

From Text to Narrative: Digital Storytelling in Legal Learning

¹W Fatimah Hanun Binti Wan Mohamad Saferdin, ^{*2}Siti Mahanisayu Binti Marhaban, ³Izyan Farhana Binti Zulkarnain, ⁴Ikhwan Naguib Jusoh, ⁵Nurul Aqmal Bin Roslan, ⁶Ummi Farhani Binti Firdaus

^{1,2,3,4,5} Faculty of Law, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Sarawak,

⁶Faculty of Administrative Science and Policy Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Cawangan Sarawak

***Corresponding Author**

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ABSTRACT

This innovation introduces a digital storytelling approach to teaching the Law of Tort, with a focus on the landmark case *Donoghue v Stevenson* [1932] AC 562. Traditionally, legal education relies heavily on text-based learning which often poses challenges for students in grasping and retaining complex case principles. To address this gap, a narrative-based video was developed to present legal case in narrative form, making it relatable and easier to digest. The core innovation lies in the integration of storytelling and visual media to transform case law from a static text into a dynamic learning experience. By presenting the case as a story, students are not only able to understand the legal principles more clearly but also to appreciate the human and social context behind the law. This educational tool leverages narrative learning theory, which emphasizes the role of stories in enhancing memory, comprehension and critical thinking because they can connect legal principles to the story. The video uses visuals, narration and simple scenarios to make complex legal ideas easier to understand while keeping the law accurate. The potential benefits of this approach include increased student engagement, improved retention of legal concepts and the development of deeper analytical skills. Furthermore, the model is highly adaptable and can be applied across various areas of law and other disciplines. Ultimately, this innovation demonstrates how technology and storytelling can enrich legal education by making complex knowledge accessible, memorable and impactful.

Keywords: Digital Storytelling, Legal Education, Narrative-Based Learning

INTRODUCTION

Legal education has traditionally been dominated by text-based approaches such as casebooks, judgments, and academic commentaries. While this method emphasizes accuracy and depth, it often presents challenges for students in grasping and retaining complex legal principles. Traditional methods like the Socratic method, though effective in developing analytical skills, can leave students struggling to connect abstract legal theories with real-world applications.

As legal education moves towards more innovative and student-centred practices, integrating multimedia and storytelling emerges as a powerful tool to enhance comprehension and engagement. By combining the case teaching method with applied storytelling, educators can make complex legal concepts more relatable and memorable, thereby enriching the learning experience and better preparing students for practical legal work (Kiran, 2024).

Digital storytelling is the art of combining narrative with digital media such as images, sound, and video to create a short story (Robin, 2016). Teachers who design their own digital stories can use them as an effective tool not only to capture students' interest in the subject matter, but also to encourage discussion and to make abstract or complex concepts easier to grasp (Robin, 2008). Digital storytelling helps students grasp complex legal concepts by contextualizing them within narratives that are easier to understand and remember. This

method is particularly effective in making abstract legal doctrines accessible to non-experts and novices in the field (Jiang et al., 2024).

This project explores the use of digital storytelling in teaching tort law, specifically focusing on the landmark case *Donoghue v Stevenson*, a cornerstone in the development of modern negligence law.

Problem Statement

Students frequently struggle with abstract legal principles when cases are presented in static and text-heavy formats. This not only reduces engagement but also hinders long-term retention of legal principles. The challenge lies in making complex legal principles accessible while maintaining legal accuracy. Current teaching methods rarely leverage narrative-based approaches, despite the fact that stories are known to improve memory, comprehension, and analytical skills. For example, a study by Nabihah Khairulazhar et al. (2025) supports the notion that integrating digital tools into legal education can enhance student engagement and comprehension by providing practical, real-world experiences.

Compared to traditional legal teaching methods that depend on lectures, casebooks, and extensive reading of judgments, the digital storytelling approach provides a more engaging and relatable means to deliver complex legal content. In conventional settings, students often struggle to visualise how legal principles apply in real-life situations, as the material is presented in an abstract and text-heavy format. Furthermore, in contexts such as Malaysian law schools, where the adoption of technology is still evolving, digital tools present significant opportunities to improve access to quality legal education (Zhang & Tahir, 2023).

By contrast, when lecturers transform a case into a narrative-based digital story, the law is brought to life through characters' events and visuals that illustrate the reasoning behind the judgment. This approach enables students to grasp legal principles more intuitively and fosters better retention and comprehension. Chan (2023) highlights that using a five-tier storytelling framework in this way adds valuable context, emotion, and accessibility to legal material, which might otherwise seem complex and distant. Therefore, digital storytelling complements traditional legal pedagogy by enriching students' engagement and understanding through narrative techniques that align well with the flipped classroom approach.

Objectives

The project aims to:

1. Simplify the learning of complex legal principles through visual and auditory storytelling;
2. Increase student engagement, motivation and critical thinking in studying case law;
3. Provide a model of narrative-based learning that can be applied across other areas of law and education;
4. Encourage active and meaningful learning by linking legal principles with memorable narratives.

A study by Smeda et al. (2014) found that digital storytelling is a powerful teaching tool that boosts student engagement, creativity, collaboration, and overall learning outcomes. It encourages active, student-centered learning where learners are more motivated and take greater ownership of their learning process.

More recent research by Isaacs et al. (2024) supports these findings, showing that digital storytelling consistently helps students build essential 21st-century skills, especially creativity, critical thinking, and teamwork. It also helps improve digital literacy, communication, and confidence, which is particularly valuable for students with diverse learning needs, such as English language learners. Overall, digital storytelling creates a richer, more meaningful classroom experience for both students and teachers.

PRODUCT DESCRIPTION & METHODOLOGY

The innovation involves the development of a narrative-based video centered on the landmark case of *Donoghue v Stevenson*. The video integrates visuals, narration and simplified scenarios to retell the case in story form, emphasizing the legal principles. Methodologically, the project draws on narrative learning theory,

which highlights the cognitive benefits of storytelling in knowledge retention and critical thinking. The development of this innovation involves several key stages to ensure its effectiveness in enhancing student learning.

Scriptwriting

The first stage is scriptwriting based on the case facts and judgment, where the relevant facts and legal principles

are presented in a narrative form. This approach allows students to follow the sequence of events more easily while grasping the essential legal issues of the case.

Multimedia Production

The second stage is producing a multimedia video that combines animated images, voice-over narration, background sound, and on-screen text. The use of these multimedia elements is intended to make the content more engaging while simultaneously reinforcing students' understanding and memory retention of complex legal concepts.

Figure 1 Screenshot of the digital storytelling video



Multi-Platform Accessibility

Finally, the completed video is designed for flexible access across multiple platforms. It can be shared through e-learning portals, social media, or used directly in classrooms, allowing students to revisit the material at their own pace and convenience. This flexibility ensures that the innovation can reach a wider audience and support diverse learning.

Commercialisation Potential

This model has strong potential for commercialization in legal education and beyond. Digital storytelling, by resonating with digital natives and linking them to the curriculum, serves as one of the most effective instructional tools available today (Dreon, 2015). It is highly adaptable across the law curriculum, as it can be extended to cover a wide range of significant cases, thereby forming a complete and comprehensive set of

learning materials. Beyond the field of law, the product also offers cross-disciplinary use, particularly in areas that rely heavily on case study methods such as business, medicine, and the social sciences.

Its flexible mode of delivery further enhances its value, making it suitable for integration into various teaching models including MOOCs, blended learning, and fully online platforms. Moreover, digital storytelling helps users reflect on their experiences and develop their professional identity, as shown in teacher education where it supports deeper self-expression and learning (Kim et al., 2020). The product also opens doors for collaboration opportunities, with potential for licensing agreements with universities and other education providers to maximize its reach and impact.

LIMITATIONS

While the project demonstrates strong potential, it may face several practical limitations that should be acknowledged. These include resource constraints, such as limited access to video production tools, editing software, or multimedia expertise among lecturers; technological accessibility issues, particularly when students have limited internet connectivity or devices to view the digital content effectively; and differing levels of faculty readiness and digital literacy to adopt this teaching approach.

Smeda et al. (2014) highlighted that limited access to technological resources can hinder the effective implementation of digital storytelling in educational settings. Similarly, Andriani et al. (2024) found that even when digital storytelling is introduced in higher education, challenges such as inadequate technological infrastructure, time constraints, and limited digital skills can significantly affect its success. Although their study focused on students, these issues often reflect broader institutional limitations that also impact educators, especially when they are expected to facilitate and support such initiatives with limited resources or training.

To overcome these challenges, institutions could offer training and capacity-building workshops for academic staff, establish technical support units or shared media production facilities, and ensure reliable access to digital platforms and infrastructure for both lecturers and students. By addressing these limitations strategically, the digital storytelling model can be implemented more effectively and sustained across various areas of legal education.

NOVELTY AND RECOMMENDATION

The novelty of this project lies in its fusion of storytelling and digital media. Digital storytelling stands out as a technological approach that effectively fosters students' motivation to learn (Alismail, 2015). Unlike traditional teaching methods that rely heavily on static lecture slides or lengthy case briefs, this approach brings legal cases to life by framing them as relatable stories rather than abstract legal principles. By doing so, it helps students connect with the subject matter more naturally and intuitively.

Moreover, the use of visual, auditory, and narrative elements creates a multi-sensory learning experience that not only enhances comprehension but also strengthens students' ability to retain and recall key legal principles. This aligns with findings from research in language education, where digital storytelling has been shown to improve teaching competency by engaging learners through creative, interactive methods (Subhamol V R & Shobhana, 2025). Such integration of innovation and pedagogy transforms the way law is taught, making complex material more accessible and memorable.

It is recommended that future projects expand this model to cover other landmark cases across different areas of law, with the possibility of creating a comprehensive digital casebook series. Additionally, further empirical studies should be conducted to measure its effectiveness in improving student performance and analytical skills.

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