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# EVALUATING CONTEMPORARY INDIAN LEGAL PEDAGOGY IN DIGITAL WORLD

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## I. ABSTRACT

*Laws keep changing, technology is changing rapidly and scientific developments are taking place. In a country like India that is dedicated to the democratic setup, the rule of law and the ideal of welfare state, the role of legal profession and legal education are very vital. The true aim of legal education must be to bridge the gap between academic and vocation. Legal education in the present context of the country must not only cater to legal profession but also employment. According to Shri G. S. Pathak, former Vice-President of India, "legal education is an investment which, if wisely made, will produce most beneficial results for the nation and accelerate the pace of national development." The Bar Council of India has from time-to-time proposed measures for reforms in legal education. It categorized reforms to be taken place at certain levels primarily institutional reforms, reforms in content and structure and measures to improve pedagogy and methods of teaching. The present study is an attempt to analyse the contemporary reforms introduced by the Bar Council of India in legal education and their applicability in the current scenario of digital world. It examines the regulatory framework, institutional developments, technological integration, emerging challenges, and future prospects of digital legal education.*

## II. KEYWORDS

Education, Bar Council, Legal, Reforms.

## III. INTRODUCTION

Law is the field which binds the social, economic, and political circumference forming the inevitable part of society. In India, Legal education is most complicated and multi

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layered. It needs certainly a reform.<sup>2</sup> Legal education has many contours and therefore includes multiple activities within its arena such as legal profession, knowledge of judicial behaviour, law making, implementation of laws, teaching, spreading legal awareness about rights and duties of people etc. Therefore, the scope of legal education is quite wide and comprehensive. Legal education plays a very critical role in the development of law. Since the educational process built the future legal fraternity including lawyers, judges, administrators, teachers, counsellors and many more. This helps in sculpting and re-sculpting the ideals of democratic governance and rights. It combines the needs of the three branches of government: Legislature, Executive and Judiciary. There cannot be a watertight compartment in the study of legal education between its theoretical and practical aspects, i.e. both theory and practice are to be intermingled.

The expansion of education in the nineteenth century necessitated reforms in curriculum and pedagogy. The Report of the Indian Universities Commission (1902) emphasised the need for separate and centralised law schools, the use of the case book method, better infrastructure, and the role of the bar and bench in administration.<sup>3</sup> India's legal education faces three fundamental problems: language, content relevance and the examination system. These perennial problems have existed now for over seventy years since independence, regardless of the myriad reports.<sup>4</sup> Legal education and research have multiple dimensions that transcend law, as legal education is intricately linked with the country's socio-cultural context. The purpose of legal education and research is not merely to impart knowledge but also to further the

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<sup>2</sup> Upendra Majhi, "An overview on teaching methods in legal education system in India" Volume 7, Issue 5 *International Journal for Research Trends and Innovation* 133 (2022).

<sup>3</sup> Diya Deviah and Ammel Sharon, "Continuity without cultivation? The student figure, legal education, and writing pedagogy in India" 20(1) *Socio-Legal Review* 46 (2024).

<sup>4</sup> V. K. Ahuja and Debasis Poddar(eds.), *Legal Pedagogy and Research Methodology* 159 (National Law University and Judicial Academy, 2024).

development of the legal system and the society at large in line with the changes in technology, politics, culture, society, and economy.<sup>5</sup>

### **A. Research Objectives**

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To analyse the contemporary reforms introduced by the Bar Council of India in legal education.
2. To examine the regulatory framework and institutional developments governing legal education in India.
3. To evaluate the role of technological integration in transforming legal pedagogy into the digital era.
4. To identify the challenges affecting the implementation of these reforms.
5. To assess the future prospects of digital legal education in India.

### **B. Research Questions**

The paper seeks to find answers to following questions:

1. Whether legal pedagogy in India is adequate to seek desired results?
2. Whether legal educational institutions in India are able to conform to the reforms proposed by the Bar Council of India?
3. What are the challenges that obstruct the compliance with proposed reforms?
4. What solutions can be proposed to overcome the obstructions in achieving the desired outcome?

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<sup>5</sup> Jeet Singh Mann and Zhang Guihong, *Comparative Teaching and Research Pedagogy and Legal Education Reforms in India and China 01* (Centre for Transparency and Accountability in Governance, National Law University, Delhi, 2023)

### **C. Research Hypothesis**

The study is based on the hypothesis that the existing legal pedagogy in India is inadequate, and the reforms proposed by the Bar Council of India confront various challenges in achieving the desired outcome.

### **D. Research Methodology**

The research methodology is primarily doctrinal, analytical and descriptive. Data is collected from statutory laws, books, journals, judgments, conferences, newspapers, magazines and web.

## **IV. THE VISION STATEMENT 2011-2013**

The Vision Statement 2011-2013<sup>6</sup> notified by the BCI identified; lack of quality legal education and requisite skills required to meet the changing demands of contemporary society. In relation to pedagogy and methods of teaching, BCI suggested use of novel technologies and discourse in teaching, discussions through web based technologies, development of softwares that have the potential to curb plagiarism, usage of techniques followed in the best law schools and focus on outcomes of learning so that knowledge, skills and professional attributes could be detected in students. All these demand urgent actions so as to conform to changing practices of teaching law. However, there are shortcomings while achieving the desired results such as lack of teachers, absence of requisite databases, inadequate infrastructure and learning technologies.

Quality standards in legal education are the demand of the day, and the present system needs a revamp ensuring imparting of necessary skills.

### **A. Need for Digital Shift**

The evolution of legal education in India reflects broader socio-political and technological developments. Traditionally, legal education was centred on classroom

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/vision> (last visited on February 27, 2026).

teaching, case law analysis, and doctrinal study. The transition to digital era, online learning and artificial intelligence has brought a huge transformation in the educational sector. The digital shift has urged all to reconsider and rethink pedagogy, curriculum and institutional reframing. The rationale is to meet the global changes that are occurring at a fast pace and to enable legal fraternity to effectively address the emerging issues like cybercrime, online bullying etc and meet the emerging challenges such as online dispute resolution, virtual court hearings, digital evidence etc. The COVID-19 pandemic further compelled the need for shifting to digital learning. The COVID times highlighted both opportunities and limitations of virtual learning.

### **B. Digital Transformation and Its Impact on Education**

The phenomenon of digital transformation implies integrating digital technologies into various facets of education. This includes teaching, learning, administration and research. Virtual learning platforms and introduction of artificial intelligence have prominently altered the education sector compelling the education sector to realign pedagogical aspects with emerging technology.

### **C. Universities Grants Commission (UGC) and Bar Council of India (BCI)**

Universities Grants Commission is the apex regulatory body established under statutory framework in 1956. The purpose of was to regulate higher education in India. It regulates the dissemination of funds and other operating functions, such as the appointment of faculty. The post-graduation courses and doctoral programmes in law are squarely within its ambit; however, it also oversees the graduation level studies in law in unison with the Bar Council of India.<sup>7</sup> The BCI, established under the 'Advocates Act', 1961, is the primary regulatory authority governing legal education in India. The BCI prescribes standards for law courses, recognizes universities, and regulates

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<sup>7</sup> Jeet Singh Mann and Zhang Guihong, *Comparative Teaching and Research Pedagogy and Legal Education Reforms in India and China 01* (Centre for Transparency and Accountability in Governance, National Law University, Delhi, 2023)

professional legal practice. It is responsible for designing and modifying the curriculum for LLB level studies and recognising the degree for enrolment of advocates at the bar.<sup>8</sup>

#### **D. Role of BCI in Legal Education Reforms**

BCI has undertaken several reforms to modernize legal education. During an international conference in 2024<sup>9</sup>, while delivering the inaugural address, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi emphasized that “legal education is a key instrument in boosting justice delivery, noting that both passion and professional competence are introduced to young minds through education. The Prime Minister suggested inclusivity in education at each level and enhancement of women candidates in legal institutions thereby enhancing their number in the legal profession as well. The Prime Minister also urged for adapting to changing times and technologies and updated trends in crimes and evidence etc. Since legal education is undergoing magnificent transformation due to the impact of technologies it becomes all the more necessary for legal institutions to empower exchange programmes to explore and seek exposure for betterment and improvement. He urged that developing countries need to work together to obtain satisfactory representation in international institutions related to justice delivery and to follow international best practices.

In response to these developments, the BCI issued a circular<sup>10</sup> in 2024, introducing reforms to improve the quality, relevance, and regulation of legal education. These reforms aim to bridge the gap between traditional legal training and the evolving needs of the digital age. These reforms represent an important step in reforming legal education in India in the era of digital transformation. The circular focuses on maintaining appropriate standards, reframing curriculum by integrating technology and enhancing regulatory supervision on legal educational institutions. This circular laid stress on the vision of government towards expansion of quality legal education. While the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 primarily focuses on higher education

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Commonwealth Attorneys and Solicitors General Conference held on 03 February 2024.

<sup>10</sup> Bar Council of India Circular No. D:468/2024 dated 20 May 2024

and proposes the Higher Education Commission of India for its regulation, it does touch upon certain guidelines for legal education as well. The NEP 2020 proposed guidelines for quality enhancement and easily accessible legal education. The BCI attempted towards implementing its requisite guidelines within the legal education framework to improve quality and effectiveness of legal education.

## V. KEY REFORMS INTRODUCED BY BCI

- 1. Regulation of Law Colleges and Institutional Standards:** One of the major concerns addressed by the BCI was the rapid mushrooming of substandard law colleges. The circular highlights that many institutions were established without adequate infrastructure or faculty. To address this issue, the BCI directed universities to strictly verify infrastructure and faculty before granting affiliation; conduct surprise inspections of law colleges; submit compliance reports to the BCI; and ensure adherence to the BCI Rules of Legal Education. The objective of reform is to revamp quality in legal education.
- 2. Integration of Technology and Computer Education:** Digital transformation has resulted in fundamental transition in legal profession. Practitioners are largely dependent upon online platforms like online legal databases, virtual hearings, Artificial Intelligence; e-courts; digital filing systems and many more. Keeping in view the relevance of this transition, the BCI directed integration of computer education in law curriculum so as to enable students to hone skills in online legal research; digital documentation; online dispute resolution; technology-driven legal practice etc. The rationale behind the reform is to ensure and maintain competency in the global digital legal world.
- 3. Inclusion of New Subjects and Emerging Areas:** The BCI has instructed legal educational institutions to introduce new subjects like mediation and alternative dispute resolution; technology law and cyber security; artificial intelligence; data protection and privacy law; environmental and sustainability law; block chains; electronic discovery; robotics; and bioethics. Moreover, Mediation has been

recommended as a mandatory subject to orient with contemporary dispute resolution mechanisms.

4. **Strengthening Practical Training and Clinical Legal Education:** Another area of reform requiring attention is experiential learning. Traditional legal pedagogy focuses primarily on doctrinal knowledge. The BCI reforms are meant to align traditional pedagogy with modern ones, thereby promoting moot courts, clinical legal education, aid clinics, internships in courts and commissions, enhancing drafting skills and training and many more. This will develop practical professional skills in the learners.
5. **Regulation of Online and Hybrid Legal Education:** While digital transformation encourages online learning, the BCI has taken a cautious approach to protect academic standards. The Council has clarified that LL.M. programs cannot be offered purely online or hybrid modes without approval, emphasizing the importance of in-person legal training. This reflects BCI's effort to balance digital innovation with academic rigor.
6. **Focus on Constitutional principles:** Legal education must be of the calibre to impart a deep contemplation of constitutional values and justice education. Emphasis needs to be made on practicality of such principles and values in legal education in conformity with NEP.
7. **Contextualization within Socio-economic and Cultural Realities:** Legal educational institutions have been directed to integrate socio-economic and cultural contexts into law curricula for a deeper contemplation and evaluation.
8. **Following multiple language mediums of learning:** Access to justice demands that education need to be imparted in the language comprehended by the learner for which both English and regional languages have been recommended for learning and better results.

9. **Enhancing Critical Thinking:** Legal educational institutions need to actively involve students in critical cognitive capabilities. Interdisciplinary research needs to be promoted that requires discipline collaboration so as to develop multiple suitable approaches in redressing emerging legal challenges.
10. **Periodic Review and Adaptation:** Regular adaptations and updations are necessary so that legal educational institutions can cope up with the changing contours of legal profession and align with existing global framework. The educational institutions are mandated to adhere to the Bar Council of India directions to bring more transparency and effectiveness.

## VI. FINDINGS

The proposed BCI reforms reflect the need to modernize legal education in the context of digital transformation of the legal profession. The reforms seek to maintain standards of legal education; regulate proliferation of law colleges; integrate digital and technological competencies; enhance practical and skill-based training; align Indian legal education with global standards; integrate technology into legal training, making graduates better prepared for modern legal practice; assure quality education by eliminating substandard law institutions by regulating affiliations and conducting inspections; ensure global competitiveness by introducing contemporary subjects; and emphasise skill-oriented education by recognising practical skills, advocacy, and professional competence. Despite significant progress, several challenges continue to affect the implementation of digital reforms in legal education.

1. **Infrastructure Gap:** Many law colleges lack adequate digital infrastructure and technological resources. This casts a doubt that whether Indian legal education is digitally ready.
2. **Faculty Training:** Effective digital teaching requires faculty members to develop new technological skills. Many teachers require training to adapt to digital

pedagogies. Universities and colleges are reluctant in sending their faculty to upgrade themselves as it requires additional financial burden on them.

3. **Regulatory Complexity:** Co-ordination between BCI, universities, and state governments remains a challenge. Time bound response system can be helpful in effective, time bound and expeditious co-ordination.
4. **Resistance to Change:** Traditional legal education systems may resist technological reforms. Legal pedagogy has been primarily without technological support for a long time. Shift to technology driven pedagogy need tech savvy faculty. This may sometimes lead to resistance to change. Transformation needs willingness to change to a technology driven system of pedagogy.
5. **Digital Divide:** Many students in rural areas do not have sufficient access to adequate browsing facilities and lack smart phones and other digital devices. This creates inequalities in access to online education.
6. **Lack of Technological Infrastructure:** Several universities still lack adequate digital infrastructure, including smart classrooms, high-speed internet, and online library access. In such a scenario full compliance with technology in education seems to be a distant dream.
7. **Quality Control:** The rapid expansion of online courses raises concerns regarding quality assurance, accreditation, and academic integrity.

Hence, reforms so proposed are yet in a transitional phase.

#### **A. Inclusion of New Criminal Laws in Curriculum**

The BCI, through its Circular No. D: 468/2024 dated 20 May 2024, has mandated the inclusion of the newly enacted criminal laws, namely the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023; and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023, into the legal education curriculum from the academic year 2024-25. This reform requires universities and centres of legal education to suitably revise their syllabi relating to criminal law, criminal procedure, and law of evidence. The objective

of this directive is to align legal education with recent legislative developments and ensure that students are trained in accordance with the updated statutory framework governing criminal justice in India.

## VII. SUGGESTIONS

The BCI reforms indicate toward contemporary legal education, but they need to be judiciously implemented. Following suggestions are proposed:

1. The shortcomings can be overcome through focus on quality control, integration of technology in traditional form of pedagogy in phased manner and emphasis on practical training. This will help maintain balance in the financial burden on legal institutions.
2. The University Grants Commission through its guidelines<sup>11</sup> emphasised on recruiting Professors of Practice but it is a pity that teachers from within the university are not allowed to upgrade themselves as per the industry demand. They need to be sent on internships on rotational basis so that teachers from within the campus too have the opportunity to upgrade themselves and there is least need for appointment of professors of practice.
3. To fully realise digital transformation, legal education must embrace interdisciplinary learning, global collaboration, and advanced legal technology training.
4. Legal education must remain responsive to changes in the legal system. It must align with judicial reforms. What is happening in the courts and what is being taught in the classrooms must align with each other else the objective of justice learning cannot be achieved. This requires mandatory annual revision of the syllabus and incorporation of recent judicial verdicts in the syllabi.

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<sup>11</sup> [https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/9097019\\_Guidelines-for-Engaging-Professor-of-Practice-in-Universities-and-Colleges.pdf](https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/9097019_Guidelines-for-Engaging-Professor-of-Practice-in-Universities-and-Colleges.pdf) (last visited on March 21, 2026).

5. The development of critical thinking skills is essential for legal professionals in India, as it enables them to analyse legal issues, interpret laws, and construct persuasive arguments. However, traditional legal education in India continues to rely heavily on rote learning, limiting students' ability to engage in analytical reasoning and problem-solving.<sup>12</sup> Hence, the reforms so proposed meant to enrich and enhance critical thinking must be incorporated through compulsory introducing mootings and clinical legal education in the main course syllabi rather than keeping it as just a mandatory part of co-curricular activities.
6. Integrating human rights and technological competencies into legal education has now become a necessity. As societies become increasingly interconnected and digitalised, professionals need to be able to navigate complex intersections of ethics, human rights, and technology.<sup>13</sup> This requires focus on values while dealing with the nuances of law. Integration of technology with pedagogy cannot completely serve its purpose unless the mankind values are addressed too.

Transformation of legal pedagogy therefore involves both technological and doctrinal modernisation while keeping human values alive.

## VIII. CONCLUSION

The digital transformation of legal education attempts to change its scope and framework. Traditional pedagogy based on lecture methods is gradually being replaced with digital platforms. The reforms proposed by the BCI indicate a prominent mode to enhance legal education quality in India to align with global requirements. But successful execution relies upon addressing emerging challenges of digital inequality,

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<sup>12</sup> Deepa Abhinandan Vagyani, "Redefining Indian legal pedagogy to enhance critical thinking in the era of artificial intelligence" Volume XII Issue VI Journal of Research and Scientific Innovation 1351 (2025)

<sup>13</sup> Rashmi Khorana Nagpal, "Why legal education must encompass the intricate relationship between law, human rights, and technology" The Hindu, February 22, 2025, available at <https://www.thehindu.com/education/why-legal-education-must-encompass-the-intricate-relationship-between-law-human-rights-and-technology/article69222533.ece> (last visited on March 15, 2026).

infrastructure limitations and faculty training. Legal education is expected to maintain the pendulum in balanced form between technology and the fundamental principles of legal education that demands critical thinking, ethical responsibility and commitment to justice. Integrating digital technologies in legal pedagogy is an endeavour to align with global competence and enhance justice education at the same time. If the integration is executed effectively, these reforms can produce legally proficient as well as technologically competent and socially responsible professionals in the digital age.

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