

THE CULTURE OF SECURITY AND ORGANIZATIONAL ADMINISTRATION: LIMITS AND POSSIBILITIES OF FORMATION, HEALTH AND WORK SECURITY POLICIES IN THE ELECTRICITY SECTOR¹

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RESUMO

Estudos anteriores sobre os impactos psicossociais da privatização no estado de São Paulo indicaram a necessidade de aprofundar as análises sobre a importância das cargas psíquicas no processo de desgaste e de adoecimento dos trabalhadores, visto que a qualificação e a saúde são requisitos fundamentais para a realização segura das atividades. Através da realização de entrevistas semi-estruturadas com gestores e trabalhadores, de análise documental e de observações em uma das maiores concessionárias de energia do estado de São Paulo, procurou-se compreender como a preocupação com a segurança, valor fundamental da cultura organizacional que orienta e estrutura o sistema de gestão, se traduz em políticas e práticas nas áreas de formação/qualificação dos trabalhadores e saúde e segurança no trabalho. A política de formação/qualificação dos trabalhadores procura enfrentar a contradição de ter que formar, em espaços de tempo cada vez mais curtos, um trabalhador disciplinado para executar as tarefas dentro dos limites rígidos do trabalho prescrito. Além de capacitado para lidar com situações de trabalho cada vez mais perigosas, insalubres e penosas e, ao mesmo tempo, o trabalhador a ser formado deve ser criativo, astucioso e inteligente, para atender as exigências colocadas pelas mudanças técnicas e organizacionais recentes. A política de saúde e segurança no trabalho tanto apóia-se na legislação nacional vigente, quanto busca outras formas de controle de riscos baseadas em normas de segurança internacional. Implementam-se programas que são elaborados com base na práticas informais das equipes e procuram delegar aos trabalhadores a responsabilidade sobre a segurança. Na próxima etapa da investigação, pretende-se realizar um mapeamento dos modos de adaptação defensivos e de replanejamento do trabalho que estão sendo desenvolvidos pelos trabalhadores para enfrentar as pressões do cotidiano.

ABSTRACT

Previous studies on psychosocial impacts of privatization in the state of São Paulo indicated a need to deepen the analysis on the importance regarding psychic loads in the process of the worker's wear-and-tear and falling ill, being that qualification and health are fundamental requisites to safely carry out work activities. By means of semi-structured interviews with management and workers, documental analysis and observations in one of the largest energy concessionaire companies of the state of São Paulo, the study tried to comprehend preoccupation, security, which is a fundamental value of the organizational culture that orients and structures the administration system and which means policy and practices in the formation/qualification areas of workers, health and work security. The policy of formation/qualification of the work force tries to face the contradiction of having to form, in short periods, a disciplined worker to execute tasks within rigid limits of the prescribed work. Besides capacitated to handle work situations

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everytime more dangerous, voracious and arduous, the employee must at the same time, be creative, cunning and intelligent in order to deal with the demands interposed by recent technical and organizational changes. Work safety and health policies depend on current national legislation while it seeks other forms of risk control based on international safety norms. Programs based on informal practices from teams and that try to delegate to workers the responsibility of safety are implemented. In the next stage of the investigation, a mapping of ways of defensive adaptation and work re-planning, which are under development by the workers in order to deal with every-day pressure, will be carried out.

Key – words: Work organization and administration, qualification and formation of workers, Psychic loads.

Palavras-chave: Organização e gestão do trabalho, qualificação e formação de trabalhadores, Cargas psíquicas

INTRODUCTION

The recent privatization of the electric power section in Brazil accelerated the movement of productive restructuring in the generation and distribution companies of energy introducing a group of technological and organizational innovations in the processes and in the administration of work.

For the workers, one of the consequences of the privatization is unemployment, caused by dismissal plans, motivated or not (Gomes, 2002). The remaining electricians were submitted to a group of aggravated work loads, mainly, by the intensification of the rhythm of the activities. The loads of the physiologic type stand out. They are generated by the organization of night shifts and, mainly, by the accomplishment of movements and repetitive efforts, that are manifested in the increase of cases of RSI (Repetitive Strain Injury) among the workers. The loads of psychic nature are also expressive and generated by the rhythm of the intensified work, the awareness of the increase of the unhealthy conditions, danger and distress and by the atmosphere of organizational instability provoked by the privatization. Due to the exposition to these loads; there was an aggravation of the health situation and an increase of the frequency and of the gravity of the accidents (Scopinho, 2002).

Another important consequence of the privatization concerns the changes in the

profile of the workers' qualification. The introduction of digital technologies designed to control the production and distribution of energy provoked structural changes in the work processes. According to Scopinho (2002), the workers resented the loss of the control on the work, once they weren't being appropriately qualified to understand the ongoing changes. On one side, the control started to happen through the electronic transmission of data and information that, concretely, became unavailable and inaccessible. On the other side, the adaptation of the production process and distribution of energy to the norms of quality of ISO meant the increase of the bureaucratization of the work routine and the expropriation of an empirical knowledge, daily negotiated among the workers to solve the emerging problems and to guarantee the safety, that was incorporated to the manuals. The opportunities to interact intelligently with the work situation became scarce and the acquired potentialities and psychomotor abilities were sub-used, therefore workers were found in the condition of a mere vigilant of the system or an executioner of procedures rigidly prescribed. For this, the digitalization of the equipments and the standardization of the work procedures were noticed as forms of expropriation of this knowledge and, therefore, responsible for the loss of the professional identity built based on that

knowledge. Besides, without the control of the work it has become more difficult to control the occurrence of accidents and other misfortunes.

Privatized, these companies started to work in agreement with another logic, whose categorical imperative is the increase of productivity and of the quality with reduction of production costs, to make possible the enlargement of the profit tax. This way, based on the redefinition of the objectives and business strategies, new guidelines were formulated for the politics of the workers' management, so that they would adapt more quickly to the new demands, rules and organizational methods. In this sense, one of the main changes observed in the management of the energy distributing companies after the privatization was the re-definition and systematic spread of a group of values, that has in the safety its fundamental support.

The objective of this article is to analyze how the preoccupation with the safety, the fundamental value of the organizational culture that guides and structures the management system, translates itself in policies and practices of the workers' qualification and of health and safety at work. The analysis is based on researches demanded by the SINERGIA - Union of the Electricians of the State of São Paulo to understand the impacts of the process of privatization of the companies of the electric section on the workers, whose methodological drawing was based, basically, in the preliminary information supplied by the union leaders.

A case study was set in an important company of distribution of electric power of the country, whose concession area includes municipal districts of intense economical activity and great population concentration in the countryside of the state of São Paulo. The company was created in 1998, as subsidiary one of the most important company energy of the state of São Paulo,

and privatized in the same year. After privatization it reduced the number of workers about eleven to three thousand, who take care of approximately 2 million customers in more than two hundred cities.

The information was obtained through documental analysis, observations in the workplace and semi-structured interviews with workers and discussion groups with the workers and unionists and as well as systematized interviews using thematic analysis and triangulation of information (Minayo, 1999). Five interviews in group and four individual interviews with workers selected for the union had been carried out. First, the individual interviews and observations had been made. Latter, the interviews in group about five to ten workers had been carried out to argue the organization of the work. The interviews had been transcribing in the complete one and analyzed to identify to consensuses and discords. The content was checked with the data of bibliographical the documentary analysis. The analyzed documents had been reports, bulletins, magazines, collective agreements of work and pamphlets produced for the labor union, for the companies and agents of health and security on work.

There was an attempt to characterize the project and the strategies of management of the qualification and health and safety at work. It has to be understood that the policies of work management as action guidelines that guide the workers' efforts so that the business objectives are reached, they are linked to the process of strategic planning and they express the organizational philosophy, constituting fundamental mediator elements in the relationship between the capital and the work (Fleury & Fischer, 1992).

QUALIFICATION POLICIES

In this topic we will analyze the qualification politics as the fundamental part of a pedagogic process, of technical and

political nature, that aims to form a profile of an adequate worker to the good functioning of the restructured productive process using varied means and techniques, among them the trainings that are configured as privileged moments of production and reproduction of the organizational values (Fidalgo & Machado, 1994).

It is known that to qualify an electrician appropriately to operate the system with safety is a process that involves the accomplishment of a group of technical courses intercalated with field experience that lasts, on average, five years, period in which the workers develop supervised activities. The qualification, mainly of the ones that they use the technique of the energized-line², was always an important requirement to the safety of the system, of the own electricians and of the population in general. The taxes of frequency of accidents are indicative of this importance. They are larger among the recently-hired workers that, therefore, are the ones who have less experience (Scopinho, 2002).

However, in the studied company, after the privatization, the concern with the qualification assumed an ambiguous character. If, on one side, it became the target of strategic investments, on the other side, the contents and methods of the programs are being revised in the sense of reducing the cost of the investments.

It happens that, in the studied company, the use of management techniques as the downsizing, mainly through the adoption of the plans of motivated dismissal, reduced the

workers' contingent in, approximately, 75%, what affected the development of the operational and administrative activities. The reduction in the number of workers, associated to the search of the quality certificates in the offer of the services of distribution of energy, made the company intensify the efforts to qualify the workforce, in the sense of making possible that a worker assumed the same work volume accomplished previously for, approximately, four others that were dismissed, voluntarily or involuntarily. The remainders had to acquire technical knowledge and psychomotor abilities to provide safe conditions to work in a versatile way³. So, the company created a special coordination and invested in infrastructure, by building buildings and appropriate facilities in the headquarters to shelter the teams that are in charge of elaborating the training programs, supplying the courses and training the workers by simulating the handling of the electric system.

The qualification policies have multiple dimensions and differentiated objectives for the administrative and operational sections. The incentive forms and the strategies used to implement it are varied. The workers are beneficiaries of a concession policy of scholarships that motivates the frequency of the formal school, of a learning center with library whose collection is composed of books, magazines and videos to be also used in the free time, of a TV channel of internal circuit that exhibits a varied programming in compatible schedules with the work day,

2 Energized-line is a technique that is used at several workstations. It requires a high qualification level because the worker operates with the energized net of 13.800 KW.

3 To deal with the reduction in the number of workers, mainly in the rainy months when the demand of maintenance services increases, the company uses the temporary and indirect recruiting; practicing what is known by outsourcing. This is a central point of the management, because the care with the qualification, the health and the safety are the responsibility of the hired company. Bresciani (1994, p.200) points that "(...) in the immense majority of the cases, the so called Brazilian outsourcing has been just one more excuse to reduce costs 'no matter what', 'specialization and quality' are empty rhetorical, and the degradation of the work, of the worker, and also of the product, renovate as spurious means of business 'competitiveness'."

including courses of technical, administrative and behavioral formation, and of an e-learning (distance education). Although those resources are extensive to all, they are used, mainly, by those who occupy administrative positions and functions, due to the existent differences in the workers' profile and in the needs of each area. In all cases, the mechanisms of incentives to the qualification are not configured as disinterested gifts, but they are established demands for the performance evaluation that is done regularly.

In the operational section the strategies are directed, mainly, to the technical and behavioral training to operate the electric system in a safe way. When beginning the career, the electrician receives an introductory course that includes a module so he gets to know the NR-10 - Regulation Norm of Work number 10 that disposes about the execution of services in electricity (Brasil, 2004) - a module that teaches techniques of defensive direction and a behavioral module, to train communication abilities and interpersonal relationship. With this, the professional practice begins, during the first three years it is supervised and it is always alternated with other courses. The objective is to form a professional profile that is creative, clever, flexible and versatile, responsible and sufficiently disciplined to follow the rules and to execute the tasks inside of the rigid limits of the prescribed work. This professional should also be enabled to deal with work situations that are more and more dangerous, unhealthy and painful and as well as to assist the given demands by the recent technical and organizational changes. So, besides the trainings, the company still uses other means of diffusion of the organizational values, such as posters, magazines, weekly meetings and periodic encounters to discuss safety.

But, contradictorily, beside the investments in trainings, there is also a movement of review of the contents and

methods of the pedagogic programs, in the sense of rationalizing the workload and, consequently, the expenses that they mean, such as maintenance of the structures, specialized human resources and workers that were released from their workstations. The ideas that give support to the review, that implies the reduction of 20% of the contents of the courses are, basically, two:

1. after accomplishing a field course, the electrician faces in his/her routine activities just, approximately, 80% of situations that are related to the given content;
2. learning of the content is much better as long as the constituent units get smaller. If, on one side, those ideas have pedagogic foundation, on the other, it is right that they continue being worth even after the reduction of the 20%.

SYSTEM AND MANAGEMENT OF HEALTH AND SAFETY

The system of management of the health and safety of the studied company, in spite of the legal demands and the present diversified strategies, is based, essentially, in the classic paradigm of the work medicine. Such way of conceiving the workers' health, in spite of the progresses in the legislation and in the Brazilian sanitary policies, in practice, restricts the complex phenomenon of the determination of the diseases and work accidents to the fatalism of the pathogenic presence of agents or specific risks in the workplace, that are susceptible to control when the worker obeys the safety's norms.

Having safety as the fundamental value of the organizational culture, policies and practices of control of the risks are structured and focused, mainly, to restraint absenteeism and to create a business image based on the idea of social responsibility. Among the used strategies, the formation of commissions and the accomplishment of events and meetings to discuss themes related to the health and safety stand out. The dimensioning of the

team that is entrusted of to elaborate the programs and to implement the health and safety practices extrapolates what is demanded by the Brazilian legislation (Brasil, 2004), in number and types of specialized professionals. The team elaborates and implements the programs of health and safety demanded by law, based on the established guidelines for a four-folded commission, with horizontal structure to facilitate the exchange of information, that incorporates, besides the professionals of the area, directors and counselors, unionists and workers. In the ambit of this commission, periodic encounters and weekly meetings are also programmed and scheduled to analyze and to discuss the causes of accidents. Those are educational strategies that, besides involving the workers, they alert all of the members of the organization for the constant need of maintaining the safety.

Among the practices of health and safety, those related to the control of accidents, taking into consideration the high risk of the activities are the ones that stand out. From the legal point of view, a *work accident* implicates in the existence of a body injury and the fact should be notified to the competent organs through CAT - Communication of Accident of Work (Brasil, 2004). In the mentioned company, the notion of *work accident* extrapolates this definition and it still involves the concepts *incident* and of *deviation*. The work accident is not only an unexpected event that generates in the worker a bodily lesion, but it is every event that generates any kind of loss: for the person, for the property and the means of production, for the production process or even for the environment. In other words, it doesn't generate damage just for the person that works, but also for the company and for the production. And before having this damage- the accident, - there was an *incident* - a previous event, that can or cannot become an accident, that is, an event that doesn't involve, necessarily, damage or

lesion, but due to its potential risk, it cannot be ignored. It is said that there was a deviation during the execution of the work every time that the worker, consciously or not, defrauds the norm prescribed for the work.

For the electricians, an accident is "*Here [in the company]... I think it is when someone dies*", accident concept formulated based on the concrete experience of the ones that were the main protagonists of the events. What means deviation for the company, for the workers can mean what Dejours (2000) calls as the *tricks of the occupation or poor adaptation*. In agreement with this author, the "deviating" attitudes are necessary to maintain the worker's health and safety, because they are forms of defense against the adversities and the wear provoked by the work; they are strategies used to face an organization of the work rigidly prescribed that, a lot of times, makes the activities monotonous, repetitive and dangerous, an "already mastered work", as it denominates Seligmann-Silva (1994).

All of the events are object of quantitative and qualitative analysis and of internal divulgation through the events and meetings because they mean unexpected inter-occurrences in the flow of production and of work. The statistical data regarding the period between May 2003 and April 2004 show that there are more accidents with the indirectly hired workers than with the directly hired. Of 113 accidents, 79 (70%) of the accidents involved the indirectly hired workers and 34 (30%) the directly contracted. There is a discrepancy between the relative numbers to incidents and the deviations. The occurrence of incidents is three times larger among the direct workers compared to the indirect ones; the occurrence of deviations is seven times larger among the direct workers in relation to the indirect ones. These numbers, besides meaning the absence or inefficacy of the policies of health and safety in the hired companies, they indicate that it seems to have a larger control by the

contracting company in what refers to the registration of the inter-occurrences in the production process.

However, it was not possible to analyze the occurrence of accident appropriately in this company, because the available data are absolute, in other words, there was not enough information on the number of directly and indirectly hired workers by section and by workstation. The official records, which must be sent to all parties involved in workplace health promotion, would allow a qualitative analysis and broader understanding of the conditions in which accidents happen. However, the union hasn't been receiving the copy it is entitled to, and the search in the local agency of the National Institute of Social Security (INSS), the Ministry of Labour local office and the health services have been hindered by underreporting about workplace injuries and illnesses. In spite of the changes in the safety and health policies that took place in the 1990's, the historical difficulties to access the data, which would allow a better understanding of the workplace health reality in the country, remain.

For managers, the idea of the "clean production" involves, above all, a preventive politics:

(...) a product that is a clean product, the product that I produced in the best quality possible, smaller price and that the people who produced it didn't have any accidents. (...) we sold energy, so to speak... but what is mentioned in the stock exchange about that the company X that had a serious accident and that comes out in the media, or the newspaper, or it is published somehow, a serious accident or even an aggression to the environment (...) those values today inside of the market have a very important meaning, that it is the economical meaning.

The management of health and safety of this company, besides diffusing safety's idea internally, tries to form and to maintain a positive image of the company in the market.

Now it is important to obtain quality certificates and social recognition. The concern in overcoming the legal demands and with the prevention relates more with image through which the company wants to be recognized at the market, than with a real concern with the workers' safety and the health. This way, the management system as mediator of the work relations and of the action of the subjects involved in the production, in the sense of guaranteeing the productivity and the quality of the work and the reduction of the production costs.

TRAINING AND RISK CONTROL: THE INTERSECTIONS IN THE DAILY PRACTICE OF WORKERS

The qualification and health are fundamental requirements for the safe accomplishment of the work, especially for those who operate the alive-line, given the dangerous, unhealthy and difficult nature of the activities, for the workers. According to the business point of view, the policies of management of qualification and health and safety are pedagogic strategies to adapt the workforce to the needs of the production.

However, not every training and not all the practices of prevention of accidents are capable to assure the internalization of safe procedures because prevails something known as the "theory of the unsafe action", which doesn't recognize the inherent insecurity to the work conditions and considers the causes of the misfortunes lay in the worker that it doesn't obey the prescribed rules. So, other control modalities are introduced in the daily routine of the workers, among them the programs that worry about the standardization of work and with the designation of a member of the team as the vigilant and formal responsible for the executed work stand out. It is assumed that it is not possible to eliminate the risk to have safety. In the technicians' point of view, having safety is a matter of learning how to live together with the risk. The programs

teach to get along with the danger and they work as didactic resources of the formation process, as well as strategies of risk control.

The concern with the standardization was inherited from the old state company, but it won new outlines due to the search of the quality certificates, whose foundation is the homogenization of the work procedures as a form to increase the productivity and the quality and to reduce production costs. Inspired in the taylorist principles, the standardization is materialized in the form of manuals that describe each procedure in terms of the tasks to be executed, the method to be used (energized-line or unenergized-line), the material, the used means and instruments, the number of workers and of the calculated average time for the accomplishment of the task. The logic of the reasoning is: if the task was prescribed in the efficiency molds and of maximum safety and if the execution happens according to what was prescribed, that is, without suppressing any stage, the one who executes the task will have the risk under control, although it is not eliminated.

The procedures are described thoroughly, but, a lot of times, the workers don't follow them, for several reasons. To reduce the existent distance between the prescribed work and the real one, trainings with behavioral emphasis are given, because the accidents are attributed to the "deviations" in relation to the prescription. Besides, an electrician's designation as a watchman and formal responsible for the work that is executed by the team is associated to the standardization and the technical and behavioral trainings. This is not a job's position attribution but a function attribution, that is exerted through alternation, in other words, every day and through negotiation, an electrician takes the responsibility for the others acquiring authority to interrupt the task and to communicate to direction, if it is not being accomplished in agreement with the prescribed norms. All the electricians can

play this role and, depending on the moment, of the need and of the negotiation, the change can happen, as far as it is communicated to the direction.

The interviewees referred that this is an old practice among the electricians, that it was always used broadly in a companionship and solidarity atmosphere, a form of mutual protection against the risks of imminent death. The company took advantage of the complicity and of the existent informal cooperation and institutionalized it as a strategy of risk control. The problem is that this implicates the transfer of legal responsibility of the accidents to the workers. The re-planning of the work, that is sometimes necessary to make it safer and more pleasurable, became object of punishment. Besides, it contributed to rationalize the teams, because it spares a supervisor's presence, to intensify the work and to create polyvalence, because besides the tasks the electricians assume the supervision, and to generate interpersonal conflicts for the compulsory nature of denouncing the non execution of the norms. The responsible electrician lives the dilemma: if he denounces the deviations, it can create conflicts with the workmate; if he doesn't denounce and there is an accident, serious or not, he/she can be made responsible by not having taken the preventive measures.

The electricians alleged that the association of those strategies does not guarantee the safety, and it also represents an increase of the managerial control on the executed work. The pointed problems relate to the heterogeneity in the qualification of the members of the team and to the commitment in the interpersonal relationships that interfere in the atmosphere of the work situation and, consequently, in the safety. As for the qualification, the problem is that the company uses the resource of forming heterogeneous couples of workers in terms of experience, as a form of transferring the oldest electricians' knowledge to the

beginners. The difference in the qualification and experience level, compromises the quality of the pair work, overloads the most experienced one and it can establish a hierarchical relationship of power between who “knows more” and who “knows less”. This can move the more experienced one not to respect the recommendations of the less experienced one. Concerning the interpersonal relationships, they referred the concern with the possibility of having to work and to taking the responsibility for the beginners (less experienced), with whom they don’t possess a friendly relationship or intimacy to call their attention in case of mistake. For the workers, these are old mechanisms of control of the work that were redefined and presented as practices of safety. The watchman’s standardization and officialization in the work situations contribute to the peacefulness of the company, but they increase the pressures, the psychic loads that provoke the wear and the workers’ sickness.

However, the production relationships educate the worker to adapt as well as to face the logic of the productive system (Fidalgo & Machado, 1994). The technological innovations and the atmosphere of instability and competitiveness created by the organizational functioning guided by the rules of the market contribute to reduce the involvement with the work and to increase the resistances, that result in retention of the accumulated knowledge and they harm the cooperation and the necessary communication to guarantee safety, due to the fear of the unemployment.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In the analyzed company, qualification is synonymous of preparation to face the market, what translates a utilitarian and technical conception of the work process; the health is an individual phenomenon,

important requirement to obtain productivity in the work. The qualification policy tries to face the contradiction of having to form, in shorter and shorter spaces of time, a disciplined worker to execute the tasks inside of the rigid limits of the prescribed work. Besides having being qualified to work with more and more dangerous, unhealthy and difficult work situations and, at the same time, the future worker should be creative, clever and intelligent to assist the demands of the recent technical and organizational changes. The system of health and safety management is not characterized as a promotion and prevention policy. Based on the current legislation, forms of risk control that are elaborated and based on the informal practices of the teams so that it can be delegated to the workers the responsibility on the safety are searched. Such policies act as symbolic and subtle forms of control of the work so that, on one side, the costs in the workforce management can be reduced and, on the other side, a business image of social responsibility and safety is created and maintained.

We followed the course of the investigations on the psychosocial impacts of the privatization of the electric power section in Brazil and analyzed two important matters related to the process of the electrician’s work with alive-lines. The first concerns the mapping of the manners of defensive adaptation created by the workers and the understanding of the mechanisms of the re-planning of the activities to face the pressures of the daily schedule, to work with the adversities and the inherent loads to the organization of the work, especially the psychic and physiologic loads. The second one refers to the understanding of how, in the context of the changes, the new forms of the workers’ identification with their work and the analysis of the re-construction process and the outstanding traces of the new identity of the electricians take place.

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