# A STUDY ON WORK-LIFE BALANCE TO WORK-LIFE INTEGRATION IN HIGHER EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

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**Abstract:**

Global educational institutions are facing a transition phase. The stakeholders in this area are creating complex and multiple issues in giving the right and professional services. This leads in creating a proper balance of work to the faculty members working in higher education. Educational institutions were always working on the term work-life balance. But in contemporary times, the word work-life integration has been gaining popularity. This change in approach was inevitable, given the advent of technology. Its incumbent upon educational leaders to experiment with novel management approaches to thrive in today's fast-evolving mobile, digital and virtual Information Age. Many people tend to focus on the even division part of the balance when discussing work-life balance. Work-life balance is always associated with creating a view of competition between the two components. Work-life integration concentrates on comprising the different areas of one's life to create a whole picture. Institutions should leverage the high-tech revolution to allow faculty members to work smarter—not just longer and harder—to maximize productivity while minimizing burnout. The basic objective of this paper "A study on Work-Life Balance to Work-Life Integration in higher educational institutions" aims at understanding the concept of Work life integrations in the new age Educational institutions filled with multi dimensional millennials. Qualitative approach of research was adopted to study this concept for better understanding and implications. The research used secondary data for the collection of data. Conclusions, based on the outcome, hereby obtained were drawn and decisions were taken about the said objectives. The primary purpose of this paper is to stimulate further discussion amongst academicians and corporate and to be used in dialogue with various stakeholders.

KEYWORDS: work life integration, work life balance, faculty, educational institutions

**Introduction:**

The concept of global higher education is changing quickly amidst the new opportunities and challenges brought about by the dynamism of globalization, transition to knowledge-based society and rapid technological advancements. These developments have sharply increased the work responsibilities of academic staff. Exacerbated by the multiple and sometimes conflicting demands of various stakeholders, academics' work practices have moved from being typically characterized by teaching, researching and delivering university-related and society-related services to becoming more myriad, complex, fluid, and demanding. Educational institutions have a number of programs to assist employees integrate different components of their life in a way that 1) fits

their needs and 2) provides them control over managing the boundaries of work and personal life. With the capabilities of modern technology, it is possible to integrate work and life.

**Concept of Work-Life Integration:**

Work-Life Integration, a new concept in which work and life are intertwined, is emerging and is perceived to be the future of the working world. Technological instruments have created new ways for us to cooperate and work virtually, bringing with them oriented alternatives for work schedule flexibility. The term Work/Life Integration instead of Work/Life Balance because the latter evokes a binary opposition between work and life. In fact, the traditional image of a scale associated with work/life balance creates a sense of competition between the two elements.

Work/Life Integration instead is an approach that creates more synergies between all areas that define "life": work, home/family, community, personal well-being, and health. Now, the new phrase is "work life integration," where professionals have to blend what they do personally and professionally in order to make both work. Millennials have already started to adapt to this reality.

Introducing flexibility in the form of work-life integration is a great move forward for the educational institutions. Performance management system can stay ahead of the curve and ensures the organization remains competitive while developing a progressive reputation among graduates and other promising candidates. One management model gaining attention with this regard is called a "Results-Only Work Environment" (or ROWE). The goal is to maximize productivity while allowing certain segments of the employees to integrate their work-life in a more seamless manner through high-tech tools and work flexibility.

**Work Life Integration in Educational Institutions:**

When educational institutions develop a function of work-life patterns and supports, it is seen that there is reduced turnover, which in turn lowers expenses connected with recruiting and training new faculty. These policies also lead to higher productivity and increased levels of commitment and engagement among faculty members, both of which can increase the reputation of the institution. Institutions that engage in place flexible policies in the initial stages of faculty careers also benefit from the retention of institutional expertise otherwise lost when senior faculty retire. This practice is of particular importance given the increasing trend of senior faculties' retirements.

Work-life balance has become an important element for organizations and the working professional because it is essential for overall health and wellbeing and also for creating productive and positive work environments. Globally, work-life balance has garnered attention including at higher education institutions. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has understood the difference of a faculty role as one seemingly viewed as immeasurable, providing a platform for challenges with finding an appropriate balance between family, personal, and career expectations and obligations. Factors contributing to conflict for the faculty member are multi factorial, and, as for other working professionals, include work pressures, work overload, and job insecurities.

For work-life integration to work, rules need to be enforced. Though it might be important for faculty members need to decide their own hours, within reason, administrators should be firm about their expectations. For this reason, goal setting is essential. Have academicians set the right objectives, which can be easily tracked by modern performance management software. This will ensure everyone is on track and nobody is taking advantage of the institutions flexible nature.

Communication needs to be a priority. Organizing frequent one-to-ones with the faculty members will help in monitor performance and obtain feedback regarding progress. This will give the faculty members the opportunity to express any concerns or discuss relevant issues. On top of this, educational institutions should embrace technology and introduce an educational institution-wide means of faculty-student communication, where both can receive real-time feedback and interaction when needed. Administrators need to accept that each employee is different and, in order to maximize their efficiency, they may have different working hours. Some are morning people and get the bulk of their work completed before noon, while others are more productive in the evening. This may take some time to adapt to, but as long as faculty members are adhering to expectations and set goals, exercise trust and take a step back.

Moving forward, the system of work-life integration needs to be considered at the recruitment stage. Educational institutions should recruit faculty members who are willing to work hard, who are independent and don't require constant supervision. Specific questions can be asked of faculty members to uncover their work ethic; this will determine whether or not they are a strong fit for the educational institutions.

On the contrary, there is still a dearth of work-life balance research in the context of higher education. Particularly deficient are works which investigate the concept of work life balance within a framework comprising of potential job stressors such as work increase and emotional toil. They state that academics, unlike many other professions, are subjected to multiple and sometimes contradictory demands from other stakeholders, including students and external agencies such as society at large. Of particular relevance are the increasing demands from students, who as "customers" are aware of their rights to demand greater levels of service from the lecturers. This is so true of students from private universities who pay much higher tuition fees than their counterparts in public universities and as such expect more. Hence, universities have to ensure "lecturer quality" by introducing more changes in the nature of academic work such as student teaching quality assessments, teaching quality reviews, research assessments and other quality measures. These changes and increasing demands on academic work will directly contribute to work intensification. **Making balance an Institutional priority**

Universities and colleges can take the following methods to create work life integration amongst the faculty members.

1. **Redefine job descriptions:** A lot of faculty members especially women, who are more often solicited to be on groups and committees or are part as mentors do a lot that is not in their official job description. This is often frustrating. There has to be a system where all the work becomes official so that it is accounted for recognition and rewards. Institutions with better formal and

informal committees are always better recognized even with accreditation institutions and in the process create a brand name. People should be given credit for the work that they are doing so that they have healthier work-life balance.  If some are doing extra work its necessary to take away some of their responsibilities.

2. **Clarity in the work:** It is observed that workaholic culture is established in fear, especially for junior faculty members.  It is a fear that if they don't work for 24 hours, their job is at stake.  Institutions and senior faculty members can bring a solution to this problem by clearing the doubts with respect to tenure and promotions.  Performance appraisals need to be clear as to where they stand and what exactly they should do for promotions and be successful. It is essential to structure their responsibilities according to their performances. If faculty members are supposed to concentrate on research, it's necessary not to burden them with too many classes to teach or mentoring many students. If you do so they'll never be able to balance their work and life neither integrate it.

3. **Furnish affordable child care and act out other concrete framework that help support families: It is necessary to help faculty members create limits between work and homes so that it makes them easier to make sure that they are available for their children and they are taken care of even when they are at work. Family, maternity, paternity leave is all essential and to create a culture where they are made to believe that they are the assets of the organisation.  Work- life balance is no just important in its own right but also yields better performance and results for everyone.**

4. **Simulate balance:** Administrators and senior faculty is the people who set the tone.  An institution is as good as its faculty members. They hold a lot of power in the universities and colleges and if they send emails or messages at late hours to the staff students or colleagues the others also will feel they need to work round the clock.

**Outcome of Work Life Integration:**

Work-life integration can be of particular benefit to working parents. Research says that fifty percent of faculty members say work conflicts with family responsibilities at least twice or three times per week. Forty percent of women delay having children as a result, and 33 percent of parents are worried they are not spending enough time with children.  Clinical Psychologist Maria Sirois has said that the practice of work-life integration results in less stress and more overall fulfillment. This is why work-life integration is so important from an HR and performance management perspective. Faculty members who are less stressed are generally more engaged, have higher morale and are more productive than those who are frequently stressed. This is also true of faculty members who have access to more flexible working environments.

Finally, it is important to understand that work-life integration isn't all about work. It is necessary to be wary of faculty members who are clearly working too hard. Overworking and perfectionism can ultimately harm as much as a lack of effort. Overworking can also result in high blood pressure and sleep problems, which will mean sick

days in the long haul. Research has also pointed to the desperate need for work-life balance among academicians. Lack of work-life balance is associated with poorer health — both physical and emotional — for faculty members, as well as decreasing rates of job retention and satisfaction.

In addition to increasing productivity, accountability, employee engagement and job satisfaction, this progressive approach helps companies attract a new generation of young talent who yearn for more autonomy at work.

**Conclusion**

Overall, people are rethinking the traditional concept of work-life balance as two separate entities, and accepting the fact that work will interrupt some personal time, and some personal time will interrupt work. "True" balance will most likely never be found, but a harmony through work-life integration is attainable. Flexibility in work schedule, along with the ability to leverage mobile technology, is the preferred way to find a balance and is a trend that is becoming more popular at Educational institutions and sought after by faculty members. Most people share a simple and similar desire to create easy joy and meaningful engagement between the interconnected roles, relationships and responsibilities that make up their lives. As times change and technology advances, work-life integration must become the norm for forward-thinking educational institutions to succeed.

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