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Rectifying the Deficiencies in the Indian Legal Education System through Moocs

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Law students are the future of our country. To have a bright future, we need to have a robust legal education system that meets the needs posed by the changing times due to the pandemic and the rise of technology in every sphere of life. Discussions for introducing reforms in the legal education system of our country have been taking place for a long time now. However, there seems to be no formulation of a concrete roadmap to proceed with the same. After the Hon'ble Chief Justice's suggestion of introducing practical courses in legal education, it is high time to think about the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed to be imbibed in our law students to make them thoroughly competent to excel at every step in their careers as legal professionals in a "complete" sense. The pandemic made us discover the potential of our minds to think of trailblazing ideas and develop solutions to contemporary issues using technology. The Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) have been present for more than a decade; they are now advancing faster than ever. This article broadly classifies the deficits in the education system into seven categories. It elaborates on a seven-fold MOOC model to rectify each one in a detailed, concrete, and structured manner.

Keywords: *legal education, MOOCs, legal education reforms.*

INTRODUCTION

Why is law essential in society?

Law pervades all aspects of life. Environment to Entertainment; Taxation to Technology; Contracts to Crimes. From the rights of an unborn baby to the rights of the dead, we see everything around us through the lens of legality. Law empowers the citizens to stand up for themselves as well as others. Law is a complex system meant to redress the people's grievances and remedy the wrongs done to them.

Why is Legal education important in society?

Firstly, we need to have law-abiding citizens to have a righteous society. For that purpose, we need the citizens to be equipped with the knowledge and understanding of the law of the land. Then further, we need the citizens to know how to effectively apply their knowledge of the law to exercise their right to legal remedy. Legal education is crucial for citizens in general and law students in specific. The famous Latin maxim goes, "*Ignorantia Juris Non-Excusat*", which means, Ignorance of Law is not excused. Every citizen should be aware of the law and act in accordance with it. However, owing to the complexities of the legal terminologies and intricacies of the legal principles, it becomes difficult for citizens from a non-legal background to develop a holistic understanding of the law. Quality Legal education is of unparalleled importance to law students. In the words of Felix Frankfurter, "*the law is what the lawyers are. And the law and the lawyers are what the law schools make them.*"¹ Law schools are supposed to prepare the students for their careers as lawyers, policymakers, politicians, academicians, judges, teachers, bureaucrats, law firm associates, etc. However, good legal education is critical because the law is dynamic.² By the time the students establish themselves in the profession, new laws will emerge, new avenues will open up in the field, giving rise to novel and more complicated legal issues.³ We need competent professionals with creative and critical thinking who can find out-of-the-box solutions. Quality legal education is essential because it lays a strong foundation for a robust legal system in a country.

What is the current status of law graduates in India?

¹ Benjamin H Barton, *The Lawyer-Judge Bias in the American Legal System* (Cambridge University Press 2011)

² Paul Gewirtz & Jeffrey Prescott, 'Point of Order-Why Legal Education Matters' (*Caixin Online*, 12 July 2010) <https://law.yale.edu/sites/default/files/china-law-documents/point_of_order_why_legal_education_matters.pdf> accessed 04 February 2022

³ *Ibid*

Law as a career has tremendous opportunities and potential for growth. However, we can see significant disparities within the profession. On the one hand, we see law firm associates & partners earning handsomely; top-notch litigating lawyers charging lakhs or crores per appearance. On the other hand, we also come across fresh law graduates who struggle to earn even the bare minimum. The students often experience that law schools are unable to equip them with the skillset demanded by the legal industry. Sanjoy Ghose, a labour lawyer, while sharing his experience in the industry, said that on graduating, he was told that if he wanted to take a successful plunge into the sea of black coats, he would have to “unlearn” all that he had learned at law school.⁴ Why should that be the case? Is the Indian legal education system failing the aspirations of budding legal minds?

Why are MOOCs a viable solution?

After COVID-19 hit, the world of education turned upside down. Distance learning was no longer a choice. Employment suffered; quality skill development was compromised. Then, MOOCs were seen as an affordable, accessible, and advantageous outlook for education and professional advancement. MOOCs defy the traditional boundaries of a classroom. They go beyond the age bar and facilitate growth that bridges the “skill gap.” MOOCs can effectively supplement the existing legal education system, impart practical education, and build tangible skills to produce “complete lawyers.” This article proposes a solution to bridge the gaps in the Indian legal education system through the technology of MOOCs. Part 1 elaborates on the definition and objectives of legal education. It throws light on the current status of legal education. Part 2 explains the idea, working, and benefits of MOOCs. Part 3 proposes a 7 Fold MOOC Model to address the issues in Legal education. The article then concludes by creating a vision of India’s bright future with limitless possibilities and top-notch legal education.

LEGAL EDUCATION

What is the meaning of Legal education?

⁴ Sanjoy Ghose, ‘What They Don’t Teach Us in Law School?’ (*The Wire*, 4 September 2018) <<https://thewire.in/law/what-they-dont-teach-us-in-law-school>> accessed 04 February 2022

There is more to Law than the mere text of statute books, codes, or volumes of judicial decisions.⁵ Legal education has two-fold objectives, firstly, to transfer knowledge, and secondly, to instill a method of thinking in the students.⁶ Like we don't need Engineers who just know how to run a machine; we need those who can think, develop and use new machines to fulfill a purpose.⁷ Therefore, legal education is not just bound to the knowledge and interpretation of the law. Its purpose is to produce good legal professionals practicing in courts and equip the students with skills that can help them while specializing in various upcoming job opportunities and to bring out academicians, critics, scholars, and researchers in the legal fraternity.⁸

What is the structure of legal education in India?

In India, we have two courses resulting in a bachelor's degree in law.⁹ Firstly, we have a three-year degree course that can be opted by the students after completing an undergraduate course in any discipline from a university or equivalent qualification recognised by the Bar Council of India.¹⁰ Secondly, we have a five-year double degree integrated course that results in a bachelor's degree both in law and another discipline of knowledge.¹¹ It can be opted by the students after completing the Senior Secondary School course.¹²

What reforms does Indian legal education need?

In the last few years, a lot of deliberation has happened to bring about reforms in the legal education system like the Conference of Vice-Chancellors of National Law Universities,¹³ National Seminar on Reforms in Legal Education and Research, and so on. It is imperative to note the views of the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India NV Ramana in the context of legal

⁵ Sushma Gupta, *History of Legal Education* (Deep and Deep Publications 2006) 4

⁶ O Kahn-Freund, 'Reflection on Legal Education' (1966) 29 (2) *Modern Law Review*, 121

⁷ Sushma Gupta (n 5) 33

⁸ Justice AM Ahmadi, *Repairing the Cracks in Legal Education* (1993) 1 SCC (Jour)

⁹ 'Part-IV Rules of Legal Education' (*Bar Council of India*) <<http://103.25.172.19/legal-education/edu-rules-chapter-2.php>> accessed 06 February 2022

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ *Ibid*

¹² *Ibid*

¹³ 'Conference of Vice-Chancellors of National Law Universities on Legal Education Reforms' (1 September 2018) <https://main.sci.gov.in/pdf/PublicationOther/proceeding_book051018.pdf> accessed 04 February 2022

education reforms. While addressing the convocation ceremony of Damodaran Sanjivya National Law University, he pointed out that among the 150,000 law students that graduate every year, only less than 25% of them are ready for the profession in an absolute sense.¹⁴ He attributed this situation not to the graduates themselves but to a vast number of substandard legal education institutes.¹⁵ According to him, urgently, practical courses need to be introduced that will give students the opportunity to interact with people and their issues at the ground level.”¹⁶

What are the elements of excellent quality legal education?

In the words of former Justice Dada Dharmadhikari, “legal education makes a lawyer an expert who pleads for all like the doctor who prescribes for all, like the priest who preaches for all and like the economist who plans for all.” As rightly opined by Freund, no system or discipline of education is worth the name unless it is developed to inculcate desire and capacity for critical thought in the students.¹⁷ Also, the ability to courageously form and express one’s opinion based on reason without the fear of an “authority.”¹⁸ For law schools to produce well-rounded legal professionals, the following are some highly crucial elements in the process of education that should be ingrained in the students from the very initial stages:

GENERAL AWARENESS

Voltaire rightly said, “Common sense is not so common.”¹⁹ In law, on many occasions, we find ourselves evaluating the legality of certain actions by consulting a “reasonable man.” We consider whether the action would have been perceived as wrong by a man of ordinary

¹⁴ Utkarsh Anand, ‘Poor Quality of Legal Education Worrying, Says Justice Ramana’ (*Hindustan Times*, 5 April 2021) <<https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/poor-quality-of-legal-education-worrying-says-justice-ramana-101617564381469.html>> accessed 05 February 2022

¹⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁶ ‘Need More Practical Courses for Law Students: CJI Ramana’ (*The Indian Express*, 20 December 2021) <<https://indianexpress.com/article/india/more-practical-courses-law-students-cji-ramana-7680941/>> accessed 05 February 2022

¹⁷ O. Kahn-Freund (n 6)

¹⁸ *Ibid*

¹⁹ ‘10 Quotes by the Famous French Philosopher Voltaire’ (*India Today*, 21 November 2016) <<https://www.indiatoday.in/education-today/gk-current-affairs/story/voltaire-quotes-353004-2016-11-21>> accessed 07 February 2022

prudence. Therefore, even before expecting our law students to be experts at interpreting complex legal principles, we should be keen on making them informed and vigilant citizens who can make an unbiased and reasoned distinction between what is right from what is not. Before building on the legal knowledge, they should be trained to pay attention to details and identify patterns in every event taking place in their immediate surroundings. Once the students have a clear awareness of the happenings around them on a personal level, then they need to keep themselves abreast of the occurrences and developments on national and global levels. As opined by the Hon'ble Supreme Court *In Re Harijai Singh*,²⁰ For the people to be able to form and express their own opinions, comments, viewpoints and select an appropriate course of action regarding the burning topics and important issues, they need to be informed about the political, social, economic and cultural dimensions of it, they need a clear and truthful narrative of the events. The students should exercise their 'right to know' effectively. Through the awareness of current issues, the students develop a working understanding of the legal concepts they learn in law schools.

They get an opportunity to use their thinking faculties and theoretical knowledge about the law to the situations in real-time. For instance, knowing about the right to equality and non-discrimination based on gender is not enough; we need the students to explore the concept of gender, understand and analyse the current issues around it and then apply the constitutional principles to come up with legal remedies and solutions. This will tighten their hold on both the conceptual and practical aspects of the law. It will instill an attitude of being a life-long learner beyond the academic demands. Informed law students will later become exceptional legal professionals who can provide holistic counseling to their clients. They will be aware of the current needs of the citizens and, invariably, society. They can then evaluate the relevancy of laws and can courageously question the pre-existing paradigms. Knowledge generates the thirst for having more knowledge. It makes us curious. We become inclined toward adding our insights and opinions to the existing knowledge. This will give birth to scholars who demonstrate extraordinary original thinking. Our country needs legal professionals who explore the avenue of academia. To carry out quality research, one needs to formulate precise

²⁰ *In Re: Harijai Singh and Anr. v Unknown* AIR 1997, SC 73

research questions that were previously not thought about to a great extent. Every practitioner of legal education moves in a landscape that his predecessors have already mapped; it is almost impossible not to come across a trail or an obstacle that was previously undiscovered.²¹ However, one needs to figure out the “knowledge gaps” in the existing literature. One can only make out the knowledge that doesn’t exist when one is completely aware of the one that does.

ACQUIRING SKILLS

Law is a demanding profession where one has to prove one’s mettle at every step. To excel in the legal industry, one has to have a great hold on the required skills. The theory makes you aware of what needs to be done; skills prepare you to do it. Acquiring skills make the students competent. When they get the opportunity to use their skills in real-life situations and solve contemporary problems, they gain confidence. Many core legal skills like drafting and practical conveyancing require the students to have some conceptual legal context beforehand. Therefore, firstly, the students should acquire the skill of learning how to learn. To gain total value from the concepts taught in the universities, the students should be trained to develop a systematic approach toward absorbing, categorising, and utilising the knowledge they receive. The tangible skills can be further built on only by having clarity of the concepts.

Secondly, the students should be trained extensively in Legal research and writing. Exposure to the nuances of research and writing from the early stages of education will open up their minds, make them think multi-dimensionally, and give them a channel to express their opinions. In the words of Heineman, *“Law schools should require students to create, not just critique. Law school courses should ask students to produce a new law or regulation, to write a memorandum of understanding or a technology transfer agreement.”*²² Research is a complicated process. Without proper guidance at every step, students might feel lost, find it baffling, and lose interest in academia altogether.

²¹ O. Kahn-Freund (n 6)

²² Ben W. Heineman, Jr., ‘Lawyers as Leaders’ (2007) 116 Yale Law Journal

<<https://www.yalelawjournal.org/forum/lawyers-as-leaders>> accessed 12 February 2022

Writing becomes vital because it sharpens the ability of articulation, persuasion, and critical thinking and allows them to educate the masses about legal issues using more straightforward terminology. Everyone has a basic understanding of what is right and what is not. However, being a law student, one has the advantage of having both common and legal perspectives. By writing through a medium like the internet, students should make the best use of this advantage. Our country needs scholars who can have path-breaking ideas relevant to modern times and make them understandable to the citizens. Thirdly, Legal professionals will become successful in the 2020s only if they acquire specific transformative skills that result from an understanding of the main principles of digital transformation.²³ There is a need to systematically teach the students how to make the best use of technology in the legal field. That is important for them in their academic years and throughout their careers. The students should be trained to adapt to the changes that have taken place in the legal fraternity and those that will continue to take place owing to the pandemic and the rising dominance of technology. Fourthly, the students should be well-acquainted with the skill of grasping the legal vocabulary: reading, understanding, and interpreting complex legal texts, speed reading lengthy judgments, and focusing on what is essential. Law school can be overwhelming at times. Students are already confused and burdened with a plethora of opportunities and cutthroat competition. Therefore, the universities should shift the focus of evaluation from “memory” to “competence.” As said by Freund, *“A good lawyer is a man or a woman who knows where to find the law; only fools burden their memories with details they can look up in half a minute or even in half an hour.”*²⁴

SOFT SKILLS

Apart from the “hard skills,” it is also crucial for law students to develop “soft skills” early on. Legal professionals have to carry out tasks involving persuasion, counseling, conveyancing, negotiation, and mediation. They need to have fine “people skills.” An advocate has two

²³ Mark A Cohen, ‘Law’s Looming Skills Crisis’ (*Forbes*, 21 May 2019)
 <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/markcohen1/2019/05/21/laws-looming-skills-crisis/?sh=1937e72445c4>>
 accessed 11 February 2022

²⁴ O. Kahn-Freund (n 6)

primary duties: the duty towards the court and the duty toward the client.²⁵ One is expected to maintain the decorum of the courtroom. However, often in the heat of arguments, one might lose one's cool. One has to be extremely patient, calm, and able to think on one's feet. One should be persuasive and argue with grit without becoming aggressive or disrespectful in the courtroom. It is also essential to be confident, have faith in one's arguments, and have sharp speaking skills. These are crucial "soft skills" that an advocate needs to possess while appearing for a hearing.

While fulfilling one's duty toward the client, it is essential to be a good listener, ask good questions, have quality interpersonal and communication skills. A basic understanding of psychology could go a long way when interacting with clients. Legal professionals need to have a structured way of thinking. They should systematically correlate the facts with the law and provide their arguments with a rational basis. A career in law can be competitive. Especially after the outbreak of COVID-19, a lot has changed. To sustain and flourish here, one needs to have exceptional endurance. A lawyer must also be well-versed in the art of delegation and should be able to work in a team smoothly. The skill of meticulous planning, organization, and crisis management is crucial for lawyers. Developing solutions based on the legal position in critical situations makes a lawyer efficient. Law students should be trained to develop good networking skills. The lawyers need to be connected to other fellow members of the legal fraternity and citizens and have a deep understanding of the contemporary issues on the grassroots level. One's technical knowledge will supply the tools, but it is one's sense of responsibility for the society in which he lived that must inspire him to be a jurist as well as a lawyer.²⁶ The skills mentioned above become important for legal professionals in fields other than litigation too. During negotiation or client counselling, the lawyers should be able to become "problem-solvers." They should look at the issue holistically and bring value to the table. They should be able to build a relationship of trust with their clients.

²⁵ 'Rules on Professional Standards' (*The Bar Council of India*)

<<http://www.barcouncilofindia.org/about/professional-standards/rules-on-professional-standards/>> accessed 11 February 2022

²⁶ U.G.C., *Report of the Curriculum of the Curriculum Development Centre in Law* (Vol. 1 1990)

PRACTICAL ACUMEN

Theoretical knowledge of the law is essential but not sufficient. As opined by the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India, *"It is the harsh reality that even on entering the professional universities, the focus is on classroom learning and not on the world beyond the classroom."*²⁷ Throughout the academic years, law students participate in co-curricular activities like moot court competitions, trial advocacy competitions, negotiation, and mediation competitions, where they get a chance to roleplay as lawyers. However, due to various constraints, it is often not possible to exactly replicate the real-time proceedings in these activities. Their importance cannot be undermined as they give the students a flavour of the legal world, but that's not all. Students often play authoritative roles in these events where they have total control over what arguments they make and how they research. But in real life, that is not the case. When fresh law graduates start their careers, they have to work under the supervision of their seniors. The stage of arguing independently comes much later. Whether in a senior advocate's chamber or a law firm, the graduates need to have a clear idea of the workplace hierarchy. Every law student should be able to use the years of education to gain a reality check about the current scenario of various areas of practice in law and other avenues of the profession. Their career choices should be informed. By "informed," I don't just mean the placement procedure, earning prospects, and growth potential. I also mean the workload, work-life balance, and job satisfaction. For the students to assess whether a particular job could match their passion and expectations, they need to have truthful insights about its nitty-gritty from experienced professionals. Law schools indeed familiarise the students with the legal concepts that prepare them to find solutions to real problems. It is much like taking a course on human anatomy before one jumps to the study of surgery.²⁸ However, when one gets to the part of performing surgery, knowledge of the tools doesn't suffice; one needs to know the procedure. When law students graduate, they need to have a working knowledge of procedural laws, the hierarchy of courts, their jurisdictions, and the legal aptitude to carry out the procedure adeptly. The art

²⁷ Dhananjay Mahapatra, 'Lack of Big Student Leader Not Good for Democracy, Says CJI' (*The Times of India*, 10 December 2021) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/lack-of-big-student-leader-not-good-for-democracy-says-cji/articleshow/88195582.cms>> accessed 12 February 2022

²⁸ Jonathan K Van Patten, 'Skills for Law Students' (2016) 61 *South Dakota Law Review*, 165

of advocacy extends beyond the moot courtrooms or mock trial halls. It needs to be developed through observation, knowledge of the proceedings at every step, and experience. Good quality Internships contribute significantly to acquainting the students with this art as they give them access to the thought processes of the best legal minds. With the right mentor, the students can gain precious guidance, interest, and confidence in the practical application of the law. The ultimate goal of an ideal legal education system should be to produce lawyers who have deep knowledge and a breadth of skills. The kind of lawyers who can function as confident and competent professionals from day one of their jobs. The lawyers who don't need to "unlearn" what they learned in law school, instead build on those learnings to keep being better.

LAW FOR LEADERSHIP

The history of our own independence movement, if impartially written, will devote more pages to lawyers than to votaries of any other vocation.²⁹ To name a few, Mohan Das Karamchand Gandhi, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lokmanya Tilak, Lala Lajpat Rai, and so on, were lawyers.³⁰ World leaders like Nelson Mandela, Barack Obama, Hillary Clinton, Fidel Castro, etc., also had law degrees.³¹ Let us first take a look at the meaning of leadership. According to Barton, "*Leaders must have a vision and the ability to articulate and excite others about it. Also, leaders raise others up and empower them by enabling their brilliance; they must bring out the best in others to work toward their vision. Great leaders create synchronization and make others feel part of something bigger than themselves.*"³² A great leader in our contemporary times is incompetent, poised, inspiring, honest, visionary, resilient, inclusive, and focused on others.³³ Now, let's try to understand the importance of leadership for lawyers. As a lawyer, whatever

²⁹ Sushma Gupta (n 5) 3

³⁰ Anant Shekhar Mishra, 'Lawyers in Forefront of Freedom Struggle' (*The Times of India*, 15 August 2015) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kanpur/lawyers-in-forefront-of-freedom-struggle/articleshow/48492719.cms>> accessed 12 February 2022

³¹ '9 Famous and Influential People Who Have Degrees in Law' (*Oxford Royale*) <<https://www.oxford-royale.com/articles/famous-people-law/>> accessed 12 February 2022

³² April Mara Barton, 'Teaching Lawyers to Think Like Leaders: The Next Big Shift in Legal Education' (2021) 73 (1) *Baylor Law Review*, 116

³³ *Ibid*

one writes, speaks, or does impact others.³⁴ Apart from the clients, a lawyer also affects society at large through policy, laws, government regulations, caselaw precedents, making it vital for them to approach their work with a leadership mindset for the greater good of everyone.³⁵ While addressing the convocation at National Law University, Delhi, the Hon'ble Chief Justice of India pointed out that, after the liberalization, no prominent leader has emerged from the student community in the last few decades.³⁶ He emphasized the need for more well-meaning, forward-looking, and upright students to take the lead.³⁷ He reminded the students that the educated youth could not stay aloof from societal realities; they have a special responsibility.³⁸ Therefore, we should introduce leadership education early on so that our law graduates are aware of it and use the awareness in their careers instead of letting them grow as leaders through trial and error, self-development books, and professional workshops.³⁹

MOOCs

What are MOOCs?

MOOCs is the abbreviation for Massive Open Online Courses. It is a significant innovation in distance learning. Firstly, they are massive, so there is no restriction on the number of students who can learn through these courses. They are known to accommodate thousands or, at times, lakhs of students in a single course. Secondly, they are open, which means anyone can enroll irrespective of age, educational background, and location. Thirdly, they are online, which means all you need to access these courses is a device and a working internet connection. The content provided in the MOOCs is usually free; however, platforms may charge the students who wish to opt for certification.

MOOCs are built around pre-recorded video lectures and are often designed by renowned

³⁴ April Mara Barton (n 32)

³⁵ *Ibid*

³⁶ Dhananjay Mahapatra (n 27)

³⁷ *Ibid*

³⁸ Krishnadas Rajagopal, 'Big Leaders No Longer Emerging from Student Community: CJI' (*The Hindu*, 10 December 2021) <<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/big-leaders-no-longer-emerging-from-student-community-cji/article37919436.ece>> accessed 12 February 2022

³⁹ April Mara Barton (n 32)

professors in their disciplines.⁴⁰ These courses also include reading material, quizzes, assignments, and a discussion portal where the students can get their queries addressed by the professors and connect with fellow students across the globe. There are various global platforms like EdX, Coursera, Udacity, and the Indian platform like Swayam that are active players in the MOOC industry.

How do they work?

Through MOOCs, one can learn various subjects ranging from natural sciences like Physics, Chemistry, and Biology to social sciences like Psychology, Political Science, and Sociology. One can also acquire skills like programming or learn new languages. MOOCs offer content at beginner, intermediate as well as advanced levels. The students have to first choose a course and sign up. Some courses might be schedule-bound, while most are available on-demand throughout the academic year. The duration of the courses might range from anywhere between 2 weeks to 12 weeks or even more. Communication takes place through formal channels like email, notifications, and announcements on the official website during the course. Then, they can get free access to the course material. Most MOOCs have weekly lesson plans that provide the students with a detailed course structure. Students must watch the required video lectures and submit the concerned assignments within the mentioned deadlines. The videos can be accompanied by reading modules that help students maintain regular notes about the concepts taught in the lectures. These notes can be handy at the time of revision. Assignments are usually conducted in an MCQ (Multiple Choice Questions) or MSQ (Multiple Select Questions) format that can be auto-evaluated so that the students can take a look at their performance and the solutions instantly. However, short-answer or essay-type questions are also seen in the assignments. For the final evaluation, some platforms conduct proctored exams that increase the credibility of the course and ensure that the students put in sincere efforts. On meeting the passing criteria in the test, students earn a certificate. Students can then use it to highlight their knowledge and skills to potential employers.

⁴⁰ Philip G. Schrag, 'MOOCs and Legal Education: Valuable Innovation or Looming Disaster?' (2014) 59 Villanova Law Review, 83

What are the Benefits of MOOCs?

After the pandemic, as everything became virtual, MOOCs have gained popularity. They are open, participatory, distributed, and supporting lifelong network learning. Let us look at various benefits the students may avail of while learning through MOOCs. MOOCs are designed in a manner that they are entirely self-paced. The students can access the course content at their desired time and place. This enables learning to become flexible, and the students can learn while managing their other academic commitments and schedules smoothly. Until the students get total conceptual clarity, they can watch the video content as many times as they want to. Transcripts of the lectures and other reading material can be downloaded and stored safely; whenever the students experience the need to revisit the concepts, they can refer to them. The Students can also take up two or more courses simultaneously, earning them more credentials in less time. As there are no rigid eligibility criteria to enroll, these courses can be beneficial for people who wish to continue their education along with their jobs irrespective of educational qualification or age. The flexibility also allows established professionals to brush up on specific skills that might have faded over time. MOOCs are accessible and affordable to students who might not be privileged enough to enroll in premier institutions owing to various financial and societal constraints. An internet connection will suffice for them to gain knowledge from the comfort of their homes. This also holds for the students who are not underprivileged. There is ruthless competition for securing admission to the top educational institutions in every discipline of study. Because of the limited seats, every student can't get in. This creates a divide between the students pursuing a course from the top-tier institutes and those pursuing the same course from less famous ones – however, MOOCs attempt to bridge this gap. MOOCs can provide every student with access to the best professors from world-recognized institutions and ensure the quality of education. MOOCs give students the autonomy to learn the subjects of their choice. MOOCs have defied the boundaries of the conventional course structure. They have introduced limitless possibilities in education. Thanks to MOOCs, now, even an aeronautical engineering students can pursue a course on counseling psychology. This has encouraged the students to look at knowledge as something that gives you more than academic credits.

It is often experienced that students are expected to wait until they graduate to have ideas that can make a difference. Ideas or insights from the student community are disregarded because the students lack experience and a relevant degree. However, if the students wish to pursue their unique ideas as viable entrepreneurial projects, access to the required knowledge and skills is not a barrier through MOOCs. MOOCs help the students to develop a global perspective. Access to the content from globally known institutes on a wide range of subjects at their fingertips has opened the students' minds to think beyond their school, city, and country. They provide the students networking opportunities through discussion forums to connect with learners across countries. This gives them an idea of competition among their peers. Interaction with peers facilitates the exchange of thoughts, ideas, and goals, motivating students to strive for their growth. The certificates that the students earn after completing the courses are considered when they appear for job interviews. MOOCs allow the students to translate their qualities like commitment to learning, discipline, and thirst for knowledge into tangible and recognizable certifications that help them establish their identity as a person beyond their grades in college.

THE SEVEN-FOLD MOOC MODEL FOR QUALITY LEGAL EDUCATION

What is the proposed solution?

To address the concerns in the Indian legal education system, this article proposes a seven-fold MOOC Model which can act as a supplement to the traditional teaching-learning process. These courses should be voluntary for those who wish to upskill themselves along with pursuing their law degree courses. This model aims to develop a one-stop-solution MOOC platform dedicated to legal education to help the students navigate law schools, co-curricular activities, research & publications, make educated choices and acquire relevant skills throughout their careers. It is proposed under this model that MOOCs should be designed to rectify the deficiencies in legal education in 7 broad areas that will be elaborated on further in this article. It is not denied that MOOCs lack mechanisms for keeping a constant check on whether the students are putting in sincere efforts. Thus, before signing up for the course, an introduction should be provided to the students that give a concrete idea about the relevance

and utility of the course learnings in the real-time context. Each student should see their “*why*” clearly. In the words of Frederick Nietzsche, “He who has a *why* can endure *anyhow*.”⁴¹

The power of purpose resembles the energy of light focused through a magnifying glass.⁴² The potential of scattered light is less than that of the concentrated one.⁴³ However, when the same light is focused through a magnifying glass, it can set fire to the paper.⁴⁴ Similarly, the power of a clear purpose allows you to focus on what matters pushes you to take risks regardless of obstacles.⁴⁵ Courses should follow a step-by-step teaching approach that can guide the students through every obstacle they encounter and help them transform from being a novice to gaining expertise in a particular topic. The systematic teaching approach becomes essential because it breaks down complex concepts into smaller and easily processable pieces of information. On achieving these mini-milestones, the students gain confidence, and their initial enthusiasm & interest in learning remains intact. This lessens the chance of them dropping out of the courses. Students often think of certain subjects as inherently challenging or lack belief in their own capacities to excel in them. An ideal teaching methodology should be such that it instills faith in the students that it is possible to learn anything under the sun, provided they have the will, preparedness to invest themselves, and belief in the course instructors; the rest will take care of itself.

It is highly recommended that these courses should not be schedule-bound, and the students should be able to take up these courses throughout the academic year. This will give them access to knowledge and skills as and when they need them. For instance, a student studying in the first year of a law degree wishes to research or write about some practical aspects of drafting which might not be taught in their university yet. They can take up a MOOC dedicated to the subject. This will give them an edge over their peers, and their innovative ideas will not have to wait. Similarly, a student studying in his final year of a law degree might

⁴¹ Dr. Margie Warrell, ‘Do You Know Your “Why?” 4 Questions to Find Your Purpose’ (*Forbes*, 30 October 2013) <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/margiewarrell/2013/10/30/know-your-why-4-questions-to-tap-the-power-of-purpose/?sh=61c52ce673ad>> accessed 14 February 2022

⁴² *Ibid*

⁴³ *Ibid*

⁴⁴ *Ibid*

⁴⁵ *Ibid*

feel the need to revisit some concepts taught in the first year or build on his understanding further with practical exposure can take up a MOOC too. Assignments should test the students' abilities to apply the learnings, not memorise them. They should be designed in a way that evaluates their understanding and provides little scope for cheating or manipulating their answers. They should feel a sense of accomplishment on earning the certificate. At the end of the MOOC, they should take away way more than the defined course objectives. The law students are invariably the future of our nation; we can't afford to miss out on the extraordinary talent just because our education system is not fully-optimized to help the perplexed students with the nuance around making the best out of a universe of opportunities that stand before them. Through the proposed model, I aim to have courses that teach the students concepts, train them for real-time situations, imbibe a way of thinking, encourage them to learn as much as possible, and develop a growth mindset.

What are the seven aspects of the MOOC Model?

1. Moocs For Knowledge Enhancement:

The knowledge of substantive laws must be complemented by understanding procedural laws like CPC⁴⁶, CrPC⁴⁷, The Indian Evidence Act⁴⁸, etc. Usually, the law teachers join educational institutes after completing their LL.B., LL.M., or Ph.D. and rarely have had exposure to the practical aspect of law. According to Rule 3 of the Advocates (Right to Take up Law Teaching) Rules, 1979⁴⁹, a practicing advocate can teach law in educational institutes for not more than three hours a day.⁵⁰The teachers who can devote time cannot offer a “complete” practical understanding of the law, and the advocates who can are not in a position to invest that kind of time. However, MOOCs can attempt to resolve this issue. Advocates practicing in trial courts have first-hand experience of how trials proceed at every stage. They have a working

⁴⁶ Code of Civil Procedure, 1908

⁴⁷ Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973

⁴⁸ Indian Evidence Act, 1872

⁴⁹ Advocates (Right to Take up Law Teaching) Rules, 1979, r 3

⁵⁰ Vishavjeet Chaudhary, 'A Case to Facilitate Academics in Practice of the Law' (*Bar and Bench*, 29 June 2018) <<https://www.barandbench.com/columns/academics-law-case-facilitate-academics-practice-law>> accessed 14 February 2022

understanding of the application of procedural laws. Because of their experience, they are aware of the loopholes and intricacies of trial advocacy. Their insights can be precious for the students. If they are roped in delivering MOOCs in their expertise, their knowledge and experience can be availed by thousands and lakhs of students. As the MOOCs are pre-recorded, they don't need to commit time to this daily. Through MOOCs, the advocates can share anecdotes from their professional lives. Along with fulfilling the purpose of knowledge enhancement, this will also inspire the students and train them to connect concepts to context. This will make them "situationally aware," This will also allow them to have their own opinions and interpretations of certain cases and the law. MOOCs for knowledge enhancement aim at acquainting the students with both textbooks and trials, principles, and procedures. They should be designed to bring the best of both worlds to the students. Moreover, they should train the students to synthesize both and move forward confidently.

2. MOOCs for Competency Building and Skill Development:

To have legal professionals who can make meaningful contributions to their work, they need to have extended as well as intricate training in the skills demanded by the legal industry. MOOCs for skill development should teach the students to core legal skills like drafting judgments, petitions, applications, contracts, agreements, making case briefs and research notes, etc., filing bail applications, and Right to Information (RTI) applications to trademark patent applications and so on. They should also train them on obtaining judgments from websites of various high courts and the Supreme Court of India. and systematic ways of reading them and making summaries, using the eCourts website to check the case status. To produce scholars who make significant contributions to the legal fraternity, we need to have students who read, think, research, and write consistently. The MOOCs should assist the students in evaluating the gaps where research needs to be done, write, publish their opinions and provide valuable content to the readers. With a sea of information available at one click, it is crucial to train the students on extracting relevant "knowledge" from "information."The MOOC should inform the students about trustworthy sources and authorities to refer to. Also, introduce them to open access resources. It should guide the students on making optimum use of research databases, books, journal articles, search engines, blogs, and newspapers to

perform holistic research.

It should acquaint them with the technical aspects of using technology: boolean search, filters, advanced search, and software to generate automated citations, etc. It should inform the students about formatting, editing, and using various citation styles and give insights about using the grammar and plagiarism checking software. This will eliminate the initial barriers like lack of knowledge, unfamiliarity with technology, unavailability of access to paid resources, etc., that hold students from trying their hand at research and writing. The goal is to reduce the efforts by effectively using technology and investing that energy and time to make the optimum use of the cognitive faculties of the students. The law students who will make their way to future positions of responsibility, authority, and power should be well-versed in professional etiquette early on. They should have a good grasp of handling formal situations. A MOOC should prepare them on writing precise and situationally appropriate emails. It should also introduce them to networking platforms like LinkedIn and inform them about the intricacies of making credible professional connections through the internet.

3. Moocs for soft skills development:

The MOOCs should be case studies to elaborate on the importance of specific soft skills in professional life. The course content should be based on the principles and theories given by subject matter experts. To sharpen the students' reasoning abilities, the assignment questions should be in the format of assertion and reasoning. Throughout the MOOCs for soft skills development, the students should be provided with links to various psychometric assessments to gain a deeper insight into their personalities find areas of improvement, and work to become the best versions of themselves. They should be subjected to situational thinking exercises that will enable them to think on their feet and maintain their calm and patience in pressure situations. For law students, "thinking" is crucial. However, we should not stop teaching them about thinking like lawyers. Through the MOOCs, we should also train them to put themselves in the shoes of a judge, arbitrator, client, senior counsel, law firm partner, and even the court staff. This will make them capable of making and evaluating decisions by taking both sides of the story into complete consideration. This will strengthen their holistic

thinking and develop empathy, which will help them build excellent interpersonal relationships.

4. MOOCs for Value Education:

Quality value education is crucial for law students. Value systems imbibed in them in their academic years stay with them throughout. To produce legal professionals who possess integrity, we need to develop students who display truthfulness and commitment to their tasks. Legal education should be infused with value systems. The students have to develop compassion, practice humility, become patient, become better listeners, learn to live in the present moment, stop blaming others, think of problems as potential teachers, surrender to the fact that life is not fair, choose your battles wisely, schedule the time for inner work, become an early riser, practice gratitude, make service an integral part of your life, live as if it were the last day and understand the gravity and power of words.⁵¹ By designing dedicated MOOCs for value education, we will be asserting that having upright lawyers is equally essential as having knowledgeable and skillful lawyers. Every week of the course should introduce value, case studies, and ethical implications. With the student's focus on academics, co-curricular activities, and resume building, it is possible that the students might not take a keen interest in value education as they won't see its tangible benefits instantly. However, the importance of imbibing values and making them habits that they stick to throughout should be communicated to them. They should be able to see the fact that habits don't seem to make a significant difference on a particular day, yet the impact they can have on our lives over months and years can be massive.⁵² Only when one looks back after a few years can one distinguish between the value of good habits and the cost of bad ones.⁵³ We often disregard the small changes because they don't seem to add any value in the present moment and switch back to our old routines like exercising for a day doesn't make us fit; we get inspired to do it consistently only when we see how exercising daily is positively impacting our body.⁵⁴

⁵¹ *Ibid*

⁵² James Clear, *Atomic Habits: An Easy & Proven Way to Build Good Habits & Break the Bad Ones; Tiny Changes, Remarkable Results* (Avery 2018)

⁵³ *Ibid*

⁵⁴ *Ibid*

Similarly, taking a MOOC on value education might not make a huge immediate difference in the students' lives. Still, the gradual effect that the values learned will keep having on their lives will be enormous. In Indian Philosophy, *Upamanais* the manner in which one can attain knowledge through analogy and learn about the unknown by establishing its relation to what is known.⁵⁵ Like one may understand that *gavaya*, which is a "wild ox", belongs to the bovine family by comparing its features to *gaus* which is a "cow."⁵⁶ Similarly, in these MOOCs, the teaching should not follow the methodology of "lecturing" on morality and ethics. Instead, it should follow the technique of "storytelling" that relates to the rights and wrongs of everyday life by using examples, analogies, and metaphors to make the content more engaging. MOOCs for Value education aim at ingraining the vital values in law students that become an inseparable aspect of their belief systems and later contribute to the good of themselves and everyone around them.

5. MOOCs for Career Guidance and Mentorship:

As mentioned earlier in this article, quality internships provide students with valuable guidance and mentorship from the best legal professionals. However, neither is every student in a position to get top-notch internships in their field of interest nor can every top-tier law firm or renowned senior counsel provide guaranteed internships for everyone. To get the best internships, one should demonstrate one's skills and make oneself stand out in the crowd. Does this mean that the students who are unable to present themselves professionally or those who don't possess prior experience don't deserve access to invaluable mentorship and guidance? No, certainly not. MOOCs can allow esteemed professionals by investing limited time to share their experiences and pass on their insights to everyone who wishes to benefit. As the recorded videos will stay in the public domain, these lectures will continue to help law students for years to come. With a dedicated MOOC on career guidance, it will be possible to collect the best insights from all legal profession areas in one place. This can give the students a flavour and complete information about the work handled in diverse avenues. Students can

⁵⁵ 'Upamana: Hindu Philosophy' (*Britannica*, 06 March 2015) <<https://www.britannica.com/topic/upamana>> accessed 15 February 2022

⁵⁶ *Ibid*

avail themselves of clear, concrete, and step-by-step guidance about academics, preparation for competitive exams like Judiciary, CLAT PG, UPSC, and a peep into their potential professional careers. We can see students perceive internships as a place where they can learn everything from scratch. Undoubtedly, they do learn a lot; however, it is not always possible for the seniors to take time from their busy schedules to train the interns from the basics. Therefore, students who perform well in the skill-based MOOCs and participate actively in the mentorship-oriented MOOCs can be offered opportunities to apply for internships under the professionals mentioned above. This will provide every hardworking student with a fair chance at securing their dream internships. As the students will have basic skills to start with, they won't feel clueless and will benefit better from the internships. Similarly, they can add much more value to their work, which will ease things for the mentors, guiding them more finely.

6. MOOCs for Harnessing Talent:

The academic years are when law students are usually uncertain about their careers after graduation. Therefore, this becomes the right time to introduce them to the unfrequented roads. The student community has the entrepreneurs, global leaders, and policymakers of tomorrow. Our law students are brimming with talent. However, we need to harness it appropriately. Law is everywhere; therefore, lawyers are also required everywhere. Lawyers have a fundamental understanding of most disciplines which means they are capable of spotting the issues and thinking of solutions in fields other than law as well. One of the aims of the MOOCs for harnessing talent is to make the best use of this advantage by encouraging law students to pursue entrepreneurship as a viable career option. The MOOC should guide the students to analyze society's needs, develop ideas to provide for them, evaluate their potential and execute them. It should equip them with crucial skills like approaching investors and think tanks, writing proposals, presenting and pitching ideas professionally. It should also give them a fundamental understanding of sales, marketing, and publicity: digital marketing, advertising, use of social media, and search engine optimization to increase visibility. This will motivate the students to think, have ideas, and monetize them. The MOOC introducing students to leadership education should give them a picture of the issues that we are facing

currently and inspire them to take the lead for the greater good of society. It should provoke them to develop ideas for initiating projects for the underprivileged and establish non-governmental organizations or student unions to mitigate the intensity of the issues at the ground level. It should inform the students about the ways to go about executing these plans. Those who wish to pursue the cause further should be trained on how to associate with think tanks and policymaking institutions. They should be taught extensively how to contribute to society by making responsible use of positions of power.

7. MOOCs for Legal Education of the Masses:

Our country needs informed and opinionated individuals who wish to make a difference with their unconventional thinking in every field. For that purpose, the masses need to be aware of burning issues and the position of law about it. However, due to a lack of formal education in law, it becomes a tedious task for them to understand the depth of legal issues and form their opinions or propose solutions. Thus, a MOOC will benefit the masses by informing them about reliable and easy-to-understand news sources. It should systematically walk them through the process of acquiring awareness about current affairs. It should guide them in identifying relevant news items, focusing on the most critical parts, analyzing issues, and reaching distinctive conclusions. Entrepreneurs and businesspersons often experience the need to know certain technicalities of the law for their ventures. They don't need in-depth knowledge extending from history to the evolution of the law. Their work requires them to know about the practical applications of the laws relevant to them. A MOOC can come in handy while dealing with narrow knowledge requirements.

CONCLUSION

The need to introduce reforms in the legal education system of our country is apparent. In the post-pandemic world, the influence of technology is increasing leaps and bounds. In the coming years, the advancement of technology can bring out significant changes in the legal profession. Thus, the seven-fold MOOC model can prove to be a remarkable innovation that can impact the fate of legal education and generate the hope of having a system that will make

Indians who are front-runners in every discipline.