

Professor (Dr.) G. S. Bajpai, *The Future of Legal Education in India: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Legal Studies*, 11(1) NLUJ L. REV. 27 (2025)

**THE FUTURE OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA:  
INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES TO LEGAL STUDIES**

~ Professor (Dr.) G. S. Bajpai\*

**ABSTRACT**

*The prime objective of legal education is to foster justice and equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to excel in diverse fields within a constantly evolving society. Law, being an interdisciplinary field of study that impacts the standing of the legal profession directly, must therefore, entail high quality education, research, training, and practice in cross-disciplinary fields. As a resilient system of legal education underpins the foundation for a robust legal system, law schools are responsible for providing high-quality, integrative legal education that prepares future legal professionals to effectively cope up with the challenges of emerging areas of law. Over the years, the legal profession has successfully drawn highly qualified and talented individuals. However, the benefits of interdisciplinary approaches have been slow to permeate legal education, creating the need for an adaptive and innovative academic approach to prepare future lawyers to comprehend new and emerging domains. The future of legal education is dynamic and enriching due to its integration with and adoption of interdisciplinary domains that enhance the quality of legal study and efficacy of legal practice.*

---

\* Professor (Dr.) G. S. Bajpai is the Vice-Chancellor, National Law University, Delhi. The author is extremely grateful to Ms. Riya Gulati, Academic Fellow at National Law University, Delhi for her time and assistance on this piece.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

I. INTRODUCTION .....	29
II. ADVANCEMENT OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA.....	34
III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN LEGAL STUDIES .....	40
IV. INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN LEGAL EDUCATION: THEORIES AND PARADIGMS .....	43
V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION IN LEGAL STUDIES.....	49
VI. SCOPE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL EDUCATION .....	52
VII. THE FUTURE OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA .....	55
VIII. CONCLUSION .....	58

## I. INTRODUCTION

India can lay claim to the privilege of holding one of the oldest and most advanced legal systems in Asia. Its doctrinal content is detailed, intricate and rich supported by a vast network of judicial institutions and legal professionals; with the legal culture deeply ingrained and widely dispersed among both rural and urban areas. However, while India needs to be taken seriously as a modern legal order, it does not imply that its legal system is in robust health.<sup>1</sup> With the proactive integration of innovative, indispensable, and evolving interdisciplinary approaches, India can gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of its legal framework in a way that enables it to realign its legal system and metamorphose itself into one that is responsive to societal needs, ensuring that justice is both effective and equitable in the face of ongoing national development.

Legal education is a valuable investment that can yield significant benefits for the nation and accelerate the pace of development. A well-structured and socially relevant legal education is pivotal for proper dispensation of justice. Legal education determines the quality of the judiciary and significantly impacts the rule of law, democracy, and socio-economic development of the country.<sup>2</sup> The continuously expanding scope and ambit of law can be attributed to the ever-changing requirements of society. Accordingly, the legal profession and its practice

---

<sup>1</sup> OLIVER MENDELSON, *LAW AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION IN INDIA* 161 (Oxford University Press 2014).

<sup>2</sup> R. Segal & S.R. Bhosale, *Legal Education in India: Restructuring and Reshaping*, *INDIAN BAR REV.* 37 (1999).

are undergoing newer permutations and combinations of diverse disciplines interlaced into a single form.

Due to the intersection of interdisciplinary approaches in legal education, today's law professionals have numerous options beyond conventional litigation. Students who are prepared to tackle multi-disciplinary issues will find it easier to deal with emerging facets of law in the future. Law educators, however, typically hold a static conception of law, wherein legal education is imparted through the lecture method that hinges on a systematic presentation and mere verbal analysis of the existing structure of rules and doctrines without being critical of them. There is an acute lack of focus on the policies that underpin these rules and doctrines or on the processes through which the legal system modifies old rules and introduces new ones. While the teaching of foundational legal doctrines is an essential function of law schools, it is not their sole function.

Beyond teaching doctrines and techniques, there is a need for a system of legal training to be designed to help developing lawyers acquire skills that promote multi-disciplinary inquiry and practical understanding of problems. To address the realities of the emerging market, law schools must innovatively develop and revamp a system of legal education that promotes an interdisciplinary approach, to enable future legal professionals to engage in institutional changes and effectively tackle the emerging aspects of law in the future. In this regard, the teaching methodology used shall prove to be of paramount importance. While some faculties are making efforts to adopt more practice-oriented

approaches, most remain primarily lecture-based. National Law Universities emphasise multi-disciplinary inquiry and practical problem-solving, utilising interactive methods like the Socratic Method and case studies.<sup>3</sup> The Socratic Method encourages students to think critically by guiding them through a series of questions.<sup>4</sup> While lectures combined with these methods are effective, there is a need for more frequent and mandatory practical demonstrations, simulation exercises, moot courts, and mock trials. Such approaches foster a better understanding of legal issues, create an environment for students to learn experientially, and foster a creative and supportive learning environment.

Legal education must therefore, aim to provide a justice-oriented outcome that aligns with the values outlined in the Indian Constitution. It must foster a commitment to the highest professional ethics and a dedication to public service. To achieve these objectives, it is important for legal education to be broad-based, multidisciplinary, multifunctional, and contextually relevant. Although several law schools deliver quality education, a significant challenge remains in enhancing the standard of legal education in most institutions nationwide. This involves numerous measures, such as reforming the current regulatory framework, establishing research and training centres, hiring skilled and dedicated faculty, developing curricula that reflect the contemporary demands of the

---

<sup>3</sup> KETAN MUKHIJA, SECOND GENERATION REFORMS IN LEGAL EDUCATION AND EMERGING TRENDS IN INDIAN LEGAL EDUCATION ARENA – A TRIBUTE TO PROFESSOR RANBIR SINGH, *in* LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR RANBIR SINGH 521 (Lokendra Malik & Manish Arora eds., Universal Law Publishing 2014).

<sup>4</sup> SHANA CONNELL NOYES & HENRY S. NOYES, ACING YOUR FIRST YEAR OF LAW SCHOOL 27 (Fred B. Rothman 1999).

profession, and securing necessary financial assistance from the government. Legal education should equip students with both theoretical and practical skills necessary to deal with the diverse and evolving landscape of legal practice.

Furthermore, legal education must be socially engaged. Inculcating this aspect into education would entail introduction of programs which mandatorily introduce students to multifarious interdisciplinary challenges through clinical education, workshops, seminars, and legal aid programs. Faculty should include individuals with interdisciplinary training and direct experience with societal issues to engage with students in order to cultivate that interest and urge within them to learn and be involved with the profession in a manner that helps give-back to the society.<sup>5</sup> It is essential to evaluate and determine what should be taught, how and at what stage it should be taught, to gain better insights into the knowledge and skills lawyers deploy in practice.

The ongoing increase in the division of labour and the flourishing emphasis on nuanced specialisations within the legal profession indicates that law departments cannot serve as the exclusive or even the primary hub of pedagogy. It is crucial to strategically identify what students learn at university but do not apply in practice and what lawyers learn during apprenticeship and on job. Identifying these aspects marks a crucial step in the direction of answering an extremely abstract, yet relevant query: how can we enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of this learning, and

---

<sup>5</sup> A.R. LAKSHMANAN, LEGAL EDUCATION – ROLE OF THE BAR, LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR RANBIR SINGH, 35-4 (Lokendra Malik & Manish Arora eds., Universal Law Publishing 2014).

how the cumulative acquisition of human capital impacts lawyers' careers?<sup>6</sup> For many lawyers, practicing law is a collaborative enterprise; therefore, legal education should also equip students for this practice of collaborative work.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, certain aspects of legal education, particularly interdisciplinary approaches, emphasise collaboration as an essential element of the educational journey.

In this article, the author attempts to answer this very question by delving into the concept of interdisciplinary approaches to legal education. In Part II, we trace the history of legal education in India to understand the various influences which gave shaped its developmental trajectory over the years. In Part III, we underscore the need for an interdisciplinary inquiry in the legal education and how it can be valuable for the progress of the profession. In Part IV, the author attempts to analyse how such a holistic and comprehensive approach impacts the skills and capabilities of students as future legal professionals and also refers to various pedagogical theories which endorse the same. Part V unravels the various challenges in the traditional manner of legal education which hinders interdisciplinary enquiry and part VI attempts to define the scope and depth that such interdisciplinary approach much go to in order to equip students for the future. Part VII addresses the possible turn legal

---

<sup>6</sup> RICHARD L. ABEL, AN AGENDA FOR RESEARCH ON THE LEGAL PROFESSION AND LEGAL EDUCATION: ONE AMERICAN'S PERSPECTIVE, *THE FUTURES OF LEGAL EDUCATION AND THE LEGAL PROFESSION* 211 (Hilary Sommerlad et al. eds., Hart Publishing 2015).

<sup>7</sup> MARK TUSHNET, EVALUATING STUDENTS AS PREPARATION FOR THE PRACTICE OF LAW, *in* *THE LEGAL SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATION* 265 (Ashgate 2008).

education can take in future in India to make itself attune itself to interdisciplinarity and Part VIII concludes.

## **II. ADVANCEMENT OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA**

The formal introduction of legal education in India began in 1857 with the establishment of three Presidency Colleges in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, where it was initially combined with social science subjects. By 1859, the significance of legal education was recognised with the inclusion of English legal systems and British laws relevant to India. The first need for reform came in 1885 from Justice Muthuswami Iyer,<sup>8</sup> who emphasised the need for a scientific approach to legal education rather than viewing it merely as an art based on technical rules.

Before the Constitution was adopted in 1950, numerous attempts were made to improve legal education in India, but these efforts were slow to materialise. Both provincial and national developments highlighted the issue, such as the 1935 U.P. Unemployment Committee Report by Hon'ble Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, which noted that legal education did not hold the significance it deserved and its standards lagged behind other fields.<sup>9</sup> The 1949 Radhakrishnan Commission Report reinforced this view, stating that law colleges lacked esteem both nationally and internationally and that legal scholarship was not

---

<sup>8</sup> Standing Committee on Personnel Public Grievances, Law and Justice, *Strengthening legal education in view of emerging challenges before the legal profession*, Joint Parliamentary Committee Report No. 142, DIGITAL SANSAD, (2024).

<sup>9</sup> INDIA, REPORT OF THE TEJ BAHADUR SAPRU COMMITTEE, REPORT OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE UNITED PROVINCES, 1935 71 (1936).

advanced.<sup>10</sup> A decade after the publication of the Radhakrishnan Commission Report, legal education had further worsened, with part-time teaching, overcrowded colleges, and inadequate infrastructure contributing to the decline in the status of legal education in the nation.

After India became a Republic, efforts to improve legal education intensified significantly. It was marked by two key developments: a significant increase in students pursuing law and sustained initiatives to enhance legal education standards.<sup>11</sup> There have been numerous Committees, Commissions, Study Groups and Working Papers to address these improvements. The All-India Bar Committee, in 1951, emphasised the necessity of a solid legal education system for a strong legal profession and judiciary. The All-India Bar Committee submitted its comprehensive report on March 30, 1953. This report proposed the establishment of a Bar Council for each state and an All-India Bar Council as the national apex body responsible for regulating the legal profession and overseeing the standards of legal education in India.<sup>12</sup>

In 1958, the First Law Commission of India conducted a comprehensive study on the state of legal education, dedicating a chapter on 'Legal Education' in its Report on 'Reforms of Judicial

---

<sup>10</sup> GOV'T OF INDIA, MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, THE REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION COMMISSION (DEC., 1948 – AUG., 1949) 224 (1962).

<sup>11</sup> LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA, REPORT NO. 184: THE LEGAL EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING AND PROPOSALS FOR AMENDMENTS TO THE ADVOCATES ACT, 1961 AND THE UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION ACT, 1956, ch. 2 (2002).

<sup>12</sup> *History*, BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA, <https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/history>.

Administration.<sup>13</sup> The Commission identified several deficiencies, including declining standards, the prevalence of part-time teachers and students, overcrowding in law colleges, and issues with instructional quality and exam evaluation. The Commission, by drawing on previous Reports of various Committees, and its own deliberations, recommended that a basic degree in Arts, Science or Commerce be a prerequisite for admission to the law programs. It also proposed a two-year law course after graduation to ensure students gain a solid understanding of legal theory and principles. The Law Commission's Report on legal education included 31 recommendations, notably advocating for an entrance test for law course admissions. This report was later discussed at the All-India Lawyers' Conference in March 1959, where the Committee on Legal Education resolved to establish a three-year law degree program.

The efforts to enhance legal education standards in India were significantly advanced by various universities. In 1962, the Legal Education Committee of Banaras Hindu University implemented major reforms, including a three-year LL.B. course, the introduction of a semester system, and the reorganisation of courses to better align with India's socio-economic context. The Gajendragadkar Committee of Delhi University, in its 1964 report, called for a comprehensive reorganisation of legal education, emphasising that its goal should be to produce not just educated citizens, but also professionals in law. The Committee recommended a three-year law course structured around a semester system, the establishment of a Council for Legal Education, and the

---

<sup>13</sup> LAW COMMISSION OF INDIA, REPORT NO. 14: REFORM OF JUDICIAL ADMINISTRATION, 520 (1958).

creation of three or four National Law Schools.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, seminars in Rajasthan (1964), and Poona (1972) reiterated these recommendations, particularly the establishment of National Law Schools.

The establishment of the Bar Council of India under the Advocates Act, 1961, aimed to enhance the status of legal education. The Bar Council set qualifications for enrolment to the Bar, requiring graduation in any discipline for admission to the three-year LL.B. or B.L. course while leaving the semester system implementation to individual institutions. In 1982, the Bar Council introduced a five-year composite degree in law following higher secondary education, making it a full-time program that could not be offered part-time. This five-year law course included a focus on social sciences subjects along with English and Legal History courses during the first two years, followed by regular law subjects and practical training. While the three-year law course required 16 courses, the five-year program comprised 21 compulsory courses, 4 practical courses, and 3 optional ones. The Bar Council also permitted universities to offer liberal legal education for various professionals, allowing degrees like the Bachelor of Academic Law (“**B.A.L.**”) and Bachelor of General Laws (“**B.G.L.**”) through distance education; however, these degrees do not qualify graduates for bar enrolment. Only a limited number of university departments and law colleges offered a two-year LL.M. or M.L. course and few universities had the facilities to offer Ph.D. programs in law.

---

<sup>14</sup> Lovely Dasgupta, *Reforming Indian Legal Education: Linking Research and Teaching*, 59. J. LEGAL EDUC. 432, 439 (2010).

The reforms in legal education in India can effectively be seen to have occurred in three phases as outlined by the University Grants Commission's 1992 Report on Curriculum Development in law. The first phase, spanning from 1950 to the mid-1960s, focused on introducing professionalism and Indian legal content into the curriculum, along with appointing full-time teachers. The second phase, from the mid-1960s to the mid-1970s, aimed at curriculum development and enhancing teaching quality, marked by the enactment of the Advocates Act in 1961, which empowered the Bar Council to uphold legal education standards and led to the establishment of a Legal Education Committee. This period also included several national seminars on legal education. The third phase, from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, culminated in the commencement of the National Law School of India University in 1987 and featured four significant workshops on legal education in 1975-1976, along with a 1981 report by the University Grants Commission on the status of teaching and research in law.<sup>15</sup>

In summary, the Law Commission of India, tasked with reviewing legal education standards, reported its findings, noting that law education at universities failed to adequately prepare graduates for the profession, particularly when compared to the intensive training offered by American law schools. The Commission expressed serious concern over the dismal state of legal education in most Indian institutions and emphasised the need for significant changes to address the evolving political, economic, and social landscape of the nation. It highlighted that lawyers must engage

---

<sup>15</sup> UNIVERSITY GRANTS COMMISSION, 2 REPORT ON CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT IN LAW (1992).

with these changes and play diverse roles in society, underscoring the urgency of reforming legal education to establish a strong foundation for future practitioners.

The proliferation of law colleges in India has significantly contributed to the decline in legal education standards. Despite the rapid increase in institutions, neither the Bar Council of India nor the universities have effectively established and enforced high standards. Most colleges relied on traditional teaching methods and had few qualified full-time teachers, making it challenging to maintain uniform standards nationwide. Reforms in the Indian legal education system have been extensively examined since independence, highlighting recurring issues such as curriculum, attendance, entrance exams, teaching methods, and student assessment. Additionally, there is a pressing need for ‘socially relevant legal education’ to meet the needs of India’s socially and economically disadvantaged populations. A significant advancement in Indian legal education occurred with the establishment of the National Law School of India University in Bangalore in 1986, and following its model, other national law schools were created, and many law colleges in India adopted the five-year curriculum. These national law schools have enhanced legal education by introducing academic rigour, interdisciplinary perspectives, and clinical training. However, concerns remain about the quality of other law colleges nationwide. Former Chief Justice of India, K.G. Balakrishnan emphasised that premier institutions should not only

set standards for legal education but also work to improve the broader legal system.<sup>16</sup>

The legal system today in these fast-paced changing times, requires and necessitates the study of law to be a holistic and comprehensive endeavour with a connect to the realities of life rather than a tunnel-like and black-and-white approach to law. The need today is to have an integrated and wide-based approach to issues, which can be effectively inculcated through an interdisciplinary understanding of the subject.

### **III. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN LEGAL STUDIES**

The term “interdisciplinary” has gained a largely positive connotation, often used interchangeably with phrases like “innovative research” and “integrated solutions”.<sup>17</sup> Interdisciplinarity is often viewed as vital for solving the intricate issues of contemporary society and for driving innovation to new heights.<sup>18</sup> Interdisciplinary studies refer to “*a process of answering questions, solving problems, or addressing topics that are too broad or complex for any single discipline or profession to handle effectively.*”<sup>19</sup> It is not

---

<sup>16</sup> JANE E. SCHUKOSKE, LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM IN INDIA – DIALOGUE AMONG INDIAN LAW TEACHERS, LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA: ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF PROFESSOR RANBIR SINGH, 197-198 (Lokendra Malik & Manish Arora eds., Universal Law Publishing 2014).

<sup>17</sup> JULIE THOMPSON KLEIN, TYPOLOGIES OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY, THE OXFORD HANDBOOK OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY 35 (2nd ed. 2015).

<sup>18</sup> Ruth Muller & Wolfgang Kaltenbrunner, *Re-disciplining Academic Careers? Interdisciplinary Practice and Career Development in a Swedish Environmental Sciences Research Centre*, 57 MINERVA 479, 480 (2019).

<sup>19</sup> JULIE THOMPSON KLEIN & WILLIAM H. NEWELL, ADVANCING INTERDISCIPLINARY STUDIES, HANDBOOK OF THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM: A COMPREHENSIVE

merely a supplement but is “*complementary to and corrective of the disciplines*”.<sup>20</sup> An interdisciplinary approach is better poised to address today’s complex issues by fostering a comprehensive understanding through a cross-disciplinary perspective. It focuses on developing boundary-crossing skills such as the ability to shift between perspectives, synthesise knowledge of different disciplines, and cope with complexity of a situation effectively through such a wide approach. While multi-disciplinarity is additive, interdisciplinarity is integrative, transforming knowledge from different fields through synthesis, which is its defining feature.<sup>21</sup> Historically, academic programs have emphasised on specialisation, but there is now a notable shift toward crossing disciplinary boundaries. This change reflects a move away from traditional compartmentalisation towards greater collaboration and cross-fertilisation. Factors driving this shift include the frequent borrowing of tools, methods, concepts, and theories from other disciplines, which reshape conventional notions of knowledge. For instance, textuality, narrative, and interpretation, once confined to literary studies, are now found across various fields, including humanities, social sciences, science studies, and even law and psychiatry.<sup>22</sup> The increasing complexity of reality has made the traditional mono-disciplinary model of law obsolete. Today’s societal challenges require complex and integrated approaches across all disciplines. This is particularly true for legal

---

GUIDE TO PURPOSES, STRUCTURES, PRACTICES, AND CHANGE 393-395 (Jerry Gaff & James Ratcliff eds., Jossey-Bass 1997).

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Elisabeth J. H. Spelt et al., *Teaching and Learning in Interdisciplinary Higher Education: A Systematic Review*, EDUC. PSYCHOL. REV. 365, 366 (2009).

<sup>22</sup> Julie Thompson Klein, *Mapping Interdisciplinary Studies*, ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES (1999).

education and practice, given its crucial role in regulating social phenomena. Moreover, the rapidly evolving labour market is transforming legal services, creating a need for new professional roles that intertwine legal expertise with extra-legal skills. This shift highlights the necessity for a more adaptable and integrated model of legal education focused on risk assessment and conflict prevention.<sup>23</sup>

Legal discipline is closely connected to other academic fields, where what is considered “self-evident knowledge” is always open to challenge. Even when there is consensus about the appropriateness of a legal rule, it requires ongoing debate through the examination of arguments for and against it. If a general consensus on legal interpretations would have ended discussion entirely, the discipline of law would have faded long ago. The focus of legal science lies in exploring the relevant arguments surrounding rules and outcomes, rather than simply identifying the right rule or outcome in a case. While practicing lawyers often aim to eliminate uncertainty, legal scholars strive to question all seemingly certain outcomes.<sup>24</sup> Legal education has evolved over time to better reflect the complexities of the legal profession. In many situations, especially when dealing with intricate legal issues, an interdisciplinary approach has proven valuable by considering various unpredictable factors and by helping gain valuable insight into hitherto unexplored nuances.

---

<sup>23</sup> Giorgia Resta, “*So Lonely*”: *Comparative Law and the Quest for Interdisciplinary Legal Education*, 37 INT’L J. SEMIOT L. 1569, 1571 (2024).

<sup>24</sup> JAN M. SMITS, *THE MIND AND METHOD OF THE LEGAL ACADEMIC* 58 (Edward Elgar 2012).

New approaches to learning are redefining legal education. A key limitation of traditional law training is its failure to address problems in a broad, multidisciplinary context. Law alone does not lead to creative problem-solving, thus, underscoring the importance of other fields. Lawyers often struggle to leverage insights from various disciplines due to their limited understanding, which is a product of their education. Even in adversarial settings, they may overlook valuable input from non-legal professionals and fail to use information from other disciplines effectively.<sup>25</sup> If lawyers focus solely on legal issues, they risk narrowly defining problems as legal challenges. Therefore, to innovate and think “outside the box”, it would be conducive for lawyers must adopt a more expansive view of problem-solving that incorporates this interdisciplinary collaboration.

#### **IV. INTERDISCIPLINARY APPROACHES IN LEGAL EDUCATION: THEORIES AND PARADIGMS**

We are on the brink of a rapid evolution in our understanding of law, not only technologically, and sociologically but also intellectually. The jurisprudential theory is primed to incorporate the role of lawyers, with various indicators pointing this shift. Beyond mere scientific and philosophical interest, sociological jurisprudence and legal realism lead naturally to an anthropological analysis of lawyering. In our culture, law

---

<sup>25</sup> Janet Weinstein, *Coming of Age: Recognizing the Importance of Interdisciplinary Education in Law Practice*, 74 WASH. L. REV. 318, 324-337 (1999).

and legal theory have historically prioritised reason, but the incorporation of an interdisciplinary approach is set to broaden that focus.<sup>26</sup>

A broad education is essential for well-prepared lawyers. Through a rigorous case-based curriculum, law schools effectively cultivate highly trained legal minds. The advancements made by these modern systems often surpass those of older methods. However, they have significant limitations: *first*, they completely disregard the importance of non-legal subjects that are crucial for comprehensive legal training; *second*, they restrict the study of law to a narrow focus on legalistic reasoning derived from court opinions, failing to emphasise on the pragmatic considerations that should inform both judicial decisions and legislative actions. The teaching and application of law have always relied on theoretical principles derived from the law itself, even though the subject matter encompasses all aspects of human interactions and societal contexts. The issue lies in the persistent practice of resolving new cases solely based on past rulings, without considering the practical implications of those decisions on contemporary business or social life. Courts shape common law through countless decisions, each influenced by preceding rulings. However, these rulings often stem more from legalistic reasoning and the nuances of legal theory, rather than a comprehensive understanding of the current societal landscape. Judges rarely consult historians or trained economists to assess whether their decisions align with contemporary trends or the practical implications of the situations before them. As a result, the law and legal

---

<sup>26</sup> Walter Probert & Louis M. Brown, *Theories and Practices in the Legal Profession*, 19 U. FLA. L. REV. 447 (1966).

professionals tend to frame cases in terms of legal technicalities, rather than drawing from the broader human experience.

The inclusion of broader knowledge is essential for practicing lawyers to better serve the public, and law schools must lead this effort. The teaching of interdisciplinary subjects in the law school, ultimately in a new way to bring out their relation to the law, is thus, a reliable method to provide courts with valuable new resources of legal counsel. Students would benefit greatly from combining courses, gaining meaningful education. They would be equipped to recognise and retain the important connections between subjects, even if instructors do not explicitly highlight them. This comprehensive understanding would allow them to address issues as a whole, something that is unattainable if law schools remain isolated. They would grasp the interconnectedness of these fields and, in their professional careers, would leverage this understanding to create practical resources for courts and legislatures.<sup>27</sup>

The shifts in professional work patterns also are an important factor necessitating changes in legal education. Legal education is influenced by the forces of standardisation, diversification, and fragmentation. Legal sub-disciplines such as contract law, torts, and criminal law are increasingly governed by diverse regulatory systems that have evolved independently yet remain interconnected. Historically, these variations were often suppressed in legal scholarship as classical frameworks sought to maintain a singular view of law. However, with time it became increasingly difficult to contain legal fields within rigid

---

<sup>27</sup> William Browne Hale, *Theory of Legal Education*, 32 YALE L.J. 353, 362-367 (1922-1923).

definitions, leading to contradictions and anomalies. This fragmentation is mirrored in legal education and theory, raising questions about the distinctiveness of these domains and the existence of a core or canon among them.

Such developments in legal education and legal theory indicate a growing interest among legal scholars and practitioners in incorporating non-legal insights and methodologies. Legal theory has increasingly connected with social theory, feminism, and philosophy, while legal education has evolved to become more interdisciplinary. It now incorporates insights from economics, philosophy, psychology, management, skills training, clinical education, and ethics. Traditional methods and assumptions in legal education have faced critique from advocates of legal ethics, socio-legal studies, critical legal studies, and skills education, including clinical programs. The range of learning and assessment methods has expanded significantly, partly due to new educational theories and advancements in information and communications technology.<sup>28</sup>

The theory of competence-based approaches to education and training emphasises performance with professional or occupational roles, structuring learning around assessment tied to evidence collected in real-world workplaces.<sup>29</sup> This approach contrasts with traditional models by analysing the specific competencies required for job performance. The

---

<sup>28</sup> Avrom Sherr & David Sugarman, *Theory in Legal Education*, 7 INT'L J. LEGAL PROF. 165, 166-168 (2000).

<sup>29</sup> Evelyn Bergsmann, et. al, *Evaluation of competence-based teaching in higher education: From theory to practice*, 52 EVALUATION AND PROGRAM PLANNING (2015).

Australian Model of competence-based education integrates general professional attributes with contextual considerations, recognising that competence involves a complex interplay of knowledge, skills, and situational understanding. It emphasises reflective practice and professional judgment. The competence-based approaches have significantly influenced professional legal education. In the United States, competency models have been developed, particularly by the School of Law at Antioch and by the American Bar Association's Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession.<sup>30</sup> Their most significant impact has been in the UK, where the law society has utilised these models to establish a framework for the Legal Practice Course, Professional Skills Course, and training contract.<sup>31</sup>

With the growing concern about the readiness of graduates for practice, with varying needs across different legal roles, law schools are influenced by the need to balance academic integrity with practical relevance. The Legal Engineering Model focuses on practical problem-solving and conflict resolution, integrating knowledge from various fields such as business administration, management, and technology. It emphasises that law is just one tool among many for regulating society. In this model, students engage with complex, real-world problems, exploring multiple solutions and making decisions based on legal, normative, and

---

<sup>30</sup> H. Russell Cort & Jack L. Sammons, *The Search for Good Lawyering: A Concept and Model of Lawyering Competencies*, 29 CLEV. ST. L. REV. 397 (1980); American Bar Association, *Legal Education and Professional Development – An Educational Continuum, Report of the Task Force on Law Schools and the Profession: Narrowing the Gap* (Illinois, American Bar Association 1992).

<sup>31</sup> P. A. Jones, *Theory and Practice in Professional Legal Education*, 7 INT'L J. LEGAL PROF. 239, 241-251 (2000).

practical criteria. Ideally, these programs collaborate closely with legal practitioners to ensure relevance and provide hands-on training.<sup>32</sup>

Interdisciplinary competence is crucial for thriving in academia, enhancing employability, and promoting sustainable development. Interdisciplinary learning closely aligns with constructivist philosophy, drawing from the ideas of Piaget, Dewey, and Vygotsky. It enables students to reconstruct knowledge from foreign disciplines, deconstruct existing concepts, and construct knowledge by innovatively incorporating notions across disciplines. To enhance students' competencies such as knowledge processing, methodology, communication, and personal or interdisciplinary competence, outcomes-based education should follow the principle of constructive alignment, ensuring that learning objectives are clearly defined, assessments measure competency, and activities support these objectives. Effective interdisciplinary teaching involves setting clear interdisciplinary goals and utilising appropriate teaching methods and assessment formats.

Boix Mansilla's pragmatic-constructionist theory highlights four key principles for successful interdisciplinary education: interdisciplinary purpose, disciplinary grounding, leveraging integration, and a critical stance.<sup>33</sup> Interdisciplinary pedagogies, such as interdisciplinary problem-based learning, interdisciplinary service learning, and student-initiated

---

<sup>32</sup> Jan M. Smits, *Three Models of Legal Education and a Plea for Differentiation*, 3 CHINA-EU L.J. 55, 60-61 (2014).

<sup>33</sup> V. BOIX MANSILLA, INTERDISCIPLINARY LEARNING: A COGNITIVE-EPISTEMOLOGICAL FOUNDATION *in* OXFORD HANDBOOK OF INTERDISCIPLINARITY 261-275 (R. Frodeman and J. Klein, eds., Oxford University Press 2016).

interdisciplinary projects are effective approaches for inculcating an interdisciplinary approach to legal education and learning.<sup>34</sup>

## **V. CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF INTERDISCIPLINARY INTEGRATION IN LEGAL STUDIES**

In a time when legal professionals often focus on specific practice areas, having a solid grasp of topics outside the conventional scope of law is essential for tackling the complexities posed by different fields. As external disciplines increasingly intersect with the legal realm, adopting a holistic approach to legal education becomes one of the key challenges law schools must diligently address. With the growing intersection of law with other fields, lawyers encounter an expanding range of innovative and complex legal challenges.

Typically, legal education is structured around a singular focus, with professor teaching a course solely from a legal standpoint. If legal education fails to empower students to engage with non-legal concepts, it lacks practical relevance and promotes a narrow understanding of legal issues, resulting in a “*distorted image of the whole*”.<sup>35</sup> Legal education must evolve to meet the needs of today’s practitioners. Despite the need to prepare law students for complex challenges by mastering concepts beyond traditional legal doctrines, legal educators seem reluctant to revise the curriculum accordingly. The teaching approach in many law schools

---

<sup>34</sup> Mirjam Braßler, *Interdisciplinary Teaching and Learning – Theory, Empirical Results, and Practical Implications*, PROCEEDINGS OF ICERI 2020 CONFERENCE (2020).

<sup>35</sup> Kim Diana Connolly, *Elucidating the Elephant: Interdisciplinary Law School Classes*, 11 WASH. U. J. L. & POL’Y 11, 13 (2003).

tends to be quite uniform, characterised by a specific method that fosters a shared experience amongst graduates. This often relies on the belief that the “case method” is the most effective way to teach.

The “case method” involves professors using compilations of cases and employing a Socratic style of discussion, where students are encouraged to identify general rules from case laws and apply them to various scenarios. The case method is viewed as a nearly foolproof approach to training students in the art of legal reasoning. However, the drawback of the case method is that, when used in isolation, it can hinder students’ professional development,<sup>36</sup> as they may struggle to apply legal thinking to the complexities of practice and often overlook relevant facts and consequences outside the immediate legal issue.

Law schools struggle to rapidly adjust their curricula to meet the demands of the legal world beyond the classroom. Similarly, graduates often lack an understanding of context and the interconnectedness of various approaches in practice. Traditionally, law schools have focused on teaching students to think like lawyers, emphasising legal reasoning and analytical skills. However, it has become evident that “*thinking like a lawyer*” or “*thinking like a psychologist*” or “*thinking like a social worker*” is insufficient when working in specialised areas of law.<sup>37</sup> An interdisciplinary approach to law enhances a student’s understanding of non-legal fields by examining various terminologies, rules, beliefs, and ethical and legal

---

<sup>36</sup> Jess M. Krannich et al., *Beyond Thinking Like a Lawyer and the Traditional Legal Paradigm: Toward a Comprehensive View of Legal Education*, 86 DENV. U. L. REV. 381, 387 (2009).

<sup>37</sup> Anita Weinberg & Carol Harding, *Interdisciplinary Teaching and Collaboration in Higher Education: A Concept Whose Time Has Come*, 14 WASH. U. J. L. & POL’Y 15, 26 (2004).

constraints within which each profession operates. This knowledge enables effective communication with professionals from other disciplines without requiring a complete mastery of those areas. An interdisciplinary approach in law courses can help graduates recognise the limitations of legal profession and know when to seek collaboration with non-lawyers. It will cultivate a way of thinking that considers issues from multiple and varying viewpoints to explore diverse possibilities. Interdisciplinary thinking fosters a holistic awareness, encouraging a diversity of thought that enables individuals to make connections beyond the immediate information.<sup>38</sup> By facilitating interaction among various professions and integrating different disciplines, this approach yields results that exceed the sum of their individual contributions.

However, engaging in interdisciplinary education is often more time-consuming, costly, and complex than teaching a single discipline. Challenges also stem from the traditional structures of universities and the educational backgrounds of faculty and students. Interdisciplinary legal education necessitates collaboration between students and professors, engaging them in creative, critical, and constructive work that extends beyond the scope of traditional legal education. This approach demands a concerted effort to thoroughly integrate various disciplines in order to effectively design a course.<sup>39</sup> Establishing connections between course content and its law practice implications is a fundamental teaching

---

<sup>38</sup> *Id.* at 22-23.

<sup>39</sup> Ermanno Napolitano, *Interdisciplinary Team Teaching in Space Legal Education*, 43 J. SPACE L. 223, 223-234 (2019).

strategy.<sup>40</sup> The important and tricky decision however, lies in understanding how far and deep these interconnections need to be drawn and to what extent a holistic overview of other disciplines will help to effectively enhance legal education.

## **VI. SCOPE OF INTERDISCIPLINARY LEGAL EDUCATION**

Much has been discussed regarding the role of ‘philosophy’ in legal education, often by commentators advocating for law to be taught in conjunction with philosophical concepts. However, there has been less exploration of our philosophy of legal education. This inquiry may be seen as a way of asking: what should the goals of law school be? A defined philosophy influences how law schools view themselves, their role, and their students - shaping what they should know and be able to do, and the type of lawyers and individuals we aspire for them to become in terms of social responsibility and ethical conduct.

The concept of a philosophy of legal education is particularly relevant in curriculum design, especially in deciding whether to prioritise black-letter law in conjunction with interdisciplinary subjects (teaching courses such as contracts, torts, and equity in isolation from context, or teaching them in association with economics, history, conflict resolution and philosophy).<sup>41</sup> Interdisciplinary learning is gaining more recognition

---

<sup>40</sup> MICHAEL HUNTER SCHWARTZ ET AL., HOW DO THE BEST LAW TEACHERS ENGAGE STUDENTS IN AND OUT OF THE CLASSROOM?, *in* THE WHAT THE BEST LAW TEACHERS DO 200 (Harvard University Press 2013).

<sup>41</sup> BOBETTE WOLSKI, CONTINUING THE INTERNATIONALISATION DEBATE: PHILOSOPHIES OF LEGAL EDUCATION, ISSUES IN CURRICULUM DESIGN AND LESSONS FROM SKILLS INTEGRATION *in* THE INTERNALISATION OF LEGAL EDUCATION: THE

among educators as the demand for ‘job-ready’ graduates rises. The goal of this approach is to prepare students for collaborative practice by allowing them from various professions to learn together, share knowledge, and understand each other’s fields.<sup>42</sup> Legal education should extend beyond a narrow focus on teachers and subject matter; it must prepare students for a variety of roles in the legal profession, not just private practice.<sup>43</sup> The current legal education framework is designed around a combination of traditional methodologies and evolving modern approaches underscoring the relevance of interdisciplinary learning.

Contemporary legal education embraces interdisciplinary approaches that offer hands-on exposure and experience in real-world legal issues that help students and professionals enhance their ability to address complex legal challenges and navigate career paths in diverse fields. Today’s law professors come from diverse academic backgrounds, making it common for law schools to recruit faculty trained in non-legal disciplines. With the internationalisation of curriculum and expansion into fields such as environmental law, business management, intellectual property, international affairs, national security, immigration, and healthcare, students now benefit from a rich variety of expertise. This trend is particularly appealing to students at universities offering

---

FUTURE PRACTICE OF LAW 72 (William van Caenegem & Mary Hiscock eds., Edward Elgar 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Jemma Venables & Tamara Walsh, *An Interdisciplinary Classroom in Law and Social Work: Can It be Done?* 33 LEGAL EDUC. REV. 1, 3 (2023).

<sup>43</sup> Mary Keyes & Richard Johnstone, *Changing Legal Education: Rhetoric, Reality, and Prospects for the Future*, 26 SYDNEY L. REV. 537, 558 (2004).

combined degrees in law and related professions, as well as to institutions that prioritise interdisciplinary collaboration.<sup>44</sup>

Lawyers' traditional role in their collaborations with non-lawyers is reflected in Ronald Gilson's theory, which suggests that lawyers can capture value from accountants and finance experts by becoming "transaction-cost engineers."<sup>45</sup> In response, several law schools have developed courses and clinics in transactional law. As traditional legal markets shrink, multidisciplinary collaborations are likely to increase, requiring law students to learn how to contribute beyond just providing legal advice and consultancy. Lawyers and law professors envision a future that largely mirrors past practices; meanwhile, there exists a dire need to reshape curricula to emphasise real-world legal practice to prepare students in this evolving landscape. Traditionally, legal practice involves applying established principles to specific cases. In contrast, emerging legal markets may require lawyers to act more like designers who create legal material. Furthermore, legal educators should prioritise the types of legal theory most relevant for preparing students for the future legal market, rather than simply distinguishing between "theory" and "practice". Once relevant theories are identified, law schools need to hire faculty capable of teaching these concepts. This approach involves recruiting educators with non-legal advanced degrees in fields pertinent to legal training. This would allow law schools to offer a wider range of

---

<sup>44</sup> John O. Sonsteng et al., *A Legal Education Renaissance: A Practical Approach for the Twenty-first Century*, 34 W. MITCHELL L. REV. 309, 431 (2007).

<sup>45</sup> Ronald J. Gilson, *Value Creation by Business Lawyers: Legal Skills and Asset Pricing*, 94, YALE L. J. 239 (1984), [https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/986](https://scholarship.law.columbia.edu/faculty_scholarship/986).

courses led by experts in specific disciplines, rather than relying solely on those trained in traditional legal science. While maintaining focus on traditional roles like litigation and transactional work, law schools should also consider integrating contemporary theories into clinical and skills courses, possibly through collaboration between practitioners and academicians with advanced qualifications.<sup>46</sup>

Moreover, the law andragogy, which incorporates the Socratic method of dialogue, should harness effective practice to enhance legal education. Law can draw from cognitive psychology literature to establish an evidence-based approach to teaching and learning. This approach should focus on connecting with prior knowledge, improving learning transfer, and implementing practice and feedback strategies. It is essential to promote and value critical thinking while identifying metacognitive barriers to learning. Moreover, encouraging effective retrieval practices will enhance long-term memory, and fostering a growth mind-set will support student development. Emphasising reflection, teaching the skills of question formulation, and practicing engagement in dialogue are also crucial components of the enhanced educational framework.<sup>47</sup>

## **VII. THE FUTURE OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA**

The examination of legal education in a society offers insights into its legal system, reflecting fundamental attitudes about the nature of law,

---

<sup>46</sup> L. E. Ribstein, *Practising Theory: Legal Education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, 96 IOWA L. REV. 1649, 1676 (2011).

<sup>47</sup> Deborah L. Borman & Catherine Haras, *Something Borrowed: Interdisciplinary Strategies for Legal Education*, 68 J. LEGAL EDUC. 357, 390 (2019).

the role of lawyers, and the operation of the system – both in practice and in its ideal form. Legal education serves as a conduit for transmitting legal culture from one generation to the next, providing a lens through which we can envision the future of that society. What legal professionals are taught and how it is delivered significantly affects their objectives, attitudes, and the manner in which they fulfil their social roles. A legal system functions as a sub-system within a broader social system, while the system of legal education serves as a sub-subsystem of the legal system. The interconnected systems are organically linked, with each part providing meaning to the others. Consequently, a change in any component reverberates throughout the entire framework.<sup>48</sup> The milieu of higher education has increasingly embraced theoretical, multidisciplinary, and research-based approaches. Viewing a law degree as a form of liberal education aligns with this trend.<sup>49</sup> The emphasis on legal education as a cross-disciplinary endeavour, coupled with a commitment to pluralism and the need to move beyond the limitations of the exemption approach to the curriculum, has likely contributed to making legal education a more diverse and intellectually stimulating experience for law students.

Looking towards the future of legal education in India, it will be essential to integrate innovative teaching methodologies, foster an environment that encourages critical thinking and interdisciplinary collaboration, prioritise practical training, develop partnerships with

---

<sup>48</sup> John Henry Merryman, *Legal Education There and Here: A Comparison*, 27 STAN. L. REV. 859, 859 (1975).

<sup>49</sup> Andrew Boon & Julian Webb, *Legal Education and Training in England and Wales: Back to the Future?* 58 J. LEGAL EDUC. 79, 115 (2008).

various industries to align curricula with real-world needs and embrace technological advancements. Further, the rise of the internet and digital media has transformed higher education, facilitating significant participation from online learners. Online education has become more interactive and accessible compared to traditional modes. Massive Open Online Courses (“MOOCs”) have emerged as a major development in online education, breaking time and space constraints, allowing learners to acquire knowledge at their own pace. Designed for unlimited participation, MOOCs are open to anyone without any pre-requisites, typically free, and feature video-based content and online forums wherein participants can enrol regardless of age, gender, location, or educational background. Law professors have developed MOOCs worldwide, incorporating various learning theories to improve online law teaching, offering unique characteristics such as subjectivity and practicality and benefits like ease of learning, resource sharing, and cost savings.<sup>50</sup> Conclusively, the future of legal education in India is likely to evolve significantly hand-in-glove with technology integration, interdisciplinary approaches, practical training focus, internationalisation, regulatory changes, increased competition, and career diversification. As interdisciplinary studies are not only alive and well, but also growing and evolving in new and exciting directions,<sup>51</sup> the future of legal education in India appears promising and transformative that will enhance students’ employability and make them more effective problem-solvers.

---

<sup>50</sup> Samar Iqbal Bakhshi & Mohammad Anees, *Legal Education through MOOCs: A Study of Select International Online Platforms*, 4 INDIAN J. EDUCATIONAL TECH. 1, 169 (2022).

<sup>51</sup> *Supra* note 12, at 10.

### VIII. CONCLUSION

Law schools have both a responsibility and a distinct opportunity to equip a generation of lawyers to approach the law with a dedication to justice and the skills to effectively move towards achieving it. The future of law and legal education in India is shaped by the growing demand for legal professionals who can collaborate from a multidisciplinary perspective with open and diverse thought-processes due to globalisation and complex legal disputes. To address this need, some Indian law schools are offering joint degree programs, aiming to equip students with a broader skill set. There is a pressing need for practical training that not only provides valuable experience but also fosters social responsibility. Despite the growth in law schools, India faces considerable challenges in integrating interdisciplinary approaches into legal education. These include a shortage of trained professionals, minimal faculty engagement in interdisciplinary collaborative efforts, inadequate systematic curriculum structure, and insufficient focus on the development of requisite and relevant skills. Furthermore, there is often limited involvement from interdisciplinary educators, significant variations in the quality of legal education across institutions, resource constraints, and numerous administrative obstacles which hinder legal education from fulfilling its objectives comprehensively. This necessitates further revisions and investment in legal education to strengthen these areas so as to create a more robust, interconnected, informed and relevant legal education system that meet the demands of this rapidly evolving society.