

## **REINVESTIGATING LEGAL EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL ERA: INNOVATION AS THE KEY TO SOCIAL AND LEGAL REFORM**

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### **Abstract**

The rapid advancement of digital technology has fundamentally transformed the social, economic, and legal landscape. In this context, legal education in Indonesia faces an urgent need to undergo transformation in order to produce graduates who not only understand legal doctrines but are also capable of adapting to digital dynamics and the complexity of contemporary social issues. Traditional legal education, which has long theoretical and normative approaches, must be restructured with a strong focus on innovation as a driving force of reform.

Innovation in legal education encompasses the digitalization of learning processes through the use of Learning Management Systems (LMS), the integration of artificial intelligence in legal case studies, and the development of curricula that are responsive to emerging digital legal issues such as data protection, cybercrime, smart contracts, and blockchain technology. This article critically examines the structural challenges within the current legal education system, including limited digital literacy among faculty, inadequate infrastructure for online learning, and the lack of interdisciplinary integration within the curriculum. On the other hand, it proposes innovative strategies for reform, such as technology-based pedagogy, the creation of digital legal ecosystems on campuses, and strengthened collaboration between educational institutions, government bodies, and the private sector to develop high-quality legal professionals.

Through this approach, legal education is expected not only to produce technically competent legal practitioners and scholars but also to cultivate agents of change who are sensitive to social justice, sustainability, and global developments. Ultimately, innovation in legal education becomes a critical foundation for successful social reform and legal system transformation in Indonesia's digital era.

**Keywords:** Legal education, digital transformation, educational innovation, social reform, legal technology, law curriculum, digital era.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Legal education is a main pillar in the formation of a society that is legally civilized (rechtstaat), just and democratic. As an institution that produces human resources in the legal field, law colleges have a strategic role in preparing graduates who not only master the theoretical aspects of law but are also able to answer actual legal problems in a contextual and solution-oriented manner. However, entering the digital era of the 21st century, legal education faces major challenges that require a fundamental restructuring of its educational approach, structure and orientation.

Digital transformation marked by the industrial revolution 4.0, the use of big data, artificial intelligence, blockchain technology, and increasing penetration of the internet and social media, has created a new, complex and dynamic legal space. Conventional legal concepts are now faced with various new realities such as cyber law, e-commerce regulation, personal data protection, cross-border digital crime, and smart contracts in the blockchain system. This change requires the world of legal education to not only follow developments but also become a center of innovation in producing new legal frameworks that are relevant to the needs of the times.

However, the reality on the ground shows that legal education in Indonesia still tends to be conservative and less responsive to technological developments and societal dynamics. A rigid curriculum, a teacher-centered teaching approach, and minimal integration of technology in the teaching and learning process have left law graduates less prepared to face global and local challenges. This is exacerbated by the wide gap between legal theory and practice, the low problem-solving skills of law students, and weak digital literacy among both lecturers and students.

On the other hand, the digital era also opens up great opportunities for legal education to innovate. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) can encourage efficiency, accessibility, and quality of legal learning. Online learning models, blended learning systems, and the use of technology-based legal simulations are concrete examples of how digitalization can revolutionize the way law is learned. Innovation in legal education also includes the development of competency-based curricula, the integration of interdisciplinary approaches, and the establishment of digital legal clinics that combine academic learning with virtual community service.

The urgency of restructuring legal education is also closely related to the mission of social and legal reform in Indonesia. A legal system that is responsive to social change can only be realized if it is supported by progressive legal education based on the values of justice, humanity, and sustainability. Therefore, innovation in legal education must be understood not merely as an adaptation to technology, but as a structural renewal strategy to create a more just, inclusive, and transformative legal and social order.

In this article, the author will analyze various aspects of restructuring legal education in the digital era, emphasizing the role of innovation as the main key. The discussion includes identifying systemic challenges, innovative strategies in learning and curriculum, integration of legal technology, and the role of legal education institutions in driving social and legal reform. It is hoped that this article can contribute to formulating a new direction for legal education that is more relevant, visionary, and able to answer the challenges of the times.

#### **A. Challenges of Legal Education in the Digital Era**

The development of digital technology has drastically changed the face of the legal world. The concepts of justice, the judicial process, and legal relations between individuals and institutions are now influenced by information and communication technology. In this context, legal education as the main pillar of preparing human resources in the legal field is required to transform quickly, adaptively, and innovatively. However, the reality is that legal education in Indonesia faces a number of structural, cultural, and technological challenges that hinder the digital transformation process. These challenges, if not immediately addressed, could widen the gap between the academic world of law and the needs of the legal community in the digital era.

### 1. Inequality of Access and Digital Infrastructure

The first very real challenge is the inequality of access to technological infrastructure. Based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology (2023) , only 47% of law colleges in Indonesia have an independent and optimally functioning Learning Management System (LMS). The rest still use manual systems, rely on free public platforms (such as Google Classroom or WhatsApp), or have not even implemented digital learning systematically.

This inequality is also seen in the availability of hardware, internet networks, and the development of digital teaching media. The APJII report (2023) shows that 23% of Indonesian students experience obstacles in internet access , especially those from rural areas and 3T regions. As a result, opportunities to enjoy digital-based legal education are uneven, creating academic discrimination that hinders educational justice.

### 2. Conventional and Low Technology Learning Models

Most legal education still uses a teacher-centered approach , where lecturers are the main source of knowledge, and students are only passive listeners. The lecture method is dominant, while interactive approaches such as trial simulations, role play, or technology-based case methods are still very limited. According to Satjipto Rahardjo (2006) , legal education should not only teach law as a norm , but also as a living social phenomenon. However, this approach has not been widely applied, especially because lecturers are not accustomed to using technology as a medium for pedagogical transformation.

### 3. Curriculum Unresponsive to Digital Law Issues

The curriculum of law faculties in Indonesia is still very classical, focusing on national positive law and normative-dogmatic learning. Digital laws such as cyber law, data protection , AI law , and fintech regulation have not been widely made mandatory or even elective courses. This results in law graduates not being equipped with the competencies to deal with legal problems in the digital era.

In comparison, the University of Melbourne has made Digital Law and Ethics, Cybersecurity Law, and AI and Legal Reasoning a compulsory part of the curriculum. In Indonesia, only a few well-known universities such as UI and UGM have started to pioneer such courses, and even then, they are still in the experimental stage and not evenly distributed.

### 4. Low Digital Literacy of Lecturers and Students

Digital transformation will only be effective if supported by technology-literate human resources. However, in fact, many law lecturers in Indonesia are not yet skilled in utilizing learning technologies such as LMS, interactive infographics, digital legal simulations, or even Zoom effectively. Data from the Directorate General of Higher Education (2022) states that only 38% of law lecturers have participated in digital transformation training in the last three years.

Meanwhile, students who are classified as digital natives often use technology only for entertainment, not for academic exploration. This shows that legal digital literacy, namely the ability to understand and manage technology in a legal context, is still very low at both the lecturer and student levels.



## 5. The Gap between Theory and Practice

The strong separation between theory and practice is a challenge that hinders the readiness of law graduates to face the real world. Legal practice has now changed drastically with the advent of e-courts, e-litigation, electronic contracts, and online dispute resolution (ODR). However, on campus, law students are more focused on studying articles and theories without being given digital-based practice space.

A case study from the Faculty of Law of Swadaya Gunung Jati University (UGJ) shows that major improvements are still needed in facilitating digital legal clinics, including technology-based advocacy training, digital ethics, and collaboration with legal tech startups such as Justika, Lexar, or HukumOnline.

## 6. Lack of Multidisciplinary Collaboration

Law in the digital era cannot stand alone. Issues such as the responsibility of artificial intelligence, the ethics of robotics, or the protection of personal data require an understanding of technology, philosophy, and economics. But legal education in Indonesia still tends to be exclusive and rarely involves other faculties or disciplines.

For example, Harvard Law School has opened a “Law, Science and Technology” course and provides collaboration space with engineering and business schools. This approach is important so that law graduates have the ability to solve multidimensional legal problems.

## 7. Resistance to Change and Innovation

Digital transformation demands a change in mindset, but not all legal education institutions are ready to change. Bureaucratic academic culture, rigid seniority, and lack of incentives to innovate are major obstacles. Many lecturers are reluctant to leave their comfort zones because they are used to old methods, and institutions also do not encourage renewal programs through technological research incentives, experimental curricula, or international benchmarking. Without visionary academic leadership, innovation remains merely discourse without real implementation.

## 8. Ethical and Regulatory Challenges of Online Learning

The implementation of online learning raises a number of ethical and legal challenges, including:

- a) Unauthorized distribution of materials and copyright infringement.
- b) The rise in academic plagiarism is due to weak detection systems.
- c) Student data privacy breach on open platforms.
- d) The absence of digital ethics policies in most law schools.

Without strong digital ethics governance, digital transformation risks harming academic integrity and legal principles themselves. Legal education cannot be separated from social reality and developments of the times. The digital era presents major challenges, but also golden opportunities for legal education to evolve to become more adaptive, progressive and relevant. Addressing these challenges requires a systemic approach, from reforming higher education policies, increasing the capacity of lecturers, investing in digital infrastructure, to restructuring the curriculum based on technology and values of justice. Without serious restructuring, legal education will be left behind and lose its role as an agent of social change and guardian of justice in the digital era.

## **B. Innovation in Legal Education**

Innovation in legal education in the digital era is not just a demand, but a necessity. A complete transformation is needed, both in terms of curriculum, methodology, human resources, and institutional structure. The following strategies can be used as a basis for implementing legal education innovation, with the support of relevant references:

### **1. Digitalization of Learning**

Digitalization must target not only learning tools, but also content and methods. The development of Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle and Google Classroom needs to be accompanied by interactive legal content, legal podcasts, animated videos about legal procedures, and digital court simulations (mock e-court). This is in line with the findings of the OECD (2022) which states that a multimodal approach can improve retention and understanding in legal learning.

### **2. Curriculum Reform**

The curriculum should include digital law issues such as data privacy law (GDPR and PDP Act), artificial intelligence law, digital forensics, and blockchain law. In Europe, The European Law Faculties Association (ELFA) has called for the importance of integrating law & technology into the law curriculum (ELFA, 2020). Harvard Law School has even developed a "Law and Innovation" track as part of its core curriculum (Harvard, 2019).

### **3. Strengthening the Capacity of Lecturers**

Lecturer training is not only on the use of technology, but also digital pedagogy, online class management, and writing digital legal content. According to UNESCO (2022), the success of digitalization of higher education is largely determined by the readiness of lecturers in managing learning transformation.

### **4. Digital Law Clinic**

Online legal clinics (e-legal aid) can be a model of technology-based service. The University of Pretoria in South Africa, for example, developed an e-law clinic that allows students to provide online legal consultations to marginalized communities (IFLA, 2021). In Indonesia, this concept can be integrated through platforms such as Justika or LBH digital.

### **5. Integration of Multidisciplinary Approaches**

Collaboration across faculties, such as between law, information technology, and communication, can create a systemic approach to digital law issues. Leiden University has launched the "Law & Digital Technologies" program that combines coding, ethics, and law (Leiden University, 2022).

### **6. International Cooperation and Global Ecosystem**

International collaboration should be expanded through faculty exchanges, global conferences, and MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses) platforms such as FutureLearn and Coursera. Stanford Law School's CodeX is an example of a legal innovation ecosystem integrated with the tech industry (Stanford CodeX, 2021).

## 7. Digital Competency Based Evaluation and Assessment

Learning evaluations must shift from essay formats to digital forms such as e-portfolios, digital case simulations, and technology law project-based assessments. The University of Melbourne has used virtual litigation-based assessments in its Legal Practice course (UoM Law School, 2020).

## 8. Digital Ethics Literacy and Cyber Law

Law students must be equipped with an understanding of digital ethics, legal hoaxes, and cybersecurity. The Berkman Klein Center at Harvard promotes the integration of cyber ethics into legal studies to anticipate digital abuses in the legal profession. By adopting these innovations, legal education in Indonesia can become a driving force for social and legal reform that is just, relevant, and adaptive to current developments.

### C. Case study

#### 1. Faculty of Law, University of Indonesia (UI)

UI Faculty of Law has begun the integration of digital law issues by developing the courses "Cyber Law" and "Law & Information Technology". Active collaboration with the National Cyber and Crypto Agency (BSSN) and the Ministry of Communication and Information has resulted in intensive seminars and training for lecturers and students. In 2023, UI will also hold an e-court-based digital justice simulation involving district courts and legal professional organizations.

#### 2. CodeX – The Stanford Center for Legal Informatics

CodeX is a collaborative research institute between Stanford Law School and the School of Engineering. CodeX develops legal tech solutions based on artificial intelligence, blockchain, and big data analytics. In addition to being a global legal innovation center, CodeX also integrates research and education through the world-referenced courses "Legal Informatics", "AI and the Law", and "Computational Law". Some of the leading legal startups like ROSS Intelligence were born from this ecosystem.

#### 3. Supreme Court of the Republic of Indonesia and the Implementation of e-Court

Since 2018, the Supreme Court has launched the e-Court application which allows for online case registration, summons and trials. This initiative is a major step in the digitalization of the justice system. Unfortunately, the integration of e-Court materials and practices in legal education is still limited. Several law faculties such as Gadjah Mada University and Brawijaya University have started to make e-Court a part of their moot court practice.

#### 4. Airlangga University Digital Law Clinic

Airlangga University through the Legal Consultation and Aid Institute (LKBH) has developed an online legal consultation platform based on a website and WhatsApp API. This innovation allows access to legal aid for remote communities without having to come to campus. Students are also involved in the process of providing legal aid, which also serves as a medium for technology-based legal practice.

#### 5. Leiden University – Law and Digital Technologies Program

Leiden University in the Netherlands offers a master's program "Law and Digital Technologies" that combines legal studies with fundamental programming, data analysis, and digital ethics. Students are trained to deal with complex issues such as cybercrime, data



governance, and smart contracts. The program's curriculum serves as a model for the development of technology-based legal education globally.

#### **D. The Impact of Innovation on Social and Legal Reform**

Innovation in legal education integrated with digital technology has a significant impact in driving social and legal reform in Indonesia. This impact can be seen from the following aspects:

1. Improving Access to Justice

With the development of online legal consultation platforms and digital legal clinics, people living in remote areas or with economic limitations can access legal information and assistance. This helps reduce the number of legal illiteracy and strengthens the protection of citizens' rights, in line with the vision of social justice in Article 28D of the 1945 Constitution.

2. Encouraging Efficiency and Transparency of Legal Bureaucracy

The integration of technology in legal education, including the introduction of e-court, e-summons, and e-filing systems in learning, helps to form legal human resources who are accustomed to bureaucratic efficiency. Law graduates who understand digital systems are better able to contribute to accountable and transparent legal governance. The Supreme Court (2022) noted that the implementation of e-court accelerated the litigation process by up to 35% in several high courts.

3. Strengthening Community Participation in the Legal Process

The ability of communities to connect online with legal institutions through digital platforms increases active citizen participation in the legal democracy process. Innovations in legal education that equip students with participatory approaches and technology broaden the spectrum of community-based legal empowerment.

4. Producing Adaptive and Multidisciplinary Legal Human Resources

With curriculum innovations that include aspects of technology law, law graduates are now able to work not only in law firms or state institutions, but also in technology companies, fintech, and international organizations. They become agents of legal change who are able to design data-based policies and digital ethics principles.

5. Supporting Evidence-Based and Technology-Based Legal Reform

Digitalization in legal education encourages the use of data-based legal analysis methods (legal analytics) and predictive legal modeling (predictive justice). This opens up opportunities for more precise regulatory updates based on integrated legal and social data. Countries like Estonia and Singapore have begun to leverage this technology to reform their legal systems.

6. Shaping a New Legal Culture

With the opening of access to digital legal knowledge, society, including the younger generation, is becoming more legally literate. This strengthens a legal culture based on critical awareness, ethics, and sustainability. Innovative legal education forms a more progressive and inclusive perspective on law. Thus, innovation in legal education plays a strategic role not only in producing qualified legal professionals,

but also as an instrument of social change and a supporter of a modern, just, and democratic legal system.

## **E. Strategic Recommendations**

### **1. Formulation of National Policy on Digital Legal Education**

The government, through the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology and the National Professional Certification Agency (BNSP), needs to prepare a roadmap for digital legal education, including competency standards for digital law graduates, as well as the creation of regulations on online learning ethics and academic data protection.

### **2. Law and Technology Based Curriculum Reform**

All Law Faculties need to revise their curriculum with a digital competency approach, including courses such as Cyber Law, AI & Law, Digital Forensics, and Law and Data Analytics, as well as adopting project-based learning and digital simulations.

### **3. Capacity Building for Digital Law Lecturers**

Institutions are required to provide regular training for lecturers in the fields of digital pedagogy, preparation of legal multimedia modules, and mastery of legal technology platforms. Providing incentives for technology-based research and teaching also needs to be done nationally.

### **4. Development of a National Digital Legal Clinic Ecosystem**

The government can encourage each law faculty to build a digital law clinic with budget support, ICT infrastructure, and networking with courts and digital LBH. This is important to ground the concept of access to justice and train students contextually.

### **5. Building Multidisciplinary Alliances and Internationalization**

A national alliance involving law faculties, engineering faculties, digital business, and global institutions such as UNODC, APTIKOM, and ELFA is needed. The aim is to integrate multidisciplinary approaches and enhance the global competitiveness of Indonesian legal education.

### **6. National Evaluation Based on Digital Competence**

National assessments need to assess not only cognitive aspects, but also digital literacy, legal simulation skills, and the use of legal technology. Forms of evaluation such as e-portfolio, digital moot court, and open-book coding-based test can be implemented.

### **7. Establishment of a Special Accreditation Institution for Digital Law Programs**

A special institution is needed to accredit digital law study programs, so that it can guarantee the quality and relevance of the program in facing legal dynamics in the era of artificial intelligence and big data.

## **CONCLUSION**

Legal education in the digital era is at a historical crossroads: between maintaining the old, stagnant model or moving forward with relevant and transformative innovation. The digital era is not just about bringing technology, but creating a new social ecosystem that is faster, more complex, and demands higher legal transparency and accountability. In this context, innovation in legal education is not only a necessity, but also a necessity to respond to the changing times. Curriculum updates, digitalization of the learning process, adaptive training of legal human resources, and cross-disciplinary and international collaboration are strategic



paths to produce law graduates who are not only technically competent, but also ethical, humanistic, and critical in facing modern legal realities.

Furthermore, innovative and responsive legal education to the digital era has a multi-layered impact: from strengthening access to justice, increasing the effectiveness of law enforcement, to forming a new legal culture that is more technology-aware and in the public interest. This transformation will make a significant contribution to comprehensive social and legal reform.

Thus, restructuring legal education in the digital era is not merely an academic project, but rather a strategic agenda for the nation in preparing a future generation of law enforcers who are able to bridge the values of justice with the dynamics of technology. In a world that is constantly changing, only education that dares to change is able to produce relevant legal leaders. The digital era demands fundamental changes in legal education. Big challenges are faced, but there is also a wide space for innovation. Through digitalization, curriculum reform, strengthening lecturers, and multidisciplinary integration, legal education will be able to produce competent, progressive, and visionary future jurists. Innovation is the key not only to educational reform, but also to comprehensive social and legal reform.

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