

Standing Committee Report Summary

Strengthening Legal Education

- The Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (Chair: Mr. Sushil Kumar Modi) submitted its report on the ‘Strengthening Legal Education in View of Emerging Challenges before the Legal Profession’, on February 7, 2024. According to the Advocates Act, 1961, the Bar Council of India is responsible for: (i) regulating standards of legal education, (ii) recognising universities that offer degrees in law, and (iii) inspecting these universities for their compliance with set standards. Key observations and recommendations of the Committee include:
 - **Powers of the Bar Council of India (BCI):** The Committee noted that the Advocates Act, 1961 was passed with a narrow view of producing lawyers for courts. It opined that legal education should impart skills required for legal practice beyond courtrooms. The Committee recommended that BCI’s powers should be limited to regulating basic eligibility for practicing at the bar. Regulation of legal education beyond this should be entrusted with an independent authority. The Committee suggested that a National Council for Legal Education and Research be established under the proposed Higher Education Commission of India.
 - The Committee noted that inefficiency and inadequacy of the inspection process by the BCI has led to the recognition of substandard law colleges. It highlighted that while recognising new colleges, due consideration should be given to quality over quantity. It recommended taking effective measures to curb the growth in substandard law colleges.
 - **Uniform curriculum:** The Committee noted that differences in the curriculum between law colleges and universities leads to unevenness. These differences arise out of law colleges and universities adopting the curriculum of affiliating universities, and deviating from that prescribed by the BCI. The Committee recommended redefining the role of the BCI and ensuring that the BCI sets a uniform curriculum for undergraduate courses in law colleges and universities. For post-graduate education, a uniform curriculum should be set by the proposed independent authority.
 - **Interdisciplinary education:** The Committee highlighted that the legal landscape is evolving at a fast pace. It added that the legal curriculum should develop all aspects and capabilities of learners. It recommended mandating subjects such as law and medicine, sports law, energy law and cyber law to the legal curriculum. The Committee also noted the need to cater to cross border issues. For this, it recommended introducing different legal cultures and disciplines, such as private international law. It also recommended encouraging exchange programmes to gain perspectives from other legal systems and fields.
 - **Practical training:** The Committee recommended incorporating practical programmes such as moot courts within the curriculum and mandating two-month long internships every academic year. It added that law students who do internships with seniors should be paid stipends and their logistical expenses should be covered.
 - **Implementation of Reservation:** The Committee observed that National Law Universities across India are not properly implementing reservation in admissions for students from SC, ST and OBC categories. It emphasised that reservations in admissions and recruitment must be rigorously followed. It recommended the BCI to oversee the implementation of reservations in law universities and consider withdrawing their recognition if they fail to adhere to relevant norms.
 - **Legal research:** The Committee highlighted the need to prioritise and promote research within legal education to improve the quality of legal knowledge and education. It recommended: (i) dedicating resources to support faculty research, (ii) introducing proper research facilities, and (iii) developing programmes to enhance communication and research skills of lawyers and law students.
 - **Technology:** The Committee recommended making law graduates more conversant with emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and blockchain. It recommended the BCI to introduce guidelines on integrating technology in legal education.

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