system for themselves which I could not unfortunately explore in this paper. This issue might be examined in the future.

(7 April, 1984)