

## CONCEPT AND QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUES

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**ABSTRACT.** DEFINING THE CONCEPT OF QUALITY OF LIFE IS A RATHER DIFFICULT TASK SINCE IT IS A CONCEPT THAT SEEMS BY ITS VERY NATURE SUBJECTIVE AND DISPERSED. THEREFORE, WE DO NOT CURRENTLY UNIVERSALLY ACCEPTED DEFINITION OF QUALITY OF LIFE, BUT A NUMBER OF APPROACHES TO THE CONCEPT BASED ON VARIOUS ASSUMPTIONS, ASSUMPTIONS AND METHODS OF ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH. FROM THIS PERSPECTIVE, THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS ARTICLE IS NOT TO PROVIDE DEFINITIVE ANSWERS REGARDING THE DEFINITION OF THIS CONCEPT, BUT TO HIGHLIGHT THE HISTORICAL APPEARANCE OF THE PREMISES AND CONDITIONS THAT CONCEPT TO ENCOURAGE FURTHER DEBATE ON THIS ISSUE.

**KEY WORDS:** QUALITY OF LIFE, HAPPINESS, QUALITY OF LIFE, SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL GOOD.

### 1. Introduction

In recent years, concern for a decent quality of people's lives become increasingly important, both in the scientific world, governments and decision-makers in public policy and ordinary people. Underlying the interest in quality of life have been some important circumstances:

a) The concept of quality of life is a very attractive concept, part of its attractiveness from that in the alternative involves a generous and positive purpose, that of a good quality life. The term is used to define considered legitimate social objectives and increase the quality of life is considered a task that never ends.

b) Currently gained social recognition widening the idea that material wealth is insufficient to cover the entire complex of human needs and a being fulfilled, contributing many other items, in addition to those materials. People not only have material needs (income, property, housing, employment, etc.) but also non-material needs (satisfaction, fulfillment, etc.) which are satisfied by mechanisms other than economic ones.

In the current stage of development of western society, we are witnessing a new reconsideration of values and human needs, a reassessment of the relationship between economic and social meanings and rethinking the notion of "good life" and the "good society".

c) Damage to the environment and exhaustible natural resources nature made increasingly obvious need for sustainable development and sustainable society, quality of life becoming an end in itself development.

d) The current economic crisis has produced a review of the evolution of society and the pillars on which it is based. In explaining the timing of deadlock in development, is increasingly call upon social elements.

## 2. The historical roots of the concept and quality of life issues

The concept and quality of life issues appears in the twentieth century, yet their base previously built within areas of knowledge and of action, philosophy and social sciences. The origin of the concept and quality of life issues are the concern of centuries of human life and happiness, the latter being, in fact, the main perspective of this concern. About how people in ancient times, thinking he conceived his own life and happiness, we have unfortunately too little information, only springs were able to keep being the works of thinkers. But what is certain is that between thinkers and views of ordinary people on how to think and conceive his own life and happiness, there are big differences. Even Aristotle recognized the difference between the common man and philosopher on how to design happiness. "Of course, not without reason, people seem to develop good and happiness in the manner of life that they choose it ..." According thinker there were actually three ways of life of the people, "the one who choose it at anchor in public affairs and, finally, the contemplative "life-oriented gains being" unnatural "because" wealth is not good that we're looking for. " Although Aristotle happiness also needs "goods outside" is impossible or difficult to accomplish without "resources", he believes that "happiness is an activity of the soul in conformity with virtue perfect" man happy is he who will act forever accordance with virtue perfect throughout life. "virtue is twofold, **dianoetică** and ethics, the **dianoetică** is born and grows especially through teaching (hence requires experience and time), when the ethics is acquired skills training ... "[1]

An analysis of how happiness evolved throughout history approach was made by Romanian sociologist Andrei Petre in his study The problem of happiness.. Its ethical and sociological foundation, developed between 1919-1921. Petre Andrei, happiness appears as a phenomenon dependent on society and morality "... the motive of all human actions, ultimately, is the eternal longing for better, is the tendency towards contentment of life, to happiness". In his view, there are two main approaches to the sources of happiness: the direction subjectivist and direction objectivist. under the direction of subjective happiness is rooted in the individual soul, identified by some with reason (conception intellectualist) and others, with the feeling (conception affective) or will ( concept of voluntarism). After Petre Andrei, design intellectualist be found in Aristotle, Plato (happiness is pleasure purified by intelligence), the Stoics (to be happy to live by nature but the essence of nature is reason, happiness stoic as exercise rational of virtue), Spinoza (the only happiness is that resulting from knowledge, which involves the release of emotions, passions), Leibniz (which derives happiness from virtue, virtue is identified with perfection, and it is to acquire knowledge) .Under the direction objectivist happiness has its origin in the outside world, being exclusively dependent on external factors. Romanian sociologist theological distinction between objectivity and social objectivism. If theological objectivism, widespread in antiquity and the Middle Ages, believes happiness is dependent upon the spirits and gods, or as the product of mystical ecstasy in which man comes into direct contact with God, social objectivism puts happiness in absolute dependence social environment.

Referring to objectivism social, Petre Andrei remembers him Durkheim, that sees the individual as an exclusive social, and society as a whole outside the individual will, the coercive

power: the man does not choose one company that was born and nor can detach from it, for education that is given form its soul in a certain direction, it makes it accessible happiness that he understands and wants society.

Analyzing happiness and in opposition to pain and suffering, Petre Andrei shows that while ancient defining happiness through pleasure and contentment, Christianity considers suffering as a necessary element for the full development of the inner man and the definitions of modern admit notes of happiness pleasure and suffering.

At final analysis, Petre Andrei defines happiness as "thanksgiving sustainable will by fulfilling wishes and achieve goals." The concept of happiness is social and ethical, because the isolated individual would not have cause for satisfaction / dissatisfaction biological. individual feels happy / unhappy comparison between himself and others; happiness is based, therefore, on two factors absolutely necessary to form this phenomenon: the individual and society.

Starting from the idea that happiness is based on the notion of purpose and means, sociologist Romanian asserts that man can have three kinds of goals: individual (conservation itself and perfection), social (altruism and achieve social good) and human (humanity - as fully cultural values and the ethical ideal that determine political and social activity in general and historical evolution).

The analysis made by Petre Andrei on the meaning of happiness from different philosophers in history and replaces any other presentation by historical approach to happiness (as historical root of the issue of quality of life); on the other hand, illustrates the existence of this concern and Romanian sociology from its beginnings.

### **3. The appearance of the concept and quality of life issues**

We note that the general issue of social research (sociology, anthropology, social psychology), involving, in one way or another, aspects of people's lives. In fact, it might not do otherwise, for that reason conducting social research is to know people's lives. However, although it seems paradoxical, studies the quality of life itself appeared relatively late in the history of social research. Contrary to identify early research temptations actual quality of life somewhere long ago, possibly even in ancient writings, interpreters theme in question indicates these beginnings in the first half of the decade VII of the twentieth century. Although the term itself was used prior period, the concept of quality of life was launched first in the US, taken rapidly in Europe and beyond, thanks to its attractiveness as collocation value evaluative human life, at individual, community, group, societal and planetary.

Connections can be made between research on quality of life and various other concerns to address human life, however, concerns the approach to quality of life is something new, not so much by the subject of research, as the content revealed through a paradigm specific approach, one that common sense without complying with the idea of quality involves evaluation (self-evaluation) by the population of his own life by marking the differences in degree of order of magnitude. Such surveys allow comparisons between the quality of life of communities or the same community at different times.

Without diminishing anything value of different research that might make reference should point out specific research paradigm of quality of life, with a view to maximizing the reception of the added knowledge that brings and prevent attempts dilution up disposal of this specificity through tests for determination of continuity with other trials and melted in a default scheme.

Both previous maintenance period the concept of quality of life and afterwards, were used and longer use expressions such as "human life", "life of peoples", or even "the quality of people's lives." Circumstances are used these concepts refer to the general terms of characterizing different populations, groups, communities, ethnic groups, peoples. there is nothing unnatural in this, because the concept evaluative quality of life does not cover all instances where appeals to expressions become traditional, previously raised as research quality of life not far from exhausting social research area.

There is sufficient evidence that the quality of life paradigm is not limited sociological, it is rather an interdisciplinary. Although social scientists have made important contributions on line studies of quality of life since the dawn of their defining the concept and paradigm approach and by conducting empirical research in the field, out of which everything would have remained only at the design stage, one fact is beyond doubt, that not only sociologists carry out studies of quality of life. Indeed, in addition to sociologists, the research quality of life are concerned economists, psychologists, ecologists, physicians, demographers, anthropologists and even specialists in art and science, but these specialists addresses only some limited aspects of quality of life in agreement disciplinary their interests.

For the most appropriate approach to quality of life, we consider it necessary to resort always in a disciplinary perspective, the general support of this research provided by sociology as a science of the social part of life and quality. In other words, quality of life can not be understood without the contribution of sociology, even as the latter is not sufficient to constitute a new paradigm of research has already stated that one type is social.

There are enough reasons to locate the beginnings of actual research quality of life in society North American in the mentioned period, related concerns to define national targets and measure the degree of achieving them through social indicators, the latter expressing features public interest of social processes. Economic indicators to complement social indicators, practically the beginning of the actual quality of life research. That idea appeared not so implacable as an evolution of research interest in various fields, but as an innovation or creation. In the 60s of the last century in the US, the idea of national targets trigger a large-scale activity at political and scientific. During this period, in turn, Eisenhower presidents Kennedy, Johnson, appoint committees to define national targets. Also, universities are conducted studies on the consequences of technical development and growth, with the support of various institutions and government agencies. It is thus that area of concern in the 60s - '64, are launched concepts of "social indicator" and "quality of life". In 1962, it appears the first report of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences for NASA's space program on the consequences, because a second report to appear in 1966. It is one of the most remarkable works for the issue in question with title Social Indicators, publisher, R. Bauer. The main authors of volume, B. Gross and A. Biderman, through their previous work, they helped launch the concept "social indicators" and "quality of life". In 1966 it had reached a broad acceptance of the terms, including the political leaders and international organizations (UN, UNESCO). The political component did not fail to be present. Thus, in early 1964, it launched the "Great Society" by US President Lyndon Johnson. Great Society is but one of the high quality of people's lives. We reproduce below, after the work cited above, several passages that Johnson present the program "the Great Society is where we find the last of gratitude and the best of us can find greatness. Everyone will respect the dignity of others and we admire the achievements of others" (My hope for America, 1964).

"We can open the doors of learning of useful work and a well-deserved free time not only for the privileged few, but we can open to all. These goals can not be measured by the size of financial deposits. They can only be measured by the quality of life of our population. Millions of Americans have accumulated wealth and discovered that ownership alone is not enough. They need a change to gain knowledge to achieve beautiful, to enjoy success, family and community "(Remark of the President, 1964)." Great Society requires not only how much and how good, no only how to create wealth but also how to use it, not only how fast we go, and are we going. He proposed that the first test for a nation: the quality of its population (State of the nation Message, 1965).

It is known that in the US, more than in any other country prevailed the idea that economic growth is the fundamental objective to be attained in society and thereby becomes feasible to obtain welfare for all. This belief has continued to manifest itself, although it noted that despite remarkable economic performance in the postwar period has not reached an appropriate level of welfare for the entire population. In these circumstances, the "Great Society" is the quality of life for the whole nation, with many implications for social policy. It should be noted, however, that the term quality of life was already used in some works, prior to the time of launching itself of its the US President in 1964. what seems to be common these works is the idea that the economic dimension of life and quality of the goods they hold are not enough people for a better quality of life. For example, in the last paragraph of the paper Sociological imagination published in 1959, American sociologist CW Mills talks about quality of life as an objective general knowledge in sociology "... problems sociological, if made properly, it must incorporate the same time attempts life, and social issues, conflict, history and biography, the entire scope of the complicated relationship between them. It is in this sphere is carried people's lives and building the company and it is in this sphere sociological imagination has a chance to distinguish the quality of human life in our time "[2]. We stressed the phrase" quality of human life "not to draw attention that the Mills would originate early studies of quality of life, but simply because he talks about the quality of human life prior to the official launch of this concept. In fact, he is not concerned about any evaluative concept of quality of life, quality of life just keeping in mind the overall objective of social knowledge in the sense that the research quality of life are sociological study and nothing more.

The concept of quality of life occurred in those historical conditions when humanity realized that economic welfare is not able to satisfy the many needs of material and spiritual, that any economic growth should not be an end in itself, but primarily must be a means to create better conditions of life to meet the needs of a community and also when the monopoly approach to economic development could not be kept and the other sciences, especially sociology and environmental science, became increasingly more credible in their criticism of the devastating side effects of accelerated development, such as the destruction of the natural environment and social relationships. The emergence of quality of life research period is a period in which the western world has seen a rapid pace of economic growth and a boom that has generated opportunities, in turn, an explosion aspirations; for a large part of the population, opportunities have increased more than consumption needs, where availability for something other than economic and qualitative consumption. In those circumstances, there was a crisis of capitalist civilization respect human consumption. In sociology, the answer to this crisis took essentially three forms of value orientations, thematic alternative lifestyles and quality of life theme.

Since the 70s there are many works including overall assessment of the quality of life of Americans. It set up a company that brings together specialists in the field (ISQOLS - International Society for Quality of Life Studies) which publishes the prestigious journal Social Indicators Research. A definition of the term is given by WHOQOL (World Health Organization Quality of Life Group's) understanding by "quality of life": the perception of individuals on their position of life in the context of culture and value systems in which they live and to the objectives expectations and their standards. This is a complex concept, a "interaction sized objective and subjective, including the issue of the health of the person, her condition psychological, level of independence, social relationships, and relationships with the environment in which he lives" [3]. The concern for quality of life, passed quickly in Europe, where in most advanced countries, such as Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands appear first social reports, organized collections of indicators and edited volumes are included comparative analysis of levels and trends made sociologists and statisticians, sociologists effort to monitor the development taking into account both the objective and the subjective. Stretching and influence in Eastern Europe, particularly in Hungary and Romania, where Research is the quality of life since the late 70s. In Romania, these studies have become a real tradition since 1990, when it set up under the aegis of the Romanian Academy, Institute for Research on Quality of Life (IRQL) that conducts research periodic monitoring, giving a strong impetus to education and research. A variety of works on the subject are published in the journal Quality of Life Profile, published by the Romanian Academy [4].

Regardless of conjunctures that showed concerns for quality of life, they prove to be extremely useful today. Current period-specific issues: economic stability, economic growth, the global economic situation, international migration, environmental issues, terrorism affects people's quality of life. In this context, a comprehensive approach to quality of life can be neither effective nor useful. Complexity of the situation demands, often, sequential approach. The contemporary world, in its diversity and complexity, not only needs a comprehensive approach to quality of life. These comprehensive approach there, being present from two sources: international organizations and globalization. But "promoting logic needs genuine human" through global programs raises a fundamental question: what are the needs of genuine human? There are different views in cultural contexts (mostly) specific enough to think about the peculiarities generated by religions, with implications on what are "genuine human needs." And political regimes totalitarian temptation promote 'needs genuine human. "Globalization in general and cultural globalization, in particular, will not impose a common view on the" needs genuine human ", ignoring cultural specificities, geographical, historical.

#### **4. Defining the concept of quality of life**

The term quality of life is hard to define and operationally used in research, design, forecasting and social planning. Despite these difficulties, he has a number of advantages as compared theoretical, methodological and practical-even operational justifying her efforts to clarify the meaning of a theory of social development.

The meanings of the concept of quality of life are generally ambiguous because, on the one hand, refers to the objective conditions in which individuals live, and on the other hand, concerns what individuals think about these conditions. In this respect it so the quality of the public life and private life. In fact, in its essence - as the name implies it - quality of life implies a

qualitative approach to human social life, as it is assessed by experts and how it is experienced by the subjects.

Difficulty of defining the concept of quality of life due to the complexity of that concept. Due to its complexity, nowadays one can not speak of a widely accepted definition of quality of life, but a number of approaches to the concept based on various assumptions, assumptions and methods of analysis and research. Defining the concept of quality of life has many variants in the literature, based on a broad definition to one that presents the concept through its components or areas of application.

Although it seems to be developed at an early stage in the research area of economic activity, the term quality of life has become in a short time due to its complexity, a strong interdisciplinary character. M. Farquhar [5] even states that the concept of quality of life is the term multidisciplinary was in current use, multidisciplinary being identified, moreover, as the main advantage of this concept [6].

Attempts award authorship of the concept evaluative quality of life discipline or another do nothing but lead to the impoverishment of the meanings which may be given and the restriction of the scope, even if they can establish some connections, such as those sociological and psychological studies on happiness, satisfaction, lifestyle, etc.

Defining the concept of quality of life is not an easy task, as remarked Sen and Nussbaum: "Searching an approach universally applicable quality of human life is marked promise a higher power, able to fight for the lives of those who have traditionally been oppressed or marginalized. But this search is experiencing difficulty in defining epistemological adequately to this approach, identifying sources from the rules and how they can prove that they are the best. This approach is also faced with the danger of Ethics of paternalism, it is obvious that, too often, these approaches have been insensitive to what is valuable in the lives of people in various parts of the world and served as an excuse for not to delve deep into these lives ". [7]

The emergence of several definitions and approaches of the term quality of life are not only the result but the complexity and attractiveness of the concept of scientific and public plan. In shaping definition of quality of life must start from the idea that we are dealing with a concept of evaluative. Specifically, the quality of life of a population (individuals, various social groups, local communities, regional, ethnic and national) is determined by evaluations that this population makes on their lives and on the various aspects that influence in one way or another.

In this context, Dex online dictionary defines quality of life as "a category that covers all possibilities offered by individual company to organize its existence after its own needs and desires."

In the conception of I. Mărginean, quality of life can be defined as: "all the elements that relate to the physical, economic, social, cultural, political, health, etc. people live, the content of the activities it carries features relations and social processes involving goods and services that are available, consumption patterns adopted, how and lifestyle assessment of the circumstances and the results in terms they meet people's expectations and subjective states of satisfaction / dissatisfaction, happiness, frustration etc. "[8].

By this definition, is performed multiple interference between objective and subjective information that between macro and micro, between quantity and quality, being able to increase the relevance of data for characterizing the quality of life. Moreover, these interferences are not optional. If you would not call both the factual data, assessment and satisfaction, we could speak

of a survey of quality of life but only certain components thereof or the living conditions, if we analyze the data only states actually or subjective well-being if research is confined to such information.

Quality of life can be seen from the point of view of the individual, a community or human society as a whole. Depending on the size, quality of life becomes a relative measure which acquires nuances differentiated approach depending on the context. What is found but with constant regardless of context approach represents sides defining the concept namely the material and the spiritual side. Depending on the context of the approach, the quality of life of people can take different values from extreme negative (poor, poor, critical unsatisfactory harmful) to extreme positive (good and favorable, satisfactory, satisfactory, beneficial).

From the perspective of both valences composing - objective and subjective Robert Constanza defines the concept of quality of life as "the degree to which the objective needs of the individual are met in relation to the subjective perception, individual or group on the welfare"[9].

### **Conclusion**

Today both theorists and practitioners in some areas, experts from different professions etc. use common language terms "*living standard*", "*lifestyle*", "*a way of life*", "*standard of living*" without being concerned about the true meaning of these terms, related quality of life. Living standard is mainly economic indicator, which can be defined as quantitative aspect of meeting the economic needs of an individual or a corporate body. Expresses general lifestyle of living human, the report of the conditions in which he leads his life and work conditions, individual patterns of behavior determined to some extent by socio-cultural factors, personal characteristics and educational. Way of lifes refers to how people organize their everyday life and leisure; in other words, how to dress, to eat, to live, etc., to achieve their personal wishes with the system of values and norms prevailing in the community. The standard of living is a reference object for the living standard, involving quantitative attributes. The standard of living can be as substitutable for the concept a notion of living standards, because the standard is presented through the standard of living of the population.

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