

CLASSROOM

Learning hours

Indian and foreign universities follow different teaching patterns, owing to which the teaching hours too vary. So how much is too much

■ DEEKSHA TERI

Students, be it school children or college-goers, spend majority of their day in classrooms. Schools in India usually follow a 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. pattern, but universities' timings differ.

Indian universities do not have any set pattern. They schedule different hours of teaching sessions for different courses. However, majority of them have lectures around four times a week and the hours usually range from 5-6 hours, four times a week.

The teaching hours in foreign universities are different. They concentrate more on self-study, rather than classroom teaching. They conduct teaching sessions twice or thrice a week and usually host 10-12 hours of teaching sessions in a week. It can be debated as to

whether the Indian students want a change in this pattern or not.

No time

Being a master's student who shifted to Northern Ireland few months back, Atasi Jain has experienced both worlds. She is pursuing her MS in Data Analytics from Queen's University, Belfast. "In India, I had lectures everyday from 9 a.m. - 3 p.m. It took me an hour to reach college and we were given assignments to complete during the weekend. I was juggling six subjects simultaneously and because of that, I did not get much time to revise," she says. "I'm satisfied with the number of teaching hours in my new university. Every module runs for a month and for each module, I have a teaching week in which there are lectures from 9

a.m. - 5 p.m. Prior to teaching week, there is a reading week which gives me ample time to go through the reading material. Third week of the module, we have drop-in sessions."

On the other hand, some Indian students are happy with their schedule. Neha Singh, a master's student of literature from the University of Delhi, feels that, "The present teaching hour duration of 55 minutes is appropriate. There shouldn't be any increase or decrease in the time duration."

An assistant professor in the same university, Dr. Payal Nagpal, agrees, "Having graduated from Hansraj College, and done my master's from there, we were taught differently. Teaching and learning happened all the time, both inside and outside the classroom. However, for purposes of quantification,



Contact hours: Leave less time for absorption of the material.

the present 14/16 hours a week is good. No change."

The reason some Indian universities like to schedule lectures almost every day of the week is that they are not sure if students would utilise their free days in the right manner. "This is how it has been in Indian universities. The 'self-study' time provided by the university, before exams, is being wasted by the students by procrastinating until the last moment," says Atasi.

A concept of 'reading weeks' is followed in foreign universities. In a term, students are given certain number of reading weeks in which they are expected to read the advised material and work on their assignments.

Insights

Such weeks help students in realising the importance of their free time and gain insights from various sources. But Riddhi Gupta, a final-year MBBS stu-

dent, says that "with the vast variety of distractions present today, it is easy to waste time."

Indian lecturers, however, seem to disagree with this notion. "No hours are ever wasted by students. A strict quantification only yields temporary efficiency. Let us not forget that the non-quantifiable model under which teachers like us and our teachers studied, produced the best minds. Some might think self-study is a waste of time. But it allows students to absorb complex ideas and develop a point of view. They are the most productive hours," says Dr. Payal Nagpal.

If the hours are fine, then what can be done for the betterment of our education system? "Our educational system lacks practical training, because of which talent does not get well-groomed," says Dr. Gurwinder Singh, assistant professor, NLU Himachal Pradesh.

Students seem to agree. "The focus on practical learning should be much more than on theory, because ultimately only that will help us in the real world," says Siddhi Gupta, second-year student of B.A. LL.B (Hons.), National Law School of India University, Bangalore.