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**CONTINUED LEGAL EDUCATION FOR ADVOCATES: ENHANCING PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE AND LEGAL PRACTICE**

**ABSTRACT**

The legal profession demands a high standard of knowledge, moral behaviour, and flexibility in response to changing legal requirements and societal shifts. To preserve and improve their professional competence, advocates must participate in Continued Learning Education (CLE). This study looks at global trends, analyses current CLE practices, examines the value, difficulties, and advantages of CLE for advocates, and offers suggestions for enhancing CLE initiatives. The value of CLE is found in its ability to keep advocates up to date on ethical principles, practical skills, and new legal developments. This allows advocates to offer competent legal advice and representation.

The advancement of outstanding legal education is an essential requirement for the development of better legal practitioners. The law is the guardian and protector of liberty and justice. Producing lawyers with a social conscience is the primary goal of legal education. Legal education is seen as a tool for social transformation in the modern day.

The ways that CLE is presently provided vary widely; live seminars and online courses are among the distribution techniques, and CLE is necessary in many areas. Through specialization in CLE, advocates can further develop their professional skills by expanding their knowledge in particular areas.

Global trends in CLE emphasize the growing emphasis on interdisciplinary learning, practical skill development, and technological integration. The incorporation of multidisciplinary and international viewpoints, cost subsidization, upholding high standards for program content, and improving accessibility through online learning choices are some suggestions for improving CLE programs. By tackling these problems, CLE programs can better assist the legal community by guaranteeing that advocates acquire updated information and useful skills, thus improving the standard of legal practice and maintaining the quality of the legal profession.

**INTRODUCTION**

CLE, or continuing legal education, is crucial to an advocate's professional development since it keeps them competent, ethical, and productive in their job. The field of law is dynamic, marked by constantly changing laws, rules, and technological developments that require

continued education beyond initial qualification. CLE programs fulfill this aim by giving legal professionals an opportunity for structured learning to update their knowledge, hone their abilities, and keep up to date on the latest trends and advances.

A static body of knowledge was found to be insufficient for lifetime professional competence, and this realization led to the historical emergence of the concept of ongoing education in law. This insight resulted in the creation of CLE programs, which have become mandatory in many jurisdictions. These programs serve the different needs of the legal community by covering a wide range of issues such as revisions to substantive law, procedural changes, ethical considerations, and specialized practice areas.

CLE has a major effect on the standard of legal practice. Continuously learning advocates are better able to handle complicated legal matters, give clients intelligent advice, and negotiate through the complexities of the legal system. In addition, CLE promotes a culture of professional growth and lifelong learning, both of which are essential to preserving the credibility and honesty of the legal profession. There is frequently noticeable improvement in the overall standard of legal services in jurisdictions where continuing education is required, indicating an obvious connection between professional competence and continued studies.

Even with its significance, CLE has several difficulties. Some main obstacles that can prevent advocates from taking part in CLE programs are accessibility, cost, and time limits. Furthermore, there is ongoing discussion regarding the relative effectiveness of traditional lectures in person vs online courses. The legal community is researching innovative methods like personalization and interactive learning to improve engagement and information retention in light of the introduction of digital learning platforms.

Furthermore, the necessity for flexible and progressive CLE programs is highlighted by the globalization of the legal profession and the quick speed of technological advancement. Studies comparing the CLE practices of various nations show a variety of methods, emphasizing the possibility of implementing best practices internationally.

### **WHAT IS CONTINUED LEGAL EDUCATION?**

The term “Continuing Legal Education” (CLE) describes the required or elective courses that lawyers and other legal professionals take following their initial bar registration. These courses aim to improve legal practitioners’ knowledge of current legal trends, assist them uphold the highest standards of competence and moral behaviour in the profession, and help them grow their legal abilities.

A wide range of subjects is often covered in CLE programs, including updates on substantive law, modifications to procedures, professional ethics and responsibility, and specialized fields like intellectual property, environmental law, or international law.

CLE can be offered via webinars, conferences, seminars, workshops, self-study courses, and conferences. Since the introduction of digital technology, online continuing education courses have grown in popularity as a convenient and flexible option for working professionals. These

programs frequently include interactive components to improve learning outcomes and engagement, like discussions and quizzes.

Bar Council of India Trust organizes academic workshops for advocates under its continuing education program, which help update of knowledge and skills of practicing lawyers and promote specialization in professional services. Quite a good number of volumes of reading materials on constitutional litigation, advocacy, labor adjudication, tort litigation, administrative law and adjudication, environmental laws, etc., have been assembled to support the continuing legal education and workshops.

CLE originated in the middle of the 20th century when the legal world realized how important it was for lawyers to continue their education. The American Bar Association (ABA) was an innovator in the US when it came to promoting and putting CLE programs into place. Initially, the emphasis was on enhancing the proficiency of lawyers and making sure they stayed up to date on legal advances.

Program structure and content for Continuing Legal Education changed along with the legal landscape. Originally, the main method of delivering continuing education (CLE) to busy legal professionals was through in-person lectures and seminars. But as technology advanced in the latter half of the 20th century, new approaches to CLE delivery emerged, giving lawyers more varied and adaptable ways to fulfill their continuing legal education obligations. The American Bar Association has released model CLE regulations for specific jurisdictions to follow in nations like the United States of America. In the US, attorneys have to accumulate a certain amount of CLE credits—measured in hours—over a predetermined number of years. Acquiring the credits requires putting in a set amount of time each year studying or teaching particular subjects or courses in significant and emerging legal domains. Credits can also be obtained by publishing a predetermined quantity of legal publications, performing pro bono work, or even sitting in moot court.

Australia, the UK, Canada, Germany, France, and Italy all have comparable criteria. One point that is important to note is that all advocates and lawyers in these jurisdictions must accrue credits, regardless of their rank within the Bar.

When it comes to India, the idea of CLE is not new. In their respective fields, several professional associations, such as the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India, have been mandating ongoing education. There haven't, however, been many concerted attempts to incorporate it into the legal system.

CPD makes sure that judicial and legal reforms are understood and that it influences the opinions and attitudes of both concerned citizens and legal professionals. It also aids in establishing a forum for additional discussion and agreement on legislative reform. It enables solicitors to broaden the purview of their professional development, which was previously thought to be a one-time event. Through continuing professional development, clients can feel more confident that the legal services they get are current and that their attorneys are qualified and knowledgeable to defend them and uphold their rights.

This need to equip legal practitioners with updated skills and expertise was articulated by the Apex court in the case of *V. Sudeer v. Bar Council of India* [MANU/SC/0167/1999].

### **EVOLUTION OF CONTINUED LEGAL EDUCATION IN INDIA**

Under Section 24(1)(d) of the Advocates Act, 1961, there was formerly an “apprenticeship” system in place where Senior Advocates trained and instructed Junior Advocates. In addition to promoting cooperation between junior and senior Bar members, the apprenticeship program mandated that junior members commit to pursuing post-entry legal study. Unfortunately, the practice was discontinued in 1973 due to the omission of Section 24(1)(d).

In the *State of Maharashtra v. Manubhai Vashi* case, the Supreme Court noted that, given the growing issues facing the legal profession, legal education must be continuing and systematic. Following the 1973 modification, the Bar Council of India (BCI) developed the Bar Council of India (Training) Rules, in 1995 to resurrect the waning legal education system and reinstate the apprenticeship system. In *Manubhai Vashi’s case*, the Supreme Court acknowledged the value of ongoing legal education; yet, in the *V Sudheer v. Bar Council of India* decision, the BCI’s 1995 Rules were overturned. The Court overturned the 1995 regulations because no regulations advancing Section 24(1)(d) could be formulated without that provision being there in the statute books. After all, it was removed in 1973.

Afterward, the BCI submitted a Final Report on Reform of Legal Education, drafted by a three-member committee, to the Supreme Court in the case of *Bar Council of India v. Bonnie FOI Law College and Ors.* Following Rule 34 of Chapter IV of the Bar Council of India Rules of Legal Education 2008, the report acknowledged the establishment of a Directorate of Legal Education with the purpose of “organizing, running, conducting, holding, and administering (a) Continuing Legal Education.”

### **IMPORTANCE OF CONTINUED LEGAL EDUCATION**

Since the legal profession in India is dynamic and ever-evolving, Continuing Legal Education (CLE) is vital for advocates. With the ever-evolving legal landscape brought about by new laws, judicial rulings, and international developments, CLE makes sure that advocates stay informed, capable, and productive in their work. The following are some major factors emphasizing the value of CLE for advocates in India:

- **Keeping Up with Legal Developments:**

The Indian legal system is always changing due to new legislation, court rulings, and modifications. CLE programs assist advocates in keeping up with these developments so they may guarantee their clients receive accurate and up-to-date legal counsel.

- **Enhancing Professional Competence:**

Engaging in CLE regularly helps advocates improve their knowledge and abilities. By fostering the development of specialized knowledge in

particular legal fields, this ongoing learning process improves overall professional competence.

- **Adapting to Technological Advances:**

Technological innovations like digital evidence, online dispute settlement, and e-filing are having a greater and bigger impact on the legal profession. CLE courses that concentrate on these technologies assist attorneys in adjusting to contemporary legal procedures and utilizing technology to increase productivity.

- **Improving Client Service:**

Expert and knowledgeable advocates can better assist their clients by offering exceptional legal counsel. By ensuring advocates are prepared to address complicated legal matters, CLE increases client satisfaction and trust.

- **Fostering a Culture of Lifelong Learning:**

CLE encourages legal practitioners to have a lifelong learning culture. A successful and long-lasting legal career requires professional development and constant progress, which is encouraged by this way of thinking.

As part of a study submitted to the Indian Law Ministry, the Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, surveyed members of the legal profession.

- More than 93% agreed that CLE should be implemented in India.
- Nearly 69% of the participants reported never having attended a program that resembled a CLE.
- 76% of respondents to the poll said that continuing professional development will improve their professional ability.
- A resounding 73% agreed that CLE ought to be required.

## **BCI AND ITS PROVISIONS RELATED TO CLE**

The highest regulatory authority governing the legal profession and legal education in India is the Bar Council of India (BCI). The Advocates Act of 1961 established the BCI to maintain the highest standards of legal education and professional behaviour among advocates. Its principal goals are to protect the rights, privileges, and interests of advocates across the country and to uphold the dignity of the legal profession and legal education.

Through several laws and regulations, the Bar Council of India (BCI) oversees the legal profession in India. The Bar Council of India enforces the following major regulations:

**Standards of Professional Behaviour and Etiquette:** The BCI has established detailed guidelines defining the expectations for advocates in terms of professional behavior and etiquette. These regulations address obligations to the public, other advocates, the court, and clients. It is expected of advocates to rigorously abide by these ethical norms.

**Advocate Enrolment:** The BCI specifies the requirements and steps involved in the advocacy enrolment process. It establishes the requirements for law graduates wishing to join the bar, administers enrolment exams, and keeps track of the lists of advocates.

**Legal Education:** By establishing guidelines for colleges and universities that offer LL.B. and LL.M. programs, the BCI controls legal education in India. It outlines the minimal requirements for the curricula, the credentials of the staff, the infrastructure standards, and other crucial elements for legal education establishments.

**Continuing Legal Education (CLE):** Through CLE programs, the BCI encourages advocates to participate in ongoing professional development. It could require advocates to finish a particular amount of continuing education (CLE) hours within a given time frame to keep their practice permits.

**Disciplinary Action:** Advocates for professional misconduct may have disciplinary action brought against them by the BCI. Depending on the seriousness of the misconduct, it may look into complaints, hold hearings, and issue warnings, suspensions, or expulsion from the rolls as sanctions.

#### **IMPACT OF ADVOCATE INEFFICIENCY ON CASE PENDENCY**

The effectiveness of advocates is essential to the court system's smooth functioning. Advocate inefficiency has a major role in case pendency, a recurring problem that impedes the prompt administration of justice. The ineffectiveness of lawyers contributes to the backlog of cases that the Indian legal system already has to deal with, which causes delays and prolonged court proceedings.

Several things can contribute to ineffective representation, such as a lack of preparation, legal expertise, and poor case management abilities. Cases continue to be postponed, adding to the backlog of unresolved matters, when advocates neglect to represent their clients or obey court schedules adequately. This undermines the legal system's overall effectiveness and hurts the plaintiffs, who have to endure prolonged uncertainty and monetary difficulties.

More than 3 crore cases are pending in different courts in India. Many of these cases are pending for more than 10 years. Below are the approximate number of cases pending in the Supreme Court, High Courts, and District and Subordinate Courts in India.

- Around 60,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court.
- Around 42 lakh cases are pending in different High Courts.
- Around 2.7 crore cases are pending in District and Sub-ordinate Courts.

Why are too many cases pending in Indian courts?

- **There are not enough judges**

With only about 21,000 judges, there are not enough of them. The ratio of judges per million people is currently 10 to 1. In 1987, the Law Commission recommended at least 50–1 million. Since 1987, the population has grown by more than 25 crores.

The States argue that the Centre should lead in expanding the number of judges, while the Centre thinks the States should lead. Judges' power stays the same as this tug-of-war continues, and litigants stay incarcerated. Over half of the positions are unfilled. The appointment of judges to the Supreme Court and other High Courts is a topic of contention between the Judiciary and the Executive.

- **Low judicial quality in lower courts**

The Indian Judicial system has miserably failed to attract the best brains and the most talented students.

As the quality of judges in lower courts is not always up to the mark, appeals are filed against the decisions in higher courts, which again increases the number of cases. Judges lack specialization and they have become less efficient and lazy.

- **Increase in the awareness of rights by the common man**

Recent socioeconomic developments and the ensuing awareness of legal rights have given regular people the confidence to approach courts seeking justice.

#### **SUGGESTIONS TO MAKE LEGAL EDUCATION MORE EFFECTIVE**

To maximize the benefits of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) for advocates in India, several enhancements and innovations can be introduced. In this case, the right action must be taken to ensure that the recent law graduate gains enough experience before being granted permission to practice in court. Participation from the judiciary, bar council, and UGC representatives must be reflected in legal education. College affiliation should be regulated and supervised by the Bar Council. A mandatory course on professional ethics should be implemented.

It is recommended that case and problem techniques be mandatory and should be assigned a higher weight than theory in the grade. It is necessary to make changes so that the lecture method is supplemented with the problem method and other contemporary methods including legal education. It is necessary to make participation in debates, mock trials, and moot courts mandatory and to give credit for it.

- **Create Engaging, Interactive Online Courses:** Make use of contemporary e-learning tools to craft accessible, interactive, and interactive online courses. Virtual classrooms, live webinars, and multimedia content are all possible in these courses.
- **Workshops on Practical Skills:** Provide instruction on topics like trial advocacy, mediation, negotiation, and legal writing.

Establish CLE programs with a concentration on specialized legal topics, such as intellectual property, human rights, cyber law, and environmental law. This can assist advocates in becoming experts in particular topics.

- **Ethics Modules:** To emphasize the value of ethical behaviour, make sure that all CLE programs include required modules on ethics and professional responsibility.

To make learning more applicable and accessible, use case studies and real-world events to highlight ethical problems and professional behavior. Australia, the UK, Canada, Germany, France, and Italy all have comparable criteria. One point that is important to note is that all advocates and lawyers in these jurisdictions must accrue credits, regardless of their rank within the Bar. Acquiring the credits requires putting in a set amount of time each year studying or teaching particular subjects or courses in significant and emerging legal domains. Credits can also be obtained by publishing a predetermined quantity of legal publications, performing pro bono work, or even sitting in moot court.

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### **CONCLUSION**

It is difficult to overstate the value of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) in improving the efficacy and efficiency of advocates, especially when it comes to resolving the problem of case pendency in the Indian legal system. Advocate inefficiencies greatly add to the backlog of cases, which delays justice and puts a burden on judicial resources. These inefficiencies are frequently caused by a lack of preparation, poor case management abilities, and a lack of legal expertise.

By giving advocates continual training and instruction to stay up to date on the newest legal developments, procedural modifications, and technological innovations, CLE plays a crucial role in reducing these inefficiencies. Advocates can improve their general professional competence, hone their skills, and acquire specialized knowledge by regularly taking part in CLE programs. To manage their caseloads efficiently, lower the number of adjournments, and guarantee prompt and accurate legal representation, advocates must engage in this ongoing learning process.

Furthermore, CLE courses emphasizing professional accountability and ethics are crucial for preserving the integrity of the legal industry. Ethical advocates are less likely to act in a way that causes delays in the legal process and poor case management. CLE contributes to maintaining the legitimacy of the legal system and guarantees that advocates are prepared to meet the demands of their profession by promoting a culture of ethical practice and lifelong learning.

Enforcing more stringent regulations and performance reviews in conjunction with the implementation of extensive CLE programs can greatly improve advocates' accountability and effectiveness. These steps guarantee that advocates are held to the highest standards of professional behaviour and that they are always advancing their knowledge and abilities.

To sum up, CLE is essential for tackling advocate inefficiency and lowering India's case backlog. Through funding advocates' ongoing professional development, the legal profession may guarantee the prompt administration of justice, enhance client satisfaction, and increase public trust in the judiciary. Improving the effectiveness of advocates via CLE is

a critical first step towards a more efficient, trustworthy, and just legal system.