ATYPICAL FORMS OF WORK ARRANGEMENTS AND FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT AS A DETERMINANT OF WORKING TIME ARRANGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

The article presented a review of definitions of the flexible work arrangements means employment forms, work arrangement forms and working time arrangement forms. The deliberation started in this article is of a literary and empirical character. The research has shown the respondents preferred employment forms guaranteeing employment stabilization, social insurance protection and standard work arrangements means limited interest in the flexibilization of working time arrangement both on the side of employers as well as employees.

Keywords: work arrangements, working time arrangements, forms of employment, flexibility

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INTRODUCTION

The rough and turbulent surroundings in which modern enterprises are supposed to function determines flexibility in all dimensions of their functioning. One of them is broadly understood work flexibility which has consequences in using atypical work arrangements and employment within non-standard employment forms by entrepreneurs, which in turn results in the possibility of using flexible working time arrangements. The latter needs to be considered in a broad context of creating work conditions. The benefits and cost connected with flexible working time arrangements for employers and employees and the opportunities and threats connected with their implementation are becoming the subject of more and more research. In the EU member countries it is combined among others with recommendations for implementing the idea of flexicurity. Analyzing the given problems the authors have related to research results presented in the subject literature, as well as their own research results.

The aim of this article is to present the problem of perceiving the solutions regarding flexible working time arrangements in reference to the research conducted in the context including the phenomenon of flexibilization of work because of implementing specific work and employment arrangements. The deliberation started in this article is of a literary and empirical character.

Work flexibility – terminological problems

The notion of flexibility in its general meaning can be described as a skill to adapt to internal and external factors of functioning. Compared to the traditional seven-to-three job held in a standard workplace, flexible work arrangements are defined as “any policies and practices, formal or informal, which permit people to vary when and where work is carried out” (Maxwell, Rankine, Bell and Mac Vicar 2007, 138-161). Flexible work options are numerous and can be categorized into three groups (Georgetown University Law Center 2010):

- flexibility in the scheduling of hours worked, such as alternative work schedules (e.g. flexitime and compressed workweeks), and arrangements regarding shift and break schedules;
- flexibility in the amount of hours worked, such as part time work and task sharing;
- flexibility in the workplace, such as working at home or at a satellite location.

In fact, the problematic question remains in differentiating between such notions as employment forms, work arrangement forms and working time arrangement forms. The terminology concerning atypical work arrangements and working time as well as employment forms remains so far not completely organized. The shown state of affairs does not facilitate a
discussion, not even regarding the confrontation with research results in the analyzed field. The problem escalates when comparisons refer to different countries and thus different legal systems creating a kind of a frame for implementing solutions regarding flexibilization of work. For example, Polish entrepreneurs, while creating employment, more and more often use other employment forms, i.e. a mandate contract or a contract of specified task. In accordance with the Polish court ruling employment does not have to be of work character and can be agreed upon based on a legal civil agreement (I PKN 2001). It leads to the creation of a specific employment relationship which puts an employee outside the binding Polish labor law, and in some cases also outside the obligatory social security. The British system does not know the notion of other employment agreements. In Great Britain there are employees contracted based on an agreement (employees), self-employed, outsourced workers and agency workers (Leighton, Syrett, Hecker and Holland 2007, 14-15). Many differences are identified regarding the conditions for implementing flexible working time arrangements. Therefore, the authors’ intention is firstly to present non-standard employment forms and atypical work arrangements so as to show against their background flexible work arrangements as their resultant.

**Atypical work arrangements and non-standard forms of employment**

Work arrangement concentrates on human activity. It considers it a sequence of activities of a person or a group of people co-working with one another and in parallel contributing to the achievement of a defined goal. Proper work arrangement – understood as establishing the order of performing the tasks and their arrangement in time and space, people selection and disposition of people, the division of work among them and uniting their activities – comprises an important factor in achieving the goal of an institution (Haus 1982, 6). Work arrangement understood in such a way includes thus a work arrangement form and a working time arrangement form, which means that from the point of view of goal achievement at a specific unit the choice of extent and type of relationships between its workers (the way in which the task is performed) and time in which the job is to be done are crucial. From the cited definition we can conclude that a working time arrangement is a resultant of solutions in the field of work arrangement.

Mechanization characteristic for an industrial era has created a model of “standard work” characterized by an inflexible working time and a presence of an employee at the time at a post at a company. Standard work was characterized by broad specialization and lack of engagement of an employee in the process of its organization. As the answer to the awareness
of the meaning of human resources at a company, followed by a trend in work humanization, since the 70’s work enrichment and expanding can be noticed. In parallel, one can observe a tendency in post rotation and development of autonomous groups. As a consequence of the pointed trends, enriched additionally by the development of information and communication technologies, new atypical work arrangements arose, more and more often used in new companies. It is worth pointing among them to outworking, teleworking, working in a virtual team or nomadic working.

In the subject literature the following rationale is pointed out for an increase in the popularity of flexible work arrangements (Ponzellini 2000, 38-39):

- change in consumer preferences who expect availability and a broader selection of services 24 hours a day,
- change in production arrangement form to such as: customized production, just in time, minimization of stock,
- change in employers’ attitude towards employees’ expectations, pressure on harmonizing personal and professional life,
- appearance of new technologies, including communication technologies.

All of the rationale indicated above creates a possibility and sometimes even a must for an employer regarding diversification of employees’ working hours as a result of adapting a company to modern functioning conditions.

Despite significant advantages of atypical work arrangements, among others optimization of employment conditions, reduction of sick leaves, saving on office space, limiting work conflicts and the resulting decrease in staff employment cost (Pędziwiatr 2002, 31-32; Machol–Zajda 2002, 81-82), it can also be observed that the biggest problem in case of the indicated work arrangements is the difficulty of monitoring an employee manifested as lack of insight into the way the work is done by them and the time devoted to the tasks. On the one hand, an employer is unburdened by an employee from many problems connected with work arrangement; on the other hand, they lose control over the way and time the work is done in. (Jagoda 2009, 135-139) The task-based character of work performed as part of atypical work arrangements determines flexible solutions regarding an employee’s working time.

Employment forms should be connected with the legal basis for personal participation. Key Polish authors researching the problem of labor market flexibility usually include to non-standard (flexible) forms of employment: fixed term contract of employment, contracting
employment, on-call employment, legal civil agreement employment, self-employment, replacement employment and agency employment. In most cases using non-standard employment forms is connected with flexibilization of solutions regarding working time (Kryńska 2003, 143-154; Sajkiewicz 2003, 126-142; Sadowska-Snarska 2006, 23-32).

**Flexible working time arrangements**

Working time is most often defined as time in which an employee is at the disposal of an employer, which means readiness to do tasks commissioned by an employer. Flexible working time arrangements mostly include: task-based working time, balanced working time, interrupted working time, flexitime, different working hours, flexible work scheme, shortened week working system, weekend working system (Kryńska 2003, 143-154; Sajkiewicz 126-142; Gableta, Cierniak-Emerych and Bąk-Grabowska 2008, 86-94). What is important is that the data presented by EUROFOUND show that in a group of over 21 thousand people employed in the European Union countries work performed regularly during the day considers only 24% of employees (Costa, Sartori 2000, 24-27).

In many studies the benefit of flexible working time arrangements is assumed in advance for all participants in the labor market. A review of research concerning the perception of flexible work arrangements from the point of view of factors diversifying employees allows for verification of the indicated stipulation.

For instance, research carried out in Greece has shown that attitudes towards flexible work options are dependent on gender, sector of employment and prior participation in a flexible work scheme. In general, women, public sector employees and employees who have participated in flexible work arrangements are more likely to perceive more benefits and fewer costs with regard to use of work flexibility (Giannikis, Mihail 2011, 417-432).

Similar conclusions can be drawn from research carried out in Great Britain by C. Sullivan and J. Smithson. They have shown that the perception of working time flexibility and especially in connection with the performance of professional work at home regards the sex criterion. Women ascribe more benefits to this working arrangement form than men. It is connected with the roles which are traditionally attached to a woman – a mother and a housewife. Women working as part of atypical working arrangements use saved up time for child care and housework, while men are more likely to concentrate on duties connected only with professional work even when they do them mainly at home. (Sullivan C., Smithson J. 2007, 448-461)
A Polish employee survey regarding flexible working time arrangement forms was carried out as part of a project „Examination of factors determining the use of non-standard employment forms in Poland” made by order of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy by the University of Human Resource Management in collaboration with partners. The project was co-financed by the European Social Fund. The survey was carried out on a representative group of 4610 people. Below are the results of the survey, focusing on the respondents’ answers to cloze questions regarding evaluation of the three most popular flexible working time arrangements in Poland, i.e. task-based working time, flexible working time and long period timesheet processing (Borkowska-Kalwas 2008, 169-173). (see table 1)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work arrangement form</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Percentage result</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Percentage result</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task-oriented work schedule</td>
<td>Personal and professional life can be balanced better</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>It is a system for well-organized and disciplined people</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One can work more effectively and finish earlier</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>A lot of possibilities for abuse, exploitation of an employee</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>One can take up extra jobs</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>Employers do not accept it willingly</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The employer has less power</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>It can influence the relationship between employees in a bad way</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is a chance for working when one cannot work in a standard way</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>It is connected with more intense work</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Such a system means that one is a good employee</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>It disorganizes personal life</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexible working hours</td>
<td>Balancing personal and professional life</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>It is a system for well-organized and disciplined people</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Freedom in establishing the working hours</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>Employers do not accept it willingly</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More effective work</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>A lot of possibilities for abuse, exploitation of an employee</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Such a system means that one is a valuable employee</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>While an employee is away, something important can happen at the workplace</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>It is a chance for working when one cannot work in a</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>The system makes team work difficult</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long period timesheet processing</td>
<td>standard way</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| More free time for own activities | 46% | It can limit the contact with one’s family 60%  
| Balancing personal and professional life | 37% | It disorganizes personal life 55%  
| Possibility to influence the establishing of days and/or working hours | 35% | A lot of possibilities for abuse, exploitation of an employee 36%  
| It is a chance for working when one cannot work in a standard way | 22% | One needs to be more available 31%  
| More effective work | 21% | The work is more tiring 28%  


Task-oriented work schedule was identified with work where the employer determines the task to be done and the deadline for its performance and the employee decides on their own when they will work. Flexible working hours is a system where the employee starts work at an indefinite time but they must work a constant number of hours a day. Long period timesheet processing is understood by the authors as work accumulated on Saturdays and Sundays, with the possibility to take weekdays off in return. (Mazur 2008, 105-132)

The result of the carried out research is that in all analyzed forms employees indicate the possibility to balance personal and professional life as its basic benefit. The achievement of this benefit is rather relative. When work in flexible form is connected with the performance of tasks in days and/or hours in which the other family members have free time, it is perceived as a negative result, which the respondents classified as personal life disorganization and limiting the contact with the family. An important issue is also pointed out by some respondents that flexible working time requires appropriate organization and high self-discipline. In case of solutions when an employee has a possibility of selecting the working hours, over one third of the respondents indicated that employers do not accept it willingly.

The research authors have shown as well that the perception of flexible working time arrangements is influenced by the income – the freedom in establishing working hours and the increase in work effectiveness were more often pointed out as advantages by better earners. In
case of working in the weekend system, young people and those without children could see more benefit from the accumulation of free time. (Mazur 2008, 105-132)

It seems that the research results quoted above have a common thing which is: not considering the comparison of traditional and flexible work arrangements and an incomplete approach to the perspective resulting from the use of employment forms and work arrangements. They concentrate only on flexible solutions, mainly in the field of working time arrangement. The authors of this article have assumed a broader perspective and in their own study they have also referred to traditional forms. In the next point they have presented the results of two pilot research projects. In the first project the perspective of the performers has been accepted – its conclusions have been completed with research results in the field carried out by a consulting company, and in the second one used work arrangements have been analyzed taking into consideration entrepreneurs’ opinions.

Non-standard solutions in the field of employment forms and work arrangements, and working time flexibility and its perception

In 2011 a pilot research was carried out among working students who studied management at the Faculty of Economic Sciences at the University of Economics in Wroclaw. Random and nonrandom sampling was used. 120 people were surveyed, 91 of them were students less than 26 years old. The research was of quantitative character. A survey was developed which includes questions about facts and opinions. Questions about the employment form in which the respondents work belong to the first ones. The second group of questions comprises among others a request to assume an attitude towards twenty statements which were opinions on the subject of non-standard employment forms. The respondents had a possibility to select one of the four options – definitely yes, rather yes, rather no, definitely no. One can agree that a modified version of a four-point Likert scale was used (Dyduch 2011, 101-126). The goal of the research was to define the perception of non-standard employment forms among working students.

Picture 1 presents in a graphic way the evaluation of four analyzed statements which refer most strongly to the relations of non-standard employment forms (NEF) with working time arrangement in a short and long time perspective:

1. Non-standard forms allow for a better balance between personal and professional life
2. Working time can be created flexibly and one can be employed on a permanent basis – it is a more beneficial solution than working in NEF
3. Working in NEF stops being attractive when health problems arise or when a woman gets pregnant
4. After starting a family it is better to work on a permanent basis.

Figure 1: Respondents’ attitude towards the statements evaluating the attractiveness of non-standard employment forms – percentage quotient of the answers
Source: own studies.

Over 60% of respondents have agreed with the statement that work in the non-standard employment form rather facilitates work-life balance. At the same time over 90% of respondents have indicated that a more attractive solution is the possibility of flexible working time arrangement in the traditional employment form. Almost all the respondents have agreed with the statement that work in a non-standard employment form is not beneficial when there are situations emphasizing the meaning of employment protection and social insurance, such as inability to work during pregnancy. This result can be recognized as characteristic for the specific Polish system introducing work under a non-employment contract. The result of the fourth statement indicates that even if currently work in non-standard employment forms is an acceptable solution for students, because of the necessity of combining work with studies and lower expectations towards the remuneration, as graduates they will prefer a contract of employment with the possibility to use flexible solutions as to the selection of working time arrangement. Therefore for respondents more possibilities of introducing flexible working time arrangement under a non-employment contract do not determine better evaluation of non-standard employment forms over traditional solutions.
Similar conclusions are drawn from a research conducted by a consulting company Pricewaterhouse Coopers where they concentrated on the so-called millennium generation, thus it has been conducted considering the age criterion. In 2008 the research was conducted on four thousand graduates from 44 countries, including Poland. The report from the research presents expectations of young people towards work and in its assumption comprises a study useful for specialists in the field of human resources management. According to the authors, the given research results deny a popular belief that young people reject traditional employment. 66% of the respondents chose an option where flexibilization of work arrangement is possible but within regular working hours. In Poland the percentage of people pro this solution equaled 75%, while only 13% of respondents expects more flexible solutions. The research pointed towards many characteristics differentiating the millennium generation from previous generations, among others in areas such as using new technologies, job mobility or attitude towards corporate responsibility. At the same time they showed similarities in such basic areas as expecting job security and employment stabilization. (Managing tomorrow’s people 2009)

Results fitting the same pattern come out of pilot research conducted in 2011-2012 in 22 enterprises located in Lower Silesia Voivodship in Poland. Their main goal is identification and evaluation of the condition of solutions used in the field of work arrangement at a specific enterprise, through identification of forms and methods of work arrangement, circumstances of their selection (condition identification), ways of implementation and realization and consequences (advantages and disadvantages of the selection), and identification of factors building satisfaction/dissatisfaction with the solutions regarding their work arrangement. The most numerous group according to the criterion of enterprise size were small organizations employing from 11 to 50 people (12 enterprises), next there were big enterprises employing over 250 people (7 enterprises) and one medium size enterprise employing 76 people. What is more, taking into consideration the basic business criterion, 13 out of the surveyed organizations are production companies, the other 7 run a service business. All of the surveyed organizations have been on the market for a long time, i.e. for over four years. The last distinguished criterion of organization division refers to their ownership forms – organizations which were taken into account in the pilot research are mostly private enterprises, domestic as well as foreign, only one of them is an organization 100% state owned. Among the surveyed enterprises where the realized work arrangement form is team work, the survey completed by 78 employees comprising team members and 21 respondents representing management staff or team leaders. Among the types of identified teams there
were two management teams, one project team, six problem teams, seven task teams and six production teams. As seen, in spite of the flexibility in work arrangement postulated in the subject literature and European politics the business practice (in the pilot research group) does not correspond with the desired one. It is also reflected in working time arrangements. In only one organization (a foreign pharmaceutical producer, a big enterprise with an established position in the market) the respondents indicated flexible working time arrangement, which comprised different hours of starting and finishing work.¹

**CONCLUSION**

It is worth considering the disparity between the flexible working time arrangement postulated in the subject literature and economic reality described by the results of the shown empirical research. It seems worthwhile to concentrate mostly on the perspective of employers, i.e. the subjects making decisions regarding ways of work performance at a company. Arranging working time at a company considering atypical work arrangements and non-standard employment forms is, it seems, a difficult challenge for an employer, connected with the lack of unified rules of regulating that time, withdrawal from fixed daily norms and individual attitude towards every employee. The indicated working time arrangements undoubtedly, on the one hand, they favor employees and their needs of social character and create a possibility of complex customer service. On the other hand, they hinder and complicate work arrangement process at a company, expressed by their relatively rare usage in business practice.

In turn, the quoted research results concentrating on employees’ perspective indicate that they are interested in flexibilization of working time only in case when their interests are considered, i.e. adapting working hours to the requirements of personal life or not limiting the income. It also turns out that in practice it is of great importance in which employment form flexibilization takes place. The respondents preferred employment forms guaranteeing employment stabilization and social insurance protection. Freedom resulting from working time flexibility is not the priority for the majority. The research thus has shown limited interest in the flexibilization of working time arrangement both on the side of employers as well as employees.

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