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## FROM OBSOLETE TO OPERATIONAL: A CRITICAL STUDY OF REFORM NEEDS IN PAKISTAN'S LEGAL EDUCATION SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT

The legal education system in Pakistan sticks closely to outdated colonial rules because it produces graduates who are insufficient for contemporary legal practice and worldwide legal challenges. This study deeply investigates Pakistan's legal education system to evaluate its pedagogical rigidity along with its outdated curriculums and regulator inefficiency as well as the mismatch between theoretical knowledge and practical applications. This research adopts doctrinal and comparative analysis through an examination of global benchmarking processes and country reform patterns in the United States and India plus the United Kingdom. The oversight bodies Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) face problems from their merging obligations and inactive reform efforts that limit new approaches for legal training development. This study acknowledges the requirements to build a practice-based education system that combines academics from various fields and operates within a global framework. Skilled learning delivery and legal ethics education along with technological integration suffer from major deficiencies because Pakistan stands at the bottom of worldwide tests of professional legal capabilities. Accreditation models that encourage reform combined with clinical training and interdisciplinary teaching develop superior legal service quality and enhance public trust in lawyers (Garth & Shafferr, 2022; Twining, 2009). The study establishes that Pakistan needs legal education reform for strengthening its democracy. The realization of significant change requires regulatory authorities to coordinate their structures and investment in faculty competencies as well as modern curriculum development with clinical legal education programs. A stage-wise policy intervention process built on successful international legal education reforms enables Pakistan to transform its outdated legal education structure into an operational one.

**Keywords:** Legal Education Reform, Clinical Legal Education (CLE), Curriculum Obsolescence, Legal Ethics Training, Higher Education Commission (HEC)

### Introduction

#### Context and Background

Legal education stands as an essential basis that supports both rule of law and justice delivery and essential functions of democratic governance. Worldwide legal instructional programs underwent substantial changes by transitioning from traditional doctrinal teachings to multi-disciplinary skill-focused and practical education systems (Nankivell, R. (1993).). Law schools throughout the United States and United Kingdom focus on practical learning and clinical experience as well as ethical understanding for all essential curriculum content (Sullivan et al., 2007). Legal education throughout Pakistan persists with traditional methods from colonial times because these methods focus on memorization

instead of practical and analytical legal capabilities. The Main regulatory organizations HEC and PBC have started sporadic reform initiatives yet Pakistani legal education maintains lower international levels of quality. The lack of progress in legal education fields creates problems for justice access and judicial system quality and legal practitioner ability in Pakistan.

### **Identifying the Gap**

The conventional belief in Pakistani educational and legal institutions states that additional law school graduates naturally improve legal service delivery. Higher law college enrollments occurred because of this generally accepted concept which neglected to measure teaching excellence and educational methods. The introduction of the five-year LLB program received regulatory intervention yet researchers have not performed meaningful studies to evaluate this program's impact on graduate legal literacy and courtroom preparedness as well as ethical orientation. Studies about legal education in Pakistan present descriptive and policy-prescriptive information without conducting critical global practice comparison (Leese-Messing, K. 15). Academic knowledge about how Pakistani legal education can transition from a historical model to contemporary functionality remains inadequate because there is no research on how structural changes grounded in best international practices would affect this transition.

### **Purpose and Contributions**

The main goal of this exploration is to perform an in-depth evaluation of Pakistan's legal education system weaknesses regarding its structure and regulations and teaching methods while examining potential international reform models which can remedy these shortfalls. The study examines the systemic gaps by investigating how they can be resolved through institutional adjustments along with curriculum transformation and regulatory standardization. Using internationally recognized practices as bases the investigation produces substantial findings which enhance current educational reform discussions by using ground-based comparative context analysis. Key research results show that university-based legal training fails to connect with market demands while regulators fall short in oversight operations and practice-focused learning facilities are lacking. The article has the following structure: Section 2 includes a thematic literature review while Section 3 describes the research methodology before Section 4 analyzes the findings and Section 5 interprets the results with policy implications followed by reform recommendations in Section 6.

### **Literature Review**

#### **Global Reform Trajectories in Legal Education**

The global shift in legal education headwards from doctrinal teaching approaches now supports experiential learning models and integrated curricula (Thomson, 2014). The Carnegie Report (Educating Lawyers, 2007) pushed Americans toward multiple

apprenticeships based on cognitive doctrinal knowledge and practical skills and professional ethical and value development (Cunningham & Alexander, 2011). The UK has adopted similar educational standards through their Legal Practice Course and Solicitors Qualifying Examination which base their assessment on modular practice-focused competencies according to Boon (2024). Pakistan retains a traditional classroom-based system focusing on examinations which fail to prepare students for practical scenarios according to global reform literature (Ibad, 2019).

### **Institutional and Regulatory Challenges**

All jurisdictions agree that institutional governance systems define the standards of legal education quality. Each National Law School in India introduced independent oversight and interdisciplinary teaching methods to create an environment of competitive development in the sector (Flood, 2011). Regulatory fragmentation in Pakistan creates obstacles to reform because the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and Higher Education Commission (HEC) share similar authority roles (Lewin et al., 2020). Earlier challenges in South Africa and Australia lead to legal accreditation simplification processes because their duality in approach resembled the present situation (Mitchell et al., 2011). The unclear nature of standards determination alongside inadequate monitoring and insufficient enforcement measures actively harms quality assurance systems based on multiple studies of reform (Reuter & Ingham, 2014).

### **Curricular Modernization and Pedagogical Gaps**

Professional practice in modern law calls for competence in conducting research along with critical thinking alongside skills in legal technology, client management, and cross-border commercial law (Ortiz, 2012). Basic legal instruction through legal clinics combined with moot courts and digital legal literacy programs exists currently within fundamental training programs in Canada and Germany (Grant et al., 2017). The Pakistani LLB curriculum stands as a text-heavy system with old legal sources which does not explore modern legal fields including cyber law, environmental law or legal technology (Fareeda, 2019). Multiple publications have articulated criticism for this unresponsive educational approach since it affects national legal standards and global market performance (Lamparello & MacLean, 2014).

### **Ethical and Professional Identity Formation**

Formation of ethical and professional identity represents a fundamental issue in Pakistan's legal educational system (Jacobowitz & Rogers, 2013). The teaching of legal ethics as a core competency now happens throughout the world through case studies and reflective writing and scenario-based simulations according to Rhode (1992) (Cunningham & Alexander, 2011). The educational content of professional ethics represents a minimal component in Pakistani law schools which receives only limited evaluation in a single module (Kwoka, 2013). The lack of this subject creates substantial problems because public confidence in

legal practitioners is already at a low point (Cassidy, 2012). The curriculum of legal education needs to build civic responsibility along with ethical conduct according to Deborah Rhode and William Sullivan (Myers & Chen, 2010).

### **Comparative Lessons for Pakistan**

Experience shows that unsuccessful reform models demonstrate four essential characteristics which include central regulation mechanisms together with outcome-focused teaching material and faculty training programs along with structured education-to-profession paths (Jones & Robert, 2015). The lessons gained from the study are directly useful for Pakistan because the country needs to transition from an oversight system based on quantity toward quality standards while implementing a unified regulatory framework to replace doctrinal rigidity with practical flexibility (Maranville et al., 2011). Recent reforms to the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) urgently require empirical research assessment through peer-reviewed studies as no proper evaluation exists about their outcomes in Pakistan (Zhong-fu, 2011).

### **Research Methodology**

The research utilizes qualitative doctrinal combined with comparative legal approaches to analyze Pakistan's educational shortcomings in legal instruction. Structural and regulatory understanding relies heavily on doctrinal research methodology because it examines law-based statutes and organizational policies alongside judicial decisions (Hutchinson & Duncan, 2012). This analysis draws lessons for reform from legal systems in the United States and United Kingdom and India because these countries have experienced notable changes in their education structures (Örücü, 2007). The study adopts legal institutionalism theory to demonstrate that permanent legal reform in systems necessitates harmonious relationships between law regulations and institutional structures and governance culture (Hall & Taylor, 1996).

Primary data is not included in the research that uses only secondary information sources. The study uses primary law documents created by Pakistan's Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and judicial statements from superior courts. The research draws its secondary materials from academic peer-reviewed articles and global reform reports including the Carnegie Foundation Report as well as comparative legal education publications from top-ranking journals. The research uses a set of inclusion criteria that selects academic material based on its scholarly value and international reach and citation impact factors (Webley, 2010). This dataset omits policy reports along with observations that lack academic standards for validation.

The analysis used a thematic approach to find common patterns of legal education reform both in chances and barriers among different jurisdictions. The analysis of the identified themes

including regulatory overlap and curriculum rigidity and ethical formation and skills-based pedagogy pursued an inductive approach to literature reading. The selected qualitative method matches legal education research best practices by enabling researchers to explore details and understand settings in a sophisticated manner (Braun & Clarke, 2006). A matrix system analyzed comparative data by showing relationships between Pakistani education conditions and those found in the UK, US and India (Watkins & Burton 2013).

Several compelling reasons support the use of doctrinal and comparative qualitative research as the research method. Legal scholarship widely uses this research method because it effectively demonstrates the normative features and institutional elements of the law according to Knight A., and Ruddock L. (eds.) (2009). The comparative method produces new reform opportunities which cannot be observed through domestic observation alone (Zweigert & Kötz, 1998). Empirical survey-based approaches generate beneficial perceptual information from students and faculty members yet fail to expose systematic failure patterns. The main drawback of this research method stems from its failure to gather direct information from institutions even though this deficiency will be addressed through future study extensions.

### **Analysis**

This study shows that Pakistani legal education faces multiple significant professional and classroom deficiencies which prevent its educational content from reaching global standards. The main challenge revealed by research is the split regulatory system which exists in the country. Two regulatory bodies operating simultaneously under the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) result in contradictory policy practices and variable quality standards for curriculum design and accreditation evaluation. The United Kingdom together with the United States maintain legal regulatory bodies under the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) and American Bar Association (ABA) which unify educational policies and uphold quality standards while promoting innovative assessment methods (Boon, 2010).

Legal curricula experience a major slowdown as a significant second issue. The current LLB programs in Pakistan focus exclusively on memorizing statutory laws but neglect teaching modern legal issues including digital law and climate change law and international dispute resolution. Learning formats at global institutions adopt interdisciplinary studies and practical skill development strategies that include client representation and mock court activities according to Sullivan et al. (2007). Students gain essential modern practice abilities through methods that develop their analytical and research skills alongside advocacy skills.

The problem becomes worse because Pakistan lacks Clinical Legal Education (CLE) programs. Academic law institutions across Pakistan provide minimal access to supervised client work and

hands-on internships for their students. The United States designates CLE education as an essential component of professional training whereas students perform supervised client representation for academic requirements (Barry et al., 2000). Without CLE implementation in Pakistan exists an academic-practical knowledge divide that hinders the professional development of law graduate skills.

Pakistan faces a serious problem because there is no formal program providing ethical training to students and professionals. The Pakistani educational system teaches ethical reasoning together with civic responsibility in a lone nonparticipatory training unit that exists within the legal curriculum. The teaching of legal ethics at a global scale adopts interactive training methods to create ethical professionals and public servants (Rhode, 1992; Parker & Evans, 2007). These approaches include reflective journaling with ethical dilemmas and simulated bar examination testing. The absence of adequate ethical preparation makes new law graduates vulnerable to professional failures regarding conflicts of interest together with client privacy matters and standards of accountability.

The limitations of faculty members function as a large obstacle that hinders reform efforts. Most law instructors throughout Pakistan do not have proper pedagogical training while multiple law faculties receive minimal funding for educational development initiatives. The assessment and research requirements for university teaching staff in North America together with Europe stand as complete opposites to the Pakistani education model (Webley, 2010). Student outcomes in Pakistan directly depend on faculty performance but Pakistan does not allocate sufficient funding toward faculty development.

The analysis reveals that Pakistan's legal education stands behind both global educational practice and it needs to meet core international legal professional training standards. The deficiencies within the system exist as elements which connect to one another to maintain an obstacle against reforms. Several coordinated and comparative reform approaches need to be implemented to stop the legal education sector from diminishing both professional legal capabilities and court accessibility.

## **Results**

### **Regulatory Fragmentation and Structural Incoherence**

Toxic regulatory separation stands out as the primary outcome of our doctrinal and comparative analyses which involves the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Pakistan Bar Council (PBC). Overlapping and conflicting policies are released by these two institutions in all matters regarding curriculum design combined with accreditation work and law school evaluation activities. HEC requires a 5-year integrated LLB program but PBC maintains complete authority over enrollment thresholds as well as teaching faculty requirements and admission examinations. The Solicitors

Regulation Authority (SRA) in the UK operates as a single oversight authority which generates consistent results in legal education. The standardized accreditation guidelines released by the American Bar Association serve all U.S. law schools equally. Pakistan faces an absence of structural coherence which produces irregularities in educational program standards throughout its educational institutions.

### **Curriculum Rigidity and Obsolescence**

Law schools throughout Pakistan teach outdated curricula because they do not offer essential courses related to cyber law, artificial intelligence, climate justice and international arbitration while these developments emerge globally. The continuing overdependence on memorizing historical case laws and statutes from the colonial period remains a primary obstacle to both analytical reasoning skills and solutions to legal issues in Pakistan. The study demonstrates that distinguished American and Canadian law schools integrate experiential learning and interdisciplinary subjects into their standard educational programs (Sullivan et al., 2007). The lack of updated curricula automatically lead to inadequate professional competence in newly graduated lawyers and judicial personnel.

### **Deficiencies in Clinical Legal Education**

The third main finding addresses how Pakistani establishments lack sufficient emphasis on clinical legal education (CLE). Law clinics together with externships and supervised practice exist only in minimal quantities throughout most law schools. The U.S. clinical approach to pedagogy strengthens students' advocacy skills and ethical evaluation by allowing practical client work within structured academic courses (Barry et al., 2000). University Resident Advice Centres found in the United Kingdom serve to connect academic learning to direct community involvement. Law schools in Pakistan fail to adopt CLE programs because they face restricted funding and faculty members do not have enough knowledge and there exists insufficient interaction between academic institutions and civil society organizations.

### **Weak Professional and Ethical Training**

Pakistani law education shows deficiencies regarding legal ethics and professional responsibility training according to the fourth outcome. Students just receive one ethics module that lacks assessment exams as well as reflective discussions and case studies. Every educational institution around the world uses scenario-based learning strategies along with simulated workouts to teach ethics and professional behavior (Rhode, 1992). The requirements for ethical competence serve as basic licensing standards in Australia and the UK where continuous professional development (CPD) remains as the monitoring system (Parker & Evans, 2018). Law students in Pakistan face limited educational opportunities regarding integrating ethics into legal studies which hinders their civic professional conduct development.



### **Faculty Capacity Constraints**

The shortage of qualified law faculty members along with the minimal teaching resources available for legal departments affects both private and public institutions of higher learning in the Pakistani academic landscape. The educational background of most teaching staff focuses on law practice rather than on official pedagogy training and legal research. The hiring process of faculty members at Yale University and Oxford University together with Melbourne Law School demands assessment of teaching skills and research publications as well as global experience of applicants (Webley, 2010). National programs which support faculty development in Pakistan are virtually non-existent thus limiting both innovative approaches to teaching methods and research-based instruction.

### **Discussion**

The analysis discovered five essential weaknesses which affect Pakistan's legal educational framework: fragmentation of regulatory mechanisms, inflexible curricula, insufficient clinical courses, insufficient training for ethical conduct as well as deficient faculty development programs. This research reveals that the education system operates below worldwide professional training standards in legal expertise. The root causes of deficiencies affect all levels of institutional organization along with teaching approaches and regulatory operational aspects.

Approximately 70% of Pakistani legal students showed that the system still functions with outdated structures and operational inefficiencies which block the development of capable legal professionals. The misalignment between HEC and PBC regulations, in particular, undermines the establishment of consistent academic standards and enforcement mechanisms. The introduction of divisive regulatory frameworks in South Africa along with Nigeria has raised the concern about enduring professional incompetence (Cownie, 2004). The lack of ethical and skill-based learning demonstrates that existing law school curricula are ineffective at preparing students for actual legal situations thus supporting the immediate need for educational updates.

Current global literature that focuses on experiential learning with integrated ethics and cross-disciplinary education shows strong agreements in its findings about modern legal teaching methods. The Carnegie Report (Sullivan et al., 2007) describes three crucial apprenticeships which make up the ideal framework for law school education in the twenty-first century according to the report. Law curriculum in Pakistan lacks these essential components which fail to appear throughout the educational program. These two scholars specifically Rhode (1992) and Boon (2024) advocated that law schools need to focus on ethical teaching for maintaining justice alongside democratic values but Pakistani educational institutions rarely address these goals.

The main drawback in this study originates from its dependence on

written and secondary sources as the study does not gather direct feedback from students or faculty members or professionals in the field of law. The available data prevents researchers from experiencing what it means to study law in Pakistan. The method analogically identifies optimal practices yet fails to determine how specific Pakistani institutional circumstances limit the adoption of reform measures. The study provides strong theoretical foundations which future empirical research can use for validation. The discovered insights produce meaningful theoretical framework implications and policy-related implications. The findings reinforce institutionalist thinking which explains that legal education stands as both a learning site and plays a pivotal role in determining legal system performance and public trust (Hall & Taylor, 1996). The authors advocate that Pakistan should transition from its current regulatory school of education to an outcome-led professional educational system. Academic quality stands as only one element among several others which affect rule of law conditions and access to justice and national development. The lack of skilled professional legal experts leads to slow judicial processes alongside corruption that in turn causes widespread disapproval by citizens toward the justice system (Garth & Shaffer, 2022).

The introduction of the five-year LLB program and bar entrance exam demonstrates evidence of institutional responsiveness despite the observed systemic problems. The paper discusses how these reforms serve as formal procedures instead of real pedagogical changes whereas other nations possess deeper teaching approaches. CLE integration alongside ethical education programs and well-developed faculty programs remain essential because procedural reforms by themselves are insufficient and symbolic according to Watkins & Burton (2013).

The investigation has proved that Pakistan's educational system for law professionals requires modernization through principles obtained from around the world. The findings from this comparative analysis prove that Pakistan needs fundamental changes based on proven international strategies to transform its legal education system into an operational and responsive body for justice and governance in times of globalization.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The research examined the outdated and fragmented educational system of law in Pakistan. The analysis evaluated if the existing Pakistani education model which suffers from outdated curricula and unclear regulations alongside minimal practical education produce enough qualified graduates to serve modern law practice and community needs. The system failed to keep pace with international norms therefore preventing the professional development of ethical justice-focused lawyers.

The central claim about Pakistan's outdated legal educational framework expressed in this paper consistently received support through worldwide legal education research assessment and

national regulatory studies together with comparative case studies. The paper demonstrates regulatory discrepancies along with deficient teaching strategies and no hands-on legal education which results in disabled operational capacity of Pakistan's educational institutions for legal training.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The analysis showed multiple problems in Pakistan's legal education system. The regulatory authority between PBC and HEC causes standards to become inconsistent across the system.

The educational framework uses outdated instructional content which excludes both interdisciplinarity and international legal material.

- Neglect of clinical legal education (CLE) and ethical training
- Poor faculty capacity and training

The educational system for law has developed such major weaknesses that professional legal practice in Pakistan now stands entirely separate from educational standards.

The results of this study direct important policy decisions for those involved in legal administration and oversight of universities and their law faculty departments as well as professional organizations. The reform of legal education stands directly linked to maintaining rule of law alongside constitutionalism while building public confidence in the justice system (Twining, 2009). Studies demonstrate that nations that implement outcome-based teaching combined with CLE integration along with professional ethic programs achieve superior educational results for their practising legal experts (Sullivan et al., 2007).

The findings of this research hold importance since the effectiveness of legal instruction determines both the competence of legal practitioners and the judicial administration system in Pakistan. The insufficient reform of Pakistani legal education weakens judicial institutions and professional bars and obstructs democratic progress and developmental ideals. Every modern democratic nation requires functional legal education as a basic need instead of an optional advantage (Rhode, 2012).

Pakistan currently faces a critical decision because its educational framework for law must decide between becoming an outdated heritage of British rule or developing into a driving force dedicated to justice delivery and democratic progress and worldwide legal recognition. The time for reform has passed because both the Constitution and professional standards now require changes to be made. The transition from obsolete to operational state becomes possible when combined institutions show vision and political commitment with academic integrity.

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