

IDIA DIVERSITY SURVEY (2013-2014): ANALYSIS AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS**BY: SHAMNAD BASHEER AND GEETANJALI SHARMA*****I. INTRODUCTION- SURVEY BACKGROUND**

IDIA conducted a nation-wide survey of first year law students across nine national law universities (NLUs) in India during March/April, 2014. The survey was conducted just as these students were about to complete their first year in the university.

The aim of the survey was to capture data on the following:

- i) the extent of diversity at the various law schools.
- ii) record students' experiences at the various NLUs.
- ii) capture the overall academic and social profile of the students.

The data and student responses highlight areas of potential reform at the various law schools, that will facilitate the evolution of a better and more inclusive legal education ecosystem.

The data and analysis as presented below pertain only to the 5 of the leading law schools,¹ given it was an easier subset to deal with. For data pertaining to all 9 law schools, see the Parent Survey available on the IDIA website.²

The summary of the survey data for the top 5 law schools (along with our analysis) is set out below, followed by a longer and more comprehensive assessment. Before we proceed, a caveat must be noted. Not all the students in the first years of the various NLU's that we studied took the survey. The numbers of those that took the survey (more than 90% of all first year batches studied) are reflected in Table 1 in section III below.

* Shamnad Basheer is the Founder and Managing Trustee of IDIA. Geetanjali Sharma is a consultant with IDIA. The authors wish to thank Avinandan Kundu, former deputy director, IDIA for all his help with administering the survey. And all the IDIA team leaders/members in 2014-15 for helping run the surveys in their respective law schools. We also wish to thank Kian Ganz (legally india) and Raghul Sudheesh (bar and bench) with the data relating to recruitments. Lastly we thank Shubham Jain (volunteer, IDIA), Vineet Bhalla (Associate Director, IDIA) and Donnie Ashok (volunteer, IDIA) for their inputs and for helping upload survey results on the IDIA website.

¹ The notion of a "leading" law school is a highly subjective one. We've used this as a term of convenience and are going primarily by CLAT preferences (the leading law schools as determined by the overall number of students who pick them in their CLAT preferences). Although NLU Delhi is not part of CLAT and conducts a separate entrance examination (AILET), it is now widely perceived as a leading law school and we are of the view that were it to be part of CLAT, it would certainly find a place in the top 5 student preference list. Hence its inclusion. It bears noting that not all NLU's are leading law schools. Some could in fact be said to be misleading too!

²See <<http://idialaw.com/idia-irap-survey-results>>.

II. Summary of Survey:

The survey reveals a serious diversity deficit with the following stark indicators as highlighted below:

1. Only 5 students from the top 5 law schools studied in vernacular medium schools. In other words, just 1% of the sampled student population.
2. The vast majority of students, i.e. more than 70% hailed from families where both parents spoke fluent English. This is a significant indicator of affluence as far their socio-economic status is concerned.
3. More than 50% of students hail from families earning an average annual income of Rs. 10 lakhs and above (close to approximately Rs 1 lakh a month or above).
4. Religious minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims and Parsis are very sparsely represented across the top five law schools. While Muslims constitute 12% of India's population, they constitute only 1% of the students at the top law schools.
5. Almost 87% students accessed expensive CLAT coaching at various commercial centres, demonstrating that expensive and sophisticated training in the form of CLAT coaching is now almost seen as a necessary pre-requisite for cracking CLAT.

The survey further points to various other issues with the current law school ecosystem:

1. **Law School Ecosystem-** A large number of students recorded 'fitting in' problems (35%) and harassment/bullying (20%) at law schools, attributable to various reasons including:
 - their lack of knowledge about certain popular TV shows, movies, food, brands etc.;
 - their spoken language and communication skills;
 - regions they belonged to;
 - the clothes they wore;
 - their gender/sexual orientation;
 - their family background;
 - their financial status/spending ability;
 - their caste;
 - their skin-colour
2. **Financial Issues with Tuition Fees-** A number of students have to rely on scholarships and financial assistance in order to pay NLU tuition fees which have been escalating year after year. One may note that top NLUs at present have fees of approximately Rs 2 lakhs per annum (resulting in a total fee of over 10 lakhs for 5 years).³

³ The tuition fees alone at most of the NLU's is between 1.5 and 2.5 lakhs a year (USD 2419 and 4032). The National University of Study and Research in Law charges around INR 2.42 lakhs (USD 3903) a year. Adding the other costs including living expenses, books, travel etc, the average cost per year for a law student works out to approximately INR 3 lakhs (USD 4839) a year; or INR 15 lakhs (USD 24,194) for a 5 year law

These exorbitant fees clearly operate as a deterrent for various underprivileged students seeking to study law. Furthermore, bank loans are not always easy to obtain and discriminate against the bottom of the pyramid in terms of requiring expensive collateral for the sanctioning of the loan.

We therefore suggest that NLUs institute internal scholarships and economic support schemes in order to facilitate the entry of underprivileged scholars to these premier institutions.

3. **Academic Support Programmes-** More than 25% students indicated that they find it difficult to follow their first year classes. Law schools need to therefore institute peer and and college academic support systems. Some colleges already had such such systems in place, though the efficacy of these require a detailed assessment, which we hope to do in future.

Our intention, as noted earlier, is to highlight areas of reform and make suitable recommendations for fostering a more diverse legal education ecosystem. These suggestions are not only relevant for the premier law schools, but could be of value to various other institutions across India that are serious about fostering diversity and inclusion.

III Comprehensive Assessment:

Firstly, the spread of students across the various NLU’s who participated in the survey is outlined below:⁴

Table 1: Participating NLUs and Students

NLUs represented	Ranking of NLU (based primarily on CLAT preferences)	No. of Students who took Survey	Total Batch Strength

education. See Basheer, Krishnaprasad, Mitra and Mohapatra, “The Making of Legal Elites and the IDIA of Justice”, HLS Program on the Legal Profession Research Paper No. 2014-18, available at < http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2433036>

⁴ Ranks have been obtained in the order of their CLAT preference ranking for 2013, Kian Ganz & Prachi Shrivastava, 2013 CLAT Law School Prefs, Legally India, June 3, 2013; <http://www.legallyindia.com/201306033719/Pre-law-student/2013-clat-preferences-nuals-drops>

NLSIU Bangalore	1	80	80
NALSAR Hyderabad	2	67	80
NUJS Kolkata	3	96	120
NLU Jodhpur	5 ⁵	99	120
NLU Delhi ⁶	-	60	80

Total Number of Students who took the Survey: 402

i. Gender Diversity (Table 2)

Of the total 402 students who took the IDIA survey, the gender diversity/spread is as below:

Gender Description	Percentage of proportionate Representation
Females	51.74%
Males	47.76%
Other	0.50%

As with previous years, the gender diversity ratio appears almost equally spread between males and females, with females exceeding males this year by around 4%.⁷

Interestingly, 0.5% of the total number of students ticked the column for “others”. This comes in the immediate backdrop of the Supreme Court of India delivering a land-mark verdict recognising the marginalised transgender community as a third gender.⁸ As a result of this judgment, all identity documents in India including a birth certificate,

⁵ NLU Bhopal ranked as number 4. Though, we were unable to conduct a survey here, owing to the lack of an IDIA team.

⁶ NLU Delhi is not part of CLAT and conducts its independent examination named AILET (All India Law Entrance Test) for admission to its under-graduate program. Therefore the All India Ranking based on CLAT preferences excludes this college.

⁷ In the last year’s survey, out of the total 549 representations, 262 were males (47.7%) and 268 were females (48.8%).

⁸ National Legal Services Authority v. Union of India, (2014) 5 SCC 438

passport and driving licence make space for the third gender and also entitle them to certain benefits as minorities.

ii. General v. Reserved

The majority of students surveyed belong to the general category (69.11%). This is to be expected since the majority of the seats available at NLU's are for general category students. The tabular representation of students from reserved categories are as below:

Table 3- Representation across reserved seats

Categories	Percentage of proportionate Representation
Scheduled Caste	11.65%
Foreign National	5.32%
Scheduled Tribe	5.06%
Non Resident Indian	3.54%
Physically handicapped	2.53%
State domicile	2.03%
Other Backward Class	0.25%
Kashmiri Migrant	0.25%
NRI sponsored	0.25%

A more comprehensive table outlining the various seats available at the 5 NLU's surveyed is available at the end of this report as an Annexure.

iii. Geographic/regional representation (Table 4)

The distribution of students across the various Indian states and Union Territories is as below:

State Categories	Percentage of proportionate Representation
Rajasthan	13.90%
Uttar Pradesh	12.53%
Karnataka	9.81%
NCT of Delhi	8.99%
Andhra Pradesh	7.63%

Madhya Pradesh & Maharashtra	6.81% (each)
West-Bengal & Tamil Nadu	4.63% (each)
Haryana, Bihar & Kerala	3.81% (each)
Odhisha	1.91%
Jharkhand	1.36%
Himachal Pradesh & Uttarakhand	1.09% (each)
Gujarat & Chattisgarh	0.82% (each)
Punjab, Assam & Jammu Kashmir	0.54% (each)
Meghalaya	0.27%
Other (including states <i>inter-alia</i> Chandigarh, Goa, Telangana and countries including Nepal and Bangladesh)	3.54%

As with previous years, the North Eastern states are scantily represented. The last year's survey had nil representations from Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Sikkim and Tripura, whereas Assam had six students and Manipur, Meghalaya and Mizoram had one representation each out of the total 549 students who took the survey. This year's survey further indicates a decline in the representation as states such as Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh & Tripura have not been represented at all.

On the other side, states such as Karnataka, UP & Rajasthan are heavily represented when compared to other states (**See Table 4**). While UP (12.5%) might be explained away as a result of it housing the largest percentage of the Indian population⁹ what can one infer from the representations made from Karnataka and Rajasthan? Could this indicate that states where NLUs are located are able to attract more native students (namely NLS Bangalore in Karnataka and NLU Jodhpur in Rajasthan)? One might argue that this by itself is not enough to account for the significant number of native students at these respective law schools, particularly since they do not have a state based domicile reservation. One factor could be that since NLU, Jodhpur & NLSIU, Bangalore, had maximum representation in the survey (compared to other law schools), students hailing from Rajasthan & Karnataka may have found more mention.

It also bears noting that students from Rajasthan and Karnataka are spread out across the various other law schools in India. From all of this, one might conclude that the presence of a well reputed law school in a state is more likely to induce more awareness

⁹ Uttar Pradesh with a population of more than 166 million holds distinction of being the most populous state in the country followed by Maharashtra (97 million) and Bihar (83 million)- Census of India, 2011, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, available at: http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/area_and_population.aspx

around law as a career and prompt more CLAT exam takers from that state. In future, we hope to look at the CLAT application numbers and see from which states these CLAT exam takers were to correlate this finding.

Therefore, the setting up of more law schools in under-represented states (e.g. North East) may help in increasing their representation overall across the various premier law schools and finally in the top echelons of the legal profession. The creation of NLU Assam is a positive step in this direction. Though for a young law school, it boasts one of the highest tuition fees and therefore acts as a deterrent for the entry of those that are financially not strong, particularly IDIA scholars. Given the level of state support enjoyed by NLU Assam, we would strongly urge the administration to consider ways in which the fees could be reduced.

RELIGIOUS DIVERSITY (TABLE 5)

Religious Affiliation	Percentage of Representation
Hindus	76.34%
Christianity	4.83%
Jainism	3.05%
Buddhism	1.53%
Sikhism	1.27%
Zoroastrianism	1.02%
Islam	0.76%

As with previous years, Hinduism, which accounts for 80.5 % of India’s overall population tops the list.¹⁰

Not too surprisingly, the representation of minority communities is alarmingly low. In fact, the percentage of Muslim representation went down even further with the current batch of students comprising a mere 0.76% muslims¹¹ as against the 1.6% of muslims represented in the previous year’s survey.¹²

FAMILY BACKGROUND

¹⁰ Census of India, 2011, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, available at: http://censusindia.gov.in/Census_And_You/religion.aspx

¹¹ While Christians constitute a 2.3 % of the Indian population, their representation at the law schools was 4.83% and Jains comprising of 0.4% of Indian population had approx. 3% representation in law school.

¹² See 2013 Survey, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013.pdf> (See response to Questions 6 & 7)

1. Professional Background:

Most students hailed from families with government jobs (almost 31%, with 12% from civil services and 19% from other government jobs). The other high categories were business (22%), medicine/engineering (20%).¹³ See below table for more details.

These figures do not differ much from the previous year's survey where students recorded their father's profession as civil servant (10%) or other government servant (27%) and business (21%).¹⁴

Table 6- Family Background Index

Categories of profession	Percentage representation of Fathers	Percentage Representation of Mothers
Business	22%	5%
Civil Services	12%	3%
Other Government Services	19%	5%
Medicine & Engineering	20%	10%
Legal Profession	7%	3%
Teachers/Professors	4.06%	21%
Home-Makers	0.00%	43%
Other	8.38%	10.41%

It must be noted that 8% students opted for the category titled 'Other' where their father's profession traversed sectors such as insurance, hotel & hospitality, bank and management consultancy. It is interesting to compare this category in the top 5 law schools with the parent survey (i.e. the one comprising the 9 NLUs, where approx. 7% students opted for the 'Other' category for father and mother respectively).¹⁵

Interestingly in this parent survey which represents a wider spectrum encompassing 4 additional law schools which are ranked below the top 5 in the CLAT preference pecking order, some responses such as vegetable merchant and farmer were included. This might suggest the relative lack of diversity in the top 5 law schools, when compared with the broader set of 9 NLUs across India. This data re-inforces the reasons why we sought

¹³ The broader category of government jobs includes elite professions such as civil services

¹⁴ See 2013 Survey, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013.pdf> (See response to Question 10 & 11).

¹⁵ See 2013 Survey, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2014-IDIA-Survey.pdf> (See response to Questions 12 & 13)

to study the select 5 law schools as a smaller category which potentially remains more amenable to a higher level of elitism and a lower level of inclusion.

2. English Proficiency (Table 7):

With respect to their parent’s proficiency in English, the data shows the following:

Spoken Language	Percentage of Representation
Both speak good English	70.55%
Only father speaks good English	16.92%
Only mother speaks good English	1.77%
None of them speak good English	10.86%

From the above, it is seen that 70% of students hail from houses where both parents speak good English. Further, as with earlier surveys¹⁶, this one also indicates that the vast majority of NLU students (98.7%) benefited from a high quality English medium education in their class 12 (see table below).

Table 8- Schooling Background

Medium of education in 12 th grade	Percentage of Representation
English	98.73%
Hindi	1.02%
Other Vernacular languages	0.25%

As was noted in our paper for the Harvard project on the legal profession,¹⁷ proficiency in English and a good English medium education is a clear social marker for affluence. It also helps such students ace CLAT, an exam that itself demands a very degree of proficiency in English.

3. Link with the Law

Of the students who participated in the survey, 29% were connected to the law in some way (i.e. had family, friends or close relatives associated with law). This is lower than the earlier years which showed a greater percentage of students with links to the legal

¹⁶ As per 2013 survey results, 97% students were from the English medium background

¹⁷ See Basheer, Krishnaprasad, Mitra and Mohapatra, “The Making of Legal Elites and the IDIA of Justice”, HLS Program on the Legal Profession Research Paper No. 2014-18, available at < http://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2433036>

profession. For instance in 2013, 42% students in elite law schools were associated with legal profession in some way.¹⁸

This could perhaps indicate that law is beginning to attract a wider set of affluent children from non legal backgrounds.

4. Parental Support for the Study of Law: (Table 9)

Nature of parental support	Percentage of Representation
Parents supported the students	85%
Parents support came later	12%
Parents did not support	3%

5. Choice of law as a career (Table 10)

Nature of choice	Percentage of Representation
Own volition	61%
Accidental choice	25%
Fall back option	6%
Parent's compulsion	3%
Other- family history in taking up law, one's own passion, inclination towards earning money, a career in social work etc.	4%

The above two tables (Tables 9 and 10) are again consistent with the view that the NLU's have changed the face of legal education in terms of making it more attractive and not a poor second or third choice, as it had been earlier.¹⁹ However, since this data has not been captured in the previous survey, it is difficult to draw statistical comparison. But the overall societal perception towards law stands evolved and these numbers present a testimony to the same.

INCOME DIVERSITY (Table 11)

Income Group	Percentage of Representation
Above Rs. 15 lakhs	31%
Rs. 10-15 lakhs	22%

¹⁸ See 2013 Survey, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013.pdf> (See response to Question 37)

¹⁹ For a changing perspective towards law as a profession, See, Shamnad Basheer, The lure of the law, India Today, 28 December 2011.

Rs. 3-10 lakhs	34%
Rs. 1-3 lakhs	8%
Rs. 50,000-1 lakh	4%
Less than Rs. 50,000	1%

As seen from the above, more than 50% of students hail from families earning an average monthly income of Rs 1 lakh and above. Those earning Rs 10,000 a month or under are approximately 5%. However, a note of caution: these income levels are never independently verified and there is a risk of under-reporting income levels by students so that they can claim scholarships and the like.

Further, the below section on “student funding” (Table 12) outlining the large number of students who are currently managing their fees with parental financial support (almost 90% of students) would appear to suggest that these parents are in the high income brackets (10-15 lakhs or above in a year). Consequently, the number of students falsely reporting low parental incomes may well be high.

Student Funding and Scholarships (Table 12):

Nature of financial support	Percentage of Representation
Parents support the students	89%
Student loans	7%
Scholarship and relatives’ funding	1%
In the process of applying for a scholarship	8%

The different scholarships listed by students included, the Aditya Birla Scholarship, IDIA funding, Central Scholarship and university specific scholarship, e.g. NUJS merit cum means scholarship. The parent survey in addition states that 1.2% students were pursuing their studies on scholarship. The type of scholarship remained similar to the ones stated above, i.e. Aditya Birla Scholarship, IDIA funding and the SBI incentive scheme partially funded the education of the one of the students. This data indicates that there is a lack of vibrant scholarship support to fund legal education in India. In this regard, more companies and institutions may be recommended to venture in this area.

The survey further indicates that 8% of the students were in the process of applying for a scholarship. This ranged from scholarships provided by the central government and government departments such as Social Welfare as well as private group scholarships and scholarships provided by NCERT. In this regard, it bears noting that a number of government scholarship schemes effectively kick in only after the candidate has taken admission and spent several months and sometimes even a year at the relevant law school. Given that the truly deserving students are those that might not have any means

to whip up a huge sum of fees at the start (to be reimbursed later through scholarships: as is the case with the current SC/ST scholarship administered by the government), this needs to be examined and rectified at the earliest.

It also bears noting that in order to avail bank loans, one has to supply a collateral, such as expensive land or property.²⁰ This requirement is a strong disincentive for several aspiring but under-privileged students to gain access to premier law schools in India. The same must be redressed at the earliest, if the society aspires to foster more inclusive access to premier higher education in India.

EDUCATIONAL PROFILE & MOTIVATION TOWARDS LAW

Table 13- Choice of subject-stream at school

Subject stream	Percentage of Representation
Science	51%
Commerce	35%
Humanities	13%
Other (Arts, Mixed)	1%

As with previous years, the highest percentage of CLAT entrants into law schools belonged to the science stream. Illustratively, 2013 survey results also depict that 50% students hailed from the science background.²¹ These figures disprove the public perception that law students hail mainly from arts and humanities streams.

Table 14- Marks during 12th Standard Examination

Marks	Percentage of Representation
90% - above	44%
80-90%	35%
65-80%	19%
50-65%	2%
Below 50%	1%

These numbers (44% of students scoring more than 90% and 80% of the students scoring 80% or above) indicate that the students entering the leading NLU's are high academic performers in school.

²⁰ The total expenses of studying five years in the top NLUs may range to any amount from 5-10 Lakhs.

²¹ See 2013 Survey, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013.pdf> (See response to Question 15)

Table 15- Possible Career choices after law school

Career Option	Percentage of Representation
Undecided	36%
Preparing for civil/judicial services	22%
Working in a law-firms	16%
Pursuing higher studies or post-graduation in law	5%
Litigation practice	12%
Joining an international organisation/NGO	7%
Joining a company	4%
Starting a new entity/entrepreneurship	4%
Academia or research	3%
Joining a public sector organisation	2%
‘Other’ including writer, journalist and politician	3%

Given that this survey was administered only to first year law students, it is not at all surprising that the highest percentage of students remained undecided with respect to their future careers. However, what is surprising is that the next highest percentage represented those that were keen on the civil services. Given that the initial reputation of the law schools centered around prestigious corporate jobs at leading law firms and most law graduates opt for law firm jobs,²² it is surprising that a higher percentage of students did not indicate law firms as their preferred choice. Perhaps the fact that a number of law school alumni are opting in increasing numbers for alternative careers outside the law firm box (such as civil services etc) could possibly help explain this choice/trend, at least in the initial years, when students are free to think up choices absent any financial compulsions or pressures.

Interestingly 12% of the surveyed students opted for litigation, a percentage that is very broadly similar to what actually plays out in practice when students graduate. See table below which captures the ratio of the batch of ‘2014 students opting for litigation.’²³

Table- 16- Career choices after law school

²² For example, in 2014, 36% students (i.e. 202 out of 566 students) surveyed across these 5 top law schools and 4 other law schools in India opted for jobs in the law-firms.

²³ Data obtained from correspondences with websites such as Bar & Bench & Legally India that report recruitment figures for legal industry in India.

Institution	Number opting for litigation	% Of Class size
NLSIU	9	12.5
NLUJ	9	10
NALSAR	7	8.97
NLIU	7	8.64
NLUD	3	4.1

CLAT RELATED DATA

i. Pre-CLAT

As with previous years, a vast majority of students benefited from expensive CLAT coaching. This year too, 87% students indicated that they prepared for CLAT with the support of coaching, whereas only 13% relied on self-study.²⁴

Of those who took up coaching, the majority were trained by LST, reputed as the country's leading trainer for CLAT. Further details of popular coaching centres are represented in the table below:

Table 17- Popularity of CLAT coaching centres

Coaching Centre	Percentage of students enrolled pre-CLAT
LST	62%
Other regional centres such as CLAT Possible, (Jaipur), Bhatara Classes/AB Tutorials (Delhi)	28.35
Sriram	12.46
IMS	2.18
Paradigm & Heritage	1.56 (each)

INCLUSIVE LAW SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT?

A significant number of students (35%) recorded 'fitting in' problems at law schools. More worryingly, approximately 20% of the surveyed students experienced some form of harassment or being bullied/ragged/ridiculed.

The various problems described by them as the cause for their not fitting in/being harassed included:

²⁴ Compare this to the 2013 survey results where 78.1% opted for coaching and 20.4% relied on self-study. 1.5%, i.e. 8 students wanted to take up CLAT coaching but could not afford it. See, <http://idialaw.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/2013.pdf> (response to Question 26)

- their lack of knowledge about certain popular shows, movies, food, brands etc.;
- their spoken language and communication skills;
- regions they belonged to (rampant regionalism)
- the clothes they wore;
- their gender/sexual orientation;
- their family background;
- their financial status/spending ability;
- their caste;
- their skin-colour;
- their disability.
- Competitive atmosphere
- Sudden shift in academic standards

- Cultural shock
- Financial issues, elitism
- Difficulty in following classrooms lectures
- Lack of support in terms of research initiation and other aspects
- Lack of confidence
- Peer pressure and having to succumb to sanctioned practices
- Rampant use of drugs and alcohol

This is a highly alarming trend, and indicates that prejudices based on caste, colour, family income and region often come into play at the law schools. These factors impact the morale and sense of self worth of many a student, particularly those from marginalised communities and impact their experience and performance at law school.

35% students recorded that they faced a ‘culture shock’ when they first entered the law school, owing to various factors outlined below:

- fast moving life in the metros where the law school was located
- regional biases and perceptions;
- an environment of smoking and drinking;
- language divide,
- public obscenity,
- environment of ragging
- an elitist culture.

BUDDY SYSTEM/ COLLEGE SUPPORT

On a positive note, 62% students recorded that their colleges had a peer/buddy support program and seniors to guide the fresher students. Even though the survey could not capture the exact colleges that have this system in place, a vast majority of students responding positively towards the prevalence of such a system remains an optimistic development. A large percentage of students who took the survey attested to such buddy systems as helpful (45%).

Therefore, law schools without such systems ought to consider instituting one at the earliest.

However, since 38% students recorded having only a regular academic support programmes in place, this issue needs immediate redressal. Given that almost 25% students surveyed found class room teaching/discussions difficult to follow, it is imperative to have mechanism such as the buddy system in place. More specifically, the students indicated that they could not follow classes owing to the reading materials being incomprehensible;²⁵ they were hesitant and scared in seeking clarifications and unable to understand follow the lectures in English.

Given this alarming rate of students who are not able to cope with the academic programme, it is incumbent on law schools to institute academic support programmes and training.

College Support For Disability

When asked whether law schools provide adequate support to the students suffering from any form of physical/psychological disability, the responses were mixed. Some said that the college provided some support in the form of counselling and extra time for exams etc. Some disabled students seem to be benefitting from the software purchased by colleges that help them access materials readily, scan the course work. Some found support from teachers and audio logs helpful. However, a number of law schools did not have any explicit support in this regard.

PARTICIPATION IN INTRA AND INTER COLLEGE ACTIVITIES

In what will come as a shocking piece of data, 40% students indicate that they did not participate in any extra curricular or co-curricular activities outside of their classrooms. (mooting, debating, client counselling, MUN, negotiations etc.)

What makes this even more surprising is that “legal education” in particular is more amenable to participation in such activities and most law schools take pride in their performance (at inter collegiate levels) on this front. On being asked the reasons for non-participation, the primary reasons included:

- not being able to cope with their studies and balance this commitment against the activities.
- lack of interest,
- lack of confidence leading to non-participation due to reasons such as- English not being good; and
- perception that they are not good enough and won't fit in.

One caveat in this regard: this survey pertains only to first year students. Presumably given their recent entry into law school and the various academic pressures, it may take them a while to warm up to such activities. Also given that such activities are within a competitive mode (meant to select teams for inter collegiate competitions), a great number may opt out of them.

²⁵ 54% of students indicated that the teacher did not teach well. 18% students also highlighted that they were not interested in the subject.

57% students indicated that they did not participate in any college committee. The reasons for the same were largely similar to what has been recounted in earlier paragraphs. However, a lack of interest (62%) was recorded in the highest response followed by reasons such as not being able to manage studies; not being able to fit in; thinking that they are not good enough and lack of good English skills.

Given that participation in committees helps build valuable skill sets such as managerial skills, team collaboration, leadership etc, this is a cause for concern and more ways to entice participation must be found.

OVERALL LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE (TABLE 18)

Students recorded the following responses with respect to their overall law-school experience so far:

Opinion	Percentage of Representation
Good	54%
Ok	39%
Disappointing	4%

Although a majority (54%) of students found the law school experience good in their very first year, the fact that a significant number (40%) found these alleged “islands of excellence” to be just “okay” is worrying.

CONCLUSION:

Overall, the law schools continue to suffer a serious diversity deficit with the following stark indicators as highlighted below:

1. Only 5 students from the top 5 law schools studied in vernacular medium schools.
2. The vast majority of students, i.e. more than 70% hailed from families where both parents spoke fluent English. This is a significant indicator of affluence as far their socio-economic status is concerned.
3. More than 50% of students hail from an average annual income of Rs. 10 lakhs and above (approximately earning Rs 1 lakh a month or above).
4. Religious minorities such as Sikhs, Muslims and Parsis are very sparsely represented across the top five law schools. While Muslims constitute 12% of India’s population, they constitute only 1% of the students at the top law schools.
5. Almost 87% students accessed expensive CLAT coaching at various commercial centres, demonstrating that expensive and sophisticated training in the form of CLAT coaching is now almost seen as a necessary pre-requisite for cracking CLAT.

The survey further points to various other issues with the current law school ecosystem:

4. **Law School Ecosystem-** A large number of students recorded ‘fitting in’ problems (35%) and harassment/bullying (20%) at law schools, attributable to various reasons including:

- their lack of knowledge about certain popular shows, movies, food, brands etc.;
- their spoken language and communication skills;
- regions they belonged to;
- the clothes they wore;
- their gender/sexual orientation;
- their family background;
- their financial status/spending ability;
- their caste;
- their skin-colour

5. **Financial Issues with Tuition Fees-** A number of students have to rely on scholarships and financial assistance in order to pay NLU tuition fees which are escalating year after year. One may note top NLUs at present have fees of approximately Rs 2 lakhs per annum (resulting in a total fee of over 10 lakhs for 5 years; excluding all stipendiary and other expenses such as living costs and internship expenses). Students especially from the underprivileged background may not be attracted towards a study of law, owing to such daunting fees figures. Furthermore, bank loans are not always easy to obtain and discriminate against the bottom of the pyramid in terms of requiring expensive collateral for the sanctioning of the loan.

In this light, it is suggested that NLUs must institute internal scholarships and economic support schemes in place to facilitate the entry of underprivileged scholars to these premier institutions.

6. **Academic Support Programmes-** More than 25% students indicated that they find it difficult to follow their first year classes. The institutions need to therefore institute peer and professor support systems and college support systems. It was wonderful to note that some colleagues already boasted such support systems. These ought to be strengthened to accommodate the needs of students hailing from diverse backgrounds.

To conclude, the survey has indicated various areas for institutional policy makers and various stakeholders including the professors, student body associations and administration within the NLUs to introspect upon the suggested areas of reforms.

These recommendations will go a long way towards fostering greater diversity within institutions as also making a better ecosystem for all students offering a rich and varied overall experience. The reforms devised on the lines of areas highlighted in the survey could further be vital lessons learnt for other state aided, autonomous and private law universities and colleges across India.

Annexure A

Details of NLU	Number of Seats in the General Category	Number of Seats in the Reserved Category (Category wise break up)								Total Number of Seats in the Reserved Category
		SC	ST	OBC	FN	NRI/NRI Sponsored	Disability	State Domicile	Other category (Specified)	
NLSIU Bangalore	55	12	6	-	5	-	2	-	-	25
NALSAR Hyderabad	41	9	4	-	10	-	2	14	-	39
NUJS Kolkata	78 ²⁶	15	8	-	4	18	2	-	-	47
NLU Jodhpur	77	15	8	-	-	15	3% reservation across	-	-	23
NLU Delhi	52	15%	7.5%	-	-	-	3%			

Table- Representing the total seat wise categories across the NLUs covering General & Reserved Segments

Source- CLAT website, Break up of seats (undergraduate) -

<http://www.clat.ac.in/new%20pdf/Mail-UG-CATEGORY-WISE-SEATS-2014.pdf>

Index:

SC- Scheduled Caste

ST- Scheduled Tribe

OBC- Other Backward Class

FN- Foreign National

NRI- Non-Resident Indian (Category & Sponsored)

²⁶ Starting 2015 CLAT, NUJS would offer a 10% state domicile reservation.

