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**HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY FOR ADVANCING LEGAL
EDUCATION: SPOTLIGHTING CLINICAL LEGAL
EDUCATION (CLE)**

~ Professor (Dr.) Usha Tandon*

ABSTRACT

This article delves into the transformative role of technology in reshaping legal education, particularly emphasising on Clinical Legal Education (“CLE”). CLE, which bridges academic theory and practical application, is positioned to benefit significantly from advancements ranging from virtual courtrooms, AI-driven research tools, and e-learning platforms. These innovations enhance experiential learning, while also making legal education more accessible and aligned with the evolving demands of the legal profession. Focusing on India’s regulatory and institutional framework, the article examines the interplay between CLE and the National Education Policy, 2020, which emphasizes multidisciplinary learning, inclusivity, and digital literacy. It highlights how technology can address gaps in CLE by streamlining case management, improving access to justice through virtual legal aid, and equipping law students.

While recognizing challenges like resource constraints, ethical concerns, and resistance to change, this article advocates for a balanced integration of technology. It underscores the importance of human-centred teaching methods in fostering critical reasoning, ethical judgment, and empathy among law students. This article envisions a future where

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technology and pedagogy converge to democratize legal education, enhance professional competence, and uphold constitutional ideals of justice and equity.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last three to four decades, the interplay between law and technology has emerged as a major theme in both legal scholarship and practice. The integration of technology with legal education has transformed traditional pedagogical approaches, fostering a more interactive and accessible learning environment. Clinical Legal Education (“CLE”), which emphasizes practical hands-on training for law students would greatly benefit from technological advancements. Digital tools such as virtual court simulations, legal research platforms, case management software, and e-learning systems provide students with the opportunity to gain practical skills efficiently.

Technological interventions enhance the capacity of CLE programs to offer real-time case handling, virtual client interactions, and comprehensive legal research. These innovations bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and professional practice, preparing students to meet the evolving demands of the legal industry. By leveraging technology, CLE programs can democratize access to experiential learning and equip future lawyers with the competency required for a tech-driven legal landscape¹. Additionally, the use of artificial intelligence, data analytics, and digital collaboration tools help foster critical thinking and ensure that legal education remains just and socially relevant.

¹ Francina Cantatore, *New Frontiers in Clinical Legal Education: Harnessing Technology to Prepare Students for Practice and Facilitate Access to Justice*, 5(1), AUSTL. J. CLINICAL EDUC. (2019).

In light of above, this article endeavours to critically examine the conceptual framework, and substantive content of CLE. It briefly outlines the current regulatory structure governing legal education and highlights exemplary practices that can be adopted by Centres of Legal Education for CLE, drawing upon insights from both international best practices and indigenous initiatives already underway in select Indian legal education centres.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought both challenges and opportunities for the education sector at large. The sector showcased remarkable adaptability in overcoming disruptions through the integration of technological tools. This led to an emergence of a “new normal”, characterised by the fusion of technology and pedagogy, which has paved the way for substantial advancements in legal education. This article advocates for the systematic integration of technology to improve the overall quality of legal education and explores its specific applicability to CLE.

This article is organised into eight parts. Following the Introduction, the second and third chapters provide a brief overview of the current regulatory and recommendatory framework governing legal education and CLE in India, as outlined by regulatory authorities such as the Bar Council of India (“**BCI**”), the University Grants Commission (“**UGC**”), and recommendations from Law Commission Reports and other pertinent policy documents including National Education Policy (“**NEP**”), 2020. The fourth chapter delves into the meaning, nature, and

content of CLE, as envisioned in the regulatory framework of BCI Rules. The next two parts examine currently adopted technology-driven practices in India within legal education and assess their transformative potential for enhancing CLE. Last, the article concludes with key observations on how technology should complement and not replace traditional human-centered teaching methods, underscoring the indispensable role of law teachers in mentoring students in preparing ethical and empathetic lawyers.

II. LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA AND ITS REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Legal education today has become one of the most sought-after fields of education for a large populace of aspiring youth.² However, the traditional understanding that legal education is pursued by only aspiring lawyers may not be true in the contemporary context as a substantial number of law graduates are moving beyond just courtroom practice.³ The growing demand for legal education has spurred widespread calls for improvements in standards of legal education. There have been voices from academia, lawyers, judges and other professionals emphasising the need to improve the standards of legal education in order to meet the ever-growing demands of the profession. There is also a call for

² 1721 *Law schools in India; more than twice as many private law colleges than government law colleges: Law Minister*, BAR AND BENCH (Mar. 29, 2022), <https://www.barandbench.com/news/lawschools/1721-law-schools-in-india-more-than-twice-as-many-private-law-colleges-than-govt-law-colleges-law-minister>.

³ Rajya Sabha Secretariat, *Key Recommendations/ Observations Contained in 142nd Report on the Subject - Strengthening Legal Education in view of Emerging Challenges before the Legal Profession*, LIVE LAW, https://www.livelaw.in/pdf_upload/142-reportpress-releaseeng-520951.pdf.

mainstreaming and democratising legal education.⁴ Furthermore, a need has been felt to transform legal education to suit the changing dimensions of the field due to reasons such as globalisation, technological advancements, emergence of new areas of practice and changing landscape of the profession.⁵ It has been pointed out that the high standards of legal education must be maintained from the foundational stages of education in law schools. Further, there is a need to provide refresher courses even for active practitioners.⁶ In addition, the goals of social justice, access to justice and ensuring rule of law for impoverished masses of India must be considered as one of the primary policy goals for the State when informing developments in the field of legal education.⁷ The standards of legal profession are dependent on the quality of legal education imparted in centres of legal education. Therefore, the standards of legal education and of Bar and Bench are intrinsically connected concerns.⁸ Various professionals, academicians, judges and other stakeholders have emphasized on the quality legal education and raising the standards of Bar and Bench to meet the needs of rapidly changing requirements of the country.⁹ However, establishing these standards of

⁴ *Id.* at 4.

⁵ Law Commission of India, *The Advocates Act, 1961 (Regulation of Legal Profession)*, Report No. 266, MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE, (Mar. 2017), <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3ca0daec69b5adc880fb46489572dbdf/uploads/2022/08/2022081654.pdf>.

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.* at 5.

⁹ *Id.*

legal education itself has proven to be a difficult task in the past due to involvement of multiple stakeholders.

The quality of legal education being imparted by the centres of legal education may be indicated by the fact that in a recent response by the BCI to a Right to Information reveals that more than fifty percent of candidates, who appeared for All-India Bar Examination, could not qualify the same.¹⁰ Therefore, it is high time to contemplate on the transforming needs of legal education. Further, it is to be noted that legal education and the legal profession are directly concerned with upholding the rule of law and ensuring Justice- social, political and economic as envisioned in the Constitution.¹¹ In addition, the Directive Principles of the State that seek to ensure equal justice and provide for legal aid have to be kept in mind while transforming the legal education.¹² Moreover, a broad interpretation of the Fundamental Duties enshrined in the Constitution such as abiding and respecting the ideals of the Constitution,¹³ rendering national services when required,¹⁴ promoting

¹⁰ Bhavya Singh, *More Than 50% Candidates Failed AIBE 2023, RTI Reply Reveals*, LIVE LAW (May 20, 2024) <https://www.livelaw.in/news-updates/aibe-failure-rate-51-all-india-bar-exam-18-258425?from-login=452647>.

¹¹ INDIA CONST. preamble.

¹² *Id.* Article 39A- Equal Justice and Free Legal Aid: The State shall secure that the operation of the legal system promotes justice, on a basis of equal opportunity, and shall, in particular, provide free legal aid, by suitable legislation or schemes or in any other way, to ensure that opportunities for securing justice are not denied to any citizen by reason of economic or other disabilities.

¹³ *Id.* Article 51A- It shall be the duty of every citizen of India— (a) to abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions, the National Flag and the National Anthem.

¹⁴ *Id.* Clause (d) to defend the country and render national service when called upon to do so.

common brotherhood,¹⁵ developing spirit of humanism and reform,¹⁶ and endeavouring for excellence¹⁷ and collective progress as a nation¹⁸ creates a binding duty in each citizen, including the law students, law teachers, legal practitioners and other professionals in the field of law to render legal aid and ensure legal literacy whenever individuals require such assistance. Therefore, transformation of legal education has to be rooted in the ideas, values, duties and goals envisioned in the Constitution and any discussion on the same has to be embedded, rooted, contextualised as well as visualised within the notions of justice and rule of law.

Whenever advancement of legal education is advocated for, the discussions necessarily touch upon the issues of clinical legal education, justice education¹⁹ and socially relevant legal education.²⁰ CLE has been advocated for by its proponents as one of the most significant transformations of legal education that is capable of providing solutions to problems prevalent in the legal education system. The Constitution envisaged education as a responsibility of the State, as reflected in its inclusion under List II of the Seventh Schedule. However, a subsequent

¹⁵ *Id.* Clause (e) to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of women.

¹⁶ *Id.* Clause (h) to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform

¹⁷ *Id.* Clause (j) to strive towards excellence in all spheres of individual and collective activity so that the nation constantly rises to higher levels of endeavour and achievement;

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Debasis Poddar, *Justice Education: A Desired Destination of The Menon Model*, 7(1) ASIAN J. OF LEGAL EDUC., 35-45 (2020).

²⁰ Upendra Baxi, *Notes Towards Socially Relevant Legal Education: Working Paper for the UGC Regional Workshops (1975-77)*, UGC, <https://www.ugc.gov.in/oldpdf/pub/report/1.pdf>.

amendment has carried the entry to List III, making it a concurrent issue to be dealt by the State legislatures as well as by the Parliament.²¹ From the inception of the Constitution, the Union has been given supremacy in matters of higher education, research, scientific and technical education and educational institutions of national importance, professional, vocational or technical training and promotion of special studies or research.²²

The University Grants Commission Act, 1956 (“**UGC Act**”) was enacted by the Parliament exercising powers conferred under the Constitution of India in the Seventh Schedule, List I, Entry 6. The act empowers the UGC to coordinate and determine the standard in institutions for higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions. The standards here, refer to the standards of teaching and examinations in the Universities.²³ The UGC Act was enacted with the view to “...*reform and improvement of University education...*”. The preamble of the UGC Act states that it is intended to make provision for co-ordination and determination of standards in universities. The provisions of the UGC Act have also been interpreted to have an overriding effect with respect to regulations dealing with qualifications of teachers and other standards relating to education in universities.²⁴

²¹ INDIA CONST. entry 25, list III, sch. VII, amended by *The Constitution (Forty-second Amendment) Act*, 1976, s. 57.

²² INDIA CONST. entry 64, list I, sch. VII.

²³ *Id* at 6.

²⁴ *Id*.

While, the UGC prescribes standards of education, acting as a regulatory body dealing with higher education in India²⁵, the BCI sets standards for legal education as a statutory body empowered to do the same under the Advocates Act, 1961²⁶. As far as the role of BCI in regulation of legal education is concerned, its powers have been invoked using various provisions as incorporated in the Advocates Act. It is to be noted that the legislation has been enacted by the Parliament under entries 77 and 78 of the List I of Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. These entries primarily deal with the constitution of, organisation of, jurisdiction etc. of the Supreme Court²⁷ and the High Courts.²⁸ By exercising powers conferred under the Advocates Act, the Bar Council of India Rules, 1975 (“**Rules**”) have been enacted²⁹ that provide for the constitution of a Legal Education Committee (“**LEC**”).³⁰ The members and co-opted members of LEC are constituted through an election for a prescribed period of four years.³¹ The LEC is required to discharge various functions relating to making recommendations on standards of legal education for universities, inspection of universities, recognition or de-recognition of universities etc.³²

²⁵ The University Grants Commission Act, 1956, No. 3, Acts of Parliament, 1956.

²⁶ The Advocates Act, 1961 §§ 7(1)(h), 10(2)(b) and 49(1)(d), No. 25, Acts of 1961.

²⁷ INDIA CONST. entry 77.

²⁸ INDIA CONST. entry 78.

²⁹ The Bar Council of India Rules, 1975, Chapter III, Rule 6.

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.*

The BCI has also framed Rules of Legal Education³³ which provide that the State Bar Council shall enrol only those candidates as advocates who have obtained the required educational qualification of bachelor degree of law³⁴ only from recognised centres of legal education.³⁵ These rules detail various aspects of legal education standards including the types of law courses offered,³⁶ eligibility criteria for admissions,³⁷ prohibition of enrolling in two regular courses simultaneously,³⁸ mandates as to the minimum marks for qualifying admission,³⁹ mandates as to processes and manner of running the integrated course,⁴⁰ mandates related to the semester system,⁴¹ minimum infrastructure requirements,⁴² and conduct of end semester tests.⁴³ The rules provide for prohibition on lateral entry and exit of these programs as well.⁴⁴

Along with these regulatory bodies, respective State or Central University as well as the State Governments also play a role in the regulatory matters, primarily through their involvement in providing grants of various types such as land and other financial, technical

³³ The Bar Council of India, Rules of Legal Education, 2008.

³⁴ *Id.* at Rule 3.

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ *Id.* at Rule 4.

³⁷ *Id.* at Rule 5.

³⁸ *Id.* at Rule 6.

³⁹ *Id.* at Rule 7.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at Rule 9.

⁴¹ *Id.* at Rule 10.

⁴² *Id.* at Rule 11.

⁴³ *Id.* at Rule 12.

⁴⁴ *Id.* at Rule 13.

resources. In short, the regulation of legal education and its standards are mandated by at least four distinct authorities.⁴⁵

III. LEGAL EDUCATION, CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION AND TECHNOLOGY IN NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY, 2020

The vision of Central Government for transforming the education system has been incorporated in the New Education Policy, 2020,⁴⁶ (“**NEP**”). NEP is envisaged as a policy of education which emphasises on flexibility, multi-disciplinarity, conceptual understanding, creativity and critical thinking, ethics and human & Constitutional values, life skills, use of technology, equity and inclusion, fostering a sense of pride in India’s educational heritage to be recognised as a public service in NEP.⁴⁷ It is to be noted that NEP has been formulated with the vision of providing equitable and inclusive education, social and economic justice and balancing the local and global requirements of human resources.⁴⁸ It has been termed as the most ambitious education policy,⁴⁹ and the same requires dogged efforts to be implemented.

⁴⁵ Law Commission of India, *The Legal Education & Professional Training and Proposals for Amendments to the Advocates Act, 1961 and the University Grants Commission Act, 1956 Report No. 184*, MINISTRY OF LAW AND JUSTICE, 10 (Dec. 2002), https://lawcommissionofindia.nic.in/cat_legal_profession/.

⁴⁶ *The New Education Policy*, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION (2020), https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf

⁴⁷ *Id.*, at Introduction 5.

⁴⁸ Sairam Bhat & Gayathri Gireesh, *Legal Education and National Education Policy 2020*, <https://ceerapub.nls.ac.in/legal-education-and-national-education-policy-2020/>.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

As for legal education, like medical education, it has been given the autonomy of regulation.⁵⁰ However, the legal educational institutions cannot afford to work in silos. There are various provisions in NEP that are uniformly applicable such as provisions relating to transformation of the centres of education into multidisciplinary institutions exercising optimal utilisation of infrastructure and resources. NEP aims to shape legal education keeping in mind global competitiveness and the need to harness technology for justice delivery while reflecting socio-cultural contexts.⁵¹ There is increased emphasis on an evidence-based style of education, legal thinking as well as development and application of jurisprudence.⁵² All this has to be incorporated within the philosophy of Constitutional values of Justice - Social, Economic, and Political, with the aim to strengthen and reconstruct democracy, rule of law, and human rights.⁵³

It is to be noted that the word 'clinical' does not appear in the NEP anywhere. However, the NEP does make mention of the word 'skill' in various places. NEP envisions a future where machines will take over mundane and unskilled work from humans and therefore, it is important that the education system imparts skills that are growing in demand. NEP states that there will be a greater demand for 'multidisciplinary abilities across the sciences, social sciences, and humanities', life skills, and skills including collaboration, self-initiative, self-direction, self-discipline,

⁵⁰ *Id.*

⁵¹ *Supra* note 47, Part III, para. 20.4.

⁵² *Id.*

⁵³ *Id.*

teamwork, responsibility, citizenship etc.⁵⁴ The Policy emphasises on the need for proficiency in language, scientific temper evidence-based thinking, creativity and innovation, sense of aesthetics and art, oral and written communication, health and nutrition, physical education, fitness, wellness, and sports, problem solving and logical reasoning, vocational exposure and skills, digital literacy, coding, and computational thinking, ethical and moral reasoning, knowledge and practice of human and Constitutional values, gender sensitivity, Fundamental Duties, citizenship skills, awareness of India's history, environmental awareness, sanitation and hygiene, current affairs and awareness of critical issues faced by local communities etc.⁵⁵ In terms of pedagogy and assessment, NEP emphasises on fostering higher order thinking which emphasises on the application of knowledge to real life scenarios.

The NEP places significant emphasis on experiential learning⁵⁶ in all subjects and disciplines.⁵⁷ It also emphasises on the idea that assessment tools should be shaped to encourage three forms: 'assessment for learning', 'assessment as learning' and 'assessment of learning'⁵⁸

Thus, it can be said that the NEP appears to be a holistic document with potential for a long-term positive impact on education. Regarding legal education, there are many aspects addressed by NEP which are directly related to its transformation. NEP talks about soft skills

⁵⁴ *Supra* note 45, para. 4.8.

⁵⁵ *Supra* note 45, para. 4.23.

⁵⁶ *Supra* note 45, Page 3.

⁵⁷ *Supra* note 45, Page 11.

⁵⁸ *Supra* note 45, Page 12, para. 4.6.

as well as professional skills along with digital literacy and use of technology. Further, the emphasis on experiential learning comes very close to the idea or notion of CLE. Therefore, there is a need for integrating the spirit of NEP in the context of legal education. Today, the landscape of legal education is rapidly changing and hence, legal education can be advanced in alignment with the broader vision of NEP.

It is worth mentioning that BCI has recently issued a circular to all CLEs that contemporary issues relating to block chains, electronic discovery, cyber-security, robotics, Artificial Intelligence and bio-ethics should be integrated in the curriculum of law schools in line with the vision of NEP.⁵⁹ *ProBono* (Nyaya Bandhu) and Disha are programmes which are being run by the Central Government⁶⁰ involving students enrolled in these centres of legal education to provide legal aid and awareness. Further, the NALSA, SLSA, and DLSA are also mandated to provide legal aid.⁶¹ The same is generally carried out by training Para Legal Volunteers (“**PLVs**”) at law schools.

⁵⁹ Ministry of Law and Justice, *Circular to all Universities and Centres of Legal Education by Bar Council of India to incorporate subjects such as block chains, electronic discovery, cyber-security, robotics, Artificial Intelligence and bio-ethics etc. in their curricula Comprehensive Law Courses*, Press Information Bureau (Aug. 2, 2024),

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2040667#:~:text=As%20per%20vision%20of%20Hon,in%20their%20curricula>.

⁶⁰ Department of Justice, <https://www.probono-doj.in/meaning-context.html>.

⁶¹ The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, No. 39, Acts of Parliament, 1987.

IV. MANDATE OF CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION FOR LAW SCHOOLS IN INDIA

As discussed above, the BCI is empowered to frame rules under the Advocates Act, 1961 relating to legal education. Exercising its powers under the Act, the BCI framed the rules of legal education in 2008.⁶² Schedule II of the Rules provides for academic standards and courses to be included in the three-year law programmes and the five-year integrated law programmes to obtain a degree that qualifies a graduate to enrol at the Bar Council. It is important to note that the Schedule attached to the Rules outlines compulsory papers, optional papers as well as clinical papers to be studied in order to obtain the qualification to be enrolled as an advocate with any State Bar Council. As far as clinical papers are concerned the list includes subjects⁶³ on (a) Drafting, Pleading and Conveyancing; (b) Professional Ethics and Professional Accounting and Bar and Bench Relationship; (c) Alternative Dispute Resolution; and (d) Moot Courts and Internships.⁶⁴ Resultantly, the Law Commission of India in 2002 recommended the introduction of ‘clinical legal education’ as mandatory subject. The Commission was of the view that Clinical Legal Education will supplement the legal aid system. Further, the report also talks about the problem-solving method along with the clinical legal education.

⁶² *Supra* note 32.

⁶³ *Supra* note 33, Schedule II, Part II (B).

⁶⁴ *Supra* note 22, p. 37.

The nature of the subjects that have been listed as compulsory clinical subjects reveals that all these subjects are primarily linked to the core skills of court craft, practice of law and managing day to day affairs of a legal professional and ensuring that conduct of the professionals is well within the bounds of professional ethics. Drafting, pleading and conveyancing as a subject is concerned with core areas of practice inside and outside the court, professional ethics, accounting and the relationship between Bar and Bench, also relating to the core concerns of organised legal practice inside and outside the courtrooms. The subject on ADR is again an area that has developed as alternative to courtroom dispute settlement yet it is an established area of practice outside the courtroom and touches upon the court craft. Moot courts and internships orient law students about the basic craft of the practice at the very initial stage of practice.

Further, legal aid has been made part of the compulsory courses as a component of Moot Court Exercise and Internship. However, there are other provisions in the Rules which indicate that CLEs are mandatorily required to run Legal Aid Clinics in the campus involving students, especially the senior students.⁶⁵ The Rules provide that when inspection of the institution is to be conducted for purposes of accreditation, then a memorandum on legal aid related facilities is required to be prepared by the inspection team.⁶⁶ The Rules of accreditation also provide that accreditation related assessments shall assess the “*status of Free Legal Aid*

⁶⁵ *Supra* note 33, Schedule III, Rule 11.

⁶⁶ *Supra* note 33, Rule 18 and 31.

Centre and legal literacy program run by the Centre of Legal Education’.⁶⁷ Furthermore, Schedule III of the Rules, dealing with infrastructural issues, also provides for the establishment and running of Legal Aid Clinics. Lastly, the application for accreditation by a CLE has to necessarily provide information of the Legal Aid Clinic incorporated in the Centre.

Additionally, NALSA provides regulations for organizing legal aid activities for communities, including awareness camps, literacy programs etc. Thus, it can be concluded that all CLEs are necessarily required to engage in providing legal aid and such clinics are required to be operated or run by collaborative efforts of practicing advocates, NGOs, law teachers and students.⁶⁸ The emphasis on legal aid clinics serve dual purpose. Firstly, it helps the students appreciate real life challenges, issues, concerns and perspectives before entering the profession, and ensure that learning is not limited to theoretical aspects alone, rather, providing them with the opportunity to apply their theoretical learnings in real life under supervision of teachers and advocates working with them in legal aid clinics. It also ensures that professional relationships are built with various stakeholders involved in the legal process including advocates, NGOs, other institutions of government and semi-government authorities etc. Secondly, Legal Aid Clinics are aimed at providing affordable legal assistance to those who need the same under DPSPs and Fundamental Duties under the Constitution of India. Thus, the purpose of CLEs will be served only when students of law are exposed to theoretical and

⁶⁷ *Supra* note 33, Schedule VI. Part I (III) (r).

⁶⁸ *Supra* note 33, Schedule III, Rule 11.

conceptual understanding and then exposed to the clinical aspects of the field.

Moreover, there is a recognised need for groundbreaking legal research in order to create novel legal knowledge and ideas that can help in meeting challenges faced by the country in the field of legal practice and to meet the ideals and goals of the Constitution.⁶⁹ The impetus of legal education has to be in the context of the socio-economic and political landscape of Indian society.⁷⁰ Legal education plays a pivotal role in promotion of social justice and enforcing the rule of law.⁷¹

V. CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION AND LAW CLINICS

CLE is imparted and practiced in various forms to serve a dual purpose. On one hand, it educates students of law about the realities of life and the application of theoretical information in real-life situations which adds value and increases the quality of their education, thus helping the students ready to practice as professionals. On the other hand, it helps in providing affordable preliminary legal aid, and basic legal education of rights and duties of various stakeholders, especially those who are from the marginalised sections of society. The most prominent forms of Law Clinics are Street Law Clinics and Consultancy Clinics. Street Law Clinics are being practiced in the law schools of countries like United State of

⁶⁹ *Supra* note 4 at 16

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

America and Scotland.⁷² As far as Consultancy Clinics are concerned, these clinics are being run all around the globe on various issues.

Examples of CLE in Australia include externship as well as in-house law clinics in Australian Universities. For example, Monash University Offers externship to institutions which provide legal aid as well as an in-house law clinic.⁷³ The University of Adelaide also provides CLE through legal aid clinics and community law service,⁷⁴ where students assist in drafting various documents such as letters and other drafts along with negotiation and researching on law for meeting the needs of clients. Victoria University also engages in similar activities along with virtual moot courts and moot court competitions.⁷⁵

As far as India is concerned, running a Legal Aid Clinic is one of the important components of a Centre of Legal Education in addition to the mandatory requirements of the CLE subjects as prescribed by the BCI Rules. It is worth mentioning that the initiatives of Campus Law Centre,

⁷² *Law Center's Street Law Clinic Celebrates 40 Years in Operation - Georgetown University*, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY, www.georgetown.edu; Grimes Richard et al. , *Street Law and Social Justice Education*, in Frank S. Bloch (ed.), *The Global Clinical Movement: Educating Lawyers for Social Justice*, ONLINE EDN, OXFORD ACADEMIC, (1 Jan. 2011). <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195381146.003.0015>.

⁷³ Castan Centre for Human Rights Law, *Monash University Clinical Legal Education*, MONASH UNIVERSITY, <https://www.monash.edu/law/research/centres/castancentre/for-students/careers/careers-guide/field-of-law/clinical-legal-education>.

⁷⁴ *Clinical Legal Education Program*, UNIVERSITY OF ADELAIDE, <https://law.adelaide.edu.au/free-legal-clinics/clinical-legal-education-program>.

⁷⁵ *Clinical legal education programs*, VICTORIA UNIVERSITY, <https://www.vu.edu.au/current-students/your-course/placements-work-integrated-learning/clinical-legal-education-programs>.

University of Delhi,⁷⁶ in providing legal literacy, legal assistance and legal aid to the community are much older than the systematic launch of legal aid movement in India as part of the curriculum of law schools. A special mention must be made of the efforts of Prof. B.B. Pande in establishing the Beggars Court which have served as an inspiration for a generation of lawyers who later went on to occupy the high echelons of Bar and Bench.

Currently, almost all National Law Universities in India are engaged in providing legal aid to the masses either through the establishment of Legal Aid Clinics or Legal Aid Committees. For instance, National Law University Jodhpur and Gujarat National Law University deliver excellent legal services through their respective Legal Aid & Awareness Committee and Legal Services Committee,⁷⁷ without having formally set up Clinics. Currently, in India, there are 1662 law colleges, out of which legal services cells are established in 1095 colleges.⁷⁸

Though, there are various CLEs across India running legal aid clinics, they have not yielded the desired results. In a recent Report⁷⁹ by the Supreme Court of India, some of the issues related to CLEs in India

⁷⁶ The author is an alumnus of CLC, University of Delhi and has had the privilege of participating in such programmes.

⁷⁷ Legal Aid & Awareness Committee, *Annual Report 2023-24*, NATIONAL LAW UNIVERSITY JODHPUR, https://nlujodhpur.ac.in/public/front/nlu_files/Annual%20Committee%20Report-min.pdf.

⁷⁸ Ministry of Law & Justice, Department of Legal Affairs, *Free legal aid by law schools*, *Unstarred Question No. 3955*, RAJYA SABHA (Apr. 06, 2023), <https://legalaffairs.gov.in/sites/default/files/AU3892.pdf>.

⁷⁹ Centre for Research and Planning, *Legal Aid Through Law Schools: A Report On Working Of Legal Aid Cells In India*, SUPREME COURT OF INDIA, <https://cdnbbsr.s3waas.gov.in/s3ec0490f1f4972d133619a60c30f3559e/uploads/2024/11/2024110665.pdf>.

have been highlighted. It points out that there are many law schools in India wherein legal aid cells are not functioning very well. The paucity of lawyers who are required to supervise, lack of funding, overburdened faculties, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient use of technology, absence of specialised cells, lack in diversity, and many other challenges have been listed in the Report.⁸⁰

However, it is important to be noted that despite these challenges there are a few centres of legal education that have contributed significantly to the field of legal aid such as the V.M. Salgaocar College of Law. Further, visionary Professors such as Prof. Upendra Baxi and Prof. Madhav Menon have individually contributed to the causes of legal aid, CLEs and socially relevant education. However, the baton is still required to be taken over by the younger generation of educators to make it socially relevant legal education.

Dr. Rajendra Prasad National Law University (“**RPNLU**”), Prayagraj, is preparing to launch an innovative initiative titled “Cluster Law” through its Legal Aid Clinic. This initiative is being designed to address the legal and socio-economic needs of marginalized and underserved sections of society by offering practically relevant legal education and assistance. The project strategically focuses on three distinct groups: a rural community (village), a small-scale industrial sector, and a tribal group. The core objective of ‘Cluster Law’ is to provide law students with hands-on experience by working on real cases, while

⁸⁰ *Id.*

offering services to target groups that might not otherwise have access. By adopting interactive and experiential learning methodologies, the project seeks to equip these identified groups with a better understanding of their legal rights, obligations, and mechanisms for seeking justice. This approach emphasizes empowering people through legal literacy and enabling them to access the legal system effectively. To achieve this, RPNLU will deploy a collaborative framework involving law school faculty, PLVs and empanelled legal practitioners etc. These stakeholders will work in tandem to access and address the unique legal issues faced by the identified groups. By prioritizing a hands-on engagement model, ‘Cluster Law’ will facilitate resolution of grievances either by pursuing remedies in formal law courts or through Alternative Dispute Resolution (“**ADR**”) mechanisms such as mediation and arbitration. Another distinctive aspect of “Cluster Law” is its focus on uncovering the untapped potential of participants from the target groups and striving to develop them.

VI. HARNESSING TECHNOLOGY IN LEGAL EDUCATION

Covid-19 adversely affected the education system including legal education as well. Various experiments were carried out in imparting legal education during the pandemic. The technological tools certainly assisted in the mission of education and most of the law schools in India as well as abroad switched to the audio-visual conferencing applications developed for the purposes of online meeting. Zoom, Cisco Webex, Google Meet and many other platforms came handy in imparting education that hitherto had been confined to the homes. However, in the Indian context,

the digital divide, and technological know-how of the educators as well students posed major challenges. These challenges were overcome by most of the CLEs by either providing training or trial-and-error methods. However, today, legal education is utilising the technology at large scale.

Moreover, the role of technology has become increasingly pervasive than simply conducting online lectures. The technology has brought massive changes in the way educational institutions impart education and manage their affairs. Further, the recent development on artificial intelligence also creates opportunities and challenges which are to be explored by the CLEs. Some of the major areas of legal education where technology plays its crucial role are mentioned below:

A. TEACHING AND RESEARCH RESOURCES

Restrictions on movement because of the Covid-19 Lockdown made us realise that lectures can be conducted with the help of various online meeting platform tools such as Cisco, Zoom, Google Meet etc. which enable the students and teachers to be part of the class even when they are geographically distant. Legal research platforms like Westlaw, LexisNexis, and open-access sources such as Google Scholar empower students to access legal databases and analyse case laws efficiently. Advanced analytics tools, including predictive algorithms, also provide insights into case outcomes, assisting students in developing strategic approaches.

In addition, the recent Supreme Court judgment of broadcasting the court proceedings⁸¹ also enables the educators and students to have the experience of a court room while sitting in the classroom at a distant place. The broadcasting of the court proceedings of High Courts and Supreme Court enables the law teachers and students to have access to the debates, discussion and arguments going on in matters which are of public importance and having large scale impact. This becomes crucial as there was a time when the court proceedings were reported only through law reports and students of law were required to wait for these reports to be published.

Further, as the courts become increasingly accessible for students and teachers sitting in faraway places, the clinical aspects of the profession, especially the soft skills, Bar and Bench relationship and many other nuanced aspects of court craft have become easily accessible to teachers and students of law which will enable the prospective lawyers to adapt to the environment much easier. It is proposed that the CLEs must come up with modalities relating to incorporation and integration of such resources in the teaching and learning processes. Moreover, legal journalism has also evolved with the changing technology and Online news report portals cum database such as Live Law and Bar & Bench have also transformed the legal journalism with live updates on their website and mobile applications.

⁸¹ Swapnil Tripathi v. Supreme Court of India, 2018 SCC Online SC 1667; Gursimran Kaur Bakshi, *Supreme Court To Launch Live-Streaming Of Regular Hearings In All Benches*, LIVE LAW (Oct. 18 2024), <https://www.livelaw.in/top-stories/supreme-court-to-launch-live-streaming-of-regular-hearings-in-all-benches-272830?fromIpLogin=99940.19921811362>.

Now most of the law journals have evolved and they have also developed the online platforms for accessing the cases reported at High Courts and Supreme Court. Most of the renowned publishers of textbooks on law subjects have started publishing the electronic versions of their textbooks. This has made reading and researching much quicker in comparison to the hardbound volumes of the work which are bulky, occupy large space and also require care in terms of binding and protection from pests. It is to be noted that usually the subscription of such database of books and journals are based on local area network. However, the remote access facilities may also be provided to teachers and the students for ease of research. This enables the entire library being available on the Cloud which will certainly improve the quality and time of reading and research.

B. LEARNING MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE AND LEGAL EDUCATION

The use of Learning Management Software (“LMS”) can also be utilised in transforming the legal education sector. There are various paid and open access versions of LMS available which can be utilised and integrated in teaching and assessment of students. There are various ed-tech companies which are providing customised solutions as per the requirements of specific disciplines. The LMS can be utilised for the purpose of various types of record including attendance, repository of teaching and research resources, assignment announcement and submission of various types such as descriptive nature assignment, live fire

chat sessions, live polling, feedback on the courses etc. Also, multiple-choice questions, gamification of the types of assessments including assessment of, assessment for and assessment as learning. Also, various features of LMS related to assessment and evaluation add to the speed and quality of the evaluation. LMS features provide for setting of rubrics and the evaluation may be done as per those rubrics. This makes the entire process of evaluation much more transparent and democratic in addition to making it assessable in real time for all students.

As far as the use of the LMS in legal education is concerned, the same may be utilised for the purposes of sharing of judgments and other materials and gradually preparing a repository of such materials. Further, as law courses require conceptual understanding of various words and special vocabulary, the same may be created gradually as a ready reckoner of any specific course, paper or subject. In addition, the requirement of assessment, especially objective type questions can also be met if the LMS is utilised to its full potential. Furthermore, the requirements of maintaining a diary of internship, its evaluation, daily reporting of the same to the supervisor can be performed with the help of LMS which is considered necessary to be ensured in CLEs.

C. INTEGRATION OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE IN TEACHING, EVALUATION AND RESEARCH

About a decade ago, research and teaching was dependent on the books and availability of journals for which, the waiting period was usually long. Also, sharing of the research results, publications etc. was also a tedious task due to the requirement of supply through postal methods.

Today, the internet has eliminated these hurdles of accessibility, law teachers and students are not dependent on material in the physical form alone. Today, the internet provides massive legal literature and other interdisciplinary research materials. Gradually, the perception is building that ‘Google Baba’ is taking the place of teachers and teachers are losing their relevance. Though, this position may not be absolutely correct, yet, the role of the teachers in the classroom is drastically changing due to the increasing accessibility of resources through the internet for a student. The teachers have to focus more on the analytical and interdisciplinary approach of teaching and building the character of the students rather than emphasising on rote learning or memorization of facts.

The recent developments in the field of machine learning and artificial intelligence have vastly affected research and writing skills. Developments in the field of AI have had a massive impact on teaching, research and assessment techniques. The recent controversy at Jindal Global Law School (“**JGLS**”),⁸² is one of the examples of these challenges that is now being faced by the educational institutions in assessment techniques and grading mechanisms. However, AI may not be discarded as irrelevant to legal education system just yet. The recent experiments of drafting deeds, prediction of outcomes in cases, case summaries, case

⁸² *Student goes to court after OP Jindal Global Law School fails him over ‘AI-generated’ answers*, TIMES OF INDIA (No. 7, 2024), https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/technology/tech-news/student-goes-to-court-after-op-jindal-global-law-school-fails-him-over-ai-generated-answers/articleshow/114949856.cms_

analyses are some of the examples of fast research outputs that AI can aid in.

Beyond this, there are many AI platforms that help in creating visually appealing power point presentations, small videos based on text commands and other appealing audio-visual outputs that make teaching and learning in the classrooms much more attractive and appealing in contrast with the last decade. These tools can especially be utilised for the case law method of teaching where the facts of the case can be converted in to small video clips and interesting PPTs.

VII. HARNESING TECHNOLOGY IN CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

As stated earlier, Clinical Legal Education represents a transformative approach to teaching law, focusing on experiential learning by integrating practical legal work with academic theory. The application of technology to CLE holds immense potential to enhance learning outcomes, improve accessibility, and streamline legal services. Technology enriches CLE by providing access to diverse learning resources and scenarios. Students can engage with real-world legal problems, develop critical thinking skills, and gain hands-on experience without being constrained by traditional classroom settings. Online platforms ensure that legal education is accessible to students and clients irrespective of their physical location. This inclusivity is particularly beneficial for underserved populations, enabling clinics to offer pro bono services widely. Automation and digital tools reduce administrative

burdens, allowing clinics to handle more cases with limited resources. For instance, automated document assembly tools like HotDocs⁸³ can streamline repetitive tasks such as drafting wills or contracts. Analytics tools provide valuable insights into the performance of clinics and students.

As per BCI prescribed CLE papers, teaching a paper on ADR can greatly benefit from the use of technology, as it provides interactive, engagement, and accessible methods to enhance learning. Role-Playing Software like ODR Simulation Platforms⁸⁴ or apps designed for negotiation exercises allow students to practice ADR scenarios in real-time. Learning Management System Platforms like Moodle, Blackboard, or Google Classroom can organize course content, host assignments, and track student progress. Since the paper on ADR is skills-based subject, therefore, mere skills of the software will not be of much help and therefore core skills of client counselling, negotiations, and soft skills related to the same along with taking notes of client conferences needs special attention. Such conferences, however, may take place with the help of online meeting platforms. Therefore, apart from the basic usage of computer for taking notes, most of the subjects remain to be focussed on core skills of human interaction, taking notes and converting the same into legal documents, where technology has a very minimal role, though

⁸³ *HotDocs Corporation Announces Ground-Breaking Cloud Technology for Lawyers*, HOTDOCS NEWS, <https://hotdocs.com/press/hotdocs-corporation-announces-ground-breaking-cloud-technology-lawyers/>.

⁸⁴ *ODR platforms & Apps*, ODR EUROPE, <https://www.odreurope.com/odr-services/odr-platforms-apps>.

artificial intelligence can certainly be exploited in preparing notes and strategy of litigation.

Teaching the paper on Drafting, Pleadings, and Conveyancing can significantly enrich the use of technology to make learning processes practical, interactive, and align them with real-world legal practices. Online Databases Platforms like Westlaw, LexisNexis, SCC Online, and Manupatra can help students research case laws, statutes, and precedents relevant to drafting pleadings. Students can be taught to analyze past court pleadings and conveyance documents from these databases. Students may be introduced legal drafting software tools like MS Word with legal templates or specialized software such as *Legito* or *HotDocs*, which automate drafting of legal documents.⁸⁵ AI-powered tools for case preparation like CaseText or ROSS AI can demonstrate how technology can assist in drafting pleadings with relevant legal arguments. Students can use E-signing platforms like DocuSign or Adobe Sign for drafting and executing agreements or deeds electronically.⁸⁶ Students can be encouraged to know how AI is used in legal tech to identify clauses and summarize agreements.

Teaching Professional Ethics through technology can make the subjects more interactive, relatable, and impactful, helping students grasp the nuances of ethical behaviour in the legal profession. Videos or

⁸⁵ *Affordable legal document automation software that puts time back in your day*, CLIO DRAFT, <https://www.lawyaw.com/>.

⁸⁶ *How AI can help lawyers write legal documents more efficiently, including drafting case briefs and reviewing contracts*, BLOOMBERG LAW, <https://pro.bloomberglaw.com/insights/technology/ai-tools-for-legal-writing/#how-is-ai-being-used-in-legal-writing>.

documentaries on landmark cases involving ethical breaches, e.g., lawyer misconduct, client confidentiality breaches, or conflicts of interest can be shared with the students. Podcasts and Webinars where legal experts discuss real-world ethical challenges in law practice can be recommended. Appropriate usage of artificial intelligence, its opportunities and challenges in the practice of law can be integrated in the curriculum of Professional Ethics. The issue of plagiarism should also be given due attention in light of recent developments in the field of artificial intelligence. It is to be remembered that the objective of CLE in India is inclusive yet dynamic, egalitarian yet, progressive, which is in conformity with the constitutional values, goals and duties. Clinical Education, Justice Education and Socially Relevant Education advocates for the same thing from different perspectives.⁸⁷ This argument is made in the line with the advocacy being a noble profession and the Advocates Act and various judgments emphasising that the advocates are the officers of the court and income of the advocates are incidental to the profession. The same is being reiterated by the curriculum of law schools through the paper of 'Professional Ethics'.⁸⁸

Coming to law clinics, virtual Legal Aid Clinics can be of significant use; wherever necessary, through video conferencing, email

⁸⁷ Frank S. Bloch, *The Global Clinical Movement: Educating Lawyers for Social Justice* (Oxford University Press 2011).

⁸⁸ FRANK S BLOCH AND N. R. MADHAVA MENON, *The Global Clinical Movement, in THE GLOBAL CLINICAL MOVEMENT: EDUCATING LAWYERS FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE* (Frank S. Bloch ed., OXFORD ACADEMIC 2011), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195381146.003.0018>.

correspondence, and secure client portals, students can conduct interviews, gather evidence, and provide legal advice, all within a digital environment. Tools like Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and dedicated legal practice software such as Clio or MyCase have made this feasible. Harvard Law School's Access to Justice Lab,⁸⁹ uses technology to streamline legal processes and provide affordable legal solutions. It integrates research, technology, and clinical work, allowing students to experiment with innovative tools and methods. Southwestern Law School's Immigration Law Clinic leverages virtual platforms to assist clients with immigration issues. Using video conferencing and secure digital document management, the clinic ensures efficiency and accessibility for clients who cannot attend in person. Several National Law Universities in India like NLSIU Bangalore, NLU Delhi, and NALSAR Hyderabad have integrated technology in their Legal Aid Clinics. These clinics use online platforms to provide free legal consultations to underprivileged communities. Students gain hands-on experience while addressing real legal issues remotely. Tools like Google Forms, online mapping, and statistical software help law students analyse data related to local community issues. Students learn to integrate technology with legal practice while contributing to evidence-based policy recommendations. Students use these tools for case analysis and document drafting during legal aid work. Students gain experience with advanced legal technologies, preparing them for modern legal practice.

⁸⁹ *Access to Justice Lab*, HARVARD LAW SCHOOL, <https://a2jlab.org>.

Platforms like *SWAYAM* and Coursera host specialized courses in public interest law and clinical legal methods. Law schools encourage students to participate in these programs, often integrating them into clinical training. Initiatives like *Nyaya Bandhu* (launched by the Ministry of Law and Justice) connect pro bono lawyers with clients through a mobile app. Law students are trained to assist in case preparation, offering them real-world exposure. Law students engage with actual legal issues while supporting public interest lawyering, enhancing their practical training.

Simulation-based learning enhances student preparation for real-world scenarios. Tools like LawBite and VR-enabled courtroom simulations immerse students in virtual environments where they can practice courtroom proceedings, negotiation techniques, and client interactions. Efficient case management is crucial for clinical programs. Digital platforms streamline the management of client records, case documents, and deadlines. Tools such as LegalServer or ClinicCases are tailored for legal clinics, offering features like document storage, workflow automation, and analytics for performance evaluation.

As per the reports of the Government, India has achieved internet connectivity in ninety five percent of the villages under the Bharat Net Project.⁹⁰ Overall there are more than ninety-five crore internet users in

⁹⁰Ministry of Communications, *Universal Connectivity and Digital India initiatives reaching to all areas, including tier-2/3 cities and villages As of April 2024, 95.15% villages having access to internet with 3G/4G mobile connectivity Total internet subscribers increased from 251.59 million as of March 2014 to 954.40 million in March 2024 Government is taking various technology-led startups and innovation schemes like TIDE 2.0, GENESIS, CoEs and NGIS*, PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (Aug. 02, 2024)

India. These numbers clearly indicate that the internet penetration has reached to the remote areas. These facilities provide opportunities to the law schools to setup online legal aid clinics and reach the masses. Special role of the students who can speak in vernacular and local language becomes crucial in setting up and providing legal aid to the masses without the hassle to travel and expenses associated with it. Therefore, attempts may be made to establish online legal aid clinic with the help of the local administration at a village level; NGOs may help in preparing and setting up the systems and assisting the masses. The same setup may also be utilised for legal literacy programmes as well.

VIII. CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING TECHNOLOGY IN CLE

Implementing technology in clinical legal education presents several challenges, as well. Cost and resource constraints are significant barriers, as are the challenges associated with acquisition and maintenance software, hardware, and training resources often requires substantial financial investment, which many institutions cannot afford.⁹¹ Handling sensitive client information digitally raises concerns about data security and privacy. Technological barriers also persist for students and clients who lack access to reliable internet, modern devices, or the necessary digital skills to navigate these platforms effectively. Resistance to change

<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaseIframePage.aspx?PRID=2040566>.

⁹¹ M.L. Rhodes *Technological Innovation in Legal Education: Challenges and Opportunities*, J. OF LEGAL EDUC. 45 (2020); J.S. Mann, *Challenges of Information Technology in Promoting Legal Education and Research: A Critical Analysis* (Aug. 2021), https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354200336_Challenges_of_Information_Technology_in_Promoting_Legal_Education_and_Research_A_Critical_Analysis.

among faculty and professionals accustomed to traditional teaching methods can further slow technological adoption, requiring targeted training and demonstrable benefits to shift attitudes. Ethical consideration, such as the risk of bias and lack of transparency in AI-powered legal tools, adds another layer of complexity, demanding careful oversight and responsible use, especially in educational settings.

IX. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The integration of technology into legal education, particularly in clinical legal education, offers transformative advantages by enhancing efficiency and practical learning opportunities. Advanced tools like AI-powered research databases and document automation streamline case preparation and analysis, allowing students to focus on developing critical thinking and advocacy skills. The use of technology into clinical legal education offers unparalleled opportunities for enhancing the learning experience, improving access to justice, and preparing students for the evolving legal regime. Virtual platforms enable students to simulate real-world legal scenarios, fostering experiential learning while reaching underserved communities through online legal aid. Though challenges such as cost, security, and resistance to change exist; the proactive measures, including training, and ethical guidelines can mitigate these issues. By embracing innovation, legal educators can ensure that future generations of lawyers are equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to cope with an increasingly digital world.

Last, but not the least, technology should serve to supplement, rather than supplant, traditional, human-centred pedagogical approaches, as the guidance, mentorship, and contextual expertise offered by seasoned law teachers is irreplaceable in nurturing critical reasoning and empathy in aspiring lawyers. While technological tools can enhance efficiency and provide innovative learning experiences, the depth of understanding and values imparted through human interaction remain central to shaping well-rounded law graduates and scholars.