

BOOK REVIEW

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THE RELEVANCE OF WORK AND THE QUALITY OF WORKING LIFE FOR SOCIETY

QUALIDADE DE VIDA NO TRABALHO: UM MODELO SISTÊMICO

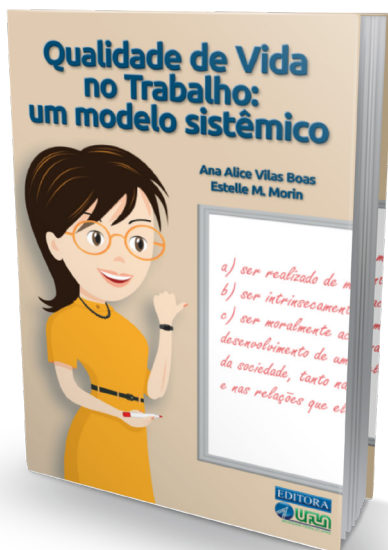
Ana Alice Vilas Boas, & Estelle M. Morin. *Qualidade de vida no trabalho: Um modelo sistêmico*. Minas Gerais: Editora UFLA, 2021. 196 p.

Understanding the meanings of work “is an important challenge for managers in view of the multiple transformations that have affected organizations and the ‘worlds of work’” (Morin, 2001, p. 8).

The subject of the quality of working life (QWL) has created anxiety, raised questions and aroused interests in different spheres of society. Its application and relevance can be seen in different published studies dealing with topics such as: management and leadership relations, the involvement of workers and their families (Rodrigues, Barrichello, & Morin, 2016); employee assistance programs, and the concepts of healthy and safe work environments (Calvosa, 2010); the spread of new technologies that affect the psychological well-being of employees (Morin, 2011); how professors and researchers establish greater labor significance, evaluating their productivity and deliverability (Vilas Boas & Morin, 2016; Vilas Boas, Pires, Faria, & Morin, 2018); and the composition of QWL analysis models (Vilas Boas & Morin, 2017, 2021). These last works reflect not only the individual interest of this book’s authors in this subject, but also their joint interest.

The first author, professor Ana Alice Vilas Boas is a Brazilian manager, with a Master’s degree and a PhD in Management (University of Reading), and a post-doctorate qualification from *Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales de Montreal* (HEC-Montreal) (2013). She was a professor at UFRJ from 1993 to March 2008, and since then she has been a professor in Management at the Federal University of Lavras (UFLA). Professor Estelle M Morin, the second author, is a Canadian, psychologist, with an MSc and PhD in Psychology (University of Montreal). She has been a researcher and professor at HEC since 1988.

Work in our society seems to be an important value, and has an influence on employee satisfaction and productivity (Morin, 2001). Loss of meaning at work and the quality of what is achieved through it may affect, albeit indirectly, a significant part of society - probably greater than can be directly or consciously measured. In this context, some of the indicators, such as absenteeism, presenteeism, reduced productivity, resistant behaviors, mistrust in relation to the company and managers, lack of motivation and breaking the implicit psychological contract, may indicate, even silently, that something is out of line with organizational objectives (Calvosa, 2010; Rodrigues et al., 2016).



By

MARCELLO VINICIUS DORIA CALVOSA^{1,2,3}
mvalvosa@yahoo.com.br

ORCID: 0000-0003-2724-9431

¹Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Departamento de Ciências Administrativas, Seropédica, RJ, Brazil

²Centro de Ciências e Educação Superior a Distância do Estado do Rio de Janeiro, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil

³Universidade Federal Rural do Rio de Janeiro, Grupo de Pesquisas em Gestão de Carreiras e Planejamento Estratégico Pessoal, Seropédica, RJ, Brazil

The work reviewed is divided into six chapters. The first deals with the meanings of work and QWL. In it, the authors examine the psychological and social functions of work, its origins, definitions, and models and QWL practices. The systemic model for analysing QWL is then described and defined by considering, in an orderly manner, the meanings “of work” and “at work” as a structured way for evaluating “optimal experiences” in the workplace and the use of “defensive strategies” for individual and collective employee protection (Vilas Boas & Morin, 2021, p. 35). This model assumes that QWL varies from individual to individual and from environment to environment. Presenting research that involves professors from Brazilian federal higher education institutions (HEIs), the authors close the chapter by narrating the “tastes and dislikes” of teaching work in the context of public administration.

In the search for work-life balance, the authors believe that an organization’s employees should perceive “value” (utility, usefulness, relevance, recognition or dignity) in proposals for social construction and in the current culture, which would enable them to become active agents in the development of pleasure, meaning and collaboration in the workplace. For various employees “the teaching profession has a peculiar profile”. It is different from other work activities due to “the complexity and level of physical and mental exhaustion that are part of the routine of this profession”, thus justifying that “the selected sample be investigated for critical analysis of the model presented” (Vilas Boas & Morin, 2021, p. 11).

The second chapter deals with the methodological procedures used in collecting the data and describes the research instruments used. It is worth highlighting the use of scales to generate the QWL indicators and factors, which demonstrates the quantitative character of the research. The population and research sample are then introduced, and the data analysis procedures detailed.

The next chapter describes the personal and professional profiles of a professor. This information is important in that it allows researchers to describe job characteristics and individual differences, which are essential for understanding QWL in the context of the systemic model. In the current scenario, teaching has undergone a precarious process that is guided by productivism, an excessive number of administrative activities having to be performed by professors, and the precarious working conditions in many Brazilian higher education institutions, which is a timely and apposite debate.

The fourth chapter deals with the QWL indicators of Brazilian professors and their correlations. For example, the book shows a moderate-positive correlation between “work-life balance” and “psychological well-being” indicators, meaning that if the first indicator increases or decreases, the second indicator also

increases or decreases. It would be interesting for the reader to follow the analysis of each correlation, such as the one between the “work-life balance” and “work-related stress” indicators, which have an inverse correlation. Another noteworthy point in this excerpt is its analysis of the possibility of differences occurring in the perception of male and female professors about QWL indicators.

The fifth chapter explains the QWL factors of Brazilian professors and their correlations, showing how an increase or decrease in the perception of one factor affects the others. There is, for example, a strong and positive correlation between “recognition” and “moral righteousness” (0.729, $p < 0.000$), and between “recognition” and “relationships with colleagues and superiors” (0.729, $p < 0.000$). This note helps explain why an increase in professional recognition scores should generate a higher level of moral righteousness and better relationships with peers and managers in the higher education environment, at least for this sample, which involved 17 Brazilian HEIs. It is a potentially interesting finding for coordinators, directors and other higher academic instances. Finally, the chapter presents testimonies from the professors themselves about the work in their respective HEIs. These testimonies make contributions that can be used in a qualitative analysis to outline strategies for improving work and working conditions.

The sixth chapter presents the final considerations on teaching QWL, with a brief summary of the main findings of the research and its contributions to public administration. Readers will observe contemplations of the complex behavior of QWL factors and indicators, which are crucial for a healthy work behavior. By carefully reading this chapter, readers will find answers to the following relevant questions: (i) What is the relationship between the meaning of work, work-related stress and psychological distress; (ii) Male and female professors are more sensitive to which QWL indicators or factors; (iii) What defensive strategies are used by professors to ensure more positive experiences in the work environment and increase their perceptions of QWL?

This book helped me, as reviewer, understand that seeking and implementing QWL involves planning, evaluating, and using individual and collective strategies in the work environment, and learning from previous experiences, and outlining and identifying the factors that enhance or inhibit tasks for promoting healthy and safe environments. All these efforts favor, in a contemplative way, the health of employees, thus avoiding the causes of illness and suffering, and promoting satisfaction and a suitable work-life balance. The study and analysis of QWL have shown to be a fundamental component for organizations, which will allow them to generate purposes in the working life of their employees.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Marcello Vinicius Doria Calvosa worked on the conceptualization and theoretical-methodological approach, theoretical review, writing and final revision of the manuscript..