



ISSUES IN LEGAL EDUCATION - GS II MAINS

Q. Critically analyze the current state of legal education in India, highlighting the challenges and disparities prevalent across various institutions. In this context, discuss the role of regulatory bodies and institutional leadership in driving reforms to enhance the quality and relevance of legal pedagogy in the country. (10 marks, 150 words)

News: *An intervention that will help strengthen legal education*

What's in the news?

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice recently submitted a significant report on legal education, making several path-breaking recommendations to strengthen the quality of legal education in India.

Key takeaways:

- Since Independence, legal education, unlike medicine and engineering, has not been a top priority for India's policymakers.

Legal Education in India:

Backdrop:

1. Establishment of University:

- In the 1990s with the advent of the national law universities (NLUs), the focus on legal education was started in India.

2. LPG Reforms:

- With the advent of liberalization and globalization, the Indian economy in the 1990s threw up many new opportunities for lawyers, which, in turn, led to bright young students opting to study law right after school.

3. Job Opportunities:

- Several NLU graduates got placed in high-paying law firm jobs.
- Many others went abroad to study at top universities, with quite a few bagging prestigious scholarships.

Challenges:

- Hundreds of other law schools nationwide don't represent the same success as NLU.
- Most of the NLUs too have failed to emerge as centers of excellence in legal research.
- Only two Indian law schools, Jindal Global Law School and National Law School of India University, figure in the QS rankings of the top 250 law schools worldwide.



Parliamentary Standing Committee Recommendations On Legal Education In India:

1. Limiting the Power:

- The committee recommended limiting the powers of the Bar Council of India (BCI) to regulate legal education in India.

2. On Litigation:

- Several facets of legal education, especially at the post-graduation level, do not pertain to litigation.
- The committee recommended the establishment of an independent body called the **National Council for Legal Education and Research (NCLER)**.
 - **Aim:** It will develop qualitative benchmarks to regulate legal education.
 - **Composition:** Judges, practicing lawyers and eminent law professors with an unimpeachable track record of research and serving legal education.

3. Bolstering Research:

- The committee emphasizes the need to prioritize and promote research, which will lead to better teaching outcomes and help students develop a critical perspective.

4. State Funding:

- The committee acknowledged the need for increased state funding for bolstering Research.

5. Globally Competitive:

- The committee recommended developing and delivering a global curriculum, promoting student and faculty international exchange programmes, incorporating more international law courses and increasing students' exposure to different legal systems.

6. On the Leadership Positions:

- It should be held by passionate, charismatic, and visionary academicians who inspire and create an enabling and supportive environment.

7. To Boost the Culture of Legal Research:

- In law schools, there should be complete academic freedom and autonomy.
- A law school or any other academic institution can accomplish a goal only if academicians are free to offer their well-researched views without any fear.

The recommendations outlined by the Parliamentary Standing Committee on legal education herald a paradigm shift in India's approach towards legal pedagogy. By advocating for a holistic reimagining of the regulatory framework, fostering a culture of research and innovation, embracing globalization, and nurturing institutional leadership, the committee lays the groundwork for a transformative trajectory in legal education. However, the realization of these aspirations hinges upon the collective commitment and concerted efforts of all stakeholders involved. As India seeks to assert its position on the global stage, the revitalization of legal education emerges as a cornerstone for nurturing a cadre of skilled legal professionals equipped to navigate the complexities of the 21st-century legal landscape.