

Students' Perceptions of Adaptive Textbook Technology as a Learning Tool in Legal Studies Courses

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Abstract. This article attempts to further the literature on technology in the classroom by performing an initial investigation on an innovative new textbook technology in an undergraduate legal studies course, such as the Legal Environment of Business. First, we discuss the traditional methods of teaching the law at both the law school and undergraduate levels. We also review the history and effectiveness of using technology in law school and legal studies classrooms. Next, we look the use of textbooks in legal education. Then, we introduce an adaptive and interactive textbook technology and compare it to other electronic texts in the current higher education market. Finally, we present and analyze focus group data regarding our students' perceptions of adaptive and interactive textbook technology, and conclude with our recommendations for this technology's use in the undergraduate legal studies classroom.

Keywords: educational technology, adaptive learning, legal studies, adaptive textbook and online learning.

1. Introduction

As students grow in their personal use of electronic technology, post-secondary education shows a "clear trend" toward adding more technology in the classroom.¹ Electronic textbook technology has been edging its way into post-secondary education classrooms over the past 40 years.² This increase in e-learning is due to faculty needs to contend with reduced resources, increased costs, student demand for technology, and the increasing recognition of the benefits of electronic learning tools.³

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1. National Center for Education Statistics, *Distance Education at Degree Granting Post-Secondary Institutions: 2006-2007*, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2009/2009044.pdf> (last visited Oct. 9, 2015).
 2. Alan Kay, *Dynabooks: Past, Present, and Future*. 70 Lib.Quart. 385 (Jul. 1, 2000).
 3. Rita Shackel, *Beyond the Whiteboard: E-Learning in the Law Curriculum*, 12 QUTLJ 105 (2011).

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In 2009, a new electronic textbook was introduced to the higher education market, which includes both interaction and adaptation capabilities.⁴ Our interest in this new technology is in increasing student engagement with the text and student mastery of legal studies material. Much literature has been written on the use of electronic learning tools at many levels of legal post-secondary education.⁵ However, there is little research on adaptive textbooks for legal education courses. This paper introduces adaptive electronic textbooks and shares how they are positively perceived by our students. The paper concludes by giving our recommendations for the use of this technology in an undergraduate legal studies classroom.

2. History of Technology-Enhanced Education

By definition, technology-enhanced learning (“TEL”) leverages technology to maximize learning within sound course design, offers students options in terms of time, place and pace of learning and emphasizes different learning styles.⁶ A review of the literature reveals that technology-enhanced learning developed over three generations: cognitive and behaviorist, social constructivist and connectivist.⁷

The first generation of technology-enhanced learning saw its rise in the latter part of the 20th century.⁸ Referred to as the cognitivist/behaviorist era, this generation of technology-enhanced learning consisted largely of learning through postal correspondence. While teleconferencing was likely the most successful form of TEL available at the time, it was not widely used due to the associated cost and complexity when used in an educational setting. The result was wider use of postal correspondence. Postal correspondence, however, tended to be slow,

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4. McGraw-Hill Education, *LearnSmart Advantage*, <http://www.learnsmartadvantage.com/about> (last visited Oct. 9, 2015).
 5. Linda A. Reid & Curt M. Weber, *Using Technology-Enabled Active Learning Tools to Introduce Business Ethics Topics in Business Law Courses: A Few Practical Examples*, 25 J. Legal Stud. Educ. 283 (2008) (ethics taught in undergraduate business law course through the use of technology); Ida M. Jones, *Can You See Me Now? Defining Teaching Presence in the Online Classroom through Building a Learning Community*, 28 J. Legal Stud. Educ. 67 (2011) (examples of technology being used in online undergraduate and graduate legal environment of business courses); Shackel, *supra* note 3 (asserting that law school use of technology must be adopted cautiously and integrated with traditional instruction); Marcia L. McCormick, *From Podcasts to Treasure Hunts - Using Technology to Promote Student Engagement*, 58 St. Louis Univ. L.J. 127 (2013) (suggesting that use of technology given very positive student feedback in law school classroom).
 6. Trentin, G. (2010), *Networked Collaborative Learning: Social and Active Learning*, 1st ed., Witney, Oxfordshire: Chandos Publishing, pp. 1-18.
 7. Anderson, T. & Dron, J. (2012), “Learning Technology Through Three Generations of Technology Enhanced Distance Education Pedagogy”, *European Journal of Open, Distance and E-Learning*, 2, pp. 1-14.
 8. Anderson, T. & Dron, J. (2011), “Three Generations of Distance Education Pedagogy”, *International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning*, 12(3), pp. 80-97.