

WEST REGION LAW TEACHERS CONCLAVE



Manupatra, a leading legal-tech company in India, in association with Gujarat National Law University [GNLU] Gandhinagar, organized a first of its kind event, the Law Teachers Conclave 2023-24. The debut edition of this unique conclave focused on the Western Region, setting the stage for discussions amongst the legal educators in the country on the changing paradigm of legal education. The theme of the conclave was - Law in Motion: Adapting Legal Pedagogy in Times of Rapid Change. The event took place on November 4, 2023, at GNLU, Gandhinagar.

The event was supported by Society of Indian Law Firms (SILF), General Counsel's Association of India (GCAI) and Law Teachers India.

Idea behind the programme



Law teachers play a pivotal role within the legal education and professional landscape, yet, until now, there has been a conspicuous absence of a dedicated conclave that exclusively engages this vital stakeholder group. The essence of this conclave is rooted in the drive to fill this gap by establishing a platform that has hitherto been non-existent; a space where law teachers from across India can converge, collaborate, foster knowledge exchange, and expand their professional networks.

The West Region Conclave convened a diverse gathering of over 125 law teachers, including law faculty members, deans, directors, principals, and research scholars, hailing from various states in the western region of India, making the event a comprehensive representation of the legal education community.

West Conclave



The conclave delved into a wide array of prevalent challenges faced by legal educators as they navigate their ever-evolving roles in the field. It proved to be a truly remarkable experience for all participants, marked not only by the exchange of innovative ideas and invaluable industry insights, but also by the unrestricted flow of information and extensive networking opportunities.

With a line up of distinguished speakers and educators (including from engineering and medicine), the event placed a prominent focus on the integration of technology within legal education in today's dynamic world, all while emphasizing the critical importance of continuous learning (including unlearning and relearning) for law educators within the context of evolving legal pedagogy.



What the Speakers shared



Prof. (Dr.) S. Shanthakumar, Director GNLU, Gandhinagar in his inaugural speech referring to the theme of the conclave 'Law is in motion', said that law is changing every day and it becomes the duty of the educator to focus on not what we are teaching, but how we are teaching it. We must reevaluate our approach to teaching law in the present day. This was elucidated by highlighting the example of technology, emphasizing that its application extends far beyond mere utilization of a projector and a PowerPoint presentation.

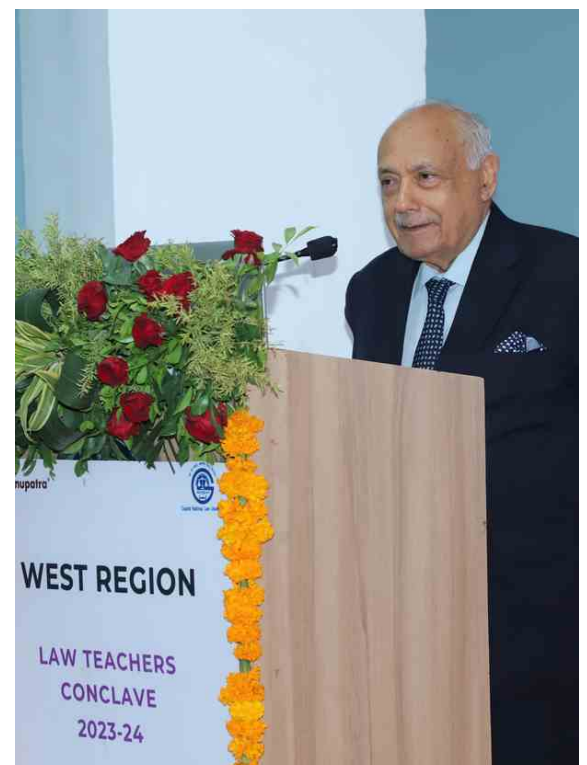


Chief Guest Hon'ble Mr. Justice M.R. Shah, Former Judge, Supreme Court of India, currently the head of the education committee at BCI, highlighting the importance of teachers said that whether it is a good corporate lawyer, a judge or an advocate, each is guided and honed by a law teacher. One has to have a strong knowledge base which is relevant to current times, and for that it is necessary that the curriculum stays current. Including practical training is imperative to equip students to face global competition. Use of AI and technology is mandatory, but should be limited/restricted for research, and should not affect one's thought process or opinions.



Prof. (Dr.) Shashikala Gurpur, Director, Symbiosis Law School, Pune, in her key note address mentioned that we need to build global competencies in students. She noted that technology is a disruptive force and law will be no exception; and hence we should move to technology as a tool, than technology as curriculum. She referred to ChatGPT and shared that it can replace data, but cannot replace experience. The only constant in this ever-changing world is change itself. As we navigate the currents of changing times, it becomes imperative to transform the methods of imparting knowledge to future lawyers, ensuring they remain agile and adept in a dynamic landscape. She shared that best practices in legal pedagogy are providing students with behavioral development, ability to enhance and nurture managerial skills and development of professional and behavioral ethics.

In an interactive session with Dr. Lalit Bhasin, a conversation hosted by Prof. S. Shanthakumar shed light onto many untouched aspects of teaching pedagogy which should be incorporated by law institutes as well as by the educators. When questioned about the evolution he has witnessed during his 61 years in advocacy, he responded with appreciation, acknowledging that the Indian legal profession and legal education stand among the best in the world. The Indian legal system has seen the test of time and has outshined every test. He firmly believes that the dynamism of the legal field necessitates that educators don't just rely on their foundational knowledge but actively seek to expand and update it. As guardians of legal pedagogy, their commitment to continued learning ensures not just their own professional growth but also the holistic development of their students.





The key panel discussed the best practices in legal pedagogy shared by leaders. The session delved deeper into the reservoir of experience and wisdom of the panellists. Justice S.G. Shah called for the fraternity to teach how to effectively and efficiently research and co-relation between law – the one that is learnt and that one that is applied.

Prof. Purvi Pokhriyal began by quoting Michelle Obama, “there is no magic to achievement, It’s all about hard-work, choices and consistency”. With this regard the best practices that one legal educator can make in legal education is the hard-work which one shall do in order to educate students and educate oneself. Secondly the choices they make, i.e. the subjects they choose and thirdly consistency i.e. being consistent with all the subjects or how one is going to teach a particular subject. She shared insights and importance of legal education to be immersive, reflective and customized.



Along with educators, the event also saw the exchange of ideas from various stakeholders of the industry. Ms. Nupur Sinha and Farhan Zia from the Centre for Social Justice demonstrated how practical learning can be introduced in a class room, with a focus on “how to teach/learn”.



The panel discussion with the General Counsels brought to the fore insights from the GC's that can guide educators on moulding a curriculum that not only imparts legal knowledge but also prepares students for the rigors and challenges of the practical legal world. Akhil Prasad stressed that Indian legal education needs to enhance and develop such skills in students that they can tend to the legal complexities along with business complexities. All the GC's were unanimous in saying that longer internships are required, collaboration with industry can be a key solution and that when students reach their final year, curriculum should be shifted to provide more of a practical knowledge and exposure.



During the interdisciplinary session, Dr. Anirbid Sircar, Director of the School of Energy Technology at PDEU, and Dr Mehul Shah Executive Committee Member, IMA – Gujarat State Branch proposed the incorporation of elements from engineering and medicine education into legal instruction. This could encompass various aspects such as rural internships, industrial exposure, and live comprehensive projects involving real industry-related issues. Dr.Sircar expressed the view that "Industry and academia are like parallel railway tracks, running alongside each other but seldom converging."



Dr.Kalpesh Gupta in his presentation on Legal Innovation stressed upon the teachers to have a teacher-preneur outlook, which entails to constantly research and stay abreast.

OUTCOME



Here are the Key Points that emerged:

- The pervasive integration of technology in legal education as a foundational tool.
- The abundance of digital media resources for subject knowledge consumption, emphasizing the need to shift focus from the increasing number of subjects taught to effective teaching methods.
- The imperative for educators to prioritize the "how to teach" over the "what to teach," ensuring comprehension and retention of knowledge.
- Pedagogy should emphasize behavioral development, the enhancement of managerial skills, and the cultivation of professional and ethical ethics.
- Practical training must offer an immersive experience to prepare graduates for the workforce effectively.
- Advocating for longer internships and fostering collaboration with industry partners, as short internships have proven less productive.
- The necessity for students to cultivate global competencies.
- Acknowledging that artificial intelligence (AI) cannot replace human perspectives and thoughts, and emphasizing the importance of not restricting one's own viewpoint due to excessive reliance on AI.

The feedback from the participants has been very enthusiastic. Many interesting suggestions have been shared which will be incorporated in the upcoming regional conclaves. The camaraderie and shared sense of purpose among teachers can exert a positive influence on the entirety of legal education.

NEXT



The North Region Conclave is being organised by Manupatra in association with NLU, Delhi on 3 Feb 2024. To register [click here](#)

About Manupatra

Manupatra, a #legaltech company, has been innovating at the intersection of Law and Technology since the year 2000. Online legal research platform is its flagship product. Other offerings include a comprehensive suite of Legal Operations solutions, such as contract lifecycle management, compliance management, case management, notice management, and litigation tracking.

