

NEW PATTERNS IN SCHEDULING WORKING TIME

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Abstract:

Flexible work arrangements should focus on providing employees with more options for when and how they do their work. Organizations can provide a suite of flexible options to enable employees to choose the arrangements that best balance their work with family and lifestyle preferences. In this paper we intended to investigate the flexibilization process of working time determined by the new trends of work organization. For this purpose, the various aspects of working time in a company were analyzed in connection with the employee's life cycle.

Keywords: flexible work time, time preference, work arrangements

Introduction

Creating more flexible work arrangements is one way to better attract and retain talented leaders and managers. Balancing work and personal life has become a pressing challenge in society today, and the ability to create work schedules that accommodate this challenge is an extremely attractive proposition for potential employees.

Organizational policies on flexible work cannot be fully effective without real support and commitment from management in implementing and applying these policies. Managers need to encourage and actively support the use of flexible arrangements, and organizations need to actively support managers in making flexible working arrangements part of the normal operating environment. Managers need to be provided with appropriate resources, training and time to appropriately assess all requests for changes in work arrangements. Some adjustments to work organization may be necessary, such as arrangements meetings when all staff can attend.

Flexible work arrangements should be available for all employees in the organization, at all levels including management. Flexible work arrangements for senior positions are also important in retaining mature age

employees in the workforce and reducing potential loss of organizational experience and skills, by providing alternatives to retirement. (Bryman, 1987)

Approaching arrangements working time and measures of human resource management in companies in a life course perspective of employees it is necessary coordinating the study on three different levels.

From the perspective of employees, activities in a certain phase of their life must reconcile paid work performed for the employer with other social activities and family at the time. It may be called the first level of synchronization. In this synchronization should be considered a number of factors acting at the individual level: age, education, family background, interests.

Klammer et al (2007) emphasis that from the life course perspective of the employee may notice a number of diachronizations between the various phases through which an employee passes, given that an individual's situation is not stable and could change. In this diachronization has to be considered a number of factors acting at the individual level: the completion of a program of study or training with the conduct of work, marriage, and birth of

a child, reduced working capacity due to age or accidents.

The last level is the synchronization between the life cycle of the company and employee. Business cycles have become much shorter and less predictable. They do not necessarily intersect with the time horizon covered by the workers. In actual conditions, companies must adapt to market demand and increased

need to maintain and enhance competitiveness. It is the second type of synchronization between the needs of the collective (company) and the needs of individual (employee).

Clearly, arrangements working time is the key timing personal needs with the collective needs.

In figure 1 the synchronizations processes are illustrated.

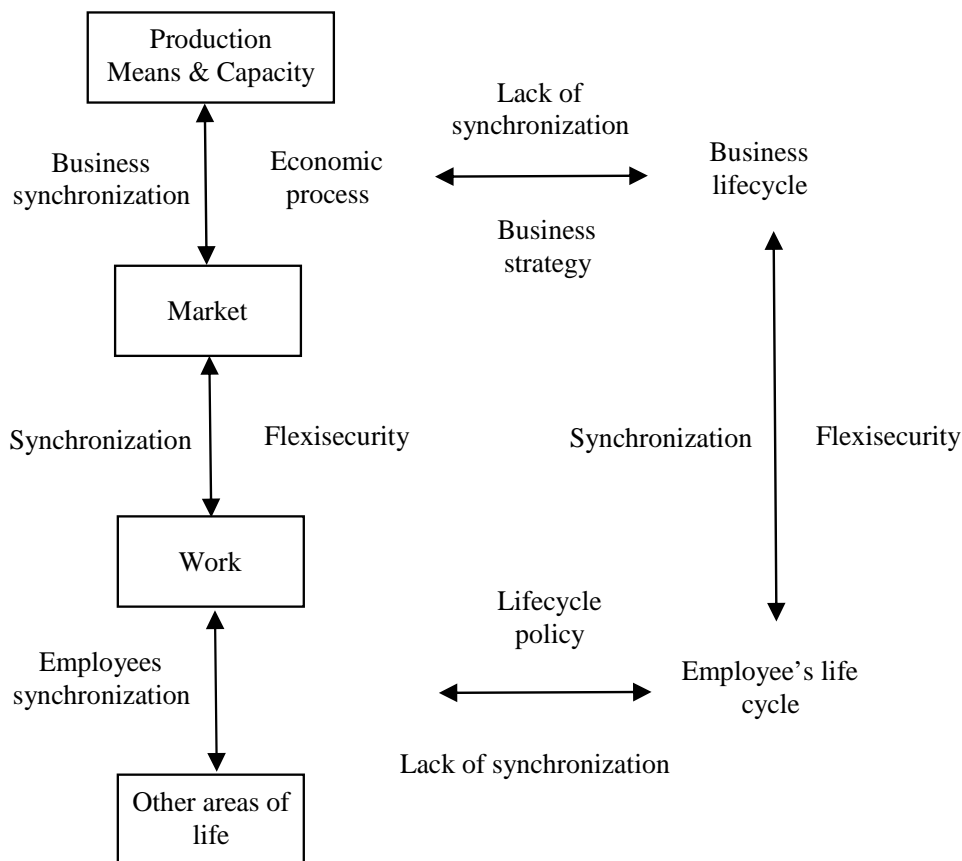


Figure 1. Synchronization of business cycles and the life course of employees

Source: Own illustration building on Klammer et al (2007)

Phases of the flexibilisation process of working time

Various interests of employees and employers regarding to flexible working time arrangements influenced the flexibilisation process of working

time in different waves of time (Hoff, 2006). Until now we can speak three different waves that have characterized the process of de flexibilisation, fourth wave being in early stage (figure 2):

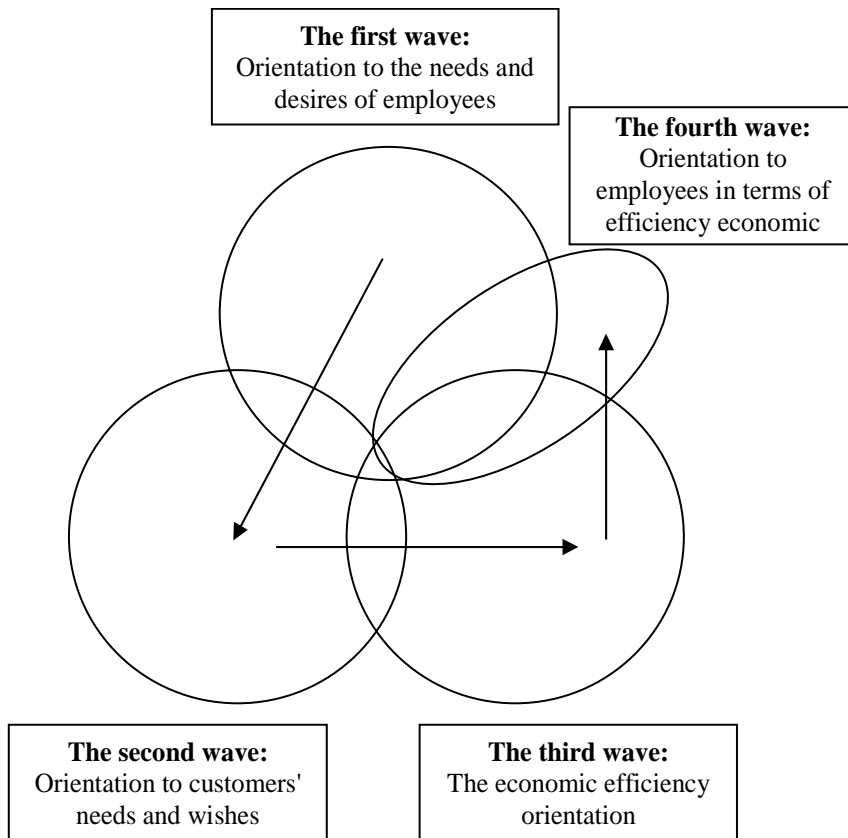


Figure 2. The evolution of flexible working time

a) The first wave of working time flexibilisation took place in the 1970s and early 1980s and was oriented towards new interests and needs of the employees. Because of a shortage in labor supply, employers tried to create more attractive working conditions by replacing strict working times ("9-5 o'clock") by flexible intervals at the beginning and the end of the working day. Some of the shortcomings of these working time models were, however, that they were not oriented towards the customers, that there was still no long term elasticity (e.g. on a monthly or yearly basis) and that these schemes were not suited for shift work.

b) The second wave of working time flexibilisation shifted the focus from the employee to the customer. In the 1980s and early 1990s, newly developed working time schemes

focused on the accessibility of services for the customers at any time. While collective bargaining in this period led to a further decline of the average working hours for full time employees, companies extended their operating hours. The organization of time in the team became one of the measures to cope with due to this new service orientation. Seen from retrospective, the service orientation in combination with a still underdeveloped steering of the presence and absence of the workforce partly led to troubles such as overboarding working time accounts which often could not be balanced out.

c) During the third wave of working time flexibilisation in the 1990s and early 2000s the economic efficiency moved into the focus of interest, due to growing international competition. This led to a double progress in the

organization of working times in the company. On the one hand, a more efficient planning of the presence and absence of each employee developed (e.g. to maximize/optimize the operation of the machinery), while on the other hand working time based on trust became a new matter. This means that working time is no longer controlled by the employer or the time clock, and employees themselves are accountable for the distribution and use of their working time. In the pure version of this approach, working time accounts become old-fashioned. Problems can arise where employees do not really have the steering competence and power to settle on their work tasks and working time.

Some experts have predicted the emergence of a fourth wave which is manifested in the first decades of XXI century.

Due to demographic reduction and future lack of qualified human resources, the fourth wave will again focus on the needs and wishes of employees. Responses to problems that will face companies in the future include offering better conditions of employment (including a working time more flexible) to categories that are not currently available in the labor market: persons at retirement age whose skills have been maintained, those with family obligations (care to have children, the elderly, persons with disabilities), people with disabilities do not affect the working conditions in some areas, women household.

Regarding the course of an individual's life can be said that recently changed. In the traditional life of an individual can be divided into three components: (O'Rand and Krecker, 1990)

- a) childhood and education,
- b) participation in the labor market,
- c) retirement.

This traditional model has developed a number of other models. Currently, the phase sequence set is less clear and precisely defined. Further phases are not sequential, but often

occur simultaneously in when paid work is combined with the training and lifelong learning or when retired work after having passed the age of retirement.

Due to a prolonged process of education and a later entry in the labor market we can speak of a true "rush hour of life" when starting work and the process of founding a family. Also, increased life expectancy has led to a social class increasingly consistent (retired) to be maintained through income of those working.

In this way employment is subject to pressures coming from opposite directions and that tend to contracts:

- a prolonged process of education (up to age 23-25 years),
- an aging population doubled by declining birth rates.

The aspect that is often neglected in studying trends on working time concerns the impact of changes in gender roles within households. Supply of labor and preferences on working time, especially for women, depend to a large degree of the changes taking place in the household.

Currently, expectations are increasingly large in the couples, both as adults (man and woman) to earn their income from the labor market. As both adults work, they are forced to share family tasks, which lead to new options for the work program to ensure a fair balance "working time - free time". These needs of individual solutions have been strengthened by the increasingly high employees who wants to preserve their availability and attractiveness in the labor market. (Lilja and Hämäläinen, 2001)

In summary, it can be concluded: different employees have different needs and preferences on the program of work consistent with their personal situation at a time; in many cases the desires concerning working program are not stable during their lifetime, could change during their life depending on the individual, age, financial reasons, and individual preferences.

Current lifecycle of the individual

includes a series of specific life cycles to be coordinated: the cycle of biological life cycle of family life, professional life cycle, the cycle of life in a business cycle of life in a post work.

Currently all these cycles are affected by changes in the labor market in terms of organizing working time (table 1)

Table 1

Life cycles of an individual	
Lifecycle	Dominant changes
Biological lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ an increasing life expectancy ○ change health risks
Family lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ changes in the behavior of a couple (marriage and divorce) ○ a decrease in fertility ○ change in family pattern and household
Professional lifecycle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ change values in terms of paid work ○ a reduction of life (caused by a long process of education and early retirement) ○ a new forms of work ○ an increasing importance of lifelong learning
Lifecycle within an company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ squashing hierarchy within an company ○ a change of career orientation ○ an increase accountability of employees ○ a changing population structure in terms of age (aging)
The lifecycle in a job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ a change in working conditions ○ a change in the qualifications required

Source: Inspired by Klammer et all (2007)

Various cycles of life of an individual overlap, but their importance may be different in some stage of individual life. Problems arise when the transition from one phase to another must be managed. When the spheres are not harmonized, and the burden becomes increasingly heavy, people tend to reduce employment in one of their areas of activity or opt for radical changes. This approach can create large problems, thus requiring a long-term approach in human resources management. (Klammer and Keuzenkamp, 2005)

Management of "the employee's life cycle"

Time horizon of firms is less clear than employees, developments on long-term perspective being taken into account in different ways.

On the one hand, is a clear trend towards a short-term orientation, as the cycles of production were reduced and companies have to adjust in a very short time to market changes. This phenomenon affects the workforce that must adapt to the company pace.

On the other hand, the increasingly sophisticated products are based strictly specialized skills of personnel, which require a short-term focus of human resource management on skills and the retention of employees. Therefore, two areas of human resource management of the company will acquire a strategic nature: career management, retention management of employees.

Considering factors such as dramatic changes in demographic or reducing labor force, a perspective of long-term development within the company can lead to increasing

satisfaction in the workplace, reducing the costs of illness and absenteeism, reducing the rate of change of job employment.

The life cycle of an individual includes the following phases with

different extent in time: birth, individual development, development in education system, entry into the labor market, the active period, retirement, inactive period, death.

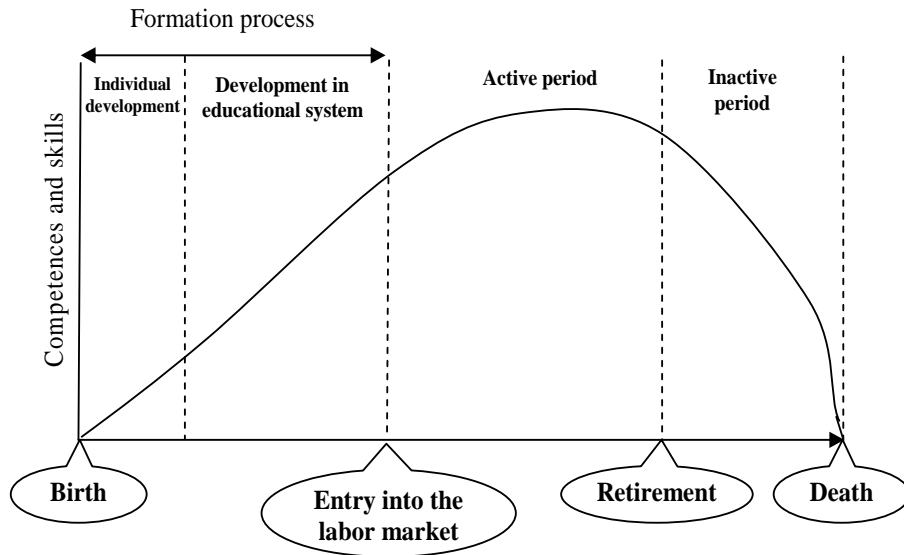


Figure 3. Life during an employee

Source: Inspired by Anxo and Boulin, 2005

Active life may be divided in several cycles of life of the employee in

a company, where the employee works in more companies in the active lifetime.

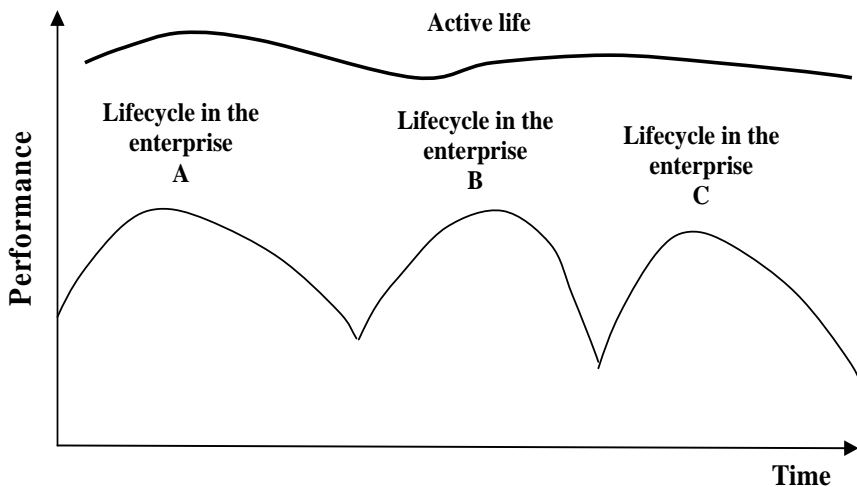


Figure 4. Lifecycle of active employee

Klammer et al show that "the life cycle of the employee in an company" can have different developments, but

there is a pattern often seen covering the following phases: period of introduction, period of growth, stage of

maturity with a “plateau” at the end of his career, saturation phase in which the regression followed by voluntary or

involuntary departure from company.

In figure 5 is illustrated a typical life cycle of the employee in a company.

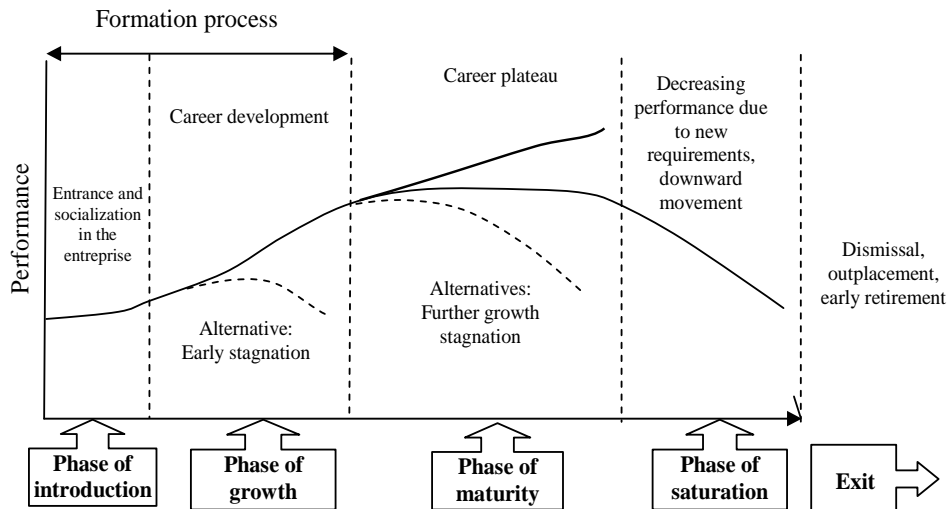


Figure 5. Phases of the employee's life cycle within the company

Source: Klammer et al (2007)

Similarly, it can be defined "the life cycle of the employee in an occupation", which is not necessarily identical with "life-cycle of the typical worker in a company". In this case the challenge is to transition employees to another job working in the company when the employee reaches saturation in the old job. (Klammer and Keuzenkamp, 2005)

As can be noted, the needs for flexibility of employees and employers may be in conflict with one another, but they can sometimes overlap. Human resources management must aim: creating a competitive work force, maintaining highly qualified workforce with a proper motivation, reducing staff to ensure high productivity in order to maximize profits.

Adjustment through labor dismissal (external flexibility) usually interferes with the needs of security and life-planning employee. Flexibilisation of work programs is preferable as a strategy for adapting company to the market needs and to meet the desire of employees

In general, the concept of

flexicurity may be regarded as an adaptive change of relations between employer and employee and we can talk about best practices in companies in which the synchronization of employers and employee takes place.

Labor supply of an individual is affected at present, by the views and personal preferences, but also by family and other aspects of his life. Therefore, the relationship between company and employee also social life must be adjusted and harmonized in order to work properly.

Macroeconomic influences on the process of flexibilisation the working time

Analysis of relations between different models of integration in the labor market during the life of an employee and social protection should consider the study: type of political regime prevailing (neo-liberal, social democrat, conservative), the nature of government policies within a state, options on the type of work, the implications of individual and collective negotiations on social security of

individuals.

The various options on scheduling the type of work may have various implications on social protection of individuals, on the social system and its sustainability in financial terms.

Impact analysis on the options concerning the type of programming work on social protection of households can lead to the follow differentiation schemes on working time: the career breaks, models for the reduction of working time (such as part-time), flexible distribution systems time work over the life course. It has shown that interruption of careers is not always a voluntary option. The phenomenon of unemployment is growing, increasingly more individuals being affected by this phenomenon during life.

The most widespread scheme on working time in most countries world is maternity leave (Bielenski et al, 2002). If the right to maternity leave is guaranteed, payment made during the period is not guaranteed in all countries (or exist form of payment which is well below the level of income prior to the maternity). The most important aspect of maternity leave is the right to return to work of the former employee (employment job working with only employees on part-time or retrieving tasks by their department). If this right is not guaranteed, this may reflect on future careers leading to discourage births.

The part-time system also contains a number of social risks: the risk of impoverishment, part-time employees are first when dismissals are made, health insurance are proportional to the size of the employee and employer contribution (smaller for employees in part-time system), the amount of pension will be calculated on the basis of all size contribution.

Apart from the rights of interruption of work or rights to adjust the hours of work in life course there are a number of schemes for welfare and social security (pension for sickness, disability, guaranteed minimum income) which enable the individual to choose between

different options for working time, being protected at the same time certain risks.

Heinz and Marshall state that different schemes for flexibilisation of working time have a major impact on the financial sustainability of social systems within a state. In principle, all schemes that offer financial reward lead to social expenditures. However, most schemes for flexibilisation of working time does not contribute much to disrupting social systems budgets for the following reasons: many schemes are unpaid, many schemes are the worst paid in comparison to previous income, other schemes (the granting of maternity leave) although not paid have a major impact on budgets due to decreased social births, schemes that generate some short-term costs lead to savings on the social long-term. (Heinz and Marshall, 2003)

One of the concerns regarding the expansion of part-time work is in the size of social security contributions paid of workers wages employed in this system (too small compared to the benefits they receive). Given that the main beneficiaries of these schemes are women that until 40-50 years ago were not present in the labor market even though they were consumer welfare, such reluctance is not justified. Countries with a major proportion of employment located in the part-time have been imbalances in the budgets of social security.

While integration into the labor market of both sexes during their lifetime is typical for countries with regimes constant social democratic (Nordic countries of Europe), conservatives, liberals and populars (particularly in southern Mediterranean countries of Europe) presents a number reluctance in terms of full integration of women with children in the labor market.

Starting from these considerations, in Europe can be identified four main models of integration in the labor market through the institutionalized framework of social and economic policies that shape the prevailing patterns of the

household, and scheduling working time during the life of the employee: (Anxo et al, 2006, p. 109)

a) The universal pattern (seen in the Nordic countries) in which there is a continuous participation of both sexes during their lifetime in the labor market or in systems of part-time or in systems of full-time. This model is, high employment continuity (sustainability) over the life course, the highest incidence of dual earner households, and relatively low gender disparities in labor market integration. In this model, marriage or motherhood status influence women's employment only through the transfer of full-time to part-time system.

b) The universal pattern changed (met in social democratic countries of Central Europe: France, Austria, Belgium) where some women exit the labor market when they have young children while the majority work full-time or long part-time hours. Hence, in contrast to the situation in the Nordic countries, family formation and motherhood are still associated with withdrawal from the labor market for some groups of (mainly lowly-qualified) women.

c) Model of dual choice (exit or full-time) is seen in Mediterranean countries: Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Greece. In this model it is recorded the lowest employment rate in the women and the highest prevalence of the traditional model of the household with one adult bringing incomes. Family formation and motherhood are still associated with a sharp decline in women's employment rates, despite rising participation rates as younger cohorts of women move through their working lives.

d) Part-time model is seen in countries such as Holland, Germany, Great Britain, and Switzerland. In this model, reducing the employment rate of women is less widespread than in the model as universal, but the habit for women who founded a family system is working part-time. This type of work is considered normal behavior in such

societies. Hours delivered in part-time system are less than in other countries where the practice part-time.

Analysis of the four existing models in European countries leading to the conclusion that there are differences and inequalities in terms of integrating women into the labor market, and the types of options for working time that are preferred to ensure balance between work - personal life. In Romania is predominantly dual choice model, due to lack of availability of jobs in the system part-time and mentalities traditional role of women in society.

Conclusions

Transformations occurring in contemporary industrial societies make the necessary social reforms that promote individual flexibility in the allocation of time between work, training, entertainment and social activities. Varieties of preferences to reduce working time and increase its flexibility accompany new demands in the production and delivery of services. There is clear differentiation between men and women's options regarding the scheduling of work time. If men prefer the full-time employment, regardless of the stage is in life, women have different preferences on working time depending on the family status.

There is an increasingly percent among men and women who wish to move to the part-time without being influenced by family, wanting more time. Therefore, new regulations are necessary and collective bargaining between the social actors that allow individuals to adjust the balance of time and be able to choose between full-time or part-time.

Traditional division of time in life course that includes three phases (the education and training, the employment in full-time system, retirement) reflects the concept of work organization that is no longer consistent with current conditions of organization of economic activity in postmodern society. For a lifetime employee is faced with periods in which it is paid without being active in

the labor market: periods of maternity or paternity, longer periods of training and lifelong learning, retirement. To meet these financial needs, national governments should make a single insurance fund to which all employees are contributors. Thus it will facilitate the management of various aids, allowances and pensions granted for inactive periods that occur during the life of an employee. Also, this system can be used by persons which transfer into the part-time (for training, childcare and elderly people), making them

decent income in these periods.

By providing a transfer quickly and smoothly from one form to another time working program and through the development of flexible forms of legal absenteeism is possible to reconcile family duties with the responsibilities incumbent in the workplace.

In conclusion, the issue of working time requires a global and transversal approach to cover all dimensions: economic, sociological, psychological and anthropological.

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