Proceedings of ICILLP 2025 Symposium: Digital Governance: Inter-Firm Coopetition and Legal Frameworks for Sustainability
DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BR26190

The Impact of ChatGPT on Legal Education and the Response

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Abstract: Due to its user-friendliness and exceptional learning capabilities, ChatGPT has achieved a user base of 100 million within just two months since its launch, exerting significant influence and even disruption across economic, social, cultural, and educational domains. Its impact has overshadowed the recent hype around the "metaverse," sparking widespread attention and debate. Grounded in the current and future realities of societal and educational transformation in the era of artificial intelligence, through investigating the challenges posed by ChatGPT's natural language text generation technology to traditional legal education theories, this paper aims to explore the functional characteristics of ChatGPT within the context of legal education and analyze its application value and boundaries in education. It finds that while enhancing efficiency and convenience in learning and professional practice, ChatGPT compels schools, teachers, and students to reform outdated ideologies and methods, fostering exploration of new educational philosophies, pedagogies, and ethical frameworks. A holistic analysis of educational ecosystems is essential to fully grasp the opportunities and challenges AI presents. Legal education should leverage the potential of such technologies while adhering to its foundational mission of cultivating ethical, well-rounded individuals, and helping legal education leverage artificial intelligence in problem-solving.

Keywords: artificial intelligence, legal education, educational methods, educational order, academic ethics

1. Introduction

With robust technological support, ChatGPT, distinct from traditional artificial intelligence, has demonstrated preliminary characteristics of generative intelligence. In the field of education, the application of ChatGPT has far-reaching implications. Some argue that it may trigger comprehensive, even disruptive, reshaping of teaching and learning, while others remain skeptical about the use of such intelligent tools. Therefore, objectively assessing the advantages and challenges of ChatGPT, analyzing its potential transformative impact on legal education, and proactively responding to these changes are of significant importance for cultivating legal talent and advancing high-quality legal education.

Since its inception, generative AI represented by ChatGPT has challenged traditional knowledge production systems. Artificial intelligence like ChatGPT is permeating all aspects of education—

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DOI: 10.54254/2753-7048/2025.BR26190

under its influence, the future of legal education has already arrived. However, science and technology are a "double-edged sword." While AI technology brings benefits to the development of legal studies, it also poses substantial challenges.

Although ChatGPT-like AI provides solutions to fundamental issues in legal education and can significantly improve traditional educational concepts and methods, positively impacting legal education and even the broader legal profession, certain factors may also give rise to more societal problems. Legal education consequently faces risks, such as a surge in academic ethical dilemmas, the gradual disintegration of teaching paradigms, the alienation of educational subjectivity, and the obsolescence of traditional legal curricula [1]. For instance, AI-generated legal papers, exams, and assignments have emerged as detrimental phenomena, exerting profound impacts on academic norms and ethics. This paper mainly investigates the challenges posed by ChatGPT's natural language text generation technology to traditional legal education theories, and aims to explore the functional characteristics of ChatGPT within the context of legal education and analyze its application value and boundaries in education, so as to explore more possibilities of integrating emerging science and technology with the development of legal education in the era of artificial intelligence, and help legal education solve problems by applying artificial intelligence.

2. Traditional legal education methods and the impact of ChatGPT

Traditional legal education has long relied on methods such as face-to-face lectures, specialized seminars, practical exercises, and course paper writing. However, with advancements in technology and shifts in pedagogical philosophy, innovative approaches like online learning, interactive teaching, and technology-driven models—including remote education, digital courses, virtual courtrooms, and online internships—are gaining prominence.

The emergence of ChatGPT is profoundly reshaping not only how law students learn but also how educators teach. It is even catalyzing transformations in the legal services market, compelling a reevaluation of traditional educational frameworks. By enabling instant access to interdisciplinary knowledge, automating routine tasks, and simulating real-world legal scenarios, ChatGPT challenges the status quo. This forces legal education to evolve from a focus on passive knowledge accumulation to fostering critical thinking, adaptability, and technological literacy—essential skills for future legal professionals in an AI-augmented world.

2.1. Impact on law students' learning methods

First, the learning methods of law students are being disrupted. Compared to other disciplines, ChatGPT’s application in legal education has a more pronounced impact. Legal scholarship demands both sweeping intellectual vision and the scalpel-like dissection of intricate problems. ChatGPT provides students with diverse problem-solving strategies, contextual information, and innovative perspectives, enabling them to grasp knowledge more clearly, flexibly, and creatively. This significantly enhances learning efficiency, fosters enthusiasm for self-directed and personalized learning, helps students identify gaps in their understanding, and motivates continuous improvement and professional growth.

On the other hand, legal education encompasses a vast and interconnected body of knowledge that extends far beyond pure law, touching on fields such as economics, sociology, and psychology. As an advanced large language model, ChatGPT offers cross-disciplinary insights, helping law students explore intersections between legal issues and other domains. This cultivates interdisciplinary thinking and equips students to address multifaceted real-world challenges.

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Moreover, by querying legal systems and practices across jurisdictions, students can use ChatGPT to deepen their understanding of comparative law and broaden their global perspectives—a critical advantage for those pursuing careers in international legal practice.

Second, ChatGPT challenges law students' conventional learning models. As the adage goes, "Practice is the sole criterion for testing truth." Legal education emphasizes practical training, as textbook knowledge often diverges sharply from real-world applications. To excel, law students must accumulate substantial hands-on experience, with practical legal skills serving as the cornerstone of professional competence.

ChatGPT's massive information repository supports legal students, educators, and practitioners in research by streamlining data collection and offering relevant insights. AI models can analyze vast legal datasets, making research more efficient and accurate. This shift creates new opportunities for experiential learning. Additionally, ChatGPT assists in drafting legal texts and providing actionable recommendations, saving time and effort. These advancements necessitate moving away from rigid, mechanical learning approaches toward prioritizing practical skill development.

However, overreliance on machine-generated content poses risks. Excessive dependence on generative AI may foster complacency, weaken critical thinking habits, and reduce students' initiative and engagement. Such tendencies could severely impair their future ability to solve real-world legal problems. It is crucial to balance AI assistance with independent analysis to preserve professionalism, academic rigor, and critical judgment in legal practice and scholarship.

2.2. Transformation of traditional teaching methods for legal educators

First, ChatGPT introduces novel pedagogical approaches, destabilizing conventional teaching frameworks. Traditional legal education has long relied on static, one-dimensional methods. In contrast, ChatGPT leverages its vast knowledge repository and generative capabilities to provide dynamic legal resources. It raises expectations for classroom interaction, pedagogical cognition, and curricular content, redirecting educators' focus toward tasks requiring human cultivation—such as critical analysis and ethical reasoning—to enhance learning outcomes. The adoption of seminar-based teaching reflects the obsolescence of purely knowledge-centric training in today's world, where interdisciplinary professionals with technical fluency are increasingly demanded. The emergence of ChatGPT-like AI will inevitably upend traditional legal education paradigms, prompting educators to reflect deeply and recenter pedagogy on humanistic principles.

Second, ChatGPT enables efficient legal teaching aids. Traditional legal research methods often lack precision and comprehensiveness. ChatGPT addresses these shortcomings through advanced data and language processing, improving the accuracy of legal retrieval and providing comprehensive materials for teaching and research. This makes accessible, high-quality legal assistance a reality. By automating text generation based on extensive legal documents, ChatGPT digitizes and accelerates established teaching practices, streamlining legal education while aiding educators in synthesizing academic outputs.

Third, ChatGPT concretizes legal principles through virtual simulations. Traditional teaching relies on verbal descriptions of cases, often rendering abstract legal theories opaque and unengaging. ChatGPT revolutionizes this approach by generating virtual case simulations of judicial scenarios based on historical rulings. Educators can use these simulations to help students grasp practical legal knowledge, significantly reducing the time spent explaining foundational concepts and enhancing pedagogical vividness.

Fourth, ChatGPT's application raises data ethics concerns. Questions persist about whether ChatGPT learns from educators' inputs to train its models, potentially appropriating intellectual

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contributions as training data. Risks of data misuse or the propagation of underdeveloped theories also arise. Educators must adopt strategies to maximize ChatGPT's benefits—such as enhancing resource accessibility and teaching efficiency—while mitigating ethical pitfalls, ensuring responsible integration into legal education.

2.3. The evolution of the legal services market and the inadequacy of traditional legal education

The application of ChatGPT and similar AI technologies in the legal services sector is driving reforms in legal education, with the following key impacts: First, the partial automation of legal services. Tools such as ChatGPT streamline contract drafting and regulatory interpretation, boosting both precision and productivity. This shift may replace repetitive foundational work, requiring legal professionals to develop higher-level expertise. Consequently, legal education must prioritize cultivating students' creative thinking, problem-solving abilities, and advanced skills to align with market demands. Second, the need to enhance innovation and interdisciplinary competencies. AI integration has intensified the intersection between legal practice and fields like technology, economics, and data analytics. Legal education must strengthen cross-disciplinary collaboration to foster innovative thinking and adaptability to industry changes. ChatGPT's adoption has revolutionized traditional service models, compelling legal professionals to upskill in digital tools, data analysis, and legal tech applications. Third, the growing emphasis on soft skills and human interaction. While ChatGPT automates certain tasks, legal work still demands communication, negotiation, and conflict-resolution capabilities. Legal education must focus on developing students' interpersonal skills, leadership, and cross-cultural awareness to ensure effective client and colleague engagement. Fourth, the imperative for career adaptability and lifelong learning. As AI disrupts traditional legal roles, education must equip students with resilience to navigate market shifts. This requires fostering adaptability and continuous learning to address future challenges. In summary, the integration of AI tools like ChatGPT into legal services is compelling legal education to reform by emphasizing innovation, interdisciplinary skills, soft competencies, and career adaptability—cultivating versatile professionals equipped for a technology-driven market.

3. The disruption of educational order in traditional academic ethics

ChatGPT's encroachment on legal education unsettles academic ethics and classroom order at every level. It reshapes how students tackle daily assignments, draft theses, and sit exams, while simultaneously weakening plagiarism detection and tempting faculty to offload tasks onto the model—eroding their own professional judgment and pedagogical authority.

First, ChatGPT undermines students' academic capabilities and integrity. Due to its ability to generate human-like—or even superior—text from minimal prompts, students may succumb to the temptation of using ChatGPT for homework, exams, or thesis writing to secure higher grades. This practice, often undetectable by instructors, fosters educational inequity, diminishes academic rigor, and risks degrading the overall quality of legal scholarship.

Second, it heightens risks of intellectual property infringement and ethical breaches. While ChatGPT may draw from existing literature or authoritative opinions in its responses, most large language models do not transparently disclose their training data sources. This opacity increases the likelihood of unintentional plagiarism and copyright violations, jeopardizing students' academic and professional development.

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Third, ChatGPT exacerbates educational polarization and the alienation of educational agency. Embedded within legal education, ChatGPT is subtly shifting from a mediating tool to an active participant, reshaping the dynamics of educational authority. By dissolving spatial and temporal barriers, it democratizes access to premier legal resources; yet educators unversed in AI often fail to distinguish machine-generated work, unsettling pedagogical authority and destabilizing traditional educational frameworks. For instance, instructors' inability to identify ChatGPT-authored papers risks eroding academic standards and accelerating the collapse of conventional educational paradigms [2,3].

4. Adaptive pathways for legal education in the ChatGPT era

Humanity is in the Web 3.0 era, where the collaborative relationship between humans and AI like ChatGPT has grown increasingly symbiotic. GPT-based technologies embedded in legal education are quietly triggering a shift in educational agency, as intelligent machines transition from mediating tools to quasi-autonomous actors.

For educators and academic administrators, integrating ChatGPT and similar AI tools requires reinforcing a pedagogical philosophy that merges technology with legal studies. Modern technologies such as AI, big data, and cloud computing must be incorporated into teaching to cultivate a new generation of legal professionals equipped with interdisciplinary knowledge and skills. This involves designing cross-disciplinary courses, forming interdisciplinary research teams, and fostering competencies that bridge law with computer science, data analytics, and ethics—fields poised to generate innovative hybrid disciplines.

Legal education must also update its content and methodologies to align with AI advancements. Curricula should expand to include AI-related legal topics such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and autonomous vehicle regulations. Teaching methods should leverage online education and blended learning models to enhance engagement and efficacy. Strengthening the connection between education and practice is critical. Establishing experiential learning hubs, moot courts, and internship programs can provide students with hands-on opportunities to hone problem-solving skills and legal acumen.

For law students, active engagement with AI governance policies and regulatory frameworks is essential. By monitoring legislative trends and participating in policy discussions, students can adapt their career trajectories and contribute to the ethical development of AI technologies.

In summary, legal education must embrace open and proactive strategies to adapt to the AI era. By fostering innovation, interdisciplinary expertise, and practical competence, it will cultivate outstanding legal professionals capable of thriving in a technology-driven future—ensuring that legal education not only responds to but also shapes the transformative potential of AI [4].

5. Conclusion

This study analyzes the impact of ChatGPT on traditional legal education, focusing on its disruption to pedagogical methods and the ethical order of academic norms. By examining three key groups—law students, legal educators, and legal practitioners—the research reveals that AI technologies like ChatGPT exert profound influence on legal education, with benefits outweighing risks. While enhancing efficiency and convenience in learning and professional practice, ChatGPT compels schools, teachers, and students to reform outdated ideologies and methods, fostering exploration of new educational philosophies, pedagogies, and ethical frameworks. Such transformations hold significant promise not only for legal education but also for societal progress. To fully capitalize on

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these gains, rigorous research must now channel ChatGPT's strengths toward propelling society's higher-order progress.

Faced with AI challenges like ChatGPT, we must confront and solve them head-on, not retreat. Legal education must leverage the potential of such technologies while adhering to its foundational mission of cultivating ethical, well-rounded individuals. Educators must guard against the "instrumentalization" and "alienation" of learners in the AI era, ensuring technology serves humanistic goals rather than undermines them [5].

In evaluating the relationship between legal education and ChatGPT, it is crucial to move beyond narrow assessments of intellectual development. A holistic analysis of educational ecosystems is essential to fully grasp the opportunities and challenges AI presents. Only through such comprehensive inquiry can we align technological innovation with the principles of equity, integrity, and human-centric pedagogy that define meaningful educational progress [6].

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