

Evaluative Research on MS – QWL Phase II Program

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Abstract

Quality of Working Life in the Workplace Phase II Program is an application of Drafted Management System of Quality of Working Life in the Workplace (MS – QWL) to 18 pioneer factories. Objectives of evaluative research on MS – QWL were 1) to evaluate outputs and outcomes of MS – QWL Phase II Program and 2) to recommend policy and strategy to the program management for the next phase. Multiple research methodologies utilized composed of documentary research, observations with and without participation, questionnaire survey, in-depth interviews of executives, constructed interviews of supervisors and workers, small group discussions and brain storming sessions of stakeholders. This research was conducted during December 2005 – March 2006. It revealed that the pioneer factories gained both direct and indirect advantages from MS – QWL implementations. However, many basic management problems were discovered in launching MS – QWL. This research has provided some recommendations at policy and strategic levels for implementation of MS – QWL in the next phase.

I. Introduction

Quality of Working Life Phase II Program implemented by Human Capacity Building Institute, Federation of Thai Industries (FTI) and funded by Thai Health Promotion Foundation was evaluated. This post evaluative research had also been funded by the same funding agency. Assignments for evaluation from the funding agency composed of three issues : 1) the outputs and outcomes of MS – QWL Phase II Program, 2) the linkage of the first issue to the Thai Health Promotion Foundation's strategies, and 3) good governance in the implementation of MS – QWL Phase II Program. The evaluative research was conducted during December, 2005 to March, 2006 with expected responses to all those three assignments.

II Objectives There were two objectives of this research :

1. To evaluate the outputs and outcomes of MS – QWL Phase II Program, and provide answers to all three issues as mentioned above.
2. To recommend policy and strategy for the next phase of MS – QWL to the program management

III Research Methodology

This research utilized multiple research methodologies such as documentary research, observation with and without participations, questionnaire survey, indept interviews of executives, constructed interviews of supervisors and workers, small group discussions and brain storming sessions in meeting rooms and on a QWL Website. (WWW.qwlthai.com)

Documentary research There were two main data sources :

- a) Factory documents: progress reports, results of project implementations in pioneer factories, reports of consultants, meeting reports, reports of auditors, statistics on workers in each pioneer factory, etc.
- b) Program documents : a report of ongoing evaluative research by researchers from Burapa University, training reports (training for factories representatives, consultants, and auditors), meeting reports of MS – QWL Program working groups, directive meeting reports, field visiting reports, etc.

Interview

Interview was categorized into two types : in-depth interview and constructed interview.

In-depth interviews for executive levels :

- 1) Executive Committee of MS – QWL Program – 2 persons,
- 2) Committee Members of FTI – 2 persons.
- 3) Consulting and Working Groups for MS – QWL phase II – 2 persons
- 4) Research director of Burapha University – 1 person

Constructed interview for supervisors and workers :

- 1) office workers of MS – QWL Program at FTI – 12 persons
- 2) personnel responsible specifically for MS – QWL Program at FTI – 4 persons

- 3) personnel responsible specifically for MS – QWL Program at Thai Health Promotion Foundation – 1 person
- 4) representatives of each pioneer factory – 18 persons
- 5) auditors – 3 persons
- 6) consultants – 9 persons

Observation

Observations were made both at the central office of MS – QWL Program and at pioneer factories in all field areas:

- a) Central office – Executive Committee of MS – QWL Program, Consulting and Working Groups of MS – QWL Program at FTI
- b) Field areas – pioneer factories, consultants and auditors (during real situation of any project implementation)

In field area, 18 pioneer factories were observed in all parts of Thailand :

1. Central area – Bangkok, Samutprakarn, Nontaburi, Pratumtani, Chachoengsao, Ayuthya, Chonburi, Samutsakorn, Ratchaburi, Petchburi, Prachinburi, and Lopburi
2. Northern area – Phitsanulok, and Lampang
3. Northeastern area – Nakhonratchasima (Korat)
4. Southern area – Suratthani, and Songkla

Questionnaire survey

A Questionnaire was developed and revised by an expert. All 1,720 questionnaires were sent to all 18 pioneer factories and distributed to supervisors and workers with an expectation of 20 – 30 percents for the returns. They were appropriate for the size of population (approximately 12,000) at the 0.05 level of significance (Kitpreedaborisuthi, 1994 : 18 quoted from Cochran, 1977 : 76). The 627 returned questionnaires were analyzed by SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Science).

Focus group

Focus group discussions were held in all pioneer factories with the visiting research teams. At least 10 persons, such as managers, supervisors, workers and researchers, participated in each focus group discussion. Most of the discussions would emphasize QWL performances, problems and corrections.

Brain Storming Sessions

A purpose of brain storming was to collect data from various stakeholders of MS – QWL Program. Such the first meeting would be rare without arrangement by the research team. The second brain storming session was held during the progress report presentation. The third brain storming session was through a QWL Website. (www.qwlthai.com)

Target groups and population

1. Pioneer factories included area persons such as consultants, auditors, factory managers, supervisors and workers. Pioneer factories in MS – QWL Program were :

1. KRT Agriculture Company
2. Cha – am Rapeepat Company
3. Precision Interplast Industry
4. Giameng Company
5. J.H. Industry
6. Thai Tabushi Electrics*
7. Raja Ceramics
8. Reungwa Standard Industry
9. V.R.P. Ruber Intertrade
10. Golden Line Business
11. Nor. Vor. Arunghig Company
12. Pacific Seafood Company
13. Thai Catalase Company*
14. Companies in Somboon Group
15. Sahafarm Company
16. Sahafarm Feedmill
17. Pitsanuloke Lee Ice
18. Asia Precision Industry
19. Flake Ible Plast Company
20. S.P.P. Ceramics

* Two withdrawals at the beginning.

2. Stakeholders of Central offices in Bangkok, such as members of Directing Committees, Consulting Committees, office managers and personnel, administrators of FTI and authorities of the funding agency.

IV. Results

This research gained enough data to provide responses to the assigned issues as requested by the funding agency as follows:

a. Outputs and outcomes of MS – QWL Phase II Program

a.1 Outputs

Human Capacity Building Institute (HCBI) of the FTI drafted MS – QWL : Management System of Quality of Work life Series, MS – QWL I – 2004 and MS – QWL II 2004 (Federation of Thai Industries, 2005 : 10). In MS – QWL Phase II Program, this MS – QWL series were tried out on 20 pioneer factories at the beginning. FTI did not successfully obtain a copyright at the end of Phase II Program.

MS – QWL is a fully Thai wisdom and initiative. It emphasizes the quality of life covering four aspects of well-being – physical, emotional, social and spiritual.

MS – QWL is so far different from ISO 9000, ISO 14000 and OHSAS 18000. ISO 9000 concentrates on quality of products, while ISO 14000 and OHSAS 18000 concentrate on pollution prevention and reduction of injuries, accidents and hazards in the workplaces, respectively. (Rochanaprai Wong, 2548 : 390)

Human Capacity Building Institute of FTI implemented the MS – QWL Phase II Program by training QWL representatives of pioneer factories, consultants, and auditors and advising administrators of some pioneer factories upon field visits. Furthermore, HCBI is also preparing for phase III of the program by recruiting more auditors, consultants and voluntary factories. Most of the jobs of HCBI were done in a meeting room. Working groups and several committees were established. On – going evaluative research by an academic institute was also commissioned.

At the end of March, 2006, four more pioneer factories of phase II program withdrew. However, several projects and action plans were established in pioneer factories within MS – QWL Programs, such as;

1. Happy Workplace
2. Lunch Offer Project
3. Money Saving
4. Annual Factory Charities
5. Sport Competition
6. Nursing Room
7. Livable Dormitories
8. Healthy Cafeteria
9. Dust Reduction
10. Plantation in Factory Area
11. Quality of Life Responding
12. Wire Radio in a Workplace
13. Healthy Workplace

14. Nice Workplace
15. Nice Geographical Factory
16. Welfare Housing
17. Aerobic Dancing
18. Worship Room
19. Worker Happy Birthday
20. Gift Season
21. Traffic Training
22. Training on AIDS
23. Blood Donation
24. Dharma Camping
25. Military Training
26. Accident Prevention Training
27. White Factories
28. Free Housing
29. Free Lunch
30. Cremation Fund
31. Friends Help Friends
32. Family Fund
33. Community Relationships
34. Schools in a Workplace
35. One Factory, One Product
36. Solid Waste Treatment & Disposal
37. Occupational Health & Safety

38. Health Insurance
39. Lovely Housing
40. Debt Clearance
41. Love in the Workplace
42. Human Resource Development
43. Recreation Area in Factories
44. Sleeping Room after Lunch
45. Others.

In conclusion, accomplishments of MS – QWL Phase II Program were mostly below targets, as shown in table I.

Table I. Outputs V.S. Targets of MS – QWL Phase II Program

Activities/Outputs	Targets	Actions
1 Training for pioneer factories	-	2 times
2 Application of drafted MS – QWL to pioneer factories	20	18 factories at the beginning and currently only 14 left (at the end of March, 2006)
3 Meeting of working groups	-	18 times
4 Field visits by the directing committee	-	13 times (repeated 3 visits)
5 Consulting services to pioneer factories	20	18 factories

Activities/Outputs	Targets	Actions
6 Auditing requests	18	8 factories
7 Auditing by authorized auditors	18	Non (would be possible in the next phase)
8 Recruiting new factories to phase III program	100	66 applications (at the end of March, 2006)
9 Meeting of the directing committee	3 times/month or more if necessary	3 times in 15 months
10 Ongoing evaluative research	1	1 report

a.2 Outcomes

Many outcomes from the implementation of MS – QWL Phase II Program were observable in pioneer factories where MS – QWL was implemented and maintained, such as :

- 1) policy and changes in organizational structure
- 2) geographical surrounding changes for factories
- 3) Social changes among workers
- 4) Changes of relationship between workers and management
- 5) Increase social participations of workers and communities
- 6) Changes of health attitudes and behaviors

b. Linkages to strategic context

This research found various linkages to strategic context such as: 1) system changes; 2) good practices for healthy workplaces; 3) social capitals; 4) social movements; and 5) project development

b. 1 System changes

System changes were observed in many dimensions such as policy, law, plan and working system as follows :

Policy dimension

Society had more awareness for healthy workplaces. Government did implement a policy and campaign for community and workplace healthcare, including social responsibilities of industry for both external and internal environments. Industries did responsively formulate policies for healthy workplaces and launch MS – QWL Program in their factories. Working groups and several projects had been established. So far, none of the pioneer factories had been audited and certified for MS – QWL.

Law dimension

Good health campaigns of governments encouraged improvement of legal activities for both industrial and labor laws.

Plan dimension

Many programs were planned in response to good health policies and laws. Several programs promoting public physical exercises were initiated, including physical exercises for workers in their workplaces.

Working system dimension

MS – QWL or so-called ISO for health, initiated from Thai wisdom, became a part of working system in many pioneer factories. Many health benefits were provided to workers.

b.2 Good practice in healthy workplaces

Many factories became leaders in good health practices in their workplaces, resulting in improvement of quality of life for workers. Industries with good health practices should be recognized. They were 1) Asia Precision Company, 2) Pitsanuloke Lee Ice, 3) Pacific Seafood, 4) Golden Line Business, and 5) Jiameng Company. However, these industries would be good examples only in a Thai society context.

b.3 Social capitals

Some social capitals had increased in Thai society as a result of MS – QWL implementation, such as, organizations and networks for health promotion in workplaces, health promotion teams, auditors and consultants for MS – QWL. These capitals pronounced a new era for Thai society which needed to be proactive in improving health care for workers in all dimensions of health (physical, social, emotional and spiritual).

b.4 Social movements

MS – QWL implementation in workplaces increased social awareness in health issues among worker's families. It was recognized that family problems were related to workers' health in their workplaces. Moreover, MS – QWL promoted social opportunities in increasing knowledge and social accountability. Several projects providing benefits to societies were developed

and set in motions. The consequences of social movements were tremendous, such as, the identical targets for workers, performance evaluations, executive reviews, continual improvements of healthy workplaces, knowledge -based learning, public acceptances and participations, public communication, work process as system, and etc.

b.5 Project development

Goal of MS – QWL was an improvement of the quality of life for workers in their workplaces. Management system was established in each factory. MS – QWL itself was planned to be registered as an international standards. Many projects were developed and implemented in order to reach the desirable goal. However, many problems occurred in the course of the implementation similar to most newly initiated projects.

c. Good governance of MS – QWL program

Some weaknesses were discovered in the implementation of MS – QWL Program, such as suspicion in approval and appropriation of MS – QWL Phase II Program as well as in the process and the system for implementation of this Phase II Program. Moreover, ineffective performances of the directing committee of this phase II program was also detected.

d. Results from questionnaire survey

For a survey research of mailed questionnaires, 627 of 1,720 questionnaires were returned (approx. 60 percents). Ten of uncompleted questionnaires were discarded. Results had clearly shown that none of the samples rejected rationales of MS – QWL Program. However, Chi – Square

Test (Significance $p. < 0.05$) showed that sex was significant in five aspects: sustainable development of QWL-MS in workplace(0.01), psycho-social changes in workplace (0.03), disadvantages of QWL Program implementation in workplace(0.03), satisfaction of QWL Program implementation in workplace (0.01), and incentives for program participation in the future (0.03).

Chi – Square Test (Significance $p. < 0.05$) also showed that positions of samples were significant in six aspects: financial assistance from FTI for workplace QWL-MS implementation (0.01), supports from company's top executive (0.00), budget appropriation for QWL Program from company (0.02), MS - QWL Program was fruitful (0.00), selection of pioneer factories was fair (0.00), and workplace visits by Executive Committee were beneficial (0.00).

Results of Chi – Square Test could be concluded that internal communication on MS – QWL Program in the workplaces was an important problem. This particular problem would lead toward nonparticipations of all workers and supervisors, and toward the failure of MS – QWL Program for pioneer factories in the future.

V. Conclusion and recommendations

(a) Conclusion

Implementation of MS – QWL Phase II Program was below targets. Most of the works in this phase were an experiment of MS – QWL on 20 pioneer factories. Because of some weaknesses of this exercise, some withdrawals by pioneer factories gradually occurred. At the end of this

evaluative research or the end of March, 2006, only 14 pioneer factories still maintained their MS – QWL Program. Not only weaknesses in MS – QWL Standard itself were found, but also other suspicion in management were detected, especially good governances of program implementations in the program managements of the FTI, the funding agency and of the pioneer factories. However, the investment in phase II program was not all wasted. Many indirect benefits beyond the objectives were accounted.

(b) Recommendations

From the research team's viewpoints, policy and strategic recommendations were suggested as follows:

b.1 Policy recommendations :

1. Interested factories which require financial assistance for implementation of MS – QWL in their facilities should be able to directly apply for assistance from the funding agency, such as the Thai Health Promotion Foundation.
2. Factories which plan to launch MS – QWL Program should have an opportunity to freely select their own consultants and auditors.
3. National Accreditation Council (NAC) for MS-QWL shall be established. All certified bodies (CB) should be independent, under the supervisions of NAC.
4. MS – QWL Program should be also offered to other businesses as well as industries, such as, hotels, academic institutes and other businesses.

b.2 Strategic recommendations :

1. Quality of MS – QWL Standard especially MS – QWL II -2004 should be revised and made it easier to understand. Definitions and indicators should be more objective. Moreover, MS – QWL should be made distinctively different from other international standards.

2. Offering access to other organizations wishing to participate in the MS – QWL Program, such as the Thai Business Experienced Organization, academic institutes, non government organizations (NGOs), the Thailand Board of Investment, the Ministry of Labor, the Ministry of Public Health, and etc.

3. Attractive benefits should be provided to businesses and industries which MS – QWL Programs were implemented, such as tax reduction, fee exemption, investment promotion, expanding international market, special rate for social insurance, and etc.

4. QWL Fund should be developed and established for the benefits of businesses and industries where MS – QWL was implemented and maintained.

5. MS – QWL should be flexibly adjusted, in order to fit every country context before registration as an international standard.

6. Commitments of executive were found to be very importance to the success of MS – QWL implementation. Accordingly, the selection process of members into the next phase of MS – QWL Program should give due considerations to their commitment and should let them voluntarily apply.

7. Advantages and benefits of implementing MS – QWL Program should be clearly explained and communicated to all members.

8. Training of the trainers on MS – QWL Standards should be conducted.

9. Public announcements to distinguished industries or businesses should be annually updated.

10. Public communications and campaigns of MS – QWL should be expanded to all sectors of Thai society.

11. Brain storming sessions for stakeholders in MS – QWL Program should be frequently arranged, in order to provide opportunity for learning from each others.

12. Directing committee of MS – QWL Program should have more meetings, in order to readily acknowledge problems and able to quickly solve them.

13. Both in-depth positive and negative data and facts should be presented to the Directing Committee. At the same times, the Directing Committee should follow – up all activities of stakeholders, especially performances of pioneer factories, technology transfer and implementation. Moreover, it should put all efforts to technically and financially assist pioneer factories.

14. Consultants and auditors should have the same level of understandings in MS – QWL Programs and standards.

15. Check and balance system should put into work among all stakeholders of MS – QWL Program.

16. On – going evaluative research should be done along with MS – QWL Program implementation.

17. MS – QWL Standard and Program in Thailand should be promoted and presented in various international seminars or academic forums, in order to establish it as an internationally recognized standard.

18. Networks and centers for exchanging ideas among stakeholders of MS – QWL Program should be effectively established.

19. Cooperate Social Responsibility (CSR) or SA 8000 plus MS – QWL Standard should be required for all foreign investments when Thailand Board of Investment approves their privileges.

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