

**INTERNATIONALISING LEGAL EDUCATION - ONLINE PEDAGOGIES,
EXCHANGE PROGRAMMES, AND POLICY LESSONS FROM THE BOLOGNA
PROCESS FOR INDIA**

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Abstract:

As times shift into the digital world and migration across borders increases, not only must laws evolve, but educational systems also need to adapt and change. Legal education in India and around the world is experiencing a significant transformation. With digital progress like Artificial Intelligence (AI), transnational legal education models, and policy changes supporting exchange programmes, flexible credit systems, and online courses, there is an increasing need to evaluate whether current legal and policy frameworks are sufficient to support these reforms in India in line with international standards. Recently, India, through the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and key regulatory bodies like the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Bar Council of India (BCI) has strived to revamp the higher education framework by introducing the Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) and National Credit Framework (NCrF), collaborations and Memorandum of Understanding (MoUs) with foreign universities and exchange programmes for students, the availability of hybrid courses like MOOCs etc. Several universities, and National Law Schools have adopted these measures within their policies. However, the challenge addressed in this paper is how these universities have incorporated these recommendations, the challenges they face amidst these initiatives, and potential solutions, particularly in comparison with the Bologna Process in the current digital era. The paper aims to examine the limitations of current legal pedagogies in Indian legal education through applicability of policy reforms like NEP 2020 and exploring comparative paradigms of how aligning with international policy frameworks like the Bologna Process can improve legal education through increased internationalisation, academic collaborations with global best practices.

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Introduction

In recent years, the world of virtual classes has significantly transformed, thanks to innovations in technology and teaching methods. Online classes allow students to engage with educational material, teachers, and peers in live or on-demand formats. This flexibility improves access to education for various types of learners and helps overcome geographical barriers present in traditional education systems. In India, where educational resources can be limited, online courses have significant impact in expanding access to learning opportunities in remote areas and promoting inclusivity. After the COVID-19 pandemic, the global transition towards digital education has become much more evident, bringing opportunities and challenges. India, with its diverse student and academia population and growing digital infrastructure, leads this evolution.

The technological innovations have fundamentally reshaped higher education worldwide, with India serving as a notable example of this trend. The rise of online educational platforms, the use of artificial intelligence-driven learning tools, and the advent of digital classrooms have fundamentally transformed traditional teaching methods and learning structures. Online education has seen considerable growth in the 21st century, not only at the school level but also at colleges and universities.

In India, the UGC is the statutory authority under the aegis of the Government of India responsible for promoting, determining, and maintaining the standards of higher education, teaching, research, and examination at the university level. Additionally, it also provides for grants to establish and recognise universities and colleges at the national level⁴. The core mission of this authority is to transform the higher education system in India. UGC is considered the regulator of non-technical branches of higher education, namely law, arts, social sciences, etc, while All-India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) is the regulator for technical branches like pharmacy, engineering, hotel management, architecture, etc. Both UGC and AICTE are under the purview of the Ministry of Education, Government of India⁵. Currently, there is a recommendation under the NEP, 2020, i.e., the National Education Policy

⁴University Grants Commission, 'University Grants Commission Official Website' <<https://www.ugc.gov.in/Home>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁵ All India Council for Technical Education, 'AICTE Official Website' <<https://www.aicte-india.org/>> accessed 2 September 2025

2020, set out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MoHRD), now renamed as the Ministry of Education, Government of India, to establish the Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)⁶. The main function of this Commission shall be to streamline and regulate the academic standards in the higher education system of India, while replacing the UGC and AICTE⁷. In relation to pursuing legal studies and legal profession after the schools, the UGC along with Bar Council of India (BCI), another statutory body that deals specifically related to professional standards and conduct to be exercised at the Indian Bar by the legal professionals and also benchmarks the merits of legal education and recognise the universities, colleges and institutions providing the law degrees so as to serve as the minimum qualification for enrolling as an advocate⁸. Post NEP, 2020, and the establishment of HECI, it is, however, noted that the BCI shall remain independent of such Commission, but is expected to work in coordination and cooperation with HECI⁹.

The transformation to the system of higher education at the national or international level multiplies threefold when it comes to the innovative ways to use digital technologies and adopt new learning pedagogies and methods in teaching to improve student engagement and knowledge base. *“Digital technologies have the potential to facilitate a long-desired shift from learning as passive content acquisition to learning as active knowledge co-creation and communities of practice. Integrated digital education media are envisaged to provide personalized, immersive learning experiences that allow interaction and collaboration, going beyond the constraints of the four walls of the classroom and the cells of the school timetable. They might also allow for easier and faster updates of content and the presentation of information in user-friendly formats, enabling the content to remain relevant and highly engaging for enhanced learning outcomes”*¹⁰. It is widely understood that the student learns better from his teacher if the teacher simplifies and engages not just the cognitive aspects of his brain but also his subconscious levels of critical thinking and thought process that reflect

⁶Ministry of Education, *National Education Policy 2020* (Government of India 2020) 47
<https://www.education.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/NEP_Final_English_0.pdf> accessed 2 September 2025

⁷Press Information Bureau, ‘Bhartiya Bhasha and Indian Knowledge Systems’ (Press Note, Government of India 2025) <<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressNoteDetails.aspx?id=154950&NoteId=154950&ModuleId=3>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁸Bar Council of India, ‘Bar Council of India Official Website’ <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/home>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁹Ministry of Education (n 6) 50

¹⁰Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, *Rethinking Pedagogy: Exploring the Potential of Digital Technology in Achieving Quality Education* (2019)
<<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000370322>> accessed 2 September 2025

upon the student's attributes beyond the classroom walls¹¹. The innovative pedagogies are said to positively impact student learning, behaviour, and problem-solving capability. Teachers often can resort to digital formats like short videos, concept maps, audio podcasts, quizzes, etc, which can be used for improving and enhancing the learner's engagement in the classroom.¹² The evolving pedagogies in the current digital world involve the ethical and effective use of artificial intelligence (AI) in academics, along with the online education system, which is gaining momentum. Additionally, learners can access online courses with just a click and attend lectures even in an international classroom, if not physically possible. *"The higher education framework in India has seen significant growth, establishing itself as the largest globally with an enrolment surpassing 70 million learners. Achieving this level of advancement was impossible without the broad integration of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools. For example, if India had aimed to develop this extra capacity solely through the establishment of physical institutions, it would have needed to construct six universities and 270 colleges every month over the past two decades, a feat that would have been unachievable given India's constrained resources. Instead, India opted to pursue the MOOCs route."*¹³

Online courses and MOOCs have contributed to the advancement of higher education in India.¹⁴ The Government of India's SWAYAM platform provides a diverse array of courses and appeals to learners from various age groups and educational backgrounds. *"MOOCs are Massive (designed to work at wide scales—from 10 to 10 thousand students or more), Open (for registration to all, for access to any content, and free or affordable education), Online (using access to local or remote cohorts and real-time interactions over internet), Courses (self-paced with scripted assignments and instructor feedback—preferably with credit mobility and learning community support)."*¹⁵

¹¹University Grants Commission, *Guidelines for Innovative Pedagogical Approaches & Evaluation Reforms* (22 December 2022) 7 <https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/1031121_Guidelines-Innovative-Pedagogical-Approaches-Evaluation-Reforms.pdf> accessed 2 September 2025

¹²M Dixit and K Dixit, 'NEP 2020: A Roadmap towards Innovative Pedagogy to Promote Enjoyable Learning' (2024) 3(9) *International Journal of Emerging Knowledge Studies* 645 <<https://doi.org/10.70333/ijeks-03-09-032>>

¹³Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young, *Higher Education in India: Vision 2030* (2013) <<https://indiamoocs.wordpress.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/ficci-e-y-vision-2030.pdf>> accessed 2 September 2025

¹⁴GR Kiran and others, 'Higher Education in India and the Influence of Online Certification Programs' in A Naim and others (eds), *Evaluating Global Accreditation Standards for Higher Education* (IGI Global 2024) 149 <<https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-1698-6.ch010>>

¹⁵PP Das, 'MOOCs in India: Evolution, Innovation, Impact, and Roadmap' in S Goundar (ed), *Massive Open Online Courses – Current Practice and Future Trends* (IntechOpen 2023) 4 <<https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1001972>>

NEP 2020 has been an evidentiary proof of the adoption of internalisation of higher education through global cooperation amongst foreign and Indian universities, institutions, and colleges¹⁶. The internationalisation of education is understood to mean that students can easily gain knowledge and attend lectures beyond the borders of a nation, if needed, and get their credits transferred, or, for purposes of research, move to another country, and vice versa. It is envisioned that India will become a Vishwa Guru, for promoting premium education at affordable costs to international students through MoUs with established foreign universities¹⁷. When these pedagogies are assessed particularly in respect to the legal education in India and how far the universities and institutions have been able to successfully adopt these pedagogies in their curricula, the regulatory and implementation challenges thus faced are what need dire attention and a policy-oriented solution.

This paper thus attempts to link the current status of legal education in India mainly to two parameters: the academic exchange programmes and the mainstreaming of online courses, along with the progress that can be inferred if applied and studied similarly to the Bologna process. The paper assesses the lack of policy implementation and clarity regarding credit equivalency in student exchange programmes and the limited articulation of these in relation to law degrees. Furthermore, the paper addresses the inadequate or low-profile collaborations between Indian law schools and international universities due to financial and infrastructural limitations, which affect the quality of the student experience. Additionally, a major concern that hinders the development of legal education is the lack of a comprehensive accreditation system that ensures the quality, credibility, and recognition of exchange programmes with credit transferability and online courses, even after the guidelines enacted by the UGC and the AICTE, along with the NEP 2020 emphasizing a quality-driven approach to implementing technology in higher education.

Literature Review

The transformation of higher education in India is increasingly driven by innovative pedagogical reforms and technology integration, as emphasized by the University Grants Commission (2022) and reinforced by the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which promotes experiential, multidisciplinary, and enjoyable learning (Dixit & Dixit, 2024).

¹⁶Ministry of Education (n 6) 39

¹⁷ Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and Ernst & Young (n 10)

Strategic visions like the FICCI and Ernst & Young (2013) report advocate for systemic reforms, quality assurance, and stronger industry collaboration to enhance global competitiveness. Concurrently, the rise of online certification programs and MOOCs is reshaping educational access and pathways (Kiran et al., 2024; Das, 2023), offering flexibility and democratizing learning opportunities, though challenges around engagement and accreditation remain. Collectively, these works highlight a shift toward learner-centric, technology-enabled education aimed at inclusivity and relevance in a rapidly evolving global landscape, while underscoring the ongoing need for effective implementation and quality control. The National Education Policy (2020) promotes learner-centric, technology-enabled education rooted in Indian knowledge systems (Ministry of Education, 2020; PIB, 2025). The online education market is projected to grow significantly between 2024 and 2029 (Research and Markets, n.d.), supported by regulatory bodies like the UGC and AICTE, which ensure quality and innovation. Digital tools are seen as key to improving access and engagement (Mahatma Gandhi Institute, 2019). Together, these efforts reflect a shift toward inclusive, flexible, and future-ready education in India. Anita Sable, Rani, and Srinivas (2022) highlight NEP 2020's impact on legal education, promoting interdisciplinary, technology-driven, and flexible learning. This aligns with broader reforms emphasizing Indian knowledge systems (Ministry of Education, 2020) and growing online education, supported by UGC and AICTE, aiming to modernize and democratize India's education landscape.

Objectives of the Study

This study aims to assess the adequacy of India's current legal and policy frameworks in facilitating the internationalisation and digital transformation of legal education, particularly in light of recent reforms under the NEP 2020. It seeks to evaluate how well these frameworks support initiatives like online learning, academic credit systems, and international collaborations. Additionally, the study explores the potential for aligning Indian legal education with global standards, such as the Bologna Process, to enhance academic mobility, foster transnational legal partnerships, and adopt international best practices for curriculum design and delivery in the evolving digital education landscape.

Research Methodology & Scope of Study

This paper is prepared through a descriptive- doctrinal and comparative research methodology, supplemented by limited normative policy analysis which includes the primary sources such as the Indian Constitution, The Advocates Act 1961, UGC guidelines, NEP 2020, and Bar Council of India Rules, as well as secondary sources such as journals, online books, reports

(UNESCO), and international policy papers. The paper shall be critically and qualitatively analyzed by the authors with respect reform articulated under the NEP 2020, identifying prospective research gaps with a comparative reference to the EU's Bologna Process. The scope of this research is specific and limited to the Indian legal education system, with a comparative aspect only with the Bologna process, and the role of AI is assessed only as a pedagogical tool. The comparative dimension is narrowly and methodologically structured through a focused engagement with the Bologna Process. This limitation ensures doctrinal depth, conceptual clarity, and analytical precision rather than adopting an overbroad global comparative survey. The following criteria are explicitly used to compare NEP 2020 with the Bologna framework: credit portability and academic credit framework, student and faculty mobility mechanisms, quality assurance and accreditation architecture. The Bologna Process is selected as a comparator because it represents a systemic higher education harmonisation model, not merely a national reform and it is widely regarded as a benchmark in credit mobility and qualification recognition. Thus, the comparison is not geographical but structural and reform-oriented. Moreover, the two major parameters under scrutiny limit the other factors that are significant to policy orientation of any higher education standards, like the autonomy of the Universities, skill development, and research-oriented approach to advance the overall improvement of the legal education system in India.

Framework of Legal Education in India & Current Status in light of Exchange Programmes, Credit Equivalency and Online Courses

The legal education in India is regulated under the UGC guidelines as well as the Bar Council of India Rules. A prospective student who wishes to pursue a career in law must enroll in a university or college affiliated with a recognized university that offers a law degree approved by the BCI. They can choose an integrated 5-year course (such as B.A. LL.B., BBA LL.B., B.Com. LL.B., B.Sc LL.B.) immediately after completing their senior secondary education, or pursue a three-year LL.B. degree after earning a bachelor's degree from a reputed and recognized college under the UGC. In India, central, state, private universities, and colleges must be authorized to offer law courses under the recognition and regulation of the UGC. In other words, the UGC does not directly regulate the law course curricula but ensures that the university or college granting the law degree is legally recognized. It is the BCI that regulates legal education in India through the Advocates Act, 1961, by approving law curricula and recognizing law degrees. A law degree without BCI approval may still be valid if the college is recognized by a university under the UGC; however, the student cannot enroll with the State

Bar Council as an advocate. Conversely, if the degree is BCI approved but the college or university is not recognized by the UGC, the degree becomes invalid, and the student cannot apply for jobs or pursue higher studies. Therefore, a degree approved solely by BCI does not guarantee eligibility to pursue a legal career. Nowadays, the establishment of National Law Schools and Universities has transformed the landscape of legal education in India.

Presently, the NEP, 2020 has carved out a futuristic approach to transform higher education in India as a whole (including law)¹⁸. The policy aims to create a transformative framework by recognizing the increasing potential of digital learning. The NEP unveils essential provisions designed to democratize access to quality education while promoting a more flexible and inclusive educational environment. To achieve these objectives, the policy includes various clauses introducing new digital platforms and strengthening the already established ones¹⁹. The policy strongly promotes the development of online degree programs in industries that face a shortage of qualified professionals, thereby enhancing access to higher education in critical areas sectors.²⁰ Under the policy, pilot studies are also recommended before launching a course. Additionally, it supports a blended educational strategy that combines digital and traditional teaching methods, thereby offering learners a more flexible educational experience. NEP emphasizes online digital education, including MOOCs, SWAYAM-NPTEL courses, and related initiatives. A key part of NEP is integrating Learning Management Systems (LMS), which aid in managing, distributing, and overseeing online courses, thus supporting both hybrids learning and the flipped classroom model. Platforms like SWAYAM further support online education by offering free resources across various subjects, along with certification options to enhance credibility.²¹

Moreover, NEP 2020 introduces a Flexible Entry-Exit Framework, enabling learners to pause and later continue their studies without losing credits, thereby accommodating individuals facing financial or personal difficulties. Complementing this initiative is the ABC, a digital platform that allows students to collect and transfer credits between institutions, thereby

¹⁸A Sable, R Rani and V Srinivas, 'National Education Policy 2020 and Legal Education in India: Transforming Legal Education!' (2022) 21(12) *YMER* 961 <<https://doi.org/10.37896/YMER21.12/83>>

¹⁹Ministry of Education (n 6) 39

²⁰University Grants Commission, *UGC (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations 2018* (4 July 2018) <<https://deb.ugc.ac.in/DEB/RegulationsLearning>> accessed 2 September 2025

²¹ University Grants Commission, *UGC Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM) Regulation 2021* (26 March 2021) <<https://www.education.gov.in/ugc-credit-framework-online-learning-courses-through-study-webs-active-learning-young-aspiring-minds>> accessed 2 September 2025

encouraging lifelong learning and academic mobility.²² These provisions collectively emphasize the policy's commitment to enhancing the credibility, accessibility, and adaptability of online education in India, as well as involving students in academic exchange programmes with foreign universities, thereby establishing a more inclusive and technology-driven learning ecosystem. Interestingly, many NLUs are adopting these academic exchange programmes as part of their law degree curricula, including NLSIU Bangalore, NLU Delhi, Jindal Global Law School²³, and others, thereby supporting the 'internationalisation of education' as outlined in the NEP, 2020.²⁴ The BCI also recognises these policies as long as the foreign universities are recognized by the BCI.²⁵

The response of BCI to the NEP, 2020 provides important insights into the reasons behind the lack of policy implementation of NEP 2020 in legal education and the challenges ahead. On May 20, 2024, the BCI issued a circular clarifying reforms related to legal education. The circular thoroughly discusses various aspects of the transformation in legal education, while also addressing some of the challenges posed by the NEP, 2020 requirements²⁶. The circular aims to enhance the relevance of Indian legal education compared to global standards. It completely derecognizes online courses and online law degrees including open or distance learning²⁷, although it still permits certain diplomas and certificates courses²⁸. The contention raised is that a law degree requires regular face-to-face interaction and consistent effort from the learner to be able to professionally practice in the Bar as an advocate with excellence and proper attitude. The BCI permits short-term semester or year-wise exchange programs for Indian students after they meet certain conditions. The BCI allows such mobility only when the foreign university itself is also recognised under the BCI. The BCI also sets out strict standards for recognition of foreign law degrees²⁹. The credits earned by such students shall

²² Press Information Bureau, *Implementation of National Digital Education Architecture (NDEAR) and Digital Initiatives in Education* (July 2023)

<<https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/specificdocs/documents/2023/jul/doc2023726228501.pdf>> accessed 2 September 2025

²³ National Law University Delhi, *MOOCs at National Law University Delhi*

<<https://nludelhi.ac.in/images/moocs/moocs.pdf>> accessed 1 March 2026; NALSAR University of Law, *Self-Study Report (Post Pre-Qualification)* <<https://nalsar.ac.in/images/SSR%20after%20pre-qualification%20-%20NALSAR%20website.pdf>> accessed 1 March 2026

²⁴ Sable, Rani and Srinivas (n 18)

²⁵ S Salunke, 'Legal Education in India: Reflecting on the Past for a Brighter Future' (2024) *Asian Journal of Legal Education* <<https://doi.org/10.1177/23220058241305560>>

²⁶ Bar Council of India, *Comprehensive Implementation of Legal Education Reforms, Mandatory Guidelines, Norms & Rules of Legal Education* (Circular No BCID-0468-2024 (LE Circular-06/2024), 20 May 2024) <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/comprehens-ku2hwr>> accessed 2 September 2025

²⁷ Bar Council of India (n 26)

²⁸ Sable, Rani and Srinivas (n 18)

²⁹ Bar Council of India, 'List of Foreign Universities Whose Degrees in Law Are Recognized by the Bar Council of India' <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/foreign-universities>> accessed 2 September 2025

only be validated and accepted by the Indian University, subject to BCI norms, thus complicating the matter of 'internationalisation of higher education' under the NEP 2020³⁰. There is no direct advocate enrolment based solely on a foreign law degree obtained by an Indian student. In other words, any Indian student who has earned a foreign law degree must pass the exam set out by the BCI in order to practice in India Courts³¹. It does not mean that Indian students cannot pursue a law degree outside the country, i.e., at the undergraduate level. The only requirement is that such Indian students with foreign law degrees must obtain equivalence from the BCI and also pass the qualifying exam as stated above³². If an Indian student, after obtaining an LL.B. degree from an Indian university, applies for an LL.M. abroad, the BCI sets no restriction. This is done to ensure that the foreign curricula meet Indian legal standards, thus maintaining the relevance and credibility of such degrees³³.

In conclusion, one can infer that the BCI in response to the NEP 2020 has not completely allowed for exchange programmes and credit transfer, since the law degrees thus received need BCI approval and recognition, which hinders the implementation of the suggested recommendation. The BCI outright rejects the concept of online law degrees. The NLUs and colleges engaging in MoUs with foreign universities are purely for the academic progression of the student and not to be recognised as a part of the official degree itself. The credit transfer is not fully accepted due to the strict guidelines of the BCI, except for the certificate courses that the students wish to pursue. The acceptance of academic exchange and online courses/degrees is thus standing at the edge of the mountain when it comes to recognition from the BCI.

The UGC plays a pivotal role in overseeing higher education in India. Recognizing the rising popularity of online learning, the UGC introduced the Online Courses or Programmes Regulations, 2018, and later updated them under *the UGC (Open and Distance Learning Programmes and Online Programmes) Regulations, 2020*,³⁴ which permit eligible higher education institutions (HEIs) to offer online degree and diploma programs. As per these

³⁰Bar Council of India, 'Notice to the Members of Parliament, Members of Legislative Assemblies, and Members of Legislative Councils Who Are Practicing Legal Profession in Various Courts of the Country' <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/notificati-4u2peb>> accessed 2 September 2025

³¹Bar Council of India, 'Schedule, Guidelines and Syllabus for the 21st Qualifying Examination for Indian Nationals Holding Foreign Law Degrees' (Notification, 11 November 2024) <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/schedule-g-sm8ycd>> accessed 2 September 2025

³²Bar Council of India, 'Notification' <<https://www.barcouncilofindia.org/info/notificati-4u2peb>> accessed 6 March 2026

³³Bar Council of India (n 26)

³⁴Distance Education Bureau, 'Regulations' <<https://deb.ugc.ac.in/Home/Regulations?Year=2020>> accessed 2 September 2025

guidelines, only HEIs meeting stringent quality benchmarks are permitted to offer online programs without prior UGC approval. Recently, NALSAR, Hyderabad, in December 2024, was temporarily debarred from offering open and distance learning courses pertaining to the Master's and Advanced Diploma in Law³⁵. Specifically, universities and institutions must have a NAAC score of 3.26 or above or secure a place in the top 100 of the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) in the university category for at least two consecutive years to qualify. These eligible institutions can introduce up to three undergraduate (UG) and ten postgraduate (PG) programs, with any expansion beyond this limit requiring explicit UGC approval. Furthermore, institutions intending to offer online courses must formally apply to the UGC, adhere to all regulatory provisions, and submit an affidavit confirming compliance with these regulations. Open universities can offer online programs, but need NAAC accreditation to maintain their authorization. These initiatives ensure online programs meet high academic standards, enhancing credibility and protecting students in India's digital education landscape. Despite these regulations, the rapid expansion of online education has highlighted weaknesses in enforcement, casting doubt on the legitimacy of certain courses. A plethora of institutions and private educational technology companies have commenced offering courses without sufficient accreditation or quality assurance.³⁶ Several reports have highlighted concerns regarding unaccredited online courses in India³⁷. The lack of a centralized mechanism to oversee and authenticate online course approvals has resulted in students enrolling in programs that may not receive recognition from employers or regulatory bodies. Additionally, the absence of uniform assessment standards across institutions has led to disparate levels of academic rigor, with certain courses being predominantly content-driven while others emphasize certification without substantial learning results.

SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds) functions as a centralized repository for the provision of UGC-sanctioned online courses. To uphold elevated educational standards, the UGC has instituted extensive protocols for the formulation and

³⁵ 'UGC Debars NALSAR Univ from ODL Programmes Citing Document Lapses' *The Times of India* (6 December 2024) <<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/hyderabad/nalsar-university-banned-from-offering-online-learning-programs-due-to-document-failure/articleshow/116054034.cms>> accessed 2 September 2025

³⁶ University Grants Commission, 'Public Notice: Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions' <https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/1272796_Public-Notice-Academic-Collaboration-Academic-Collaboration-between-Indian-and-Foreign-Higher-Education-Institutions.pdf> accessed 2 September 2025

³⁷ 'UGC Warns against Fake Online Degrees, Cautions Public on 10-Day MBA Course' *The Economic Times* (16 February 2024) <<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/services/education/ugc-warns-against-fake-online-degrees-cautions-public-on-10-day-mba-course/articleshow/109536561.cms>> accessed 2 September 2025

dissemination of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) on the SWAYAM platform. The UGC's *Guidelines for Developing Online Courses for SWAYAM* delineates comprehensive instructions regarding course development, with a pronounced emphasis on quality and learner engagement.³⁸ These guidelines emphasize a four-quadrant framework.³⁹

The AICTE, serving as the commanding authority for technical education across India, has boldly instituted policies focused on upholding stringent standards for online technical programs.⁴⁰ In pursuit of this mission, the AICTE's Approval Process Handbook lays out comprehensive guidelines for executing technical courses in a dynamic blended format, encompassing both online and offline learning. These rules emphasize the importance of offline participation, especially for skill-focused subjects, to ensure students attain practical excellence. Additionally, the AICTE builds strong partnerships with initiatives like SWAYAM and the National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) to expand access to technical education through MOOCs⁴¹.

In response to the NEP 2020, UGC has, through a notification, promoted the dual/ joint degree programmes by the Indian universities with the foreign universities, thus allowing for academic exchange programmes provided that such institutions are NAAC A Grade or of equivalent grade.⁴² The credits thus earned abroad shall be recognised under the mutual recognition framework for fulfilling the Indian degree requirements. UGC supports and promotes National Academic Depository (NDA) and Digi-Locker, thus storing credits earned⁴³.

Summarily, the adoption of the NEP 2020 recommendations through UGC and BCI to transform the legal education system in India is at a slow pace, with many regulatory limitations. It is often argued that the law degree recognition and regulation in whole should

³⁸University Grants Commission, *Guidelines for Developing Online Courses for SWAYAM* (1 June 2017) <[https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/3885329_MOOCs-Guideline-\(Development--Funding\).pdf](https://www.ugc.gov.in/pdfnews/3885329_MOOCs-Guideline-(Development--Funding).pdf)> accessed 2 September 2025

³⁹ H Srimathi and A Krishnamoorthy, 'Review of India's UGC Guidelines on Online Degree Courses' (2024) 27(1) *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* <<https://ojdla.com/articles/review-of-indias-ugc-guidelines-on-online-degree-courses>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁴⁰All India Council for Technical Education, *AICTE Open and Distance Learning (ODL) and Online Learning Guidelines 2021* <<https://www.aicte-india.org/sites/default/files/aicte-odl-online-guidelines-2021.pdf>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁴¹Vaishali and N Dey, 'MOOCs through SWAYAM: An E-Learning Platform for Implementing Online and Flexible Education as per the NEP 2020' (2023) 14(2) *Learning Community* 61 <<https://doi.org/10.30954/2231-458X.02.2023.3>>

⁴²University Grants Commission, *UGC (Academic Collaboration between Indian and Foreign Higher Education Institutions to Offer Twinning Programmes, Joint Degree and Dual Degree Programmes) Regulations 2022* <<https://www.ugc.gov.in/KeyInitiative?ID=/1JT+8jW785lBIAsbqDMVw>> accessed 2 September 2025

⁴³ Press Information Bureau, 'Setting up of National Academic Depository (NAD) for Digitalization of School Records' (27 March 2018) <<https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=178056>> accessed 2 September 2025

be under the aegis of UGC alone and not regulated by the BCI; however, the pertinent question then rose is with regard to the enrolment of the degree holders as advocates and their right to practice in Indian Courts. The legal pedagogies in the digital age are transforming policymakers' approaches with pro-digitalisation ways to integrate into the higher education system. The role of AI and the online courses available to learners in addition to their regular academic studies is a game-changer. The ethical use of AI, however, is argued in academia by the faculty and the students. The AI can assist in deriving the best curricula for the students by referring to the foreign degree curricula and hence provide a nuanced and diverse course structure at the global level. The integration of multi-disciplinary and interdisciplinary courses becomes much more concrete with the adoption of global standards adopted by various foreign universities and institutions. It is often understood in the context of Indian Constitution formation, which is often regarded as both flexible and rigid, but more so a bag of borrowings. In other words, the Indian universities/colleges can also prepare their curricula in line with the foreign universities and promote smooth transition of student mobility and ensure a dilution of diverse cultures and languages amongst students. The academic exchange programmes between universities through MoUs, and allowing for credit mobility in legal education, can enhance the standards of legal education. The BCI's strict regulations in this aspect need to be revisited and redefined to better align with the evolving academic landscape globally and also to come in line with the NEP 2020. The credit transferability leads to motivation for the students as well, apart from their academic achievements; hence, there is a need for reformation in the law degrees to some extent. More collaborative and comprehensive guidelines are needed by the UGC and BCI within the NEP 2020, specifically pertaining to the law degrees on such parameters.

The authors propose to integrate various aspects of the Bologna Process within India's NEP 2020 with respect to legal education in India. The detailed analysis of the Bologna Process with the NEP 2020 in respect of transforming legal education in India is as follows. The comparative parameters broadly identified for the descriptive and critical understanding are: Credit system and quality assurance, Academic Exchange of students, Online education/ degrees/ courses, Degree recognition, Role of AI. These parameters have been identified keeping in mind the significant highlights of the bologna process and the NEP 2020 with a futuristic foresight of transformation in legal education in India. While these parameters may be selective, the emphasis on these factors engages the authors to inculcate in the Indian education policies to smoothly change the legal education today and for tomorrow.

Integration of Bologna Process into India's NEP, 2020, in respect of Legal Education: Comparative Analysis

The Bologna process was initiated as an international consensual agreement between European countries to make higher education systems comparable and competitive by fostering students' mobility across the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) amongst European universities⁴⁴. The adoption of this process has a long historical process. European initiatives like the Joint Study Programme Scheme and the European Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students (ERAMUS) brought forth the mobility and exchange amongst European students to study abroad. These programmes basically supported the students financially, and eventually this programme also became open to non-EU members⁴⁵.

Eventually, there were six major action lines on which this bologna process was based, namely to adopt a system which is comparable and includes the diplomas as well, system follows a cycle i.e. undergraduates and graduates, establish proper credit system which eventually came out to be named as European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), students as well staff mobility and cooperation from European Universities towards quality assurance⁴⁶. The Bologna process is understood as a viable option for European students who wish to study abroad, thus bringing inclusivity and international partnerships.

Upon comparison of the NEP 2020 and the Bologna Process, the major limitations are that due to differences in the structural framework of India's higher education system to European countries, involving around 1100 universities and more than 40,000 colleges. Moreover, there is a different quality assurance system in India as compared to the European countries.

While it is pertinent to note the striking difference with respect to the parameters this paper discusses, what is fundamental is how this comparison can assist in reframing the education policies in India, particularly to bring a revolutionary change in the legal education. Indian legal education is undergoing structural modernisation but remains institutionally transitional. While the introduction of the NCrF and ABC reflects an attempt to emulate the mobility-oriented logic of the ECTS, credit portability in India is still mediated by professional regulation under the Bar Council of India. Unlike the Bologna framework, where degree comparability and cross-border recognition are structurally embedded, Indian reforms operate

⁴⁴A Curaj and others (eds), *The European Higher Education Area: Between Critical Reflections and Future Policies* (Springer 2015) <<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-20877-0>>

⁴⁵F Shams and J Huisman, 'The Bologna Process and Its Impact in the European Higher Education Area and Beyond' in DK Deardorff and others (eds), *The SAGE Handbook of International Higher Education* (SAGE Publications 2012) 81 <<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452218397>>

⁴⁶Curaj and others (n 44)

within a layered regulatory environment that conditions mobility, online degrees, and professional recognition on BCI approval. The increasing incorporation of MOOCs, digital pedagogy, and AI-driven learning tools indicates technological advancement; however, their integration remains normatively cautious and ethically underdeveloped compared to more practice-integrated AI use in European legal clinics. Overall, the implications for Indian legal education suggest a shift toward flexibility, digitalisation, and global alignment, but without yet achieving the seamless recognition, mobility assurance, and regulatory harmonisation characteristic of the European model.

In light of the said argument, the comparative analysis is as follows.

Parameters	NEP 2020	Bologna Process
Credit system and quality assurance	Launch of National Credit Framework (NCrF) and Academic Bank of Credits (ABC) to allow mobility and flexibility ⁴⁷ .	Existence of European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) to facilitate academic mobility and credit recognition ⁴⁸ .
Academic Exchange of students	Encourages dual/joint degrees and student exchange programmes in legal education with certain conditions.	Legal education is aligned to enable comparability of degrees across borders.
Online education/ degrees/ courses	Adopts technology-driven pedagogies in legal education, such as MOOCs ⁴⁹ .	Includes online education and virtual learning
Degree recognition	Subject to BCI rules, yet many changes are slowly adopted by the BCI, thus allowing for diplomas and online certificate courses and full-time undergraduate and post-	Clear recognition of degrees and mobility of legal professionals across EU member states ⁵¹ .

⁴⁷Ministry of Education (n 6) 48

⁴⁸ A-W Heringa, 'European Legal Education or Legal Education in Europe' (2011) 18(3) *Maastricht Journal of European and Comparative Law* 306 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1023263X1101800301>>

⁴⁹Ministry of Education (n 6) 48

⁵¹F Shams and J Huisman (n 45)

	graduate law degrees with conditions ⁵⁰ .	
Role of AI	Adopted as a legal pedagogy in legal education to formulate the academic curricula through online methods, still not completely exclusive in the use of AI ethically.	Legal clinics are using AI tools to train students in real-world courtroom advocacy, negotiation, and arbitration skills.

Therefore, one can infer that India can adopt some principles of the Bologna Process, such as credit transferability, student exchange, and the harmonization of legal degrees across foreign universities, even if not entirely. The Bologna Process holds a stronger position in the legal education landscape compared to the NEP 2020. This is mainly due to the delayed response of Indian universities, colleges, and the complex regulatory framework already existing within the country's higher education system. A key issue is that the BCI has a tenure of five years, after which policies and rules change with new members, disrupting the implementation of NEP 2020. Therefore, there is a need to liberalize legal education in India rather than restrict and regulate it completely. Although India's NEP 2020 is broader in scope and aims for inclusivity and diversity, considering the structural framework of universities at the national level, certain lessons can be learned from the Bologna Process regarding academic student exchange, credit transferability, integration of AI as a legal pedagogy, and online education/courses.

Parameters	India's Legal Education	EU Bologna Process with respect to Legal Education	Key Takeaways for transforming India's Legal Education
Academic Exchange of Students	The exchange programmes are mainly through bilateral agreements	Academic exchange is institutionalised through Erasmus+ and other EU-level	There is need for greater policy coherence and legal backing for mobility

⁵⁰A Sable, R Rani and V Srinivas (n 15)

	and MoUs and mainly by NLUs, elite private colleges/Universities, and a few central and state government colleges/universities.	programmes. The Erasmus+ Program and other EU initiatives have focused on expanding academic mobility beyond Europe, strengthening partnerships with non-EU countries ⁵² .	and recognition of academic credits. There is also a need for greater accessibility to foreign universities providing law degrees to improve mobility of students, thus ensuring less complex regulatory mechanism and more of collaboration and coordination between the regulatory authorities at the national level.
Credit Transferability	Lack of a standardised credit equivalency system across institutions and countries. Lack of implementation and awareness of ABCs in legal education.	ECTS allows students to transfer credits freely across member institutions ⁵³ .	
Digital Pedagogy in Teaching and the Role of AI	AI tools in legal education are still fragmented. Digital legal education is offered via platforms like SWAYAM, NPTEL, and private MOOCs, but these are not fully	Actively using AI and digital simulations in academia to foster clinical education and meet global academic standards of research and professionalism. Policies like the Digital Education	There is a need for recognition of AI tools in teaching, more capacity/faculty development programmes for faculties and students to sensitize them on the use of AI in

⁵²Curaj and others (n 44)

⁵³ *Ibid.*

	recognized for professional legal qualifications.	Action Plan (2021-2027) reflect the EU's commitment to virtual mobility, where students can earn credits through digital exchanges ⁵⁴ .	teaching and research. Recognition of online courses in the curricula and credit system to foster legal education.
Online Legal Education/ Law Degrees	BCI does not recognize online or distance learning/attaining law degrees ⁵⁵ .	Many law schools offer blended learning, online master's degrees, and dual mode learning recognised under Bologna standards. recognition of qualifications acquired through online learning, subject to quality standards ⁵⁶ .	The implementation of NEP 2020, with its complex regulatory mechanism, makes the adoption of this parameter difficult. There is a need for better enforcement mechanisms and also improvement in the quality standards and indexes of these online degrees.

Challenges and Solutions to Online Education, Academic Exchange of Students & Credit Transferability in Indian Legal Education

The ecosystem of online education in India faces several challenges, mainly related to digital infrastructure, content development, and student engagement. There are also many socio-economic issues. For learners, a reliable internet connection is essential to access online courses, but many areas still experience connectivity problems. In terms of content creation, institutions need strong infrastructure, such as recording studios and skilled staff, to produce high-quality courses. However, many instructors, used to face-to-face teaching, find it difficult

⁵⁴ F Shams and J Huisman (n 45)

⁵⁵ A Sable, R Rani and V Srinivas (n 15)

⁵⁶ F Shams and J Huisman (n 45)

to effectively engage virtual learners and often struggle to create dynamic, interactive content. Lack of Infrastructure is the most common problem faced by the faculty while designing MOOCs.⁵⁷ The fundamental aspects needed for the establishment of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) involve institutional endorsement, technological capabilities (both hardware and software), designated time for the crafting of MOOCs, accessibility of learning resources (Open Educational Resources), course-related instructional content, the instructor's roles, and the comprehensive length of the course.⁵⁸ Lack of teacher training in virtual delivery, particularly in non-verbal communication like eye contact, further hampers course quality. To address these gaps, institutions must adhere to SWAYAM guidelines, with a focus on presentation and communication, potentially using listener bots for feedback. Additionally, the quality of online education content can be enhanced by utilizing skilled teachers and infrastructure, alongside leveraging AI to overcome challenges posed by India's vast scale.

However, a major issue with MOOCs is that there is rarely sufficient infrastructure for students to turn to for help.⁵⁹ Traditional education is more straightforward, as students can easily seek assistance from their instructors and classmates. Online learners, however, are likely to face challenges in terms of timing and frequency of support. Some MOOCs use asynchronous learning, which means that the interaction is not in real time. The UGC (Credit Framework for Online Learning Courses through SWAYAM) Regulations, 2016, sought to mitigate this by mandating interactive sessions and discussion forums, but these are rather constrained in their application⁶⁰. The UGC (Online Courses or Programmes) Regulations, 2018, also focus on mentor-assisted learning, but student engagement remains a challenge. To solve this problem, moderated online courses need to have well-defined support mechanisms such as online office hours with instructors, live doubt-clearing sessions, AI-enabled tutoring, and a partial online, complete offline (COFE) model where students can get face-to-face guidance at certain locations. The need to enhance these provisions, especially on government-led platforms like SWAYAM, is likely to enhance student retention and performance.

⁵⁷N Purkayastha and MK Sinha, 'A Study on Design, Development and Implementation of MOOCs by Faculty Members in Central Universities of India: Problems and Prospects' (2023) 60(5) *Journal of Information and Knowledge* 341 <<https://doi.org/10.17821/srels/2023/v60i5/170945>>

⁵⁸*Ibid.*

⁵⁹I Das and V Pawar, 'Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and Indian Education' (2022) 11(7) *Paripex – Indian Journal of Research* 41 <<https://doi.org/10.36106/paripex/6204117>>

⁶⁰University Grants Commission (n 38)

Another big problem is the societal view that online learning is substantially worse than conventional classroom instruction. In India, degrees from reputed universities are important, and MOOCs are not preferred due to issues with assessment, authenticity, and employment opportunities⁶¹. The UGC (Online Courses) Regulations, 2018 permitted accredited universities to provide fully online degree programs; however, the information is scarce. To increase the acceptance of MOOCs, policymakers must increase the quality assurance standards in NBA and NAAC, engage the industry to recognize the programs, and educate the public on the validity of online learning⁶².

With the ever-evolving digital space, quality assurance is another very important issue. To build trust and engagement of the students, the course quality, both in terms of content and instructor, must be high. India is a country with diverse cultures, backgrounds, and languages, and thus it becomes even more important that a benchmark is set. Increased collaboration between colleges and accrediting bodies is also recommended. Another challenging issue is the assessment of these online courses, as traditional methods such as multiple-choice and short-answer questions often fail to assess the deep knowledge, especially in fields like law, where practical applications and illustrative answers are essential. A solution here can be physical exams that could improve credibility and address issues like plagiarism. Courses can be taken online, but assessment could be done offline to better understand and evaluate. Furthermore, online education in India faces low retention and completion rates, with only a small percentage of enrolled students completing courses. While this problem is not restricted to India, we still must find effective solutions to improve retention and maximize the returns on its educational investments.

Insufficient awareness among students regarding the accreditation status of online educational programs is another very prominent issue. This deficiency in knowledge frequently leads to students enrolling in programs that lack recognition, thereby endangering their academic and professional trajectories. For example, institutions such as Annamalai University and Periyar University⁶³ have encountered stringent actions from the UGC for providing online education without the requisite UGC-DEB endorsement. To protect their personal and professional interests, students must ascertain the UGC-DEB accreditation of online courses before

⁶¹Purkayastha and Sinha (n 57)

⁶²Das and Pawar (n 59)

⁶³University Grants Commission (n 38)

enrolment⁶⁴. Thus, it is important to minimize this information gap to create a well-informed student population, thereby solving the most prevalent issue about online courses in India⁶⁵.

The ABC initiative and the Multiple Entry and Exit framework were established under the NEP 2020 to offer enhanced flexibility in higher education, especially concerning online education⁶⁶. Although these measures aim to improve student mobility, encourage lifelong learning, and acknowledge prior learning, their execution in online programs has encountered numerous obstacles. These challenges encompass administrative intricacies, insufficient institutional readiness, quality assurance concerns, credit transfer issues, and opposition from conventional academic systems.

Challenges Related to the ABC System and the Academic Exchange of Students

The ABC system and student mobility through dual/joint degrees/ exchange programmes initiative came forth under NEP 2020 to offer enhanced flexibility in higher education, especially concerning online education and the credits earned by the students internationally. These facilities can be game-changers when it comes to boosting access and flexibility for students. It lets learners decide on the fly when to join or drop a course based on what's going on in their lives – different paces, various commitments, etc. However confusing it may seem, it is beneficial for both students and institutions to reach a wider audience, including busy professionals seeking part-time education. The ABC system is a neat idea meant to innovate higher education in India by making it way more flexible⁶⁷. It lets students pick credits from all kinds of institutions, so they hop between different courses and programs, allowing them to have multiple routes rather than one fixed one. But it's not free from challenges; for example, the academic standards, the quality of digital infrastructure for online teaching, the regulatory and structural framework, standardization, and the quality of credit transfers, each needing a closer look. It's important to dig into these challenges to build a solid digital education experience.

The students who acquire certain knowledge from exchange programmes within their law degrees from foreign universities should be considered without any conditions by the Indian

⁶⁴ Purkayastha and Sinha (n 57)

⁶⁵ University Grants Commission, 'Public Notice' (30 May 2022)

<https://deb.ugc.ac.in/pdf/Public_Notice_signed_30052022.pdf> accessed 6 March 2026

⁶⁶ A Sable, R Rani and V Srinivas (n 18)

⁶⁷ Ministry of Education (n 6)

Universities, thus providing for harmonization in the educational sector, rather than subjecting them to complex regulations and restrictions. The students must feel motivated to engage and learn from experiences rather than being worried about their implications for their home country degree. There is a need for a collaborative and coordinated framework between UGC and BCI to recognize credits earned by students abroad and through online courses, if not the regular law degrees obtained from abroad. However, the BCI and UGC have to some extent accepted the dual/joint degrees to be obtained, subject to certain restrictions, which makes the process even more complicated and delays the implementation of the NEP 2020.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Education is considered one of the prominent aspects of bringing in desired social change. Undoubtedly, it is a powerful medium and a potential instrument that can bring change in the society one envisions. The education one gets at school differs from the higher education in colleges/ universities. Moreover, the professional character involved with certain subjects like law, medicine, engineering, architecture, chefs, etc, requires special training, knowledge, and experiential learning to be able to justify the given field of study⁶⁸. The quality of the legal profession will entail quality legal professionals as well. Therefore, it becomes of paramount significance to understand the degree of quality higher-level legal education is being provided by the national as well as the international universities, which is not limited to only the infrastructural and administrative growth, but also the student relationship and engagement, and teacher capacity, along with the research component of the institution. These are also some of the factors upon which the ranking of the universities and colleges is assessed, thus ensuring that the best is delivered and assessed as well.

Globalization has opened up new challenges to the legal profession, thus making it impossible for legal studies to be confined to the territories of the national legal systems. Thus, the curricula and methodologies adopted to pursue law degrees with the objective of preparing students to meet the new challenges and the needs of society also need to be upgraded and revisited. *“Legal education needs to be competitive globally, adopting best practices and embracing new technologies for wider access to and timely delivery of justice. At the same time, it must be informed and illuminated with Constitutional values of Justice - Social, Economic, and Political - and directed towards national reconstruction through the*

⁶⁸Ibid

instrumentation of democracy, rule of law, and human rights. The curricula for legal studies must reflect socio-cultural contexts, along with, in an evidence-based manner, the history of legal thinking, principles of justice, the practice of jurisprudence, and other related content appropriately and adequately. State institutions offering law education must consider offering bilingual education for future lawyers and judges - in English and in the language of the State in which the institution is situated”.

To ensure the success of transformed legal education and the legal profession as a whole, making it efficient, effective, competitive, and comparable, certain suggestions are proposed for consideration. Firstly, academic curricula must be developed with regard to the challenges of globalization while also reforming law degrees within the complex regulatory and restrictive rules at the national level. In other words, there is a need to adopt more collaborative, integrated, and inclusive course design and curricula that align with global standards and are on par with international universities and colleges. Secondly, the teaching methodology should be upgraded by incorporating modern techniques such as PowerPoint presentations, audio podcasts, and visual demonstrations. The role of AI should be enhanced and incorporated into curriculum development in law schools, and faculty members must be sensitized to the ethical use of AI. Students should also be informed about AI's application in research. There is a need for better implementation of the NEP2020 in the Indian legal education system and to harmonize its complex regulations. It is essential to establish mechanisms to monitor how universities and colleges follow guidelines set by regulatory authorities, potentially utilizing AI within the NAAC and NIRF systems to analyse the working culture of institutions at both national and global levels. The clarification of credit transferability through improved mechanisms, allowing students to enrol in various online courses or exchange programs abroad while pursuing their degrees domestically, will provide students with a competitive edge. This approach will motivate other students and promote a transformation in legal education worldwide.
