

Legal education's inter prepares students to be

disciplinary approach come problem-solvers



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Law being a noble profession has consistently contributed to the process of nation-building. Legal education, in turn, has served as a medium for transmitting legal knowledge from one generation to another, empowering societies to uphold justice, equity, and address dynamic societal needs.

A robust legal system depends on resilient legal education. Law schools, therefore, bear an obligation to ensure the delivery of high-quality, interdisciplinary legal education that prepares future legal professionals to meet the demands of persisting and emerging areas of law. Legal education holds immense significance, both for the practice of law as a profession and also for the community's welfare in general.

The proliferation of law colleges in India has led to the decline of legal education standards. Notwithstanding the sharp increase in institutions, efforts to efficiently establish and implement high standards have been comparatively slow. Most colleges relied on conventional teaching methods and had few qualified full-time educators, making it complex to maintain uniform, nationwide standards.

Since independence, reforms in Indian legal education have been extensively examined, highlighting recurrent issues such as entrance exams, curriculum, teaching methods, attendance, and student evaluation. Moreover, there is a dire need for 'socially-relevant legal education' to meet the legal needs of India's socially and economically-disadvantaged populations.

Big Stride: National Law Schools

A major progression in Indian legal education occurred in 1986, with the establishment of the National Law School of India University, which refined the five-year BA LLB degree programme.

Following its model, other national law schools were developed, and many law colleges in India adopted the five-year curriculum. Indeed, these national law schools have revamped legal education by introducing academic rigour, interdisciplinary perspectives, and clinical training.

Challenges in legal education

However, concerns remain about the quality of legal education in other law colleges. This necessitates further refinement and investment in legal education to contribute to a more relevant, equitable and robust legal education system.

Legal education not only determines the quality of the judiciary, but also impacts the rule of law, democracy, and socio-economic development of the nation.

While Indian law schools have made considerable advancements, critical challenges persist in the modernisation of legal education.

The challenges confronting legal education include the dearth of industry-oriented legal educators and trained professionals, outdated curriculum structure, lack of focus on practical skills development, resource constraints, limited emphasis on research and innovation, and limited accessibility and opportunities for students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, persons with disabilities, and older individuals seeking to enter or transition into the legal profession.

New approach to education

The present Indian legal education system stands at a conflux where opportunities for growth coexist with critical challenges that require swift attention and action. For India to fully harness

the vast potential of its legal sector, it is imperative that we re-think, re-define, and re-evolve the present legal education system to ensure it is inclusive, dynamic, and aligned with the transitional needs of both students and the profession.

The shifts in professional work patterns entail improvements in legal education. Legal education must extend beyond a narrow focus on educators and subject matter; it must well-equip students for diverse roles in the legal profession.

The contemporary legal education system is designed around a combination of conventional methodologies and evolutionary, modern

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approaches, while serving relevant interdisciplinary learning.

The present legal education embraces interdisciplinary approaches that offer hands-on experience and exposure to real-world legal issues and help students and professionals enhance their ability to address legal challenges and forge career paths in diverse fields.

Contemporary law educators come from diverse academic backgrounds, making it common for law institutions to recruit faculty trained in non-legal disciplines.

With the internationalisation of the curriculum, students now benefit from the rich diversification of expertise. Due to technology integration, practical training focus, internationalisation, interdisciplinary approaches, increased competition, career diversification, and regulatory changes, the future of legal education in India is likely to transform.

The future of legal education appears to be promising and transformative that will not only enhance students' employability but will also prepare them to become more efficient problem-solvers in an interconnected world.

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But there is also 'a dire need for 'socially-relevant legal education' to meet the needs of disadvantaged populations, writes VC of NLU Delhi