

Legal Education in Pakistan: Legal Framework for Free and Fair Elections and The Role of the Election Commission of Pakistan

Mian Muhammad Saleem

miansaleem@awkum.edu.pk

Associate Professor, Department of Law Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Pakistan

Corresponding Author: * Mian Muhammad Saleem miansaleem@awkum.edu.pk

Received: 7-08-2025

Revised: 29-08-2025

Accepted: 13-09-2025

Published: 01-10-2025

ABSTRACT

In Pakistan, legal education is pulled into immense trouble by its regulation, that which is taught and student performance. This essay takes a closer look at the current state of affairs of the law training there. Attention is put on the standards that are set, course content, and skills that graduates have. One of the major segments paves this compared to leading systems in UK and US. Program establishment, the manner of instruction, personnel supervising quality, and practical job preparation are all areas with gaps. In Pakistan, the new lawyers are deficient of talents required due to scattered rules and old school practices. Man setups in UK and US have stable control, drive seriously on practice, and have steep barriers to entry, so their graduates graduate high-performing. The target of ideas here is on leaders, schools and such bodies like the Pakistan Bar Council or HEC to change. Hitch together loose ends in management For a single way. Renew courses and make them relevant. Increase requirements on standards in order to maintain them high. More emphasis should be put on real abilities and proper behavior. Such gestures uplift the norm of new lawyers and cement the law work in general.

Keywords: *Legal Education in Pakistan; Regulatory Framework; Curriculum Standards; Professional Skills Development; Comparative Legal Education (UK and US); Pakistan Bar Council; Higher Education Commission; Legal Profession Reform*

INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, legal education is facing massive challenges following its rules, what is taught and the outcome of students. This article takes a close examination at the current state of affairs in law training there. Inattention is paid to setting the standards, course content, and graduate competencies. This is compiled against a lead in top systems in the UK and US in a critical section. There are lapses in the arrangement of programs, method of instruction, the ones who monitor quality and practical job preparation. Pakistan has plenty of old-school and haphazard rules and leaves the aspiring lawyers lacking in talents they require. UK and US systems have a stable dominance, drive to the edge on practice, and block high barriers of entry, thus their graduates enter the field prepared. The target of the ideas in this case is leaders, schools and agencies such as the Pakistan Bar Council or HEC to initiate changes. Knot hanging strings in superintendence to one. Energize courses to conform to contemporary times. Increase demands on standards to maintain them. Emphasize more on practical abilities and right conduct. These actions elevate level of the new lawyers and strengthen the law work in general.

METHODOLOGY

The paper will apply the qualitative doctrinal and comparative approach to research using primarily secondary sources in an attempt to evaluate the situation in legal education in Pakistan and to suggest

change. It is based on the analysis of regulatory documents and policy instruments released by the Pakistan Bar Council (PBC) and the Higher Education Commission (HEC) such as the PBC Legal Education Rules 2015, subsequent amendments and HEC model curricula and guidelines (particularly the revised four-year LLB curriculum 2025) to comprehend the formal structure of law schools. These materials are consulted alongside university rules and public orders of Supreme Court concerning admission tests (LAT), exit tests (Law-GAT) and closing or accreditation of law colleges and so as to establish gaps, overlaps and conflicts in supervisions. The research also examines scholarly resources and empirical studies of legal education in Pakistan, and commentaries, policy statements and the news in order to embrace the perception of stakeholders regarding the quality of the curriculum, teaching practices, faculty profile, and graduate outcomes. Desk-based research on the structure of legal education in the UK and US is introduced to establish a comparative element, which is reports, rules and explanatory material of the LLB/JD pathways, vocational training, bar examination and clinical education, which will determine aspects that lead to greater professional standards in other countries and that can be applied to the Pakistani context. The approach is structural (the analysis of rules and norms) and comparative (between Pakistan and the UK/US), with the descriptive synthesis of the empirical work already in the field, this is a weakness, yet the approach still offers a sound platform on which to diagnose regulatory, curricular and pedagogical failures and to make realistic proposals to remedy it.

Law Education Regulations in Pakistan

Dual Oversight by PBC and HEC

In Pakistan, there are two major bodies that deal with legal education rules. This job is shared by the Pakistan Bar Council, PBC and the Higher Education Commission, or HEC. The PBC is elected by lawyers and derives its power through a 1973 law to promote improved legal education and makes decisions on legal degree requirements. All higher learning spots are under the watch of the HEC and these include the spots that offer LLB, LLM, and PhD in law. Both parties establish their own rules and exams, yet they walk over each other. Such confusion brings about confusion on who decides on approving law schools, courses to teach and whether degrees matter. One report has indicated the way their split rules and inter-related employment trigger fights. The schools remain at cross roads as on which one to adhere to. The division of power retards fixes as no field thrives well with bosses who do not get along. To straighten the situation, people want there to be a thin line between what each is doing, or what they at least should have worked closer as a team.

PBC's Legal Education Rules

In 1978, the PBC released the initial legal education rules. Those were supposed to establish fundamental standards of law courses. By 2015, the situation was already appalling as the number of shaky law schools was spurting out. So the PBC revised and repackaged new rules. Step to the bar was installed in the 2015 edition. They extended the LLB to five years, lowering the previous three years program that followed an additional degree. By 2018 all short programs were forced to cease operations. Next days children jump into law right after high school in a prolonged fashion. This allows them to do basics out of law at the beginning and do more intensive work, similar to India. Secondly, the guidelines restricted 100 new LLB students per school per year and prohibited night courses on it. Leaders desired to prevent the proliferation of junk schools, and maintain groups sufficiently small to have decent lessons. And they tightened ties and approvals even further. All schools were not connected to a new law spot since 2015. The old private ones were re-inspected over teachers, books, buildings, etc. The PBC also added that teaching of higher law

content such as LLB or PhD required permission first by the both them and HEC. This drag is extended even to the graduate level, to ensure the places are up to it.

HEC's Role and Recent Reforms

The HEC operates side by side with PBC regulations and even has its position to ensure such solidity of school work even within the law. They would establish teams that would go and check and construct sample field plans. In the case of law, their 2011 guide to the five-year LLB gives the main classes and hours schools ought to achieve. The HEC also assisted in the execution of the best court directives of changes as well. Since 2019, they have joined with PBC to begin a Law Graduate Assessment Test, or Law-GAT, to pass which LLB graduates need in order to qualify to enroll as lawyers. This was after a court push in 2018 to have tests done on start and end of law paths. Since 2018, a Law Admission Test, LAT, was introduced as a condition to join the five year LLB. And Law-GAT sets up to keep off grads prior to administration. Such measures attempt to boost who heads in and out, because until there were unworthy children escaping and the poor graduates making first employment.

By the year 2025, HEC collaborated in a massive renovation of classes with the education group of PBC. They reduced LLB to four years, as it is done in other undergrad programs elsewhere and elsewhere in the world. The highest court gave the green light and a new LLB plan takes effect in fall 2025. It operates eight period terms having more bend room. Grads complete 25 courses on basics and tricks that are mandatory, six courses in special groups, four cross-field courses, a work stint watched to get a feel of it. The new list emphasizes new skills such as unearthing facts of law, writing, and practice clinics. It deals with hot law spots to produce more focused and complete pros. This change is encouraging, but it is dependent on the effectiveness of schools implementing it and monitoring it across the country.

Enforcement Challenges

With all the rules available, it is still hard to enforce them. Auditors declare that half of the 2015 PBC regulations are being half done courtesy of slack checks and counterchecks. PBC and HEC do run spot visits. In 2018 and 2019, they closed most of the bad schools after they were ordered to do so by the courts. But spotsome watches leave some breakers of their rules. The two-boss deal opens holes. One school may score on book inspections conducted by the HEC, but fail on work quality tests such as inadequate number of instructors on full-time schedule or excessive number of children. Confusion of rule in situations whereby one party has prevailed, leaves everything in ruins, according to one part. Teams agitate to have a single joint managing boss or tighter connections. Now this is connected with a new office of legal education under PBC that contacts HEC and they both sit in the team of classes. Time can tell whether this team play can ensure that entry tests, classes plans and school structures work on any law spot.

The Curriculum and Pedagogy of Law Schools in Pakistan

Curriculum Content

Pakistani law courses are adherent to such major themes as constitutional regulations, crimes, transactions, injustices, land ownership and the judicial procedures. They imitate the old British method of colonialism. Until recently regulators established a list of most schools. The five-year agreement began in the year 2016. It introduced the elementary classes early. Cogitate English, local history and mere social stuff. These broaden the knowledge of the students. But the whole thing felt old. It narrowed down on pure facts of law.

New areas got ignored. Such objects as online regulations, safeguarding nature, other methods of conflict resolution or actual client work. The schools were not so innovative in classes. They merely discussed laws and judicial decisions without a lot of background. That is altered by the 2025 plan of HEC. It sets 25 must-take classes. Together with selection of major subjects. Business regulations, international law, management of crime. Cross-subject items join in. A work placement attracts marks. The objective strikes actual tricks and up to date data. Yet paper plans start the fix. The schools need to construct lessons. Educators should capture these changes.

Teaching Methods

Law spot classes remain stuck on discussion. Students memorise and repeat information. There is a weak consideration given to critical thinking. There is not much back-and-forth that occurs. One observer mentioned that classes do not indulge seriously on the reason rules are there. In Western spots, questions or puzzle of the case are prompted. In this case students get notes taken out of talks. They make use of fast instructions to test. Exams hit once at term end. Written ones exalt recollection dumps. Not using law on fresh cases. Grads come out feeble on actual matters. They are lacking in the law-breaking practice.

Academic and Faculty Culture

Educators bring down performance as well. Majority of them combine law as a side job. Active lawyers or old judges. Few had learnt deep in the law, or how to teach. Spots would lean towards those who lack time and ability to attend classes. Lessons are saying the same old lessons. Research stays thin. Local writing on law lags. In 2016 only one journal received approval. Courses draw out dogged regional books. Or raw law texts. No deep views or looks abroad. In the absence of stable full-time thinkers the curricula are stagnant. They cut corners or angles they disregard. In 2018, the top court and council urged the improvements in hiring. Heads of the departments require doctorates or big judge positions. The schools are required to maintain fixed full-timers. Upon her pushed these tweak who teaches. Change is led by some confidential locations. They advertise writing by talks in large urban spots. However, it is laborious to turn the teaching round. Not just orders. Mindsets shift. Value new ways. Train staff. Prod students to learn not only to memorize.

Graduate and professional outcomes are assessed by examining quality in graduate education programs and quality improvement in professional development programs at the University of Alabama.

The concerns of this arrangement are lead by weak grads. A new poll indicated that everybody was concurring with bad shape. Reforms from 2015 helped some. But rollouts stayed soft. Grads are substandard according to insiders. Lessons and exercises lack preparing them to the actual job. They have no cutting up, composition of law, solving puzzles. The cram culture allows them to parrot rules. But applying flops. Tests for licenses show it. Many bomb on logic parts. English hurts too. Courts and books use it. Poor abilities interfere with precise writings or discussions. Such gaps immobilize new lawyers.

Bad prep shows in work. Fresh ones stumble at start. Delays and slip-ups are witnessed in courts. Bad set up and poor ethic slip are noticed by the judges. Some act wild in halls. Over 150 schools flood the field. Top spots fight hard. Elite graduates plunder overseas extras or excellent secondary schools. They find secure employment or judicial well-paid positions. Most grind low courts. Little guide there. Pay stays low. UK and US filter tight. Difficult tests or trainee places allow the strong ones to get in. Pakistan allow all degree holders before new test graduate. Now are skills diffusing through starters.

Pakistan possesses a host of quick and talented attorneys indeed. However, many of them acquired their know-how in the non-school system. Others even plunged into their own books. Other mentees were shadowed over experienced lawyers working on the job. And some attended to additional degrees abroad. Reports and watchers paint in the big picture. Deep fixes in teaching law are some of the important ones in enhancing what grads cause on average. Solid grads work more on behalf of people. Without them courts operate smoother. The entire system of justice becomes more just as well. Next we look at the UK and US law learning and prep styles.

Comparisons in UK and US Legal Education

The legal training in Pakistan might be compared to that of the United Kingdom and the United States - the two jurisdictions which are characterized by strict legal training. The law in the UK is an undergraduate course (LLB) that lasts three years with a compulsory training at the professional level. Law graduates need to pass either the Bar vocational course (lawyers (barristers)) or the Legal Practice Course (lawyers (sololices)).

and then to pass a period of apprenticeship (pupillage or a two-year training contract), to become fully qualifiedwickerhamilton.co.ukwickerhamilton.co.uk. The UK curriculum does not only include the core legal topics but also a focus on the analysis of cases and reasoning of law by means of small group tutorials and moot courts. A small percentage of the graduates who do take an LLB ever become an actual lawyer, as filters operate at a vocational level especially basically to maintain quality through providing a good deal of practical training.

In the US, law is a graduate-level activity. Admission is competitive (based on GPAs and the LSAT exam), and the JD program is intensive: the first year is spent on basic subjects in a Socratic method (training students to think critically), and the others come with an extensive number of electives, clinics, and internships. To be licensed all the graduates should pass a state bar exam that is considered a rigid competency barrier. The ABA accreditation criteria combined with the bar exam creates a very elevated degree of uniformity and quality in the law school and graduates.

Important Dissimilarities

Both UK and US systems have the structured and well-regulated tracks that unite the theoretical, as well as practical skills and the gatekeeping examinations. The UK with its professional bar course and supervised practice limits the training of the new lawyers to a real-life practice before an individual could practice. These features of the US system stressing the interactive teaching, clinical experience and the bar exam make graduates who do not have to be apprenticed, yet they have demonstrated their competence by passing standardized tests and engaging in practical course material. By contrast, it is possible to enter the profession in Pakistan with a law graduate almost without an equivalent period of practical training or testing, according to the system prior to reforms. This has led to a decrease in the average level of skills in new lawyers. The experience of the UK and the US teaches that well-developed curricula, the skills-based approach to the learning process, and highly qualified standards lead to more proficient legal professionals. It is in these spheres that Pakistan is now trying to improve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Regulators, institutions, and policymakers should work together in order to bring back law education in Pakistan. Key steps include:

- Improve coordination of the regulatory affairs: PBC and HEC are to coordinate their standards and degrees of supervision. The legal education standards should be set and implemented jointly by a united legal education council or directorate (including PBC, HEC, and academics, and judiciary). Such authority would remove duplication of duties and provide uniform accreditation, curriculum ratification, and quality inspections.
- Modernize curriculum and teaching: Law schools need to adopt the new flagship 2025 curriculum on its emphasis on applied skills and an interdisciplinary approach. Clinical legal education must be incorporated (in moot courts, legal clinics, and internships) in order to have students to obtain practical experience. Staff members must be educated to embrace interactive forms of teaching (case studies, problem-solving exercises) rather than the use of a rote-based teaching.
- Strengthen quality assurance: Regulators are expected to use strict implementation of accreditation requirements (qualification of faculty, facilities, classes sizes) and frequent inspection of law colleges. Any institution that does not be able to comply with minimum standards should be sanctioned (a possible closure of admissions). Entry and exit exams (LAT and Law-GAT) should also persist in filtering the candidates and their curriculum should be not only updated in accordance with the skills demanded of the new lawyers but also the post LLB apprenticeship should be formalized and a model such as the pupil system should materialize to finally grant full-fledged licensing.
- Inventory faculty and resources: Universities and the government must invest more in the law faculties. The process of invitation of additional full-time professors with high degrees (LLM/PhD) and training on pedagogical work will raise the quality of teaching. There should be an improvement of libraries and online databases to facilitate research. HEC and PBC may implement such incentives as research grants or teaching excellence awards on the law faculty to raise their academic performance.
- Focus on morality and interdisciplinarity: Studies of law ought to teach professional morality and perspective. Professional responsibility and legal ethics courses should be compulsory in the LLB and ethical knowledge should be assessed in bar exams. Similarly, interdisciplinary courses (i.e. law and technology, economics, human rights) need to be introduced in the curriculum to result in well-rounded graduates who are able to solve complex societal problems.
- The achievement of such reforms will be very rigid and need great dedication of all the stakeholders, and through these measures it will be possible and in accordance with the world best practices. In the long run they will be able to make a significant improvement in the quality of legal education and in the professionalism of the legal practitioners in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The legal education system in Pakistan has been a matter of great concern although some efforts have been made to reform it in the recent days. This paper has demonstrated that poor results have been occasioned by fragmented supervision, the outdated curriculums, rote based instruction and teaching. Several law graduates do not possess the necessary skills in analysis and practice and it reduces transparency of the legal practice. The longer LLB program, admission tests and new curricula are some of the advances in the

