International Journal of Sociology and Political Science
www.sociologyjournal.in
Online ISSN: 2664-7745, Print ISSN: 2664-7737
Received: 01-12-2021; Accepted: 15-12-2021; Published: 30-12-2021
Volume 3, Issue 2, 2021, Page No. 73-79

So-called 'non-law' in law: Rethinking interdisciplinarity and faculty hierarchy in Indian legal education

Anil Kumar
Assistant Professor of Sociology, School of Legal Studies, Central University of Kashmir, India

Abstract
The introduction of the five-year integrated LL.B. programme in 1987 marked a paradigm shift in Indian legal education, explicitly designed to embed legal training within the broader intellectual frameworks of the humanities, social sciences, and commerce. This reform was intended to produce legally trained professionals who understood law as a social institution. However, a significant contradiction has emerged: the faculty recruited to teach these essential interdisciplinary subjects are often categorised as "non-law" teachers. This label creates a symbolic and institutional hierarchy that marginalises their contributions and undermines the very interdisciplinarity the curriculum promises.

This article, drawing on the author's lived experience as a sociologist within a law faculty, interrogates this persistent divide. It situates the "law" versus "non-law" binary within the historical evolution of Indian legal education, examining its regulatory foundations and institutional manifestations. The paper argues that the term "non-law" is a misnomer that is intellectually untenable and institutionally harmful. Law is inherently interdisciplinary, pulling its legitimacy and vitality from sociology, political science, history, and economics. Through a combination of historical analysis, policy review, comparative perspective, and autoethnographic reflection, this article demonstrates how this hierarchical distinction stifles pedagogical innovation and critical research. It concludes by advocating for a more inclusive institutional framework that recognises the constitutive role of all disciplines in legal education.

Keywords: Legal education; interdisciplinarity; non-law; social sciences; pedagogy; india; faculty hierarchy; multidisciplinarity

Introduction

The integration of law with disciplines like history, political science, sociology, economics, and literature through the five-year integrated LL.B. programme was envisioned as a transformative reform in Indian legal education. Initiated by the University Grants Commission (UGC) in the late 1980s and championed by the Bar Council of India (BCI), this model aimed to broaden the intellectual horizons of future lawyers, moving decisively beyond a narrow, technical, and positivist reading of statutes to a richer, more nuanced understanding of law as a dynamic institution embedded in society, economy, politics, and culture. The ambition was nothing short of creating a new generation of legal professionals: not mere technicians of the law, but jurists, social engineers, and critical thinkers who could handle the complex dynamics between legal norms and social realities.

Yet, over three decades later, a distinct and deeply ironic contradiction persists at the very heart of this project. The faculty members recruited to teach these disciplines, which form the essential pillars of the integrated programme's philosophical foundation, are routinely and officially designated within law schools and university systems as "non-law" teachers. This terminology is far from a benign or neutral descriptor; it is a powerful linguistic and institutional marker that carries significant social, professional, and epistemological weight. It creates a rigid symbolic hierarchy within academic institutions, demarcating boundaries of belonging and legitimacy. Those trained in conventional doctrinal law subjects, such as jurisprudence, constitutional law, criminal procedure, and contract law, are perceived and institutionally validated as the core "insiders," the authentic custodians of legal knowledge. In contrast, sociologists, political scientists, historians, and economists are positioned as the "outsiders," essential yet peripheral adjuncts to the main enterprise, tolerated for their utility but denied full membership in the juristic community.

I have directly experienced this marginalisation, an experience that forms the empirical and emotional core of this critique.[1] As a faculty member trained in sociology working within a law school, I have consistently encountered a subtle but persistent undercurrent of discrimination and epistemic disregard. My courses, though mandated by the BCI's curriculum, were often treated as secondary, less rigorous, or mere "value-added" components rather than foundational to legal understanding. My participation in core academic decision-making processes was sometimes circumscribed, and my expertise was questioned in realms deemed the exclusive preserve of "law" faculty.

A pivotal moment of reflection, which serves as the catalyst for this paper, came after I completed a doctorate from the School of Social Sciences at Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, and was formally recognised as a PhD supervisor within the Department of Law. The students allocated for supervision were exclusively registered for a PhD in Law. This practical acceptance of sociological expertise as valid for advanced legal research stood in sharp, almost schizophrenic, contrast to the persistent institutional label of "non-law." This cognitive dissonance culminated recently when the first doctoral student under my supervision successfully defended her thesis on a robust socio-legal theme. This practical, successful outcome posed

a fundamental, almost existential question to the very category I am critiquing: if sociology is fundamentally "non-law," how can it form the legitimate, scholarly basis for supervising, guiding, and ultimately awarding a doctorate in law?

This personal and professional dilemma forms the critical point of departure for this article. It is a point that I contend resonates with a wider, systemic structural issue defining the culture and administration of Indian legal education. At stake is not only the professional identity and dignity of individual faculty members but the larger, far more critical epistemological question: what is law, and how should it be taught and understood? This paper argues that the "non-law" label is an earnest misnomer, a categorically flawed and intellectually impoverished term that perpetuates an anachronistic and sterile vision of legal education. It asserts that true, meaningful interdisciplinarity requires not just the token inclusion of other disciplines in the curriculum brochures but the full, equal, and enthusiastic institutional, professional, and intellectual recognition of those who embody and teach them. It demands a move from a paradigm of integration based on hierarchy to one based on constitutive synthesis.

This article will proceed to unpack this argument through a multi-pronged approach. First, it will dig into the historical evolution and regulatory architecture of Indian legal education to trace the origins of this dichotomy. Second, it will employ a comparative lens to situate the Indian experience within global trends, demonstrating that the marginalisation of social sciences is not an inevitable feature of legal training but a peculiarly Indian institutional failing. Third, and most crucially, it will utilise my reflexive, autoethnographic insights to illuminate the lived experience of this hierarchy, giving a human face to an abstract policy problem. Finally, by deconstructing the "non-law" myth and highlighting emergent counter-spaces, such as the establishment of the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Innovation and Multidisciplinary Research within the School of Legal Studies at the Central University of Kashmir, the article advocates a radical reimagining of the law school as a genuinely pluralistic intellectual space, the only way to realise the original but still unfulfilled promise of the five-year integrated programme.

Materials and Methods

To critically examine the pervasive and persistent "law" versus "non-law" dichotomy in Indian legal education, this article employs a multi-methodological approach. This pluralistic framework is necessary to capture the various dimensions of the problem, *viz*., historical, regulatory, comparative, experiential, and discursive.

1. Historical and Policy Analysis

A foundational element of this research involves tracing the historical evolution of legal education in India, from the colonial era to the post-independence period and the landmark reforms of the 1980s (Government of India, 2020) [13]. This analysis scrutinises key policy documents and regulatory frameworks that have shaped the ecosystem. Primary sources include the Advocates Act (1961) [1], which established the BCI as the apex regulatory body; the various BCI Rules on Legal Education (particularly the 2008 rules); reports from the Law Commission of India (most notably the 184th Report on Legal Education in 2002) [6]; and UGC guidelines. This historical-policy trajectory helps to contextualise the moment of interdisciplinarity's formal introduction and exposes the regulatory contradictions that allowed the "non-law" category to emerge.

2. Comparative Perspective

The Indian scenario is consciously contrasted with global trends to demonstrate that the rigid hierarchy observed domestically is not a universal constant (Menski, 2006; David & Brierley, 1978) [10, 17]. The paper draws comparisons with models in the United States, where elite law schools have long embraced scholars with PhDs in economics, philosophy, and history as central figures in faculty rosters, pioneering fields like Law and Economics and Critical Legal Studies. Similarly, references are made to European traditions, particularly in Germany and the UK, where legal philosophy (*Rechtsphilosophie*) and sociology of law (*Rechtssoziologie*) are often considered indispensable components of a comprehensive legal education. This comparative analysis serves to highlight the specificity of the Indian problem and to learn from alternative, more integrative institutional practices.

3. Reflexive and Experiential Insights (Autoethnography)

The primary methodological strength and unique contribution of this article stem from my lived experiences as a "non-law" faculty member within a law school. This reflexive, autoethnographic approach is not indulgent but is methodologically necessary to understand the everyday practices, subtle perceptions, unspoken biases, and institutional politics that sustain this hierarchy. Personal narratives and specific incidents, such as the struggle for recognition as a PhD supervisor, are used not as anecdotal evidence but as critical data points for a broader structural and institutional critique. This method gives voice to the subjective experience of marginalisation that often remains hidden in policy documents and official reports.

4. Documentary and Literary Analysis

Existing scholarly literature on legal education, interdisciplinary studies, and the sociology of knowledge is reviewed to theoretically contextualise the argument. This includes engaging with works by legal theorists like Roger Cotterrell (2006) [9] on law and society, Upendra Baxi (1986) [6] on Indian legal education, and Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2002) [18] on the 'give and take' of law and power. This analysis helps to ground the empirical observations within a broader theoretical framework, moving the discussion from a specific Indian institutional issue to a larger epistemological debate about the nature of legal knowledge itself.

It is important to note that this methodology is qualitative and critical in nature. It does not seek to present quantitative data on faculty numbers or student performance but offers a deep, qualitative reading of the structures, discourses, and lived experiences that shape the contested space of interdisciplinarity in Indian legal education. The aim is to provoke thought, challenge categories, and advocate for institutional change based on a rigorous critique of the status quo.

Results

The empirical findings of this study, derived from historical analysis, policy review, and lived experience, reveal a consistent pattern where the aspirational goals of interdisciplinary legal education are systematically undermined by a rigid institutional hierarchy. The "non-law" categorisation is not an accident but a product of a specific historical and regulatory evolution.

1. The Historical Evolution of Legal Education in India

The modern structure of Indian legal education is inextricably linked to its colonial past. The British established a system designed to produce a class of interpreters, Indian lawyers and lower-court judges, who would facilitate the administration of colonial law and governance. This system prized a technical, positivist understanding of law as a set of rules to be applied, divorced from its social, moral, and political consequences. The focus was on procedural expertise and a command of statutes and precedents, creating a legal profession that served as a handmaiden to the state rather than a critic of it.

Post-independence, the Advocates Act of 1961 [1] established the BCI as the supreme regulatory body for the legal profession and legal education. For decades, the dominant model remained the three-year LL.B. course, pursued only after completing an undergraduate degree in any discipline. This structure, while not explicitly interdisciplinary, implicitly acknowledged the importance of a prior intellectual foundation. A law student entered the programme already equipped with knowledge of history, economics, political science, or sociology. The law was, in effect, layered upon a pre-existing base of liberal arts or science education, creating a de facto, though unstructured, interdisciplinarity.

By the 1980s, a consensus emerged among legal academics, judges, and reformers that this system was failing. It was criticised for producing graduates with a narrow, technical skill set, lacking critical thinking, social awareness, and the ability to see law as an instrument of social justice. The move for reform was galvanised by the landmark establishment of the National Law School of India University (NLSIU), Bangalore, in 1987. This institution became the prototype for a new model: the five-year integrated LL.B. programme.

This was a deliberate and radical break from the past. The new model was designed to admit students directly after higher secondary education, offering a combination of foundational undergraduate education and professional legal training in a continuous, intensive five-year period. The very nomenclature of these programmes, like B.A.LL.B., B.B.A.LL.B., B.Com.LL.B., and B.Sc.LL.B., explicitly highlights their interdisciplinary intent. The first two years were heavily dedicated to subjects like Economics, Sociology, History, Political Science, and English, intended to provide the social, economic, and historical context within which law operates. The reform was a clear acknowledgement that a jurist must first be an educated citizen, equipped with the analytical tools of the humanities and social sciences to understand the "why" behind the "what" of the law.

2. The Institutional Emergence of the "Non-Law" Category

Paradoxically, the very reform that was meant to dissolve boundaries ended up creating a new, more rigid institutional hierarchy. As law schools across the country adopted the integrated model, they faced a practical necessity: they needed to hire faculty to teach these new foundational courses. Consequently, law faculties began recruiting teachers trained not in law but in sociology, political science, history, English literature, and economics.

Instead of being celebrated as the pioneers and essential practitioners of this new interdisciplinary vision, these faculty members were institutionally branded as "non-law" teachers. This label, now formally encoded in university statutes, faculty rosters, and administrative jargon, functioned as a powerful mechanism of institutional sorting. It created a symbolic and practical wall between the "real" law teachers (those with LL.M. and PhD degrees in conventional law subjects) and the ancillary "others." Recent critiques emphasise that despite decades of reform, interdisciplinary faculty remain marginalised in Indian legal education (Chandrachud, 2020) [7]. The "non-law" tag became a marker of otherness, implying a deficit, a lack of the essential qualification (a law degree) that defined the in-group.

This categorisation is empirically and intellectually flawed. A cursory examination of any core law subject reveals its inherent interdisciplinary nature. Jurisprudence is inseparable from philosophy and ethics. Constitutional law is incomprehensible without a deep grounding in political theory, history, and sociology (Krishnaswamy, 2009) [15]. Criminal law draws fundamentally upon sociology, psychology, and criminology to understand concepts like deviance, intent, and social defence. Intellectual Property Law is embedded in economics, ethics, and the philosophy of ownership. Environmental law requires knowledge of ecology, science, and economics. To designate the foundational disciplines of these very subjects as "non-law" is a serious logical contradiction. It reveals a system that benefits from the substance of interdisciplinary knowledge while rejecting the identity of its bearers.

3. Lived Experiences of Marginalisation: A Case Study

The marginalisation of "non-law" faculty is not an abstract concept; it has tangible, professional consequences that impact career trajectories, pedagogical autonomy, and intellectual contribution. My experience within the Department of Law at the Central University of Kashmir provides an obvious case study.

Upon joining, despite being mandated to teach core courses from the BCI's syllabus, I encountered immediate institutional ambiguity regarding my role. While my courses were listed as mandatory, there was a persistent, underlying perception of them being less critical. A significant barrier emerged in the context of postgraduate guidance. There was initial institutional resistance to allowing me to supervise LL.M. dissertations, based on the rationale that supervision was the exclusive domain of "law" faculty. This was a clear professional marginalisation, excluding me from a core academic activity despite my subject being integral to the LL.M. curriculum.

The most significant battle, however, was over the recognition as a Doctoral supervisor. The argument against

it was circular and tautological: a PhD in Law must be supervised by a PhD in Law; since my doctorate was not in Law, I was, by definition, ineligible. This ignored the fundamental nature of a PhD, which is training in research methodology, critical analysis, and scholarly contribution, skills that are discipline-agnostic.

This changed only after persistent negotiation, advocacy, and a demonstration of my research profile, which was explicitly focused on socio-legal themes. The university eventually recognised the validity of my expertise, permitting me to supervise PhD scholars registered in Law. This practical acceptance was a hard-won victory against the rigid "non-law" classification. The outcome was also made possible by the absence of any other research supervisor in the Department of Law and by the support of my Vice Chancellor, who himself had a background in Law and made no rigid distinction between sociology and criminology.

The ultimate validation of this stance came when the first doctoral student under my supervision successfully defended her thesis on a theme situated at the intersection of law, crime, society, and gender. The research employed sociological theory and ethnographic methods to analyse the efficacy of legal instruments, producing a thesis that was unanimously approved by a panel of senior law professors. This outcome posed an unanswerable question to the upholders of the dichotomy: if the research output is a legitimate and accepted contribution to legal scholarship, how can the disciplinary training that produced it be considered "non-law"? The successful supervision and defence served as a practical deconstruction of the very category that sought to exclude me.

4. Institutional Counter-Spaces: The Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Innovation and Multidisciplinary Research

In direct response to these institutional constraints and as a proactive attempt to promote genuine interdisciplinarity, I advanced a proposal in 2020 for a dedicated research centre within the School of Legal Studies at the Central University of Kashmir. The vision was to create an institutional space that would not merely tolerate but actively champion multidisciplinary research, freeing it from the confines of the "law" versus "non-law" debate.

After extensive discussion and receiving approval through the Departmental Board of Studies, the School Board, and the University Academic Council, the centre was established as the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Innovation and Multidisciplinary Research. The choice of nomenclature was deliberate and symbolic. Dr. B.R. Ambedkar was not only the chief architect of the Indian Constitution but also a towering interdisciplinary scholar, a jurist, economist, sociologist, and political thinker. His life’s work embodies the very synthesis the centre aims to promote: using law, informed by a deep understanding of social sciences, as a tool for social justice and transformative change.

The Centre represents an institutional counter-space, a deliberate effort to create a platform where philosophy, sociology, history, economics, and political science can flourish *within* a law school, not as subordinate disciplines but as equal partners in the production of knowledge. Its stated objectives include

- Promoting innovative and multidisciplinary research on emerging themes like technology and society, environmental justice, gender and law, and human rights.
- Organising seminars, workshops, and lectures that bring together scholars from diverse fields.
- Ultimately, launching multidisciplinary PhD programmes that formally award degrees reflecting this integration (e.g., PhD in Law and Society).

The establishment of the Ambedkar Centre is a concrete result of the struggle against the "non-law" label. It is an institutional acknowledgement that the future of legal scholarship lies in breaking down walls, not in reinforcing them. It stands as a witness to the possibility of creating inclusive frameworks that recognise the constitutive role of all disciplines in understanding the complex phenomenon of law.

Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section illuminate a deep-seated institutional and epistemological conflict within Indian legal education. The disjuncture between the interdisciplinary ambition of the five-year programme and the marginalisation of its practitioners through the "non-law" label is not a minor administrative glitch. It is a symptom of a fundamental tension over the very nature of legal knowledge itself. This section looks into the implications of this conflict, deconstructing the misnomer, highlighting indispensable contributions, drawing comparative lessons, and outlining a path forward.

1. Deconstructing the "Non-Law" Misnomer: An Epistemic Injustice

The term "non-law" is intellectually unsustainable and performs a function of what philosopher Miranda Fricker (2007) [11] terms "epistemic injustice," a wrong done to someone specifically in their capacity as a knower. To label sociology, political science, or history as "non-law" is to actively ignore the historical and philosophical foundations of law itself.

Law is not a self-enclosed, autonomous universe of rules that emerged sui generis. It is a social institution whose very emergence, operation, and legitimacy are closely connected with political power, economic organisation, cultural norms, and historical processes. As Kennedy (1982) [14] observes, doctrinal knowledge alone is insufficient to understand the real-world effects of law, highlighting the need for social science insights. For instance, the Indian Penal Code of 1860 was not a neutral, technical exercise in logic. It was a great project of colonial governance and social engineering, designed to codify Victorian morals, suppress dissent, and create a manageable subject population. To analyse the IPC without the tools of history and political science is to misunderstand it completely. Similarly, contemporary commercial law is inseparably linked to global economic theories and practices. To call economics "non-law" in the face of the complicated regulatory frameworks governing markets is a logical absurdity.

Furthermore, the lived experience of law, including how it is interpreted, enforced, circumvented, and resisted by citizens, cannot be understood through black-letter statutes and case law alone. A Dalit woman's encounter with the legal system regarding land rights or caste atrocity is shaped by centuries of social hierarchy and gender oppression

(Ahuja, 2014; Chatterjee, 2004) [2, 8]. A tribal community's interaction with environmental laws is mediated by a distinct worldview and a history of displacement. To treat sociology and anthropology as external to law is to wilfully obscure the reality of how law is lived and experienced by the majority of Indians. The "law" vs. "non-law" binary is not just academically inaccurate; it is a form of epistemic violence that erases the very social fabric in which legal reasoning is situated and from which it draws its meaning. It privileges a doctrinal, state-centric view of law over a sociological, pluralistic one.

2. The Indispensable Contributions of "Non-Law" Disciplines

The value of these disciplines is not merely negative (i.e., critiquing the "non-law" tag) but scholarly, positive and generative. Each brings a unique and essential toolkit to legal education, without which a lawyer's training remains incomplete

- Sociology illuminates the critical gap between "law on the books" and "law in action" (Galanter, 1989) [12]. It reveals how access to justice is systematically mediated by class, caste, gender, and geographic location. Sociological methods, like ethnography and fieldwork, provide empirical evidence of how laws affect real lives, moving beyond appellate court narratives to the stories of the district courts, police stations, and villages.
- Political Science provides the essential tools to understand law's relation to state power, sovereignty, democratic governance, and the politics of rights. The ongoing debates around judicial activism, the separation of powers, and the use of public interest litigation (PIL) are fundamentally political struggles (Sathe, 2002) [20]. A lawyer who cannot analyse the political motivations behind a statute or a judicial decision is a mere technician, unable to anticipate legal change or advocate strategically.
- History provides the crucial context that reminds us that law is never timeless or natural. It is a product of specific historical conjunctures, conflicts, and compromises. From the colonial codifications to the constitutional assembly debates to the neoliberal reforms of the 1990s, legal evolution can only be fully grasped through a historical lens. It frees legal thinking from the dogma of the present.
- Philosophy provides the indispensable normative lens for evaluating law, pushing students to ask not just what the law *is* but what it ought to be. It engages with concepts of justice, equality, freedom, and rights, providing the ethical foundation without which legal practice can descend into amoral opportunism.

Together, these disciplines dismantle the illusion of law's autonomy and enrich legal scholarship and practice, creating legally trained minds that are critical, contextual, and ethically engaged.

3. Global Comparisons: Lessons in Integration and Status

The Indian tendency to structurally marginalise interdisciplinary faculty is not a global norm. In fact, leading law schools across the world have moved in the opposite direction, recognising that the most cutting-edge legal scholarship occurs at the intersection with other disciplines. Global socio-legal scholarship demonstrates that the integration of law with social sciences is essential (Sarat & Kearns, 1992) [19].

In the United States, the trend began with the rise of Legal Realism in the early 20th century, which explicitly argued that law cannot be understood without the social sciences. Today, elite law schools like Yale, Harvard, and Stanford actively recruit and prize scholars with PhDs in economics, history, philosophy, and sociology. Figures like Cass Sunstein (law and behavioural economics), Catharine MacKinnon (law and feminist theory), and the late Ronald Coase (law and economics) are not peripheral figures; they are central to their institutions' identities and intellectual missions. Their contributions are celebrated as groundbreaking legal scholarship, not relegated to a "non-law" category.

Similarly, in Europe, the integration is often even more acute. Many German law faculties have mandatory courses in Rechtsphilosophie (legal philosophy) and Rechtssoziologie (sociology of law), taught by scholars who are respected as full members of the law faculty. The UK's Oxbridge model has long maintained law as an undergraduate degree firmly within the humanities tradition, requiring engagement with history, theory, and ethics from the outset.

The comparative lesson is clear: the problem is not the inclusion of these disciplines per se, but their stigmatised and subordinate status within India's peculiar institutional hierarchy. The global academy has largely accepted that law is a social science, or at the very least, a discipline that must be in constant dialogue with the social sciences and humanities. India’s adherence to the "non-law" distinction marks it as an outlier, clinging to an outdated and intellectually impoverished view of legal education.

4. Implications for Pedagogy, Research, and Institutional Culture

Moving beyond the "non-law" label is not merely a semantic exercise; it has practical implications for how law schools function

1. **Pedagogical Reformation:** Courses in social sciences and humanities must be fully integrated into the curriculum, not treated as ancillary electives to be endured in the first two years. Teaching must move beyond rote learning of sociological or political concepts. It should involve co-teaching by law and social science faculty, case studies that blend doctrinal analysis with social context, and assessments that evaluate a student's ability to synthesise different forms of knowledge. A course on Contract Law should actively incorporate economic analysis of bargaining power. A course on Criminal Law must integrate sociological data on policing and incarceration.

2. **Research Innovation:** Internationally, faculty hierarchies are mitigated through institutional policies that recognise interdisciplinary contributions (Altbach & de Wit, 2018) [3]. Institutions must actively promote and fund genuinely interdisciplinary research. This can be achieved through dedicated multidisciplinary research centres (such as the Ambedkar Centre), seed grants for collaborative projects between law and social science departments, and the creation of doctoral

programmes that formally award degrees in "Law and Society," "Law and Political Economy," or in related fields such as criminology, psychology, sociology, and social anthropology. Such initiatives would attract scholars not only from law but also from the social sciences and humanities, encouraging research that more accurately reflects the complex nature of legal problems.

3. **Faculty Policy and Institutional Culture:** A conscious culture of respect and parity must be cultivated. University statutes must abolish the "non-law" designation, instead using neutral, descriptive terms like "Faculty of Sociology" or "Faculty of Economics." Faculty development policies should encourage cross-disciplinary dialogue through workshops and seminars. Most importantly, "non-law" faculty must be granted absolute parity in all academic functions: membership in senior administrative bodies, professional rights in academic councils, and unquestioned eligibility to supervise doctoral research in their areas of expertise. Leadership must come from Deans and Vice-Chancellors who visibly champion the value of disciplinary diversity as the law school's greatest strength, not a bureaucratic complication.

The failure to address this hierarchy ultimately diminishes the quality of Indian legal education and the legal profession it produces. It risks creating a generation of lawyers who are proficient in manipulating rules but lack the intellectual depth and social awareness to be architects of a more just society.

Conclusion

The story of the so-called "non-law" in Indian legal education is, at its heart, a story of extreme misrecognition. The institutionalisation of the five-year integrated LL.B. programme was a monumental reform, born from a clear-eyed acknowledgement that the practice and understanding of law require the grounding, the analytical rigour, and the humanistic perspective of other disciplines. It was an implicit pact: the law would open its doors to the humanities and social sciences to regain its relevance and transformative potential. Yet, in a stunning act of bad faith, the system has consistently refused to honour the bearers of this knowledge, welcoming their content while rejecting their identity.

This article has argued that the "non-law" designation is more than just a clumsy administrative label; it is an intellectually untenable and institutionally harmful category that perpetuates an anachronistic and sterile vision of legal education. It is a vestige of a colonial and positivist past that viewed law as a closed system of rules, a view that has been thoroughly discredited by decades of global legal scholarship. Through historical analysis, I have traced how this dichotomy emerged not from pedagogical necessity but from an institutional failure to fully embrace the logic of its own reforms. The comparative perspective has revealed that India's rigid hierarchy is an outlier, not a norm, placing its legal academe at a disadvantage in the global exchange of ideas (Twining, 2009) [21].

Most powerfully, my autoethnographic account from the Central University of Kashmir has given a human face to this structural issue. The struggle for recognition as a PhD supervisor and the ultimate success of a sociologically-guided doctorate in Law serve as an irrefutable practical deconstruction of the "non-law" myth. It demonstrates that the knowledge from these disciplines is not external to law but is, in fact, constitutive of it. The establishment of the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Centre for Innovation and Multidisciplinary Research shows that it is possible to create inclusive institutional spaces that challenge hierarchical labelling and encourage genuine collaboration across disciplines.

The debate over "non-law" is ultimately about the future soul of legal education in India. It forces a choice between two visions. Do we want law schools that produce sophisticated technicians, adept at manipulating rules and procedures but blind to social injustice, historical context, and the political economy of power? Or do we want institutions that cultivate true jurists, thinkers and advocates who see law not as an end in itself but as part of a larger, more complex struggle for justice, one that must be historically grounded, politically aware, and socially responsive? The answer, for the sake of Indian democracy and its constitutional promise, must be the latter. The challenges of the 21st century, from digital privacy and algorithmic governance to climate justice and pandemic response, are not purely legal problems. They are socio-legal, techno-legal, and politico-legal challenges that demand interdisciplinary solutions. Law schools must be at the forefront of this thinking.

To embrace true interdisciplinarity is to recognise law in its most robust sense: as an intellectual, moral, and social enterprise. This means removing the "non-law" distinction not just from university statutes but from the institutional mindset. It calls for a shift in how we teach and structure law, where philosophers, sociologists, economists, and doctrinal lawyers are not ranked hierarchically but work together as equals, each contributing to a complete understanding of the law. This approach is the only way to realise the democratic and transformative promise of the five-year integrated programme envisioned over three decades ago. The time for this overdue change is now.

[1]**Author's Note:** This article emerges from my lived experience as a sociologist within a law faculty. Its critical gaze is directed not at individual colleagues, for whom I have the utmost professional respect, but at the pervasive institutional structures and epistemic categories that shape our collective practice. The "law" vs. "non-law" hierarchy is a systemic issue, often an unexamined consequence of how legal and social science disciplines have been traditionally trained and valorised. The argument presented here is a plea for a collective "change of lens," a structural and philosophical shift towards recognising the constitutive interdisciplinarity of law itself, for the benefit of our students and the future of legal education in India.

References

1. Advocates Act. Government of India, 1961.
2. Ahuja R. Indian Social System. Rawat Publications, 2014.
3. Altbach PG, de Wit H. Internationalization and Higher Education: Global Trends and Emerging Opportunities. Sense Publishers, 2018.
4. Bar Council of India. Rules of Legal Education, 1987.
5. Bar Council of India. Rules of Legal Education, 2008.

6. Baxi U. Towards a Sociology of Indian Law. Satvahan Publications, 1986.
7. Chandrachud D. Legal Education in India: Challenges and Reforms. Oxford University Press, 2020.
8. Chatterjee P. The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World. Columbia University Press, 2004.
9. Cotterrell R. Law, Culture and Society: Legal Ideas in the Mirror of Social Theory. Routledge, 2006.
10. David R, Brierley JEC. Major Legal Systems in the World Today: An Introduction to the Comparative Study of Law (2nd ed.). Simon and Schuster, 1978.
11. Fricker M. Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing. Oxford University Press, 2007.
12. Galanter M. Law and Society in Modern India. Oxford University Press, 1989.
13. Government of India. National Education Policy, 2020.
14. Kennedy D. The Role of Law in Society. Harvard University Press, 1982.
15. Krishnaswamy S. Democracy and Constitutionalism in India: A Study of the Basic Structure Doctrine. Oxford University Press, 2009.
16. Law Commission of India. 184th Report on Legal Education, 2002.
17. Menski W. Comparative Law in a Global Context: The Legal Systems of Asia and Africa. Cambridge University Press, 2006.
18. Santos B de S. Toward a New Legal Common Sense: Law, Globalization, and Emancipation. Cambridge University Press, 2002.
19. Sarat A, Kearns T. Law in Everyday Life. University of Chicago Press, 1992.
20. Sathe SP. Judicial Activism in India: Transgressing Borders and Enforcing Limits. Oxford University Press, 2002.
21. Twining W. General Jurisprudence: Understanding Law from a Global Perspective. Cambridge University Press, 2009.