Improving Quality of Worklife through Labour Legislation

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Abstract

This paper is prepared in the context of declining quality of work life (QWL) situation, capacity utilization and contribution of manufacturing industries in Nepal. This paper mainly focuses on to review the existing Nepalese labour laws, their implementation situation and examination of the present nature of jobs and expectations of trade union leaders in order to improve QWL situation of Nepalese employees.

From the analysis current and anecdotal evidences, it seems that there have been no significant changes in the nature of manufacturing jobs for the last 15 years. Although there are provisions in labor laws and well-defined mechanisms to implement these provisions to ensure labor rights, at the organization level there are a number of lapses. All three actors, government, employers and unions are, to a larger extent, failed to implement labor legislation.

In an opinion survey of 40 union leaders it is revealed that most of the union leaders focus on the need for the proper mechanism for the enforcement of legislation and introduction of some other provisions that are not included in existing labor legislations. They still believe that in Nepalese organizations pay and benefits and job security are considered the most important motivating factors to improve the level of QWL situation. At the same, consideration is needed to improve QWL through education, training and other skill development programmes.

Keywords: Quality of Work Life, Labor legislations, Manufacturing industries of Nepal, Trade Union, Role of the Government, Nepal.

Concept: Quality of Work Life

The term ‘Quality of Work Life’ (QWL) originated from the concept of open socio- technical system designed in the 1970s that helps to ensures autonomy in work, interdependence, and self-involvement with the idea of ‘best fit between technology and social organizations. Although he open socio-technical system is traditional concept for practice, it assumes that optimal system performance and the ‘right’ technical organization coincide with those job conditions under which the social and psychological needs of the workers are satisfied (Belweg, 1976). A better QWL initiative supports to fulfill technical and social requirements of job in our organizations.
Different authors view QWL differently. According to Hackman and Suttle (1977) concept and practice of QWL has broad and diverse and many use this phrase in their own way, for example,

To some, quality of work life refers to industrial democracy, increased worker participation in corporate decision-making, or a culmination of the goals of the human relations movement of two decades ago. To others, especially those in management, the term suggests any of a variety of efforts to improve productivity through improvements in the human rather than the capital or technological inputs of production. Unions and worker representatives often view changes in the quality of work life as leading to a more equitable sharing of the income and the resources of the working organization and to more humane and healthier working conditions. Alternatively, some union leaders suspect that management’s efforts to improve quality of work life are little more than attempts to elicit higher productivity from workers without payment of higher wages. Finally, many view the quality of work life as closely related to, if not merely a broader and more up-to-date term for, such concepts as job satisfaction, humanizing work, or individualizing organizations. Thus, efforts to improve quality of work life are seen as closely akin to organizational development programs. (p.174)

The benefits of QWL initiative go to both employees and employers. Employees trust that with the presence of QWL initiatives they feel safe, relatively well satisfied and able to grow and thus can develop as human beings. They believe that QWL enhances their dignity through job satisfaction and humanizing work by assigning meaningful jobs, ensuring job security, making provisions for adequate pay and benefits, providing safe and healthy working conditions, giving opportunities to develop human capacity, ensuring growth and security, social integration, constitutionalism, getting freedom to self-expression and thus, help to increase individual productivity that supports to achieve organizational effectiveness (Hian and Einstein, 1990; Nachmias, 1988; Carlson, 1980; Guest, 1979; Suttle, 1977; Walton, 1974). That’s why Casio(1992) aptly defines QWL “in terms of employees’ perceptions of their physical and mental well-being”. QWL initiatives are equally beneficial for the employers. QWL positively nurtures a more flexible, loyal, and motivated workforce, which is essential in determining the company’s competitiveness (Allan and Loseby, 1993; Meyer and Cooke, 1993; Bassi and Vanburen, 1997). There is statistically significant correlation between measures of QWL and business performance in terms of market performance, stakeholder value, and business sustainability as well as differentiating competitive capabilities in terms of service quality, delivery, employee knowledge, flexibility, and technological leadership (Roth, 1993). Positive results of
QWL reduced absenteeism, lower turnover, and improved job satisfaction (Havlovic, 1991; Cohen et al., 1997; King and Ehrhard, 1997). Largely, it appears that the main concerns of an effective QWL program are improved working conditions mainly from an employee’s perspective and greater organizational effectiveness mainly from an employer’s perspective.

Predicting or studying QWL variables depends on approaches adopted to improve QWL situation at the organizational level. Three different approaches regarding QWL are common in the literature of human resource management (Krahn and Lowe, 1998; Crompton and Harris, 1998; Gallie, 1990; Rose, 1994). In the era of scientific management, QWL was based on extrinsic traits of jobs: salaries, safety and hygiene, and other tangible benefits of the workplace. The human relations approach stressed that, while extrinsic rewards are important, intrinsic traits of job: autonomy, challenges and task contents, are key predictors of productivity and efficiency. A third approach—orientation to work—suggested that a focus on extrinsic or intrinsic reward is contingent on the person. However, the success of QWL initiatives depends on openness and trust, information management, organizational culture, partnership between management and workers (Casio, 1992).

Equally important, responsibility of improving QWL is concerned, it should be jointly shared by employees, owners, union leaders and governments through legislations (Suttle, 1977). The role of these stakeholders is most vital in protecting rights and interests of the workers and employees. Very few authors have mentioned about the role of the state in the protection of QWL rights at the time of liberalization and globalization. Although with the increasing impact of liberalization and deregulation of economy, organizations in developed and developing are demanding for more autonomy in labor related decisions, provisions and mechanism of implementing QWL initiatives should come from the labor laws. In this article, only the legislative role of the government is discussed to explain QWL situation in Nepalese manufacturing organizations.

In 1999 International Labor Organisation (ILO) put forward a new agenda of “decent work” defined as decent work deficits caused by a gap between the world that we work and in and the hopes that people have for a better life (ILO, 2001) in order “to improve the situation of human beings in the world of work (ILO, 1999,3). From the perspective of decent work, the “gaps” which exist between people’s aspirations regarding their work and their current work situations can be viewed as “decent work deficits”. Although ‘decent work’ movement is recently development concept that is different from the QWL initiatives it has not left the main issue of labor rights problem arising due to the gap in the aspirations and real work situation at our workplaces. In other words, the issues of QWL are also considered while framing “decent work” concept. However, in this article only QWL is
considered for presentation and discussion. The recent development of decent work issues further substantiates this paper to explore situation of QWL in Nepalese work places.

Very few studies have undertaken to assess the situation of QWL in Nepal. From workers’ perspective, the QWL situation of Nepalese shop floor jobs described in the following ways:

“Shopfloor jobs (in Nepalese manufacturing organizations) are generally considered routine and non-motivating. The overall consensus among workers is those job design dimensions are unsatisfactory on the shop-floor. This fact however, has no effect on workers remaining on the job, due to economic necessity alone... facts about satisfaction and motivational levels of many factories were discouraging. Workers are alienated from their work and they often feel punished while working on the shop-floor. .. In some factories, workers are resisting difficulties and variety on the job, while others need some sort of challenge and irregularity on the shop-floor. Economic incentives and pay needs are the major determinants of both satisfaction and motivation.” (Adhikari, 1992):

With this anecdotal evidence about the QWL situation in Nepalese workplaces the question arise that: does the situation changed over the time? To answer this, some specific questions this paper deals with are, such as: 1) what QWL related provisions are stated in the labor laws? ; 2) What are the enforcement mechanisms given in different labor laws to implement QWL initiatives? 3) How effectively provisions of labor laws are being complying by Nepalese manufacturing firms? 4) What are the expectations of the union leaders towards different dimensions of QWL? As discussed earlier in this article, the role of state is important to ensure QWL initiatives. The state is responsible for the promulgation of different labor laws. Implementation of such laws is essential to ensure a better QWL at the workplace. Expecting a better QWL depends on how far each party including employer, management and workers’ unions involved are honest enough to enforce given provisions of labor laws. Since the country has become the Republic and Constitutional Assembly is preparing in drafting the new Constitution of the country the questions raised in this paper can be fully justified.
Methods

Both secondary and primary sources of information is collected and analyzed to examine current situation of QWL in Nepal. A separate questionnaire was structured to collect opinions of union leaders, to examine the nature of present manufacturing jobs, and to find their expectations from the new labor legislations that are expected after the promulgation of new Constitutions of Federal Republic of Nepal. For the purpose of analysis this paper is divided into four parts. In the first part, review of QWL related provisions of the Nepalese labor laws made. The second part describes situation of Nepalese manufacturing industries. The actual assessment of QWL situation in Nepalese manufacturing industries is examined in the third part of the paper. Such analysis is made on the basis of published data from different sources. In part four of this paper, nature of jobs in manufacturing industries and expectations of union leaders are presented. Altogether 40 Trade Union Leaders from different manufacturing companies were selected and met personally to fill the questionnaires. The questions relating to QWL factors such as, job variety, challenge, training, performance appraisal, health and safety, pay and benefits, job security and meaningful job were partly taken from work of Adhikari (1992). Items selected for examining expectations of trade union leaders were adapted from different literature (e.g., Hian and Einstein, 1990; Nachmias, 1988; Carlson, 1980; Guest, 1979; Suttle, 1977; Walton, 1974). What was different from the previous work is that Adhikari (1992) study based on the response of supervisors and non-supervisory employees, for this study only union leaders were involved as respondents. The questionnaire contained three sections. In the first section questions were asked about the nature of jobs. Similarly, in the second and third sections of questionnaire leaders were asked to rank the job factors essentials for improving current QWL and to express their expectations from the forthcoming labor legislations. Data was analyzed using simple descriptive statistics such as, total percentage of responses.

Labor legislation and enforcement of QWL Initiatives

Like many other governments, Government of Nepal (GON) is also taking a number of measures to maintain and improve QWL situation. Although not adequate in the changing situation of Nepal, Government has been playing different roles to implement QWL initiatives. First, it has
formulated different labor related acts, rules and regulations. Second, the government has been trying to ensure that QWL mechanism is properly developed and organizations are working in accordance with the rules and regulations. Third, since the government is still the largest employer in the economy government itself sitting on the negotiation table to bargain with trade unions in order to reach an agreement on different human resource and labor related issues (Adhikari, 2005).

Although the country’s economy is open and deregulation process is undergoing, there are still many roles to play from the side of government safeguarding the interests of workers and employees. In a country like Nepal, where culture of privatization is yet to flourish, the government still has to protect rights, interests, facilities and safety of workers in different establishments. Similarly, role of employers and trade unions is also important in maintaining a sound QWL situation. In the process of protecting rights and interests, the government has constituted a number of labor legislations. The authors of this paper attempted to review the current labor laws in order to examine how far the government in the past remained successful to implement QWL initiatives at the organizational level. The three major labor acts guiding QWL issues are Labor Act, 1992; Child Labor Act, 2000, and Trade Union Act, 1992. Major QWL related issues as described in these three acts are reviewed and discussed below:

**The Labor Act, 1992**

The Nepal Factory and Factory Workers’ Act, 1959 was replaced by the Labor Act, 1992 aiming to protect rights, interests of workers together with providing a number of facilities and safety measures at work places. According to this Act, every enterprise shall have to classify the job of the workers and employees according to the nature of work. The Act also defines ‘employees’ and ‘labor.’ For the sake of this Act, ‘employees’ refer to persons working in administrative posts, whereas ‘labor’ refers to persons obtaining remuneration against for working production jobs, or plant, or building construction or to similar other posts. Provisions of the act also helps to design pay and other incentives of workers and employees explicitly based on the nature of work. The Act clearly states that no person is appointed in a vacant position without prior vacancy notice. This provision of the act also ensures the right of every person who are qualified to apply for a position. Similarly, there is an explicit provision for appointing an employee in a permanent position once he or she completes 240 days as temporary worker.

The Act clearly states that a non-Nepalese citizen has to take work permit to get a job in Nepal. However, there is an exception that if persons with special skills, knowledge are required for a position to be fulfilled, and if no Nepalese citizens are available in such job, a non-Nepalese
citizen can be employed. Regarding working hours, employees entitled to get a half-hour Tiffin break after working five hours continuously. Any permanent worker or employee shall not be terminated from the job without following given procedures prescribed in the Act. The changes in the ownership of the enterprise shall not be deemed to have any effect on the terms and conditions of service of workers or employees adversely.

The Government of Nepal has been entitled to fix the minimum remuneration, dearness allowances and facilities of workers and employees on the recommendation of the Minimum Remuneration Fixation Committee and such notice shall be published in the Nepal Gazette. Similarly, the standard of safety required as per necessity is also published time to time in the Nepal Gazette. The Act makes sufficient provisions for keeping workplace free from dust, fumes, and hazardous chemicals, adequate supply of light and water and other health and sanitation facilities at work place. The Factory Inspector appointed by Government of Nepal examines building, land, plant, machine, and health and safety aspect of factory. He or she has right to collect and test the samples of finished or semi-finished raw-materials used in the factory and inspect the registers and documents relating to the factory and records statements of any person as per necessity. The Labor Office can give order for maintaining safety standard at the work place. The Act clearly states that compensation shall be paid to employees or workers or their family as prescribed.

Every factory employing more than 250 employees has to appoint one Welfare Officer and factory employing more than 1000 employees has to appoint additional an Assistant Welfare Officer. The Act makes a provision of Labor Court. There is also a provision for an Appellate Court which is responsible for the settlement of dispute finally in absence of the Labor Court. According to the provision of the Act, every enterprise shall have to form a Labor Relation Committee in order to create amicable atmosphere between the workers and employees and the management and to develop healthy labor relations based on mutual participation and coordination.

**Child Labor Act, 2000**

According to the Child Labor Act, 2000 ‘child’ is defined as that who has not completed the age of sixteen. The Act also states that factories are not allowed to engage a child as a worker prior to competing his or her 14 years of age. There is also an explicit provision that factories are not allowed to engage a child labor by pleasing, gratifying or misrepresenting him or greediness or fear or coercion or any other way against his will. The Labor Office may depute any employee time to time to inspect factory if employing child. If a factory has to engage a child of the age
between 14 and 16 in a work, it has to obtain approval from the Labor Office and that of parents or guardian of the child.

The Labor Office may depute any employee time to time to inspect the factory that has employed children. The deputed employee shall have to submit a report to Labor Office within fifteen days of completion of inspection stating an exact statement. Every factory must take certificate of fitness for a child being capable of working as a labor before employment. Similarly, it is necessary to submit a statement to the Labor Office consisting of details of employing organizations, child labor and manager within fifteen days from the date of employment of child labor.

According to this Act, Government of Nepal shall form a Child Labor Prevention Committee in order to provide health, safety, education, and vocational training for child working in an enterprise. The Government shall create a Child Labor Prevention Fund for the child labor prevention purpose. In order to implement the objectives of this Act, the Government shall give necessary directions to managers, trade unions, and child welfare associations. Similarly, the Labor Office have power to punish if any factory fails to abide the given rules and regulations.

**Trade Union Act, 1992**

In any enterprise workers can form an enterprise level trade union to protect and promote their occupational rights. According to this Act, the trade union association and federations have to engage in collective bargaining on behalf of the enterprise level unions. The enterprise level unions have to allow the workers to follow the decision made by the enterprise level authorized trade union. The authorized trade union shall not go on strike in enterprise or do such action that may assist it in any manner without completing the procedure mentioned in Section 76 of this Act.

The Act clearly mentions that the Government of Nepal shall appoint Registrars as necessary for the registration of the trade union in accordance to this Act. The Registrar shall be responsible for the registration of trade union. The Government can give necessary orders or directions to restrict any activity of trade union seem to create un-controllable situation thereby disturbing the industrial peace and harmony or to go against the economic development process of the country.

From the review of these three different acts and their QWL relating provisions it appears that the Government is actively playing guardian role with a view to protect interests of workers and employees working in factories. The responsibility of employer is to obey rules and regulations. They have to follow the mechanism to ensure a better QWL situation at the organizational level.
Similarly, labor unions are there to protect the rights of workers and employees considering provisions in the given labor legislations. However, it is yet to know clearly how all of them are putting their efforts in such directions.

**Situation of Nepalese Manufacturing Industries**

The effort for the establishment of modern manufacturing industries in Nepal was started after World War I, and after promulgation of the Company Act 1936. Though the *Rana* regime did pay attention to creation of an industrial base, there was a lack of continuity and proper strategic approach. It was worth mentioning that the Nepalese economy at the time of *Rana* regime was largely an expansion of Indian industrial market (Adhikari, 2005).

In 1956, Nepal has initiated the planned effort of industrial development. The Industrial Policy, 1957 was formulated and emphasis was given in the self-reliance in the production of basic manufactured goods. It was in 1962 another Industrial Policy was formed to motivate industrialists to establish a number of manufacturing industries in the country. This was also the time of third plan (1965-70) during which priority was given for the establishment of import substituting and export promoting industries. Most of the public enterprises were set up in the 1960s and 1970s funded by foreign assistance to play a catalytic role in the promotion of economic growth. Similarly, in 1974, the government brought a new industrial policy, which has the fundamental objective of contributing to the growth of import-substituting and export-oriented manufacturing industries.

After the restoration of democracy in 1990, the Government initiated to reform major policy to promote manufacturing industries. The new Industrial Policy 1992 announced and emphasis was given to deregulation, encourages competition and reliance on market forces in the allocation of resources (IIDS, 1996). The Government encouraged the domestic and foreign investors through the measures such as licensing, tax facilities, FDI, and institutional arrangements. The Government efforts were made to encourage private investors for the investment and for the maximum utilization of managerial and technical skills, modern technology, and foreign capital in the process of promoting industries in the country.
Table 1 Capacity utilization of some selected manufacturing industries (in percentage)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Sugar</th>
<th>Cigarettes</th>
<th>Beer</th>
<th>Matches</th>
<th>Cement</th>
<th>Jute product</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Year 2006</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Economic Survey, 2006/07

Although the Government has initiated various reform measures and enacted a number of rules and regulations, the overall performance in terms of capacity utilization of manufacturing industries is not that much satisfactory (see table 1). Industries engaged in producing sugar and cement are not even utilizing even 50 percent of their total capacity. Despite various measures from the government to improve performance of public sector manufacturing enterprise, it was found to be ineffective, irresponsible, and insensitive to their duties (Panday, 1999). There are number of problems faced by manufacturing industries. They are: high cost for raw materials, a little access to international markets, absence of corporate cultures, weak enforcement of rules and regulations, insecurity among investors, poor financial management, operational inefficiencies, overstaffing, growing employee’s satisfaction, increasing quality complaints, government interference, and lack of control mechanism and efforts (Adhikari, 1992; 2000; 2005; IIDS, 1996; Pant and Pradhan, 2002). Thus, it appears that growing employees’ dissatisfaction is one of the factors attributed for the low capacity utilization of selected manufacturing industries.

Assessment of QWL situation

In the past the Government of Nepal, to a large extent, remained inefficient to develop proper mechanism to monitor and supervise workplaces ensuring fair practices, such as standardized wage system and implementation of child labor standards. Although the Government enacted different acts in the past, is not found to be very successful for their enforcement at the organization level. Provisions in three different acts, as discussed earlier, are seemed to be enough, if they are honestly implemented. The following table clearly expresses how far government and employers are successful in implementing provisions of the labor laws (CONCERN, 2005, 2007; GEOFNT, 2001).
## Table 2: Assessment of QWL situation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QWL related provisions</th>
<th>Mechanism to ensure implementation of QWL provisions</th>
<th>The reality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Labor Act: 1992</strong></td>
<td>• Safety standards</td>
<td>• Jobs were not properly classified and graded in more than 90% of the manufacturing firms as per the norms of the Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Punishment measures</td>
<td>• Almost 61% factories were not providing appointment letter.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Minimum Wage Fixation Committee</td>
<td>• 77% of the organisations have not reappointed as permanent event after completing 240 days.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appointment of Factory Inspector</td>
<td>• 86% organisations had no system of advertisement for recruitment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Welfare Officer</td>
<td>• 36% enterprises have no fixed working hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Appellate Court</td>
<td>• Only 42% of enterprises had implemented minimum wage system as fixed by the Minimum Remuneration Fixation Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Labor Court</td>
<td>• Since many factories were established in existing building and facilities, layouts are not hygienic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Child Labor Act: 2000</strong></td>
<td>• Time-to-time inspection and direction from the Labor Office and HMG</td>
<td>• Leaves were not provided as stated in the Act.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Child Labor Prevention Committee</td>
<td>• Only 13% organisations had provisions for life insurance and 22% have provision for accidental insurance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Labor office approvals</td>
<td>• Only 7% of the organisations were having Labor Relations Committee.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Deputation of child labor Inspector and action</td>
<td>• Although 41% enterprises employed guest workers only 3% of these employed on the basis of work permit.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Punishment measures</td>
<td>• Over 26000 children aged 5 to 14 were engaged only in manufacturing industries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Child Labor Prevention Committee and Fund.</td>
<td>• As many as 59000 children were working in brick factories. Of these children 76% were aged between 12 and 16 and 24% were aged between 6 and 12.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Government can give direction time-to-time.</td>
<td>• 85% Child workers working in brick factories were suffering from respiratory problems, tuberculosis, muscle pain, joint pain, cough, fever, backache joint pain, and visual defect.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Trade Union Act: 1992</strong></td>
<td>• Appointment and functions of Registrar</td>
<td>• In a recent study conducted in 26 districts of Nepal there are 36 child workers in each of the 4012 mechanical works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Special power of HMG</td>
<td>• Total number of child labor in mechanical sector is 18000. Of which 24 percent are of 13-15 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 45% of them do not know about a fixed monthly salary.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 53% of them help their families from their income.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 60% of enterprises created problems in the formation of unions and 35% of these were punishing or harassing union activists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 29% of organizations were still not unionized, 10% enterprises ‘don’t know’ whether they are unionized or not.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 2 reveals the fact that both the government and employers have failed to follow and implement proper mechanism of labor legislations. There are a number of lapses in the implementation of labor laws in Nepalese factories. In such a case it is really difficult to ensure
QWL at the organizational level. The following reasons observed for the poor implementations of labor laws:

a. The government is not monitoring QWL factors as per the rules and regulations.
b. Factory owners are disinterested to implement government regulative mechanism.
c. Labor unions are not successful in the process of collective bargaining in order to ensure their members’ rights and interests.

Nature of jobs and Future Expectations of Union Leaders

The nature of jobs at present in manufacturing sectors is also close to the nature of jobs identified by Adhikari in 1992 in seven manufacturing factories. According to Adhikari (1992) most of the jobs in manufacturing sectors are routine, repetitive in nature, simple to perform, involve conventional technology and do not require high level of mental efforts. Adhikari (1992) further observed that jobs are less challenging and workers are less creative and innovative in their respective field and workers are strongly in favor of opportunity for overtime work, education, training and development, promotion and participation, and they believe that opportunity positively links to job satisfaction of workers. The result of responses is presented in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S. N.</th>
<th>Nature of Job</th>
<th>Yes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Repetitive Job</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Challenging Job</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Creative &amp; Innovative Workers</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Workers get frequent opportunities</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Opportunities to workers positively links to job satisfaction</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Wage system is based on productivity</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Training needs are assessed</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Performance of the workers are evaluated</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Promotion is based on performance evaluation</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Safe and healthy working conditions are maintained</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There have not been changes in the nature of job in manufacturing sectors for the last 15 years. Majority of jobs are still repetitive and less than quarter of the jobs are challenging. Most of the union leaders agreed that opportunity provided to workers lead to higher satisfaction. This clearly indicates that workers are seeking more opportunity to improve QWL situation. Although some of the organizations have formal system of performance evaluation, few of them indicated that their promotion is done on the basis of work performed. The study indicates that enterprises need
to take a few more safety measures like fire-exists, fire alarms, and safe drinking waters to improve the quality of work life. Regarding skill development programs, large number of workers are trained on-the-job. However, they inform that their training needs are not properly assessed and the candidates are selected based on convenience of the supervisor.

Based on current literature five major job related variables are selected to examine essentials of QWL in Nepalese manufacturing organizations. Table 4 indicates that the union leaders believe that QWL in Nepal is primarily related to adequate pay and benefits. The extrinsic traits of jobs: wages and salaries, incentives, facilities and other benefits are still more essential to maintain QWL than the intrinsic traits of jobs like meaningful jobs and work autonomy in the work sites. Job security and good working environments are also felt necessary and prioritized by leaders to enhance quality of work life. While extrinsic rewards are important, intrinsic traits of job: autonomy, challenges and task contents, are felt necessary to accelerate productivity and efficiency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Job contents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1st rank essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Adequate pay and benefits</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Safe and healthy working condition</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Meaningful job</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Autonomy in the job</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Nepal declared the Republic State and Election of Constituent Assembly held just in April 10 2008. Since the country declared as the Republic State expectations of people from every corner of life have been rising. Union leaders are not the exception. Table 5 depicts the expectation of union leaders about the new labor laws especially in QWL factors. These expectations can work as the guiding map to formulate new labor laws. The responding leaders are expecting that manufacturing enterprises have to develop a proper mechanism for the implementation of labor related legislation and there should be regular monitoring of such initiatives by government and unions. The union leaders are waiting on how the government develops mechanism through labor act so that it can insure rights of working people. According to union leaders, the government failed to enforce QWL mechanism and they believe that the government still has to play a lead role in maintaining sound industrial relations. There is the evidence that even in the private
sector-led developed economy like Japan, the role of government is appreciated in order to protect the right and interest of industries and workers (Adhikari, 2005 ‘a’).

Table 5: Expectation regarding QWL by Trade Union Leaders (N=40)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.N.</th>
<th>Expectations of union leaders from the future labor laws</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1st rank expectation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The need for enforcing labor legislations and proper mechanism to monitor and supervise work places.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sufficient provisions for social security, insurance, standardized wage systems, incentives, facilities, health and safety, working conditions, etc.</td>
<td>67</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Enhance skill development programs like training and development, participation, autonomy, flexibility, employee relations etc.</td>
<td>55</td>
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Table 5 put forward a number of demands of the unions expected to consider while framing a new labor law. Realizing this fact it seems that promulgation and enforcement of new labor legislation is becoming more relevant to incorporate opinions given by the union leaders. Moreover, previous experience shows that for a country like Nepal the role of government in the transformation of manufacturing sector and enhancement of QWL is imperative ensuring its freedom of choice particularly in the matter relating to employment relations.

The leaders of trade unions of manufacture sectors have realized the significance of skill development programs through participation, education, training and development, flexibility and others. They believe that collective bargaining process will be successful when labors understand their rights and they are trained and educated to follow the bargaining. New labor laws have to concentrate to make provisions for ensuring job security and high morale of work force.
Conclusion

After the restoration of Democracy in 1990, national economic policy of Nepal was geared towards the liberalization, privatization, and deregulation. However, experience shows that it is difficult for the state to give up all of its responsibility in the name of liberalization and deregulation. In a country like Nepal where the situation of working people is deteriorating and performance of industries is not being satisfactory in terms of capacity utilization, government should be more vigilant to protect their rights and interests (Adhikari, 2005).

The situation of QWL is really deteriorating. As we know that there are positive consequences of QWL initiatives on the personal and work lives of employees and workers. In the absence of QWL initiatives, as discussed in the beginning of this paper, negative consequences we will face. From the above discussion, it appears that our manufacturing organizations experienced negative consequence in the absence of QWL initiatives. What is required is the commitment on the part of government and employers to work on these initiatives and create a sound and harmonious industrial environment. In the changing perspective of Nepal it is imperative to learn from the past mistake and at the same time government has to take into account expectations of union leaders. However, we suggest that there should be an open debate amidst employers, the government and labor unions in the framework and provisions of new labor legislations to meet the challenges of 21st century.

References


*Trade Union Act* (1992), Ministry of Law and Justice, Kathmandu.