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Improvement of Processes in Managing the Organizational Climate and Work-Related Quality of Life in a Public-Sector Research Company

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Abstract

The objective of this article is to present the contribution of process management for implementation of improvements, through intervention, monitoring and evaluation of processes, in the organizational climate and work-related quality of life of a decentralized unit of the Brazilian Agricultural Research Company (Empresa Brasileira de Pesquisa Agropecuária - Embrapa). For this, we used the action research method. The data were collected from discussions in focus groups and a semi-structured questionnaire. During the improvement phase, quality measurement tools were used to prioritize and critically analyze the causes and problems, as well as to validate a new diagram of processes by applying the Bizagi® software. The study is qualitative and descriptive in nature. Among the main results of the improvement efforts are standardization of operational procedures, simplification and rationalization of work and stimulation of participative management with the involvement, participation and cooperation of all the involved parties.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The first studies involving the satisfaction and motivation of employees at work emerged in the writings of Kurt Lewin, who demonstrated interest in their application in the social context. Lewin proposed a motivational cycle that mirrors the states of stable and unstable equilibrium to which humans are subjected in their personal existence and social experience¹.

In the 1960s the studies of Forehand and Gilmer addressed the influence of workplace environmental variations and proposed indicators of organizational behavior². However, only in the 1980s did studies defining and examining the concept of organizational climate (OC) become common. However, this concept is associated with that of organizational culture, and in many cases the two are treated as interchangeable elements or as having mutual influence³.

According to Bispo², in Brazil the diffusion and application of research on OC can be traced to the studies of Souza carried out in public-sector entities based on the model of Litwin & Stringer⁴ and his own diagnostic model based on definition of nine factors. In this sense, studies of OC have always been aimed at the workplace environment and the component variables of the individual-organization relationship.

With respect to work, OC actions are configured as an opportunity to improve the factors involving the organizational environment, through redesign of old work processes and design of new ones where the need for improvement is evident. The OC diagnosis should enable managers to know how people perceive the practices, processes and structure, the form of communication and the management actions.

In this sense, people are seen as protagonists to the extent they perceive and interpret the organizational events and conditions that surround them. Therefore, meaning is constructed from the perception, interpretation and attribution of meaning that certain organizational aspects have for groups of people.

The theme of work-related quality of life (WRQoL) has been discussed with academic and practical business approaches since the 1950s. It was initially applied in the area of occupational health, and later spread to other areas of knowledge, such as psychology, sociology and administration. The theme originated with a socio-technical approach based on recognition of the social subsystem (employees and their physiological and psychological characteristics) as organizational components⁵.

The constructs of the quality of life theme in general are viewed and addressed with a multidisciplinary humanist focus. The theme is treated broadly, without homogeneity of concepts⁶. Ecologists relate it with the quality of life attributed to the natural environment; economists, sociologists and politicians associate it with wealth and welfare of society; and doctors associate it with health⁷.

Practical efforts related to WRQoL seek to improve the following institutional aspects: unification of actions for all employees; creating of better ways to communicate; increased participation of employees in decisions about work routines; and transformation of isolated actions of the company into joint actions. They involve activities to enhance awareness of change, promote psychological well-being and stimulate personal responsibility for healthy living and corporate responsibility for healthy working conditions in integrated form.

The organizational school seeks to deal with questions involving WRQoL from a specific focus on work routines. This is a current that relates WRQoL to themes such as health, safety, motivation and adaptation, i.e., a specific dimension where labor relations occur. Regarding models to improve work satisfaction, mention can be made of the supportive approach, with highlight on activities and practices to reduce stress and thus enhance productivity, and the counter-hegemonic or structural approach, which focuses on prevention of risks and removal of characteristics that degrade welfare at work⁸.

1.1. The Unit Studied

The National Center for Agrobiological Research (Embrapa Agrobiologia) is one of the 47 decentralized units of Embrapa. It is located in the town of Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro state, and is a nationally and internationally

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