



REGENT BUSINESS SCHOOL
Brown Bag Seminar Series 2014

Issues in Critical Management Studies

Seminar Topic 7: Work Life Balance

Date: Friday, 19th September 2014
Venue: Regent Business School – 8th Floor Boardroom
Time: 09h00 – 11h00
Presenters: Ms Maxine Grimett
Moderator: Mr. Richard Cowden

In this presentation Maxine Grimett will speak on:

Work Life Balance



Some Background Information to the Seminar

The pressures of work, for those in work, have been intensifying in recent decades. Factors such as the advances in information technology and information load, the need for speed of response, the importance attached to quality of customer service and its implications for constant availability and the pace of change with its resultant upheavals and adjustments all demand our time and can be sources of pressure. The evidence from the UK, which has the longest working hours in Europe, shows while the average number of hours worked has been steady for the past twenty years, the proportion working more than 48 hours has increased in the past decade. Also, people report an increase in the intensity of work. As a result, so the argument goes, the demands of work begin to dominate life and a sense of work-life imbalance ensues.

Generally, there is growing concern that the quality of home and community life is deteriorating. There are various explanations for this associated with affluence, the growth of single parent families, the privatization of family life and the lack of local resources and facilities. In Western industrial society we live in an unparalleled era in that a higher proportion of women from all social classes are engaged in paid employment than ever before. In addition, the pressures and demands of work reflected both in longer hours, more exhaustion and the growth of evening and weekend work leave less scope for “quality” family time. The consequences include increases in juvenile crime, more drug abuse, a reduction in care of the community and in community participation and less willingness to take responsibility for care of elderly relatives and for the disadvantaged. While steps to redress these concerns transcend work and employment, it is nevertheless argued that the demands

of work contribute to a reduced participation in non-work activities resulting in an imbalance.

There is also a view, widely promoted by some management writers but not strongly supported by sound empirical evidence, that workers are less willing to display unlimited commitment to the organisation. One reason offered for this is the changing nature of the psychological contract at work; turbulence in organizations has made it less feasible to offer secure progressive careers and therefore to justify why workers should be committed. The conflict between the demands of work and the decline of work as a central life interest results in an imbalance between work and the rest of life.

Much of the general analysis about the causes and consequences of work-life imbalance is speculative and based on limited convincing evidence. We need to learn more in particular about the consequences of imbalance on family and community and on changing values among younger workers. It is also notable that debates about work-life balance often occur without any clear and consistent definition of what we mean by work-life balance.

The seminar, therefore, is a critical examination of the concept of **Work Life Balance** and how it impacts on the quality of life of working individuals, especially women.