WORK

STUDY NOTES prepared by Tim Riley

Subject Areas: Work Studies, Small Business Studies

Levels: Upper secondary schools, university and TAFE courses. This educational kit will also be useful for government, corporate and union training courses.

Synopsis
Globalisation and the restructuring of Australian industry and business in the 1990s have led to widespread workplace change. These changes range from the decline in manufacturing employment to the spread of enterprise bargaining as a wage determination system.

Program 1. FLEXIBILITY: THE VANISHING WEEKEND 10 minutes

Program 1 examines the structural and technological changes that are transforming the Australian workplace. To compete in the global economy, Australian industry has been restructured, rationalised and deregulated. The lowering of tariff barriers and new technology have led to widespread unemployment in affected industries. Rapid growth of the service sector has created a new labour force of casual workers. Enterprise bargaining has replaced the centralised wage fixing system set up at the turn of the century when Australia was seen as a “workers’ paradise”. For many workers there is now no such thing as a traditional weekend or an eight hour working day. Workers must juggle family life with employers’ demands for “flexibility” and increased working hours.

Program 2. PRODUCTIVITY: TIME IS MONEY 10 minutes

Program 2 uses case studies in the health care and the clothing industries to explore the drive towards higher productivity and its implications for future employment. Many Australian industries are cutting production costs by shedding jobs and rationalising work practices. Even in the public service areas such as welfare, health and education, thousands of jobs have been lost and the pressure is on remaining workers to improve “productivity”. The resulting unemployment and intensification of work has led to a growing divide between those who are underemployed and those who are overemployed. Now the very concept of work itself, and the right to work, are under question.

Program 3. ADAPTABILITY: WORK IN PROGRESS 10 minutes

Program 3 looks at the changing nature of work: contracting and outsourcing, telecommuting and the decline in union membership. It also examines the new industrial relations system of enterprise bargaining and its impact on wage equality and employment conditions. The old model of work was based on the notion of the male breadwinner and men's full time employment outside the home. Now women make up half the workforce, and men are learning to adapt to different expectations on the home front. For young people entering the workforce today, it is increasingly important to understand the new forms of work available to them, and the demands of the changing workplace.
Before Watching

WORK is designed as a discussion starter - it presents a provocative mixture of views and contrast of arguments, with a strong set of assumptions which clearly ask: "And what do you think?". Triggers are included in each ten minute program to facilitate stopping the program for discussion and work sheet completion. This program could be used in conjunction with Land of the Long Weekend, a 55 minute documentary available with study notes from Film Australia.

The nature and types of work Australians are performing have changed dramatically in the 1990s. Workplace change is a result of restructuring the economy as Australian workers and management meet the challenges of globalisation. The concepts of work, leisure and time management are changing in Australian society.

After Watching

FLEXIBILITY - THE VANISHING WEEKEND

The "land of the long weekend" is changing. No longer is the weekend only for leisure after working a forty hour week. The so called "workers' paradise" of "eight hours to work, eight hours to play, eight hours to sleep and eight bob a day" is over. The traditional nature of work in Australia according to Professor Belinda Probert was characterised by the following:

- An eight hour day
- A forty hour week
- Centralised arbitration of wages
- Minimum wages and conditions based on the 1907 Harvester Judgment
- Differential wages for men and women which reflected the traditional view of men as breadwinners in Australian households.

Activities

1. Compare working and wage conditions of employment today with those in the past in terms of the following indicators:

- Length of working week
- Types of employment
- Method of wage setting
- Use of technology
- Level of employment/unemployment
2. How has the shift from manufacturing to service industries changed working conditions?

3. What is meant by "full employment"?

4. Why doesn’t full employment exist today?

5. How have the following factors contributed to workplace change?
   - Globalisation
   - International competition
   - Deregulation
   - Tariff reductions
   - The switch from manufacturing to services

6. What implications does the growth of the service sector have for the workforce?

7. What types of workplace change are taking place (eg. casual or part time employment and the role of women in the workforce)? Why do women and young people make up most of the casual workforce?

8. What is "enterprise bargaining"? How are wages and working conditions determined under this system?

9. How is it different to centralised wage determination?

10. How do workplace contracts operate at the Sheraton Hotel? How is restructuring taking place in the clothing industry?

11. What are some of the different attitudes to workplace change and increased flexibility? What does Archbishop Rayner think are the repercussions of flexibility on society and families?

12. How can change in the workplace be managed or led?

**Research Questions**

- Find out what the Harvester Case and Judgment were.

- Compare the operation of the centralised wage fixing system of award wages with the decentralised system of enterprise bargaining.

- How has the distribution of employment altered between primary, secondary and tertiary industries in the last two decades?

- Assess the importance of globalisation and technological change in influencing workplace change in a particular industry eg. motor vehicles.
Define the Following Terms

work  
workplace change  
structural change  
globalisation  
unemployment  
technological change  
deregulation  
enterprise bargaining  
full employment  
competition  
restructuring  
workplace contracts

Debating Topic

That workplace change will lead to more jobs being lost than created.

PRODUCTIVITY: TIME IS MONEY

Activities

1. What does "productivity" mean?

2. How are workers "slaves to time"?

3. Why and how have workplaces like hospitals, the clothing industry and the public sector been forced to increase productivity?

4. What is the link between the rationalisation or restructuring of an industry to changing work practices?

5. How is technological change (eg. facsimiles, videos and teleconferencing) leading to improved productivity?

6. Explain the following relationship: Productivity - Efficiency-Profits

7. Why can unemployment result from improvements in productivity?

8. How has increased productivity in the workplace led to increased part time work yet no change in the level of unemployment?

9. According to Professor Julian Disney, how has a divide emerged between the overemployed and the underemployed?

10. What are the social implications of the drive to raise productivity?
Define the Following Terms

rationalisation
structural unemployment
productivity
overemployment
unemployment
underemployment
public sector
private sector
technology
efficiency
working poor

Research and Discussion Questions

- What is productivity and how is it measured?
- How are productivity improvements used as a basis for wage increases in enterprise bargaining?
- How can technological change create as well as destroy jobs?

ADAPTABILITY: WORK IN PROGRESS

Activities

1. What do people get out of work? Why might it be important to work?

2. How is workplace change affecting employment (eg. casual workers, women's participation and service sector jobs growth)?

3. What are the social consequences of large scale unemployment?

4. What is structural change? What problems does it create?

5. How is structural change leading to changes in the way work is done (eg. outsourcing, sub contracting and working from home)?

6. Why may there be less social interaction in the workplace?

7. Why has union membership declined as structural change has taken place?

8. How is the new system of industrial relations based on decentralised enterprise bargaining different to centralised wage fixing?

9. Why might men and women have different attitudes to workplace agreements?

10. How are disadvantaged groups (eg. young people, women and migrants) faring under the new system of industrial relations?
11. Who should take responsibility for child care?

12. How has workplace change led to changing roles for males and females?

13. What types of employment opportunities are available for young people entering the workforce (eg. traineeships and apprenticeships)?

14. How are workers going to acquire the skills needed in new types of employment?

**Research Tasks**

- Collect data on the decline of union membership in Australia. What reasons can be put forward for this trend?

- Find an example of a workplace agreement and comment on the productivity tradeoffs made by employees for higher wages from their employers.

- Design and conduct a survey of employed and unemployed young people to find out their attitudes to work and leisure. How are they preparing themselves for entry into the workforce? What types of skills and attitudes do they think employers want?

**Define the Following Terms**

workplace change  
structural change  
outsourcing  
telemcommuting  
trade union  
traineeship  
apprenticeship  
enterprise bargaining  
centralised wage determination  
Industrial Relations Commission

**Debriefing Discussion Question**

Do you agree or disagree with the opinions and values expressed in *Work - Flexibility, Productivity and Adaptability*? Support your response by reference to evidence you have collected and analysed.
References & Further Reading/Viewing

**Land of the Long Weekend + Notes**  
55 minutes © 1974 Director: Sue Brooks  
A Film Australia National Interest Program

**The Best of Both Worlds: Work and Family + Notes**  
18 minutes © 1996 Director: Gerry Crown  
Produced by Film Australia for NRMA and Sydney Water.

**A Rock and a Hard Place + Notes**  
28 minutes © 1994 Director: David Cameron  
A Video Projects & Film Victoria Production.  
Distributed by Film Australia.

A further selection of educational video programs suitable for work and business studies courses in upper secondary schools, university and TAFE courses are available from Film Australia. Please contact Film Australia Sales.

About the Author

Tim Riley B.Ec, Dip. Ed. (Syd.Uni) M.Ec (Macq. Uni) is one of Australia’s leading Economics Educators. Formerly a Director of the Economics Education Resource Centre, Tim has organised numerous seminars and conferences for economics teachers and educators throughout Australia.

Tim wrote three episodes for the 1995 ABC TV series *Economic Australia* and prepared the education edition of *Australia 2010: Creating the future Australia* for the Business Council of Australia. He has been editor of numerous publications including the *Business Studies Review*, the *Economics Conference Proceedings* series of books and the *Economics Education Review newsletter* from 1990 to 1995. He was also a major contributor to *Understanding Our Economy*, (1995). Since 1990 Tim has been a regular contributor to *The Economics Education Review* and *Current Economics*. Tim has recently taught Economics at Secondary Level and is currently Director of the Economic Literacy Centre and his own publications company.

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