

## The Role of Autonomous Colleges in Developing Innovative Teaching Practices - An appraisal

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*“It's not what is poured into a student that counts, but what is planted”- Linda Conway*

### Abstract:

*The higher education in India has grown in a remarkable way, particularly in the post-independence period, to become one of the largest systems of its kind in the world. In order to achieve academic excellence, the UGC, Department of Higher Education in the States, Human Resources Department in the Centre are functioning to achieve intended goals of National Educational Policy and to strive for quality education. Higher education turns into a powerful tool to build a knowledge-based information society of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The quality monitoring and accreditation bodies also directly support the education institutions to meet the new challenges. The learning and teaching process are two faces of the same coin. Both are supplementary and complimentary to each other in developing an innovative teaching method. The real quality and excellence of the institution is basically assessed on the quality of education imparted in the college. In the competitive world, the survival of the educational institutions depends on its unique method followed in the quality of learning and teaching process. It is also one of the major criteria to recognize and placing the college with potential for excellence.*

*The theme of the paper is to analyze innovative teaching practices adopted by the college in order to ensure the internal quality and also enhance the academic excellence. The major techniques as adopted by our college, known as LTP (Lecture, Training and Practical) methods, a part of skill development which caters to the needs of slow and quick learners. Further, the special coaching classes, language lab facility are provided to the reluctant students or slow learners. The mentor system appears to be more effective in the integration of the students academically and socially. Maximum utilization of ICT enabled classes, seminars and paper presentations by the students, village visits, community work, charts, exhibition, interactions with professionals, role play, regular moot court activities, client counseling, imparting legal literacy & legal aid programmes in rural and selected urban areas by the faculty and students will enriches the practical application of the subjects studied by them is an incarnation through an invitro to an invivo conditions.*

### A. Introduction:

Innovation in teaching process evolves from numerous sources. By involving all the students in active learning processes, meaningful knowledge can be constructed and students are motivated

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to reframe issues and inspire them in solving the societal problems. Dr.S.Radhakrishnanan an eloquent speaker, an innovative educationist, a great humanist with an outstanding vibrancy in his creative flow stated that, the aim of education as the instrument for social, economic and cultural change. For social and national integration, for increasing productively, education should be properly utilized. “The importance of education is not only in knowledge and skill, but it is to help us to live with others.” He is of the view that teaching of moral values should be through real and living examples. He wants that the student should come close to society and nature in order to understand the same. In the current situations, Changes have been unprecedented and so large-scale and so fast. All his university education reforms have been overtaken by new demands, new responses.

The focal point of this paper is assessing the application of innovative teaching methods from the contemporary needs with special reference to social sciences preferably the methods adopted by the autonomous College. Law is a branch of social discipline, however the present context it has akin relationship with the other disciplines such as science, commerce, technology and medicine. Therefore, it is a challenging task to the teachers to equip them with the modern techniques and also devise the curriculum according to the student need based. The legal education is to ensure that while teachers are teaching explaining students are learning and understanding the argumentation. The aim is to ensure that students become familiar with the standards of legal thinking as soon and as efficiently as possible. The learning and teaching process are two faces of the same coin. Both are supplementary and complimentary to each other in developing an innovative teaching method. Traditional methods are not enough to promote adequate level and quality of student learning. We have to change the pedagogy of teaching from teacher-centered methods to student-centered aspects of teaching and learning. The real quality and excellence of the institution is basically assessed on the quality of education imparted in the college. In the competitive world, the survival of the educational institutions depends on its unique method followed in the quality of learning and teaching process. It is also one of the major criteria to recognize and placing the college with potential for excellence.

Basically, the innovative methods may be a common phenomenon in any discipline. It may be motivating, enhancing students knowledge, prepare them to perform better way in their

examination and creating a good opportunity in placements etc., further, the graduates comes out must be capable of performing individual jobs and also self-confident in solving the problems of society and their clients approach them on various socio-legal issues. It is the primary responsibility of the State to provide the eligible with good quality education at reasonable cost. The Constitution of India also specially provided that right to life also includes right to education and it is an aspect of human right was held in *Mohini Jain V. State of Karnataka*<sup>1</sup> and *Unni Krishnan V.State of A.P.*<sup>2</sup> cases, where the Supreme Court reiterated the importance of primary as well a higher education. Consequently, it is specifically included under Article.21-A<sup>3</sup> of the Constitution of India. To ensure the quality education the University Grants Commission (UGC) and Accreditation bodies like NAAC, also working hard to improve the quality of education from the global perspective.

## **B. Major components of innovative practices:**

The teaching practice varies from subject to subject, person to person, or it depends on the respective discipline. The methodology of teaching varies from one to another person, teaching method devised by the experts it limited application and it cannot said to be absolute in its application. Each teaching a method adopted by the teacher depends on the target group or trainees. Instructional methods and teaching methods mean the same thing. They are primarily descriptions of the learning objective oriented activities and flow of information between teachers and students. Although some may argue otherwise, to split hairs over whether such methods are meaningfully different adds nothing to the process of learning to be a teacher. Direct and indirect instruction are two main categories that many educators find useful for classifying teaching methods, but it is, as you will see, a bit more complicated than placing all instruction into two categories. Any instructional method a teacher uses has advantages, disadvantages, and requires some preliminary preparation. Constructivist learning theory says that all knowledge is constructed from a base of prior knowledge. Children are not a blank slate and knowledge cannot be imparted without the child making sense of it according to his or her current conceptions. According to Audrey Gray, the characteristics of a constructivist classroom are the learners are

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<sup>1</sup> (1992) 3SCC 666

<sup>2</sup> (1993)1SCC645

<sup>3</sup> 86<sup>th</sup> constitutional Amendment Act ,2002

actively involved the environment is democratic the activities are interactive and student-centered the teacher facilitates a process of learning in which students are encouraged to be responsible and autonomous. The common methods followed by the facilitators are, lecture method, discussion, cooperative teaching, panel discussion, case studies, Audio-visual aids, role playing, worksheets and survey etc., The teaching techniques and innovative practices followed by the law schools in addition to the above techniques, some uniqueness is to followed while teaching law. Law subjects from the contemporary issues, it is no more confined to conventional type of cases or subjects to be dealt. It involves both natural and social science. Law being a complex social science, the growth of law is phenomenal, complex with diversified situations. Experimentation is going on to devise the appropriate techniques of teaching. It may vary to regional wise and at the international level. The Basic tenets of good practice in teaching and learning according to Stark (2007) some guidelines for using active learning in the University classroom include the following<sup>4</sup>:

- Professor must be “student oriented.”
- Students participate in setting goals.
- Climate is collegial and supportive.
- Activities are problem-centered and student-driven.
- Assessment is continuous and supportive.
- Teaching is “developmental” rather than “directive” and “presentational.”

Chickering and Gamson (1987) formulated seven principles for good practice in undergraduate education;

- Encourage contacts between students and faculty.
- Develop reciprocity and cooperation among students.
- Use active learning techniques.
- Give prompt feedback.
- Emphasize time on task.
- Communicate high expectations.
- Respect diverse talents and ways of learning.

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<sup>4</sup>Refer: Article by Patricia C. Skalnik and J. Robert Skalnik, “*Active Learning and Innovation in Marketing Education-A Case Review*’ published in the Journal of Research innovative teaching volume.1issue.1 2012

All the said parameters may be commonly accepted to every discipline. It is optional and might be relevant in law education; imparting legal education has to be evaluated on the above said guidelines. In legal education, the law colleges developed their own way of teaching techniques and experimented in unique methods, namely;

**i. The LTP methods:** The major techniques as adopted by our college, known as LTP (Lecture, Training and Practical) methods, a part of skill development which caters to the needs of slow and quick learners. As a preliminary exercise, identify the skill and practical component of each subject. The syllabus is prepared in such way that, it encompasses all the three ingredients. For example, a particular topic or unit is divided into areas which are exclusively theoretical, the components which required a kind of training is demonstrated through activity oriented assignment and the areas which is of practical in nature, where students are advised to study and prepare their own inferences. It also blended with formal tools of training such as; state the desired outcome, choose the appropriate teaching method, refrain from giving the proposition of law first, instead make them arrive at that, provide as many illustrations/ case laws as possible and intersperse lecture with personal experience and anecdotes.

**ii. Class seminars and paper presentations:** In order to develop language and developing self confidence in public speaking is to be developed through class seminar and paper presentations. From the selected areas of the syllabus and also from the emerging areas students are asked to prepare paper and present it in power point presentations or ICT enabled facilities.

**iii. Legal aid and legal literacy:** This is a two in one programme enhances the skills of advocacy and also involved the students in community oriented services. Though it is a part of the curriculum, frequent field visits, survey techniques, prepare of questionnaire on various socio legal aspects will enriches the knowledge and develops real practical exposure to the students. Therefore, legal science is not abounding with fictional questions, open-ended situations and problems. The step-by-step logical problem-solving through knowledge delivered by the teacher is more suitable in legal education. In this scenario the role of the student is to become a real

problem solver who masters legal knowledge through more or less bounded problem solving. On the other hand the task of the teacher is to guide the student to the right knowledge and solution.

**iv. Moot Court activities:** It is major practical training oriented techniques normally followed by all the law schools. This training equips a law student to cope successfully with the strains of profession in the courts of law. The training imparts several essential skills such as research, data analysis, framing of the issues and contentions, examining & cross-examining and presenting the arguments. The training enables the student to learn the art of drafting of conveyances, pleadings and memorials. Moot Court competition will also increase the level of awareness and understanding of the mandate and activities of the Court. Furthermore, it will promote access and facilitate understanding of the judicial processes at the Court. Legal training anywhere in the world requires the capacity to objectively assess the facts, apply relevant principles of law and legislation and bring out reasons and arguments to justify ones stand. In addition to the moot exercises, college also organizing the client counseling classes. This is process where, when a client and counselor set aside time in order to explore difficulties which may include the stressful or emotional feelings of the client. It helps the client to see things more clearly, possibly from a different view-point. This can enable the client to focus on feelings, experiences or behavior, with a goal to facilitating positive change.

**v. Research oriented activities:** The seminar paper is one where students are given an ample opportunity to select any areas or interdisciplinary study on the challenging or issues of national and international importance. It is also included either as a part of field work, internship or a dissertation work.

**vi. Case study methods and case review assignments:** Students have to select any area of law as a case study and preparation of the report in the form of project. Students also deputed to various establishments to collect the data and also a kind of training from the professional and NGO's based groups. Case review is an analytical method of study of the judgments of the High Courts and the Supreme Court. It will develop the skills which are essentially for lawyers.

The other innovative and best practices which are directly or indirectly enhance the overall progress of the students which also inculcates drafting and oratory skills, conduct activities like quiz, debate, chart preparation it may be further used as a educational aid for the successive groups of students, interaction with judges and lawyers on contemporary issues, Alternative disputes redressal mechanisms (ADR) are tributaries to teaching and learning process.

### **C. Conclusion and suggestions:**

The main purpose of education is the capacity building of human-resource in its chosen field. Well trained and committed teachers are dearth of the day due to obvious reasons. However, teaching in higher education has its own scope and abundant avenues to the teacher who had a passion for teaching. Therefore, to enhance the quality of teaching and learning adapting to the changed environment is inevitable. Adapting the innovative methods in teaching by way of active participation in the seminars and conferences will facilitates knowledge of the teachers. Innovative teachers are risk takers, innovative teachers are passionate about teaching, keep themselves vital. Teaching and learning center events do provide a meeting place and a source of new ideas and materials for innovators. These faculties especially value the opportunity to find out what is new and to meet colleagues across the disciplines. The teaching methods followed by the law schools and also the learning method adapted by the law schools are to be tested with modern requirements.

Hence, In the light of above, I would like suggest some changes in the teaching practices; Periodic upgrading of curriculum, it should be a dynamic one both in contents and practicable way. Law being an interdisciplinary subject and it focuses on focus on heterogeneous group of learners it requires a new vista in the method of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning center events do provide a meeting place and a source of new ideas and materials for innovators. These faculties especially value the opportunity to find out what is new and to meet colleagues across the disciplines. Teachers actively identify prior knowledge necessary for learning the new concepts and equip themselves by planning tasks for reinforcing or teaching the basic concepts while preparing to teach the new material. Both Conventional and innovative shall be applied according to the need based and circumstantial way. An innovative method gives a new flavor to the original or conventional methods of teaching.

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