CHAPTER 4

WORK LIFE BALANCE POLICIES AND PRACTICES

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Policy responses to changes in work and life patterns vary among countries, they vary according to types of arrangements between the state, the organization, the market, the civil society, and the family (Brough et al 2008). Hence, a cross country comparison and views of international bodies on work life balance are examined. Further as this study is based in India work life balance policies in India are discussed in this chapter.

4.2 CROSS COUNTRY COMPARISONS

Herein, work life balance legislation and practice is discussed in some of the countries.

4.2.1 USA

The Family and Medical Leave (1993) act gives working families the right to take unpaid leave such that essential care giving responsibilities are met without the risk of losing the job. But the importance of work life balance has been gaining importance through Resolution 210. “Work and Family Month” is celebrated at the national level by the government. The new policy for US employees on initiatives for Workplace Flexibility 201 provides a comprehensive set of solutions to access flexible arrangements like telework, predictable schedules and compressed workweeks. Even after
school care was newly introduced by some organization. The U.S falls short of many policies for work life balance as the Family and Medical Leave Act neither provides any paid leave nor encourage flexible arrangements. Under the Accrued Sick and Safe Leave Act, workers in businesses with 100 or more workers earn up to seven days of paid sick leave each year, workers in businesses with 25 – 99 workers earn five days, and workers in businesses with 24 or fewer workers earn three days. This paid time off can be used to recover from illnesses, care for sick family members, seek routine or preventative medical care or obtain assistance related to domestic violence or sexual assault. 105. (www.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parental_leave)

The Balancing Act 2009 bill was introduced by the Department of Labor which aimed to address issues such as childcare and medical need assistance. The bill also includes a business child care incentive grant program in addition to a section promoting teleworking. Specifically, the bill incorporates provisions of the Family Leave Insurance Act (H.R. 1723), an employee- and employer-financed insurance fund to provide for the paid leave, Family and Medical Leave Enhancement Act (H.R. 824), to allow employees to take time off from work to participate in their children’s or grandchildren’s school or community organization activities and the Healthy Families Act (H.R. 2460), a bill that would require employers to provide paid sick leave to employees, were all introduced within the past six months. Childcare assistance is the most prevalent work-life program in US where 97% of employers provide the assistance. Also elder care programs and adoption benefits have a significant buy in. Tuition Reimbursement is also given to those pursuing higher/part time studies and opportunities for personal development is also prevalent. Off- site and on-site opportunities are popular initiatives. (Schuman 2010)
A hotbed of all sorts of flexible working arrangement—Shortened workdays on Friday, telecommuting and outsourcing are seen in Mexico’s information technology sector. Assistance in education and childcare is at the forefront in Latin America. Brazil, Argentina and Mexico have full tuition refunds whereas Argentina employers also have offer day-care centres and nurseries at the workplace.

4.2.2 UK

The British government initiated the work life balance campaign in the year 2000. This is a part of the government’s agenda and is led by Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The DTI works on employment rights policy and legislation. They focus on the problems of long-hours culture and even provide support and guidance to work differently in long-hours culture. A team of the DTI is responsible for awareness on maternity rights, child care, employment agencies dealing with part-time work and flexible working employer organizations (www.cipd.co.uk).

The UK government has created a partnership fund and challenge fund. The partnership fund is given for projects on work-life balance and the ways in which stress can be reduced. The Challenge Fund was launched in 2000. Under this financial support is given for the advice of specialist consultancy firms to provide advice to private, public and voluntary sector employers who wish to develop work-life balance practices and policies. Employees even receive a “Specific Solution” that provides materials for solving problems in work-family conflict and the appropriate kind of working arrangements employees would like to explore. The work Foundation created by the UK government is a nonprofit organization. It partners with the government to promote good practice in work life balance and implement work-life balance practices (Beauzamy 2009).
A website is also created where all the legislation regarding the work life balance practices is included. A work-life balance standard was also set up in 2000. It gives a framework for development of work-life balance policies and practices. It also provides a benchmark against which organizations can be assessed. Thereby facilitating the recognition of good working practice.

The right of Parents to request for flexible working arrangements was also enacted in 2003. Parents with children under six years old or disabled children under 18 have the right to apply to work flexibly, and employers have a statutory duty to consider these requests seriously. They may also make a request to work from home. These arrangements can include working patterns such as annualized hours, compressed hours, flextime, job-sharing, shift working, unpaid leave during school holidays, and staggered hours. As there is a strong emphasis of market forces in UK, the state has very little intervention in matters relating to family arrangements (Andrew 2002).

The Government in UK has established children’s centers—a government programme to see better futures for children and parents. A National Childcare Strategy (1988) where nursery provision and expansion of affordable childcare for children up to the age of 14 was proposed. It entitles parents of children under the age of six to request for flexible working hours or a reduction in working hours, and the right to return to the same job after one year and a maternity pay for 26 weeks. The Work and Families Legislation (2010) extended maternity and adoption pay from six to nine months and a right for fathers to an additional Paternity Leave of 26 weeks. A particularly interesting development in the last few years is the introduction of unique legislation in the UK that provides employees with the ‘right to request’ flexibility in accommodating work and family responsibilities (Wise 2004).
4.2.3 New Zealand

New Zealand has promoted the importance of work-life balance at the highest levels of government. The New Zealand Department of Labour’s Future of Work Programme (2004) provides a wide range of information on best practices on work life balance and the recent government policies and legislation. Through its Future of Work Programme the government lists a number of current legislation that give provisions for work life balance. Even an integrated policy development program was designed to promote family-friendly policies. These initiatives are supported by the government but led by the Department of Labour. The New Zealand’s Equal Employment Opportunities Trust gives away awards every year for the organization with the best work-life balance practices. The organizations also have to provide enough evidence whether the work-life balance policies are benefitting the employees and the organization (www.dol.govt.nz).

Under the Parental Leave and Employment Protection (Paid Parental Leave) Act 2002, pregnant women are entitled to up to 10 days of unpaid special leave to attend medical appointments; anyone whose partner or spouse has recently had a child is entitled to up to two weeks of unpaid partner/paternity leave; up to 52 weeks of extended unpaid leave can be shared between partners after the birth or adoption of a child; and up to 12 weeks of paid parental leave is provided to employees who have worked for their current employer for at least one year, working 10 hours per week or more. New Zealand has a number of laws in which is set down what’s known as the minimum code of employment rights.

The main ones that apply to work-life balance are the Holidays Act (2003), the Minimum Wage Act (2007), the Parental Leave and Employment Protection Act (2000), and the Employment Relations Act (2000). The union
campaign for a quality of life in New Zealand both inside and outside work is called ‘Get A Life’!

4.2.4 Australia

The Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, focus on flexible working arrangements and ways to improve work and life. Australia is more narrowly couched into work-family balance as compared with New Zealand and U.K. The National Work and Family award was implemented by the Australian government where it aims to give recognition to organizations that have accommodated employee’s work life needs, promoting flexible working arrangements in their organization and benchmarking and reviewing the arrangements.

The Australian Department of Employment and Workplace Relations have cited the Workplace Relations Act 1996 (WR Act) where the framework assists and provides provisions to employees in balancing their work and family. Under this, employees are entitled to unpaid maternity and parental leave of 52 weeks. Except for one week at the time of birth, parents of the same child cannot take leave simultaneously. This leave is also available to parents who adopt a child. Besides these minimum provisions, the Act ensures that awards take family responsibilities into consideration. It also requires the Australian Industrial Relations Commission to perform award-making functions that further the objectives of the Act.

The act also envisages the need to prevent and eliminate discrimination because of family responsibilities. The Work and Family Unit has information on best practices that can help employers and employees negotiate agreements that include family-friendly provisions. In addition, it has a database with family-friendly agreement clauses. It is a helpful resource that allows the user to access a range of provisions in federal certified
agreements. Its purpose is to provide access to family-friendly clauses by industry, by the size of the organization and by type of clause. For example, the user can find examples of paid family leave clauses in the retail trade in medium-sized organizations. Such user friendly data bases can disseminate information of family friendly initiatives thereby increasing the awareness to employee rights.

4.2.5 Scandinavian Countries

Norway, Denmark and Sweden have developed policies and legislation mainly to support care giving. As members of the European Union (EU), these countries are directed to provide minimum standards to reconcile work with family life. One of the four pillars of the European Employment Strategy (2002) consists of commitments to strengthen equal opportunities policies for men and women and reconcile work and family life. The EU promotes work-life balance through several directives such as the Pregnant Workers Directive (1996), the Parental Leave Directive (2006). Special Leave and vacation entitlements are extremely generous in European countries. The maternity leave varies from 10 weeks to 22 weeks with paid leave.

At least 20% of the workforce in Europe practice teleworking and the numbers are high in Scandinavian countries.

4.2.6 The Netherlands

The Dutch policy envisages rights such as the right to adjust working time, parental and other leave to care for family member and aims at making it easier for people to combine work and care. The Adjustment of Hours Law (2000) gives Dutch workers the right to request a shortening or lengthening of their normal working hours. Thus it allows new parents to shift to a four-day schedule when they are raising young children and get back to
their normal schedule as and when children grow up. In short, the law allows for a voluntary reduction, or increase, in hours without affecting the quality of one's job, although pay and benefits are adjusted on a pro-rated basis to reflect the change in hours worked (World of Work Magazine 2006).

Thus Netherlands have the highest number of part-time workers and the lowest rate of involuntary part-time workers among the EU countries, Pagan-Rodriguez (2009). The Work and Care Act, introduced in 2001 has encompassed provisions for different variety of leave to care for children and other relatives. The Act includes the right to paid maternity leave (16 weeks with wage payments from the government at a maximum rate slightly higher than the average national wage rate), paid paternity leave (two days paid in full by the employer), unpaid parental leave over a six month period, and provisions for adoption and multiple births. The Paid Employment and Care Act (2002) is also being considered in order to make a long-term care leave possible where it could be used in situations of terminal illness of a child, partner or parent or a life-threatening illness of a child. It has a maximum duration of six times the weekly working hours, in principle spread out over 12 weeks. The employee can ask the employer to grant six weeks full time leave.

4.2.7 Denmark

The Dutch government extended the Paid Maternity and parental leave from 32 weeks to a total of 52 weeks in 2002 where the mother can avail four weeks of leave before childbirth and 14 weeks of leave after childbirth whereas the father can avail two weeks of paternity leave after the child is born. This is one of the unique way in which work-life balance can be improved. Even changes in the part-time work have been incorporated and the employee is allowed to work only for 15 hours or less per week. A joint initiative has been announced by the Ministry for Gender Equality and
Ministry of Employment where flexible work time arrangements based on a person’s entire working life. For example, they will consider the creation of a time bank that would make it possible for individual employees to adapt working time to their needs at different points in their lives (European Working Conditions Observatory 2005).

Danish Work Environment Cohort Survey (2000) describes working conditions, health and lifestyle among Danish employees and self-employed people. The parents also get subsidies from the Danish government to take care of their children instead of using public childcare services. This subsidy is available when the child is 24 weeks old until he/she reaches the age of six years. The Work and Family Commission (2007), concentrated on full-time working families with children, time off for grandparents to care for their sick grandchildren, and the establishment of time-saving accounts over the life course.

4.2.8 Sweden

The parental leave benefits of Sweden promote the participation of fathers in care giving. i.e. 70% of fathers use the parental leave benefit since, 1974 (Human Resource and Skill Development 2005). 90% of the mothers return to employment once their parental leave has expired. Among the high performing countries, Sweden replaces 80% of the usual earning in terms of paid leave. Such policies have been developed taking into consideration the need for encouraging work and making working possible. For promoting better health in working life a comprehensive active plan was formulated by the Swedish government in the year 2002. It reduces the impact of poor health on work-life balance.

A committee was formed in 2000 where the entire system of legislation on working time was proposed. The workers could use one week
of the current statutory five weeks of annual leave flexibly, in different units
of one or more hours or in days. Even sabbatical leave was proposed from
2002 to 2004 which would entitle the employee to take up a year off for
studying or to look after the children.

As both the countries Denmark and Sweden have a strong history
of social and family policy, the policy makers mainly focus on the well-being
of citizens, particularly children’s welfare. Both have generous parental leave,
family leave benefits and even give a choice to the workers to change their
working time such that they accommodate their care giving.

4.2.9 France

The statutory week was reduced from 39 hours to 35 hours in 2002
and the overtime rates were simplified. The France’s National Economic
Planning Agency (1962) recommended that the working time should be in
demand with the people’s social and private lives. The Family Code was
introduced in 1938 when the family policy of France was institutionalized. It
plays an important role in social cohesion. There are specific organisations to
administer the policy: a ministry devoted to family affairs, a national fund,
and a policy decision process involving economic and social actors as
partners (Beauzamy 2009).

Single-earner families are provided with a “Single Salary
Allowance” or a “housewife allowance” aimed at supporting women’s care
work at home. The impact of this scheme was to confine women to the role of
full-time mothers and housewives because it was assumed that this would
contribute to the welfare of young children and to the rise of fertility. France
ranks high in matters of protecting children and guarantee of giving equal
opportunities for children. The highest number of part-timers is in France than
most of the Scandinavian countries. The Maternity Leave for pregnant
working women in France (1993) is sixteen weeks and even fathers are eligible for two weeks leave following the birth of a child. 100% parental leave is granted. An Unpaid leave can also be taken if the child has fallen sick. In cases of serious sickness the employee can work part time. The timing of offices were also regulated in order to regulate the timing of transports, services, shopping and childcare services along with the time of work. The Aubry Law (2000) proposed by the Government reduced the hours of working from 39 hours to 35 hours per weeks. It allows mothers to choose a day free when the children are not at school. An extra day off corresponding to the extra time spent at work is also allowed.

4.2.10 Belgium

Belgium introduced a system named “time credits” which would help the employees to interrupt their work for a maximum of one year or make their employment into part-time without the employer breaking the contract of employment. Belgium has the new ‘time-credit’ practice which reconciles professional careers with responsibilities to the family (Beauzamy 2009).

4.2.11 Canada

Canada increased the parental leave from 10 weeks to 35 weeks in 2000. This is in addition to 15 weeks maternity leave. Employees can avail a combination of maternity and parental benefit up to maximum of 50 weeks. The Employment Insurance System pays the maternity and the parental leave (Lero 2009).

4.2.12 Ireland

The Irish government endorsed, the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (2000). One of its objective was to develop family friendly policies which would provide equality in childcare and family life. It has also started a
“Family-Friendly Workplace Day” in 2001. Promotional activities are undertaken. It highlights government’s recognition that even workers without children have to balance their life. In 2004, the name of this annual day of promotion was changed to “Work Life Balance Day”. The Irish Work balance website is hosted by the National Framework Committee for work life balance policies which was established under the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness (www.worklifebalance.ie).

4.2.13 Hong Kong

The Government of Hong Kong has taken a lead in 2006 and introduced a 5-day week for suitable government sectors. The Community Business in 2008 promoted Work Life Balance Day (Fun and Peggy 2007). On this day different companies participated to highlight the issue of work-life balance. Legally women are entitled to maternity leave of 10 weeks duration. Other forms of family friendly initiatives are voluntary in nature and employers (Gender Equality Bureau 2010).

4.2.14 Spain

The Autonomous Community of Madrid and the International Centre of Work and Family developed a guide for Flexible and Good practices in Companies. It is called Culture FR (Flexible vs. Responsible). It has focused on how better rights for parents at work, or changes to work or school hours can combining work and childcare easier. It offers a 100% paid parental leave (Beauzamy 2009).

4.2.15 Japan

The Labour Market Reform Investigation Committee of Specialists under the aegis of the Economy and Fiscal Policy Council aims at providing
flexibility in the labour market. In 2007 a committee of the government and top cabinet was formed. It proposed a charter and principles for both government and employers in the year 2008. It was marked as the “First Year of Balance Between an Individual’s Work and Personal Life”. The office for promoting balance between individual’s work and personal life was set in the Cabinet office as a core organization and cooperates with the top public, private think tanks, labour, management and local government. The government also launched a task force to improve work life balance measures among both male and female workers (JAUW 2009).

The panel set up under the Government’s Council for Gender Equality deals with issues and ways to balance work and personal life. The task force has representatives both from the Japan Business Federation and Japanese Trade Union Federation. The government of Japan introduced Child Care Flexible Work in 2005 whereas Child Care Grant, Child Care Paid Leave, flexible Work during pregnancy period, Child Care Short-Time work were introduced in 2007. The at-Home Work System and Use of Paid Annual Leave on an Hourly Basis was introduced in 2008 (Decent Work in Japan Fiscal 2009).

4.2.16 India

The boom in the Indian economy has made a stronger case for work-life balance in India. The Indian workforce in greater stress than counterparts in developed nations; Regus plc (2009). A large rise in percentage of working women has also added to the complexity. The Maternity Benefit Act of 1961 requires that a three-month paid leave be given to all women workers. The Factories Act (1948) requires the employer to provide a crèche if there are more than 30 women employees with children below six years. The Sixth Pay Commission (2008) has clarified the child care leave in respect of central government employees. It would facilitate women employees to take care of their children at the time of need.
care leave is also granted to women government employees having children below the age of 18 years. This leave can be taken for a period maximum of two years. Conveyance allowance was also modified and the rates automatically increased by 25% to enable employees to opt for faster transit thereby allowing more time with family. The Maternity leave has been increased from the period of 135 days to 180 days by the Sixth Pay Commission.

The Maternity Benefit Act 1956 entitles every woman liable for the payment of the maternity benefit at the rate of average daily wage for the period of her actual absence and the period following the date of delivery. Maximum twelve weeks of not more than six weeks is given. The Maternity Amendment Act was passed in 2008 where the medical bonus as maternity benefit was increased to Rs. 1,000 from Rs 250. Further up this benefit will be enhanced to a maximum of Rs.20,000 every three years.

The Factories Act, 1948 directs that a factory in which ten or more than ten workers are working should concentrate on the health and welfare of the workers working in the factories. Crèche facility is required if there are more than thirty women with children below six years. A trained female staff is to be appointed in charge and milk and refreshments for the children are provided. Women workers have to be given period intervals to feed the kids. The weekly hours should not be more than 48 hours a week’s where the first day of the week shall be a weekly holiday or one of the days three days before or after the said first day. The Amendment Act bill was passed in 2005 where women workers were prohibited to work in night shift and there would be no change of shift after a weekly holiday or any other holiday.

4.2.17 Other Asian Countries

The maternity leave for women in Bangladesh is 12 weeks which is paid at 100%. But there is no specific laws for women working in the
management level as the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 which allows the Maternity Benefit refers to workers that do manual work mainly in factories. ILO suggests 14 weeks maternity leave but the latest convention passed in 2000; Maternity Protection Convention was ratified only by 13 countries and Bangladesh was not one of them. The rest of the facilities such as flexitime, personal leave days, four-day work week, etc are unheard of in Bangladesh. Pakistan and Sri Lanka from the Asian region also face similar difficulties for maternity leave. Singapore work life balance initiative include implementation of family friendly policies such as flexi-hours, telecommuting, family care leave and concierge services for staff. A grant of up to Singapore $14,000 has been offered by the Singapore government to assist small and medium companies to help staff by introducing pro-family practices. Financial assistance for childcare is another benefit.

4.3 RECENT STUDIES ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

There are few studies reporting work life balance practices across the countries of the world. A review of these gives some meaningful insights.

Countries like Australia, US and Canada have a high government and workplace policy support. The Australian employees reported positive spillover originates from both work and family (Pocock et al 2007). Countries like India, Indonesia and Turkey have high extended family and paid worker support but low institutional support provided by both government and organization. Enforcement is a problem in many of the underdeveloped countries (Aycan 2005; Lero and Bardoel 2008). In US the work and family overload is more where both time and strain based work family conflict and family work conflict is seen (Ishaya and Ayman 2008). In Canada, the work and family overload is more where both work family and family work conflict and guilt. Even with more job and family demands there is conflict between work and family (Korabik and Lero 2004; Korabik et al 2009). Higher the
work and family overload more work interference and family interference and 
vice versa but less job and family satisfaction is seen in Taiwan (Huang 
2009).

A recent study by Kelly services (2009) revealed that personal 
communication technologies such as smart phones and laptops have improved 
work life balance. The worldwide average shows that 84 percent of Singapore 
respondents agree whereas in China it was 93 percent, India 92 percent, 
Indonesia 97 percent. The Western countries such as United States was at 
73 percent, UK 82 percent whereas Germany 81 percent.

The survey on work life balance (2009) indicated that 54 percent of 
Singaporeans were satisfied with work life balance whereas the Western 
countries such as United States is at 69 percent and the United Kingdom at 
56 percent and Germany at 58 percent. Asian countries like India showed 
64 percent of work life balance, China 58 percent, Indonesia 68 percent and 
Malaysia 57 percent. Gen Y respondents aged between 18 and 29 gave 
importance to achieving work life balance whereas 71 percent of Gen Y’s 
viewed it as extremely important to have a good work life balance. The Gen 
X, aged 30 to 47 gave an importance of only 64 percent whereas Baby 
Boomers aged 48 to 65 gave it an importance of 59 percent.

The basic policy practices which are important for work life 
balance are paid leave. France, Greece and Spain offer 100 percent portions of 
parental leave where Sweden replaces 80 percent of usual earnings whereas 
Norway can choose between 80 percent of usual earning or a shorter fully-
paid period. Finland has a different perspective where low-earning workers 
receive two-thirds of their usual earnings and higher-earnings receive 
progressively less. The second feature is parental leave is not transferrable 
from one parent to another such that mothers would benefit the leaves given 
to the fathers. Finland and Spain guarantees four full weeks of paternity leave
where if the two weeks entailed to them is taken they get the benefit of two weeks extra at a higher wage-replacement rate. But Norway and Sweden allow single parents to avail the entire two-parent share of paid leave. In matters of scheduling flexibility parents can take paid leave until the child’s birthday whereas people working part-time can avail leave benefit until the child’s seventh birthday. France has a four level parental benefit depending upon people who work full time; who work between 50 and 80 percent of their usual schedule; who work not half of their usual schedule and who take full-time leave. Spain, Sweden and Norway take on a part-time basis where Norway allows both the parents to take part-time leave at the same time (Generosity et al 2008).

The Times of India (2010) report on work life balance issues states that certain organizations like Hindustan Unilever and Procter and Gamble India have introduced flexible working hours for women employees. Initially, HUL introduced it to retain women but in recent times it is identified as one of the best means to attract and retain talent whether they are men or women. Tatas and Muthoot have even offered a second career option for women. IBM has seen an increase in the percentage of women workforce by 26% which was revealed in the recent survey in 2007 by Confederation of Indian Industry survey. The women in the IT workforce grew from 4.21 lakh in 2006 to 6.7 lakh in 2008. The percentage of female employees in technical functions have seen a steady rise and stands at 36 percent. These trends are attributed to IBM’s work life balance initiatives.

At the 8th European Regional Meeting (2009) of the International Labour Organisation facts regarding the quality of working life were submitted. Six dimensions for a decent work-life balance was proposed. They were measures leading to an increase in child-care services, reforms of entitlements to care leave, reduced working hours, long-term care insurance,
promotion of a family-friendly culture and workplace, and development of international legal standards.

In the European Countries employer prefer to offer work practices such as flexitime (95 per cent) and working from home (79 per cent). Regarding leaves of absence, 23 per cent of employer give their employees the opportunity to take a paid sabbatical. Relatively few employer place any emphasis on child care services (34 per cent), special maternity/paternity leave arrangements such as extra leave for mothers (15 per cent) and fathers (34 per cent), and extra pay for mothers (46 per cent) and fathers (48 per cent). The Dutch, Irish, Danish, Portuguese and Belgian employer flex time and working from home is the second best benefit where in the case of Irish, Belgian and Danish companies it ranks first. Only 34 percent of the companies show a contribution towards childcare benefits and work a bit above the statutory minimum. These companies are in a notion that it is the responsibility of the state for the provision of child care services. Thus it is seen that employer contributes low when the state plays an active role as care provider and contributes high when there are little public child care coverage (Straub 2007).

Countries like Germany, Austria and Ireland have confirmed the phenomenon where children are seen as private responsibility of the parents comprising a working father and a caring mother and the family has to bear the responsibility. Among the European countries Sweden is an exception where the employer play an important role in the provision of childcare to overcome family-related problems at work. In countries like Sweden, Austria, German and Ireland employer have promoted job-protected paternity leave arrangements where fostering increases participation of men in family care a popular theme in European countries (Straub 2007).
The countries can be classified into low, medium and high performers on the work life balance front. The low performers include Italy, Portugal and Belgium whereas medium performers include Germany, Finland, Greece, Austria and France. The high performers are Denmark, Ireland, the UK (Reilly 2006). The Netherlands, Spain and Sweden, Denmark and Norway have the highest level of maternity benefits—Sweden provides 68 weeks paid maternity leave, Norway provides 56 weeks paid maternity leave and Denmark provides 52 (Generosity 2008).

A survey done by Team lease in 2008 said that 54 percent of people felt that they were only “weekend parents” whereas 34 percent of the working couples said that as there were two careers, chances of divorce were high. A HT C-fore survey (2010) found that 76 per cent of executives earning over Rs. 15,000 monthly did not have a good work-life balance, 89 per cent thought they would be more productive if they had one. About 91 per cent thought it should be the company’s responsibility to promote a balance.

4.4 EXISTING PRACTICES OF WORK LIFE BALANCE

The foregoing studies indicate that there is diversity on work life balance legislation and practices. Some interesting work life balance practices in vogue are: (Hogarth and Bosworth 2009)

- Fixed part-time working where the employee works a reduced number of working hours per day or fewer days a week.

- The V-time working where the employee voluntarily reduces working hours for a limited period of time. The pay is reduced appropriately but the leave entitlement remains the same.

- Job Sharing where a full-time job is split and the work, responsibilities and benefits of the work are shared between
two people. It can be on the basis of week split or day or week on/week off. They receive the full benefits of full time staff including the career progression.

- Job splitting is where the specific tasks are divided between the partners and in this case the working time may overlap.

- Domestic leave where the employee can take special leave for family reasons and even attend important family occasions.

- Short time leave allows the employee to leave early to go home and feed their elderly parent or to take an hour leave, rather than taking a half-day leave.

- Term-Time working allows an employee with children to balance their working arrangements such that they are on leave when the schools are closed. They are entitled to take leave for a few weeks and the regular payment is averaged out over a 12 month period.

- Seasonal working ensures the pay is given even in the off-season.

- Career breaks can be taken for a specific duration when agreed by both the employer and the employee. The purpose for such a break would be for the education, childcare or other domestic purposes. A career break can be taken depending upon the minimum service requirement of the organization.

- Flex time where the starting and finishing time of work can be varied according to the choice of the employees except at the core working hours. If an employee works above the normal
hours then the extra time is credited and can be taken as time off. This is known as “banking”.

- Compressed hours are where by an employee instead of doing eight hours of shift five days a week can do four days of 10 hours shift or nine-day fortnight etc.

- Self-rostering allows employees to schedule their working day to meet the workload. It allows flexibility in staff levels to meet fluctuations which would give the employees better control over their work.

- E-working is initiated where proper safeguarded flexible arrangements would benefit the employee through saving on commuting time.

- Variable year employment where one changes the work hours over the month or through the year depending upon on the demands of the job. This way an employee where one works more during busy periods and takes time off in lean times.

4.5 INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND WORK LIFE BALANCE

This section discusses the initiatives of international bodies like the International Trade Union Confederation and the International Labour Organisation in fostering work life balance.

4.5.1 International Trade Union Confederation

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) represents 170 million workers, 40 percent of whom are women, in 157 countries and territories and has 312 national affiliates (www.ituc-csi.org). The ITUC aims to achieve gender equality at the work place and in trade unions. Decent Work, Decent Life for Women was successfully launched on 8th March 2008.
in cooperation with the Global Union Federations. It focused on maternity protection rights, child-care facilities and work life balance. The ITUC has a committee of trade union women from all the regions which meets once a year to discuss and prepare recommendation for ITUC gender policies. The 4th yearly international women conference was held in 2009 in Belgium. The ILO along with ITUC launched an awareness-raising campaign on gender equality and is also a part of overall Decent Work Campaign (Decisions for Work 2010).

4.5.2 International Labour Organization

The ILO through its conventions prescribes workers rights to work and wages, holidays and leave, health safety and social security. These have a bearing on work family enrichment (www.ilo.org).

Work and wages: The minimum wage must cover the living expenses of the employee and his/her family members. Moreover it must relate reasonably to the general level of wages earned and the living standard of other social groups. Wages must be paid regularly. Working overtime is to be avoided. Whenever it is unavoidable, extra compensation should be offered – minimally the basic hourly wage plus all additional benefits a worker is entitled to.

Work and holidays Convention 132 (1970) on Holidays with Pay Convention (Revised). The annual minimum paid holiday is set at three weeks of paid leave, national and religious holidays not included. Work during holidays and weekends is governed by Conventions 14, 47 and 106. In addition different Conventions apply for several industries. Employees are entitled to paid leave during national and officially recognized religious holidays. If employees have to work on a national or religious holiday, they should be entitled to compensation. This does not necessarily have to be in the
same week, provided the right to a paid compensation day is not forfeited. If an employee has to work during the weekend, s/he should acquire the right to a rest period of 24 uninterrupted hours. This does not necessarily have to be during the weekend, but at least during the course of the following week.

Children at school Convention 156: Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (1981) govern these issues related to children. An employee’s paid holiday should be allowed to coincide with the holidays of school-going children. Employees (regardless of gender) with family responsibilities should have the same opportunities as their colleagues who have no such responsibilities. Maternity and work Convention 183 (2000) govern issues related to maternity. During pregnancy and maternity leave the female worker should be entitled to medical and midwife care without any additional cost.

During pregnancy and while breastfeeding, employees should be exempt from work that might bring harm to the mother or the baby. Maternity leave should be at least 14 weeks. An earlier Convention (Convention 103 from 1952) prescribes at least 12 weeks maternity leave, 6 weeks before the birth and 6 weeks Thereafter. During maternity leave a worker’s income should amount to at least two thirds of his/her preceding salary.

Work and sickness Conventions 121 (1964) and 130 (1969) concerning Employment Injury Benefits and Medical Care and Sickness Benefits govern sickness during work. An employee’s rights to work and income should be protected when illness strikes. The first three days of a worker’s absence due to sickness do not need to be compensated for. An employee should be entitled to a minimum income of 60% of the minimum wage for a period of six months. Countries are free to opt for a system which guarantees 60% of the last wages during the first 6 months of illness or during the first year. A worker should not be fired during the first 6 months of his/her illness. Whenever an employee becomes disabled due to an occupational
disease or accident, s/he ought to receive a somewhat higher benefit than when the cause is not work-related. Social security Convention 102 (1952) govern social security. For several benefits somewhat higher standards have been set in subsequent Conventions: 121 (1964), 128 (1967), 130 (1969) And 168 (1988).

Pension benefits should apply from the age of 65, and be set as a percentage of the minimum wage or a percentage of the earned wage. When the breadwinner has died, the spouse and children are entitled to a benefit, expressed as a percentage of the minimum wage, or a percentage of the earned wage. For a limited period of time the unemployed person has a right to unemployment benefits, set as a percentage of the minimum wage or a percentage of the earned wage. Employees and their family members should have access to the necessary minimal medical care at an affordable price.

Fair treatment at work is governed by Convention 111 (1958) and 100 (1952). Convention 111 lists the discrimination grounds which are prohibited. Convention 100 (1952) includes equal remuneration for work of equal value. Equal pay for men and women for work of equal value is a must, regardless of marital status. Pay inequality based on religion, race or ethnic background is also prohibited. A transparent remuneration system and the clear matching of pay and position in the workplace is intended to prevent wage discrimination. Sexual intimidation is gender discrimination.

Equal training opportunities for all employees, regardless of gender, religion, race or ethnic background is directed at improving development opportunities. The freedom to complain is provided under these conventions. Workers should know whom to turn to for help in case of discrimination. Whenever an employee asks questions about discrimination or files a complaint, s/he should be protected against intimidation and against being dismissed (International Labour Conference 2009). ILO covenant and India is shown in Table 4.1.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work and wages</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum wages</td>
<td>Minimum wages act 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular Pay</td>
<td>Payment of wages Act 1936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work and Holidays</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid holidays</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work during holidays and week ends</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay on public holidays</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public holiday compensation</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children at school</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paid leave during school holidays</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equal opportunities to parents</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maternity and work</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free medical act</td>
<td>Maternity benefit act 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No harmful work during pregnancy</td>
<td>Employee can request 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity leave</td>
<td>Maternity benefit Act 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternity leave pay</td>
<td>Maternity benefit Act 1961</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Health and safety</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer duty of care</td>
<td>N/L Factories Act (1942)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free protection</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complaints</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Work and sickness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sick pay</td>
<td>Employee state insurance Act 1952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minimum sickness income</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job security</td>
<td>No legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disability benefit</td>
<td>Employee state insurance Act 1948</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Workmen’s compensation Act 1923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social Security</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pension rights</td>
<td>Employees Pension Scheme Act 1995 of respective service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent benefits</td>
<td>Payment of gratuity Act 1972</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployment benefits</td>
<td>Unemployment compensation Act 1956</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical care</td>
<td>ESI 1948</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Quite a few of the ILO covenants have legislations envisaging duties of the employer and employee. However, a few are still missing. Steps must be initiated to have appropriate legislations. Even where legislations are in place enforcement is often slack, thereby, vitiating the purpose of the relevant acts. Therefore, adequate measures to enforce the legislation when the need arises must be taken and they must be taken within reasonable time to render justice (ILOLEX Database on International Labour Standards 2010).

4.6 THE INDIAN SCENARIO

An attempt is made herein to understand work life policies and practices in India, practices followed by major organizations in the IT sector, the opinions of successful business women and reasons why companies made it to the list of best companies to work in are reported.

4.6.1 Work Life Balance in Major IT Companies

Work life balance practices in the major organizations is reported herein.

TCS: TCS encourages work-life balance through “Maitree”. It is an unique platform which supports all employee engagement activities. Different clubs like Theatre Club, Bibliophile Club, Adventure and Trekking Club, Fitness Club, Sanctuary Club, Music Club and Community Services Club, among others facilitate fun at work. These clubs organise various activities like yoga, dance lessons, music competitions, trekking expeditions, sports activities, regular visits to NGOs, among other activities for TCS employees. These are extended to the families of their employees where a Family Day is organized where the employees can bring families to TCS. It brings about a bonding between families of employees.
It also offers a flexible work environment where the employees are given the option to work part-time or work from home. Adoption leave is also given to a parent irrespective of their gender. They even give an option to women to discontinue work for a temporary period of time due to family commitments and rejoin work later. Employees also have an option to go on sabbatical leave. Employees can even avail a job-sharing arrangement to divide the workload. TCS offers a variety of choices to its employees to balance their work and life.

**WIPRO:** Crèches, Paid holiday, Vacation, Maternity Benefit with extended leave of absence and sabbaticals are offered to every Wiproite. The various Corporate Social Responsibility campaigns under the ‘Wipro Cares’ initiative gives insights into the right diet, best exercises for the body and soul and a variety of tips to keep one fit. Wipro’s focus is on both the emotional and physical wellness of the employee as a means to enable work life balance.

**IBM:** At IBM, a mobile work environment allows employees the ability to enhance their effectiveness by providing tools to use at any location, be it a customer office, airport, IBM’s mobility workstations or home. Employees in consultation with their managers can agree on a special working hours schedule which would assist the employees in balancing their responsibilities to work, family education and other personal needs. IBM ranks among the best companies for “Working Mother” for nineteen successive years (www-07.ibm.com).

IBM also entails a partnership between IBM and ‘Your Kids R Our Kids’ a high quality pre-school and day care solution provider. High-quality learning programs are available to the young learners in the form of coupled education with fun. This child care centre has been started in Pune and offers: The Infant program; The Early Toddler/Toddler program; The Pre School
The Pune child care centre operates from 8:00 am to 7:30 pm, five days a week twelve months a year. Well balanced and nutritious lunches, morning and afternoon snacks coordinated by a registered dietician are offered at the centre along with a certified in-house nurse and pediatrician who are available on call.

IBM's Global Work/Life Fund was formed in the year 2001. It is one of the first funds of its type to address such employee issues globally. While the fund addresses a variety of work/life issues, the primary focus is on dependent care programs that will help employees and their communities respond to the child and elder care responsibilities of working families. The fund is managed by cooperation with WFD, Inc., a leading consultant in work/life issues, based out of Boston, USA. IBM's Global Work/Life Fund has been recognized by NASSCOM as one of the most innovative offerings that address work/life needs in the IT/ITes industry. IBM won the Nasscom award in December last year for best childcare services in the Indian IT industry. Holiday camps are also undertaken where the children of IBM are fully occupied when the employees are at work and the kids are off school. Especially in the summer months there is a high participation rate among the children. Clearly, IBM positions itself as a child friendly employer.

**Tata Communication:** An innovative service which enables its employees to work from home was launched by Tata Communications. Employees are given an option to work from home, while maintaining the security and confidentiality required. A secure and cost effective way is provided to the employees to work in an tele-work atmosphere through its world-class IP-VPN/MPLS network. Tata Communication provides opportunity to its employees to work from home to ease work/life pressures.
**Cisco:** It provides gamut of infrastructure to its employees. Laptops, data card for web access, broadband access at home are facilities provided to them to balance work/life. Cisco does not have a track on attendance and office times as the work is done globally. Employees end up participating in calls and meetings at home. Forums like Women’s Action Network have been enabled to seek support and guidance for the employees to balance career and life. IT enabled services are instrumental in driving work life balance here.

**Google Pvt. Ltd.:** The concept of family-friendly has been imbibed in Google. Children are seen playing with Lego sets or eating in their staff canteen. It creates an atmosphere of freedom with a sense of empowerment for its employees. Employees are given maximum flexibility in terms of work and what they would like to do.

**Network Appliance Systems (India) Private Limited (NetApp):** Trust and Integrity are the key elements of this company’s culture. During its recent global restructuring where 6% of their workforce had to be terminated, they made sure that the affected employees were not left high and dry.

**Tavant Technologies:** About 60% of the employees in Tavant can work from home and everyone uses this aspect of flexible working policy and balancing of social life. The attitude of the employees at Tavant is Work Hard; Play Harder attitude. Tavant scored well on work-life balance, especially for women employees. The company achieved the second spot in terms of gender inclusivity. A Tavant Olympics, an annual sports event in which all the employees participate is organized. Besides, it also has an in-house Rock Band

**Infosys:** An on-line network for the employees-who are parents is designed to provide parenting counseling, clarify work life balance policies,
opportunity for employees to ask questions and even discuss their views with working parents. Useful information about schools, day care facilities and doctors are provided for people who want to relocate. Some of the policies for women are maternity leave, Telecommuting, Sabbaticals, leave for child care, Satellite office for pregnant women and young mother and performance based career progression. The support systems include flexible arrival/departure, alternate career paths, Parenting workshops, Family Friendly events, Day care centers(Company supported) and nursing stations.

**HP:** Flexible work option is offered to all its employees, especially young mothers, working in HP which allows its employees to work part-time or flexible hours. A 60:40 ratio is planned among the local units where for every 60 employees who punch in their cards at office, 40 work from home. A better work-life balance is delivered to the employees while the organisation saves on real estate, power consumption and office maintenance staff. HP offers flexible work options to help employees balance work and personal commitments. They also offer Flex time, Part time, Telework and Flex work. Self defense classes and mentoring programmes are also conducted for women.

**Accenture:** The work environment in Accenture enables one to collaborate with people and draw from experiences around the world. It not only enables one to work with dynamic people but also enables a healthy work life balance. Telecommuting initiative is one of the key tools for attracting and retaining employees, especially women employees. At Accenture, workshops on building effective networks and managing work/life balance are conducted. Accenture is also coordinating a webcast featuring stories from and about Accenture women worldwide. The webcast is accessible by all Accenture employees via an Intranet connection. “Vaahihi” a group was launched by Accenture in 2005 which address women's issues
proactively. The company gives incentives including cash for referring women. (www.mtaram.com)

4.7 VIEWS OF TOP SUCCESSFUL WOMEN IN INDIA ON WORK LIFE BALANCE

Media Reports of work life balance issues in India is reflected in here. The views are based on comments provided by successful women to the media. They are considered in this research. They are pointers how successful women achieve work life balance (Source: Business Today 2008).

- Amrita Patel, Chairman, NDDB believes that mantra for maintaining work life balance is meditation

- Chanda Kochhar, MD, ICICI Bank maintains a daily time schedule and prioritises things depending on the situation.

- Indu Jain, Chairman, The Times Group says that inner growth must match one’s material growth and achievements. She stresses on Learning, Living and Actions and she moves in Oneness. According to her there is no positive nor negative only there “is”

- Kalpana Morparia, CEO JP Morgan India emphasis work is life.

- Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairman and Managing Director, Biocon tend to spend more time with family and friends and a great balance is achieved through them.

- Leena Nair, Executive Director, HUL has the mantra that don’t give a choice about life just live life to the fullest
- Madhabi Puri-Buch, Executive Director, ICICI Bank specifies the use of technology especially the Internet and Mobile to achieve Work Life Balance. She even says that if people enjoy life by what they are doing then they are living a wonderful life.

- Mallika Srinivasan, Director, TAFE says that one should recognize their strengths, do what they are good at doing, have a flexible approach and even set meters such that there is a flow of work and life.

- Preetha Reddy, Director Apollo Hospital Enterprise balances her work and life like being a Buddhist. According to her one has to be dispassionate about all decisions particularly the ones which involve a decision between work and personal betterment. That way one would have no regrets.

- Rana Bijapurkar, An independent Management Consultant merges both work and family life together such that there are no separate spaces between the two. She advises one to go to the beauty parlors on Monday mornings and Sunday afternoon for meetings if necessary, thereby stressing the need to be flexible.

- Renuka Ramnath, Managing Director and CEO, ICICI Venture believes the mantra of work life balance is to prioritize one’s needs depending upon the situation faced.

- Swati Piramal, Director Healthcare Ltd. enjoys every moment with a smile and a sparkle in the eye. She opines that work becomes passionate and relaxing when one loves doing it.
4.8 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK IN

The unique family friendly initiatives that have enabled the organization to get recognition as best companies to work in are discussed. (www.greatplacetowork.in)

4.8.1 Unique WLB Initiatives

**LG Electronics:** The family ambassador programme dedicates a mentor who goes to the workers house and talks to his family, about their needs, problems etc and tries to make their situation better. Another unique point in LG is the Joyful Working programme which was initiated to remove monotony and the boredom employees face at work. Five key factors like stress, communication, leadership, target setting and working hours were identified that needed attention. There are informal clubs such as singing, games and yoga clubs which aims at de-stressing employees and building their overall personality. It also understands how family members perceive LG as an employer and even takes suggestions on improving the organizational environment. A sense of bonding is created which adds an additional dividends for the company in the form of emotional attachment to the staff. This initiative is focused on both factory workers and managerial staff. The Family Ambassador programme is an ice breaker where the HR team can consider an emotional bonding and also bring a feeling of human touch in large and faceless organizations. Working on Sundays was banned in LG where employees would be called on their landline to make sure they are not in office or in any outside assignments.

**Intel India Pvt. Ltd.:** Intel offers a greater degree of flexibility to the employees at the work place so that they can help in developing new business line, product category and even promotion-driven activity. Efforts are constantly driven in assimilating the culture and differences in the...
personalities of the employees. Family, extra-curricular activities and volunteerism have a strong emphasis in Intel where “Rural Olympics” are held which consisted of games that are played in India. “Fresh Vegetables Buying Day” is also organised in the campus. There is an informal talk among the managers and staff regarding the ways in which an employee balances his/her personal and professional life and whether the organization is facilitating him/her to do so. Intel has a work- effective manager who is responsible for looking after the work-life balance and examines the market and surveys employees for ideas and opportunities in the arena. Flexibility, Telecommuting, Employee development and convenience/services are the four key work areas Intel provides every employee. The two pronged strategy in Intel is that the company creates a congenial environment on one hand and five core values (ie discipline, risk-taking, quality, customer orientation and result orientation) at the work place on the other hand.

**Silver Spark Apparels Ltd.:** The company is a subsidiary of Raymond’s. The best practices in the company is that the management staff and welfare officers visit the homes of the employees and meet their parents where the culture, style of working and other facilities available in the company are explained to them. The company gives more importance to the development of women. Children’s education is absolutely free.

**RMSI Private Ltd.:** The “Best Employer” tag has been won by the company constantly for three years. It actively encourages balancing personal life and professional commitment by providing flexible work schedules. Some of the employee benefits given by the company are Family Health plan, Education Assistance, Restaurant and merchandise discounts etc. As for what makes it a great work place is the independence and strong working ethos, along with flexibility to hone one’s entrepreneurial talent.
What could be done to ensure work life balance. Indian organizations could start implementing work life balance policies such as:

1. Offering childcare financial assistance and/or on-site crèches
2. Enforcing maternity benefit act
3. Paid paternity leave
4. Flexitime – offering flexible start and finish times provided the employee works the core hours
5. Relocation – allowing employees to relocate to any branch in India or overseas to suit their personal circumstances e.g. if they get married
6. Allowing staff to work from home
7. Term-time contracts – offering contractual working hours during school terms only and allowing parents not to work during school holidays
8. Self managed working – employees manage their own working pattern and time to deliver outputs
9. Giving staff free membership of a company health club
10. Compelling people to take a holiday
11. Formal mentoring- is required for all to identify and nurture future champions

Work life balance initiatives must address the issue of equity and fairness among employees by targeting numerous forms of care -- childcare centres, family childcare, school-age and backup programmes, and eldercare services. Employers can ensure that programmes meet the dual needs of
employers and communities by building on the existing dependent care infrastructure such as grandpa grandma crèches, elder care institutions, palliative care homes, community crèches, revival of cultural initiatives etc.

Today most organizations have implemented intranets, virtual private networks and other knowledge management systems to stay in touch even if it means they have to work from home for non-work related purposes such as tending to a sick child or parents. Video conferencing to reduce travel and not scheduling work events during school holidays are other measures that can be adopted. The Indian employers can learn from the experiences of other countries who have worked on work life balance policies and initiatives. The negative fall outs of not implementing policies can also be observed. Cases in point include rising number of broken homes, crimes by adolescents and children stress and related diseases to name a few (Srivastava 2009).

However, new initiatives must consider the nature of industry, profile of workforce, the local culture and environment etc. In the recent past, some proactive measures have been introduced in some organizations to increase work life balance. Among these are concierge services which can include services from dry cleaning to grocery shopping as the commuting time is long and gives less personal time for completing households tasks.