

Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Transforming Legal Education

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ABSTRACT

Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) has influenced all the field of knowledge in the world. The influences are felt more and more in education. Because ICTs provide both students and teachers with more opportunities in adapting learning and teaching to individual needs. ICTs have revolutionized the way people work today and are now transforming education systems. Legal education cannot exist in vacuum, therefore development in legal education is necessary in accordance with new means of ICTs. This paper discussed the importance of Information and Communication Technologies in legal Education and the changes it brought in traditional teaching of law.

Keywords: Information and Communication Technologies, ICTs, Legal Education, Computers, Legal Research, Internet.

Introduction

Computers made their entry into education sector in the late 1970s. With computers, other devices like printers, floppy disk drives, scanners and the first digital cameras also made their way in education sector. At that time the term Information Technology (IT) was used to describe computers and these various peripheral devices. Then with arrival of internet and World Wide Web, emails and search engines a complete transformation occurred in almost every field including education. A new term ICT emerged in the language which is short for Information and Communication Technologies. It embraces the many technologies that enable us to receive information and communicate or exchange information with others.¹ According to UNESCO the term "Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) refers to forms of technology that are used to transmit, process, store, create, display, share or exchange information by electronic means."² This broad definition of ICT includes any communication device or application, encompassing: radio, television, cellular phones, computers, satellite systems as well as various services and applications associated with them, such as video conferencing and distance learning.³ ICT can be used to support the educational content, the educational process as well as the organization and Administration of education.⁴

Importance of ICT in Education:

Due to its various characteristics, ICTs are making dynamic changes in society. They are influencing all aspects of life. The influences are felt more and more at schools, colleges and universities. Students and teachers have got more opportunities in adapting learning and teaching to individual needs. ICTs have revolutionized the way people work today and are now transforming education systems.⁵ Education policy-makers are attracted to the prospect that ICT can improve student achievement, improve access to schooling, increase efficiencies and reduce costs, enhance students' ability to learn and promote their lifelong learning, and prepare them for a globally competitive workforce.⁶ Effective ICT integration into the learning process has the potential to engage learners. For instance, using multimedia to present authentic and ill-structured problems in problem-based learning can motivate and challenge students and

¹ Jonathan Anderson, ICT Transforming Education: A Regional Guide, UNESCO, Bangkok, 2010, p.3.

² The UNESCO ICT in Education Programme (2007). Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0015/001567/156769e.pdf>

³ T. Manichander, ICT And Education, Lulu Publication, United States, 2016, p. 2.

⁴ Antoinette Muntjewerff, "ICT in Legal Education", Comparative Research in Law and Political Economy, Vol. 5. No.4, 2009, pp. 669-670.

⁵ Fisseha Mikre, "The Roles of Information Communication Technologies in Education", Ethiopian Journal of Education and Science, Vol. 6, No. 2, 2011, p.1-2.

⁶ Transforming Education: The Power of ICT Policies, UNESCO 2011, p. 4. Available at <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0021/002118/211842e.pdf>

hence develop their problem-solving skills.⁷ The benefits that ICTs can have for teaching and learning include:

1. Using ICT means that information can be obtained almost instantly. The worldwide web, for example, contains a vast amount of easily accessible information. Such information can provide learners with different viewpoints and a wider understanding of issues.
2. ICT helps teachers to adjust teaching materials to suit the needs and ability levels of their students.⁸
3. Computers equipped with internet and other means of ICT provide opportunities to the students to study anytime and anyplace. Now they are not confined to the boundaries of schools and colleges. Use of ICT has extended the scope of offering programme at a distance.⁹
4. ICT promotes multimedia approach of education like, audio-video aid, sounds, motion pictures, television, filmstrips, records, computers and audio tapes etc. The use of audio-video techniques has various advantages in education and learning. It makes learning more interesting. Students can learn more quickly in audio-visual techniques as compared to traditional class room learning. It makes learning more memorable and brings the subject matter to life.¹⁰
5. It creates environment with multiple tools and materials in which student acquire various skills such as critical thinking, typing, presentation, and research skills. It also facilitates contact between students and teachers, allowing joint activities and sharing of ideas.¹¹
6. ICTs enable new ways of teaching and learning rather than simply allow teachers and students to do what they have done before in a better way. ICT has an impact not only on what students should learn, but it also plays a major role on how the students should learn.¹²
7. ICT helps to prepare students for life after school. Proficiency in ICT skills, for example, can improve job prospects.¹³

ICT in Legal Education:

In India legal education is regulated by the Advocates Act, 1961. This Act has provided for setting up of the Bar Council of India and State bar councils in the states. Advocates Act, 1961 empowered the Bar Council of India to fix a minimum academic standards as a precondition for the commencement of study in law.¹⁴ Bar Council of India is also empowered to recognise universities whose degree in law shall be taken as qualification for enrolment as an advocate and for that purpose to visit and inspect universities and colleges.¹⁵ The Act thus empowers the Bar Council of India to prescribe standards of legal education and recognition of law degree for enrolment of law graduates as advocates.

Legal education cannot exist in a vacuum, therefore development in legal education is necessary in accordance with the new means of information and communication technologies. Traditional way of teaching is no longer useful in inculcate the practical skills in students required to meet the challenges of

⁷ Soni Srivastava, "ICT implementation for Education and Learning", IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education, Vol. 6, Issue 4, 2016, pp. 2-3.

⁸ ICT in Schools: Inspectorate Evaluation Studies, Department of Education and Science Dublin, Brunswick Press, Dublin, 2008, pp. 165-166. Available at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/ICT-in-Schools-Inspectorate-Evaluation-Studies.pdf>

⁹ Swati Desai, "Role of Information Communication Technologies in Education", Proceedings of the 4th National Conference; INDIACOM-2010, Computing For Nation Development, Bharati Vidyapeeth's Institute of Computer Applications and Management, New Delhi, February 25 - 26, 2010. P. 4

¹⁰ http://wikieducator.org/Need_and_Importance_of_Information_Technology_in_Education

¹¹ Nicoleta Duța , Oscar Martínez-Rivera, "Between theory and practice: the importance of ICT in Higher Education as a tool for collaborative learning", Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 180, 2015 , p. 1471. Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

¹² Syed Noor-Ul-Amin, "An Effective use of ICT for Education and Learning by Drawing on Worldwide Knowledge, Research, and Experience: ICT as a Change Agent for Education", p. 6. Available at <https://www.nyu.edu/classes/keefer/waoe/amins.pdf>

¹³ ICT in Schools: Inspectorate Evaluation Studies, Department of Education and Science Dublin, Brunswick Press, Dublin, 2008, pp. 165-166. Available at <https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/ICT-in-Schools-Inspectorate-Evaluation-Studies.pdf>

¹⁴ Section 7 (1) (h) of Advocates Act, 1961.

¹⁵ Section 7 (1) (i) of Advocates Act, 1961.

competitive world of 21st century.¹⁶ Accordingly Bar Council of India in its Education Rules, 2008, emphasised the importance of ICT in law colleges and made it mandatory for every law college to provide at least 10 internet access points with desktop facilities and one online database in the library for the students.¹⁷

Application of ICTs in Legal Education:

From the very beginning The Legal Profession is considered as a noble one. Hence, it is necessary to have the best Education System in Law.¹⁸ For many years the use of ICTs to teach law has been a minor concern among law schools and colleges. Due to this they face various difficulties such as, decline enrolment, decline job prospects for law graduates, inability of fresh law graduates to present their cases before courts etc. leading to shutting down of many law colleges. Against this backdrop technology offers attractive possibilities of making legal education more efficient and more effective. This is the reason that now a day's every law college is trying to be equipped with ICT facilities as much as possible.¹⁹ Some examples of application of ICTs in Legal field are as under:

Electronic Books

E-books are nothing but the digital version of printed books. In addition to textual matters, the e-books consist of hyperlinks, search facilities and multimedia capabilities. E-books compilers compile also the source files into an easy one to distribute file format like HTML, PDF and RTF files. In other words, an e-book has electronic text and that text is showed to the readers visually.²⁰

E-Journals

An e-journal is a periodical publication which is published in electronic format, usually on the Internet. Electronic journals have several advantages over traditional printed journals. Student can search the content page of the full text of journal to find article of their choice. They can read it anywhere in their laptops or even on mobiles so they don't have to be in the library. Students can save the journal in their desktops or laptops for future reference.²¹

Electronic Legal Data Bases

- 1) Manupatra Online Legal Database: Manupatra provides legal, taxation, corporate and business policy database which contain primary documents and analytical content covering commentaries, digests, bare acts, judgements and articles. It is fee based database having different subscription policies for different members of legal fraternity. It provides privileged access to its users and empowers them with in-depth legislative regulatory and procedural information critical for decision making in single online platform. It may be useful for law students for preparing their moot court problems as well as doing legal research as a part of their curriculum.²²
- 2) LexisNexis Database: LexisNexis® is a worldwide provider of content-enabled workflow solutions designed specifically for professionals in the legal, risk management, corporate, government, law enforcement, accounting, and academic markets. It provides customers with access to billions of searchable documents and records from more than 45,000 legal, news and business sources.²³
- 3) Westlaw is Thompson West's online legal research data base service. It provides quick, easy access to statutes, case law materials, public records, and other legal resources, journals and law reviews

¹⁶ Jay Parkash Yadav, "Legal Education in the Era of Information and Communication Technology: An Analysis, Jamia Law Journal, Vol 1, No. 1, 2016, p 12 .

¹⁷ Rules on Standards of Legal Education and Recognition of Degrees ('BCI Education Rules, 2008'). Available at www.barcouncilofindia.org/about/legal-education/education-rules-2008/

¹⁸ Kamlesh M.Pandya, "The Concept of I.C.T. Application in Legal Field", Indian Journal of Research, Vol. 2, Issue 12, December 2013, p. 107.

¹⁹ Michele Pistone, "Law Schools and Technology: Where We Are and Where We Are Heading", Journal of Legal Education, Vol. 64, Number 4, May 2015, p. 586.

²⁰ Manikya Rao Burrell, Viswachandra Nath Madasu, "Importance of Internet Facility in Support of Legal Education and Legal Research", Vol. 2, Issue 5, 2013, p. 43.

²¹ <https://www.soas.ac.uk/library/resources/ejournals/about/>

²² <http://www.manupatra.com/Asp/CompanyInfo.aspx>

²³ <http://www.lexisnexis.co.in/en-in/about-us/about-us.page>

- ublished from all around the world. The primary legal materials are available on jurisdictions of UK, USA and Commonwealth countries.²⁴
- 4) SCC Online Web Edition: It provides top quality information with an interface which makes legal research a quicker, easier and more effective process for the students or other legal professional. It has a collection of over 380 databases, with more than 3.4 million documents and over 16.7 million pages.²⁵
 - 5) Judgement Information System (JUDIS): Judgement Information System Consists of the judgements of Supreme Court of India and several other High Courts. All Supreme Court reported judgments which are published in Supreme Court Reporter Journal since its inception i.e. 1950 till date are available.²⁶

Conclusion and Suggestions

Effective use of ICTs into teaching-learning process has the potential to engage the students. Various applications of ICTs such as audio-video aid to present practical legal problems can motivate and challenge students and thus enhance their analytical and problem solving skills. But for effective use of ICT in education, there is a need to change the attitude of teachers and students. For this purpose intensive and continues training of teachers regarding the use of ICTs in classroom teachings should be conducted periodically. To motivate the students regarding the use of ICTs in theory as well as in practical training, it should be made part of the curriculum. Computers and internet should be made available for the staff and students so that they can share and communicate with each other important information beyond the four walls of the classroom. Provisions for computer labs, wifi, emails accounts should be emphasised in the colleges and universities for effective use of ICTs.

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20. https://www.sconline.com/downloads/SCC_OnLine_Web_Edition_Brochure.pdf
21. <http://judis.nic.in/>
22. http://wikieducator.org/Need_and_Importance_of_Information_Technology_in_Education

²⁴ Manikya Rao Burrell, Viswachandra Nath Madasu, "Importance of Internet Facility in Support of Legal Education and Legal Research", Vol. 2, Issue 5, 2013, p. 44.

²⁵ https://www.sconline.com/downloads/SCC_OnLine_Web_Edition_Brochure.pdf

²⁶ <http://judis.nic.in/>