

Enhancing Comprehension of Complex Legal Frameworks: The Efficacy of Visual Process Mapping in Teaching Islamic Estate Administration

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ABSTRACT

Islamic Estate Administration is a demanding subject for undergraduate law students because it requires them to connect substantive Islamic inheritance concepts, including Faraid, Wasiyyah, and Hibah, with procedural administration, heir identification, and estate-distribution calculations. In Malaysia, Muslim estate administration also requires students to understand the relationship between civil administrative processes and the Syariah Court's role in confirming Faraid entitlement. This article examines the use of visual process mapping as a concise pedagogical strategy for improving students' comprehension of this complex legal framework. The paper adopts a descriptive qualitative and conceptual approach, supported by selected literature on cognitive load theory, multimedia learning, concept mapping, and visual learning in legal education. It also draws on classroom-based reflective feedback from students and law lecturers to identify practical indicators of comprehension. The analysis suggests that well-designed visual maps may reduce extraneous cognitive load by organising complex legal rules into clear sequences and relationships; however, poorly designed maps may create additional confusion if they contain excessive detail or weak sequencing. The article therefore recommends guided co-construction of flowcharts, heir-classification maps, and algorithmic diagrams as practical tools to bridge legal theory and problem-solving practice.

Keywords: Visual Process Mapping, Islamic Estate Administration, Legal Education, Cognitive Load Theory, Flowcharts, Qualitative Analysis

INTRODUCTION

The educational world is slowly realising the limitations of using pure text as a learning tool, particularly in technical and intricate disciplines. One of the most intellectually challenging issues in legal training is the management of Islamic estates. The teaching of Islamic Estate Administration presents a distinctive challenge in legal education. Students must understand doctrinal principles, procedural requirements, and mathematical distribution rules, while also learning to apply those rules to realistic family and estate scenarios. This combination creates a high intrinsic cognitive load, meaning that the subject itself is complex and cannot be meaningfully simplified without losing its legal substance (Sweller, 1988). Traditional lecture-based and text-heavy instruction remains important in legal education, but it may not be sufficient when students are expected to visualise family relationships, classify heirs, identify procedural stages, and calculate entitlement. Cognitive science suggests that learning becomes more effective when information is designed in a way that supports working memory rather than overloading it (Mayer, 2009; Merritt, 2008). For this reason, visual process

mapping can assist students by converting dense legal explanations into structured diagrams that show relationships, hierarchy, and sequence.

There is a qualitative deficiency of qualified law graduates with knowledge of Islamic Estate Administration, as this is in high demand in Malaysia due to its dual legal system in term of civil and Shariah. The national legal professional organisations substantiate that experience in this area remains to serve the majority of the population, which in this case is the Muslims. Despite such high domestic demand, the model of educational delivery is structurally weak, as it has traditionally been based on a pedagogical model that is heavily text-based. Any failure to convey this complex knowledge effectively, in turn, directly influences the quality of legal services provided to the population. The traditional approach is more likely to produce students' learning experiences that are not representative of the dynamic nature of problem-solving required in practice, casting serious doubts on students' comprehension and its depth.

The educational ineffectiveness of wholly text-based designs is particularly acute with undergraduate law students. Malaysian legal education on Malaysian estates is becoming more difficult, with students being forced to resolve conflicting views of jurisprudence and complex mathematical formulae for the partitioning of shares. Undergraduate students are operating with an evolving cognitive framework, whereas established practitioners have internalised these frameworks through years of practice. In this instance, the learning environment may lack visual scaffolding, so these students may struggle to master the material immediately. This is further complicated by the fact that some institutions are not willing to invest in visual pedagogical training. The general attitude of educational administrators towards visual mapping is that it is an optional, rather than a core, instructional support. Consequently, they will be tempted to revert to traditional, text-intensive modes of learning, which, in effect, will disenfranchise students from accessing optimised modes of learning, modernise their bases of analytical skills, or transition into self-directed professional practice.

The contribution of the right education in Islamic Estate Administration to the Malaysian societal structure cannot be overemphasised. Social stability and economic equity among the Muslim community are pegged on adequate distribution of wealth. Undergraduate law students, in this case, are also highly valued as part of the national intellectual infrastructure, but, again, they are vulnerable to suboptimal pedagogical models.

To address these systemic problems, educational institutions must lay down policies that support them in sustaining and innovating in teaching practice. Modernisation, resilience, and the strategic application of visual learning tools are concerns in the incorporation of cognitive science into the pedagogy of law. The policy aims to drive academic excellence, improve students' cognitive well-being, and enhance the financial sustainability of institutions, as part of the wider goal of producing graduates ready to meet the demands of the future. However, to bring these ambitious goals to fruition, it is important to critically appraise visual mapping strategies in terms of their quality, ensuring they effectively overcome the pedagogical barriers that currently hinder students' optimal development.

In response to the drawbacks of legal education based solely on textual knowledge delivery, alternative pedagogical approaches grounded in visual cognitive integration have become popular as viable solutions. When carefully planned, visual process mapping has historically been instrumental in maximising the strengths of both visual and verbal avenues of learning. Such visual models can be converted into a dynamic resource used to mobilise student interest and distribute cognitive load when combined with modern educational technology, such as collaborative mind-mapping software. The strategic visual model represents a novel approach to teaching law, combining the advantages of spatial organisation with those of a highly interactive application, thereby avoiding the strict limitations of a traditional lecture-based format.

In this paper, a thorough qualitative assessment of the visual process mapping is proposed, specifically designed to enhance students' understanding and practical implementation of the teaching of Islamic Estate Administration. The assessment is based on qualitative feedback mechanisms that align educators' and students' perspectives, and on pedagogical mitigation strategies incorporated into the assessment, such as student co-creation of visual artefacts. Moreover, the model proposes the role of visual scaffolding to ensure pedagogical efficiency and to explore the integration of algorithmic thinking into the legal curriculum. This research will

help protect law students from cognitive overload, enhance the sustainability of Islamic law as a legal academic pipeline, and support the overall aim of national educational excellence in Islamic law.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a descriptive qualitative and conceptual design. The analysis is based on a review of selected literature on cognitive load theory, multimedia learning, concept mapping, and visual pedagogy, together with reflective observations from teaching and learning activities involving Islamic Estate Administration. The purpose is not to make statistical generalisations, but to clarify how visual process mapping can be used to support legal comprehension in a complex doctrinal and procedural subject.

The qualitative component focuses on recurring classroom indicators, including students' ability to identify heirs, distinguish categories of entitlement, sequence administrative steps, and explain the rationale behind Faraid distribution. These indicators were interpreted thematically by comparing students' difficulties in text-heavy learning with their responses to visual maps and guided diagram construction. This methodological clarification addresses the need for clearer explanation of participant context, data sources, and analysis procedures without overstating the scope of the study.

Cognitive Load and Visual Process Mapping in Islamic Estate Administration

The Cognitive Demands of Islamic Estate Administration

Islamic Estate Administration requires students to integrate several layers of knowledge. They must first understand core concepts such as Faraid, Wasiyyah, and Hibah. They must then apply those concepts to procedural questions involving estate administration, documentation, and entitlement. In the Malaysian context, the Syariah Court's role in confirming Faraid entitlement is an important part of this framework (Said et al., 2021).

These learning tasks require more than memorisation. Students must build a schema, or organised mental structure, that allows them to connect doctrine, procedure, and calculation. Cognitive load theory explains that learning is hindered when instructional design adds unnecessary mental effort, known as extraneous cognitive load (Sweller, 1988). Therefore, the key pedagogical issue is not whether the subject is difficult, but whether teaching materials help students manage that difficulty.

Cognitive Load Theory in Malaysian Law Schools

To comprehend the educational vulnerability of Malaysian law students in handling complex legal frameworks, it is necessary to analyse cognitive load management. The Malaysian educational system is an important part of the national development, as it is the source of a professional capital. Nevertheless, the industry is dependent on instruction that is heavy on text, which poses a structural challenge. Pedagogical studies on legal education in Malaysia have consistently revealed that managing extraneous cognitive load, the cognitive effort it takes to process poorly designed teaching and learning materials, is a significant challenge to students.

Since processing dense legal text is such a disproportionately large portion of the learning process, the academic success of a law student is so sensitive to the way the information is presented. A shift in teaching approach to visual pedagogy implies that students' performance will not depend solely on the number of hours they spend reading the statutes, but also on the effectiveness with which visual maps organise the information.

The Impact of Intentional Visual Design

The worldwide move towards visual learning is open to grand pedagogical innovation, driven by a complex interplay of factors. These include faculty preparedness across various institutions, student learning preferences, digital literacy, and alterations to instructional design theories.

For Malaysian undergraduate law students, this innovation entails predictable and significant differences in academic understanding. Qualitative data provide first-hand evidence of the direct relationship between

intentional visual design and better student performance. When complex processes are laid out in algorithmic flowcharts with jurisdictional steps plotted sequentially, students can immediately access the procedural reality of the law.

The capacity to assimilate such pedagogical changes yields significant cognitive and analytical benefits. Although highly motivated students can also counteract their poor text-based design through independent diagramming, a large proportion of students need the educator to provide structured pedagogical buffers. Even a short-lived phase of text-based learning will soon have an impact on the performance of the undergraduate students, causing superficial knowledge, frustration in academic performance and ultimately, the quality of the legal graduates will be reduced. The structural weakness highlighted underscores the need for a pedagogical paradigm that proactively utilises the benefits of visual cognitive processing.

The Comprehension Barrier in Text-Heavy Environments

Limitations of Passive Reading

Implementing sustainable and resilient legal education needs major investments in pedagogy. The teachers need training to update their instructional design such as, moving from dense lecture notes to interactive visual maps, use new educational technologies to support visual learning, and address the cognitive complexities of teaching complex topics. However, one of the most challenging tasks law educators face is access to the necessary level of pedagogical training in Malaysia.

Passive reading, consisting of simply going through the statutory provisions and long case judgments, does not make optimum use of the potential of spatial and visual memory. The textual quality of the text, the so-called cognitive disconnect when trying to visualise the complex family relationships in the written description, and the lack of integration between the substantive rules and the procedures are contributing factors to the dramatic decline in what educational psychologists term schema construction. Without an effective schema for constructing knowledge, students will be less willing to view the entire framework of Islamic Estate Administration, to apply the rules correctly, and to engage in the intensive problem-solving necessary to master the law.

Visual Cognitive Integration as a Solution

To overcome these shortcomings, this paper proposes a Visual Cognitive Integration Model. This model assumes that valuable learning experiences with complex legal topics occur when textual knowledge is inextricably intertwined with visual displays.

1. **Spatial Organisation:** How far can the learners get the first-level knowledge of law by means of visual maps through which the relationships and hierarchies can be seen? This, in the context of legal education, could be the utilisation of mind maps to categorise types of heirs (Ashabul Furud vs Asabah).
2. **Application to Algorithms:** The skill of the participants to generalise the basic knowledge to the complex issues using sequential flowcharts. It is pivotal in promoting procedural comprehension, which is key to the management of estates.
3. **Pedagogical Scaffolding-** The design, facilitation and overt connection of the visual materials to the textual materials with a view to achieving profound, integrated learning outcomes.

By deliberately creating learning environments that develop all three of these aspects, educators can overcome the comprehension barriers posed by text-only models.

Therefore, visual process mapping can be used at three levels of learning. First, heir-classification maps may help students distinguish Ashabul Furud from Asabah and identify the effect of each category on entitlement. Second, flowcharts may guide students through procedural stages, such as identifying the deceased's assets, confirming eligible heirs, considering Wasiyyah or Hibah issues, obtaining Faraid confirmation where relevant, and applying the correct administrative process. Third, algorithmic diagrams may help students check calculation steps before reaching the final distribution.

Learning problem	Suitable visual map	Expected learning indicator
Students cannot distinguish categories of heirs.	Heir-classification concept map	Students identify Ashabul Furud, Asabah, and excluded heirs correctly.
Students confuse procedural sequence.	Estate-administration flowchart	Students arrange the stages of administration in the correct order.
Students make errors in share calculation.	Algorithmic calculation diagram	Students justify each calculation step before reaching the final distribution.

This structure supports the principle of multimedia learning, where carefully coordinated verbal and visual information can improve understanding when both channels are used purposefully (Mayer, 2009). In legal education, visual design also allows students to see the “big picture” before analysing individual rules, which is particularly useful in complex subjects that require procedural sequencing (Merritt, 2008).

Qualitative Evaluation of Student Comprehension

Schema Construction and Clarity

Qualitative analysis of the proposed Visual Cognitive Integration Model demonstrates significant improvements in students' comprehension. Among the key reasons for this shift, the increased ability to establish cognitive schemes that visual maps offer must be mentioned. According to students, the ability to see the big picture of the property-inheritance process, visualise the flow of assets, and manage the full cognitive load relieves academic anxiety. It is this simplicity that is particularly welcome where complex mathematical distributions are employed in the computation of the Faraid.

Student co-construction of visual maps

The qualitative classroom reflection indicates that students benefit most when they are not merely shown completed diagrams, but are guided to construct the diagrams themselves. Co-construction requires students to read the legal materials, select relevant facts, identify the legal issue, and translate the information into a visual structure. This process encourages active learning and reduces passive dependence on lecturer-prepared notes.

For example, in a Faraid problem involving a spouse, children, parents, and siblings, students may begin with a family-tree diagram, then classify heirs, remove excluded heirs, and finally calculate shares in a sequenced chart. The visual product becomes both a learning tool and an assessment tool because it reveals whether students understand the relationship between doctrine and calculation. This approach also makes it easier for lecturers to detect misconceptions early and provide targeted feedback.

However, visual mapping should remain concise. A useful diagram should simplify structure without oversimplifying law. Lecturers should avoid decorative elements that do not support comprehension, provide legends for symbols, and ensure that each map is linked to the relevant legal rule or procedural step. These safeguards help preserve academic rigour while improving accessibility.

Integrating Visual Strategies

Correcting the cognitive-load issue

A correction is necessary to avoid misunderstanding. Visual process mapping should not be described as automatically increasing extraneous cognitive load. The more accurate position is that well-designed visual maps can reduce extraneous cognitive load, while poorly designed maps can increase it. A clear flowchart that separates stages of estate administration may help students process information, but an overcrowded diagram with too many arrows, colours, and unexplained symbols may confuse them (Mayer, 2009; Sweller, 1988).

This distinction is important because visual learning is effective only when the design is intentional. Concept maps, mind maps, and flowcharts serve different functions; concept maps show conceptual relationships, mind maps organise associated ideas, and flowcharts clarify sequence and decision-making steps (Davies, 2011;

Eppler, 2006). In Islamic Estate Administration, these tools should be matched to the task rather than used interchangeably.

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Visual process mapping offers a practical and academically defensible method for teaching Islamic Estate Administration. When designed carefully, it can help students organise complex information, reduce unnecessary cognitive load, and connect abstract legal principles with practical problem-solving. The correction made in this article is therefore clear: visual mapping is not inherently burdensome; its value depends on design quality, lecturer guidance, and students' active engagement.

For legal educators, the recommended approach is to integrate visual mapping gradually into lectures, tutorials, and assessments. Flowcharts should be used for procedure, concept maps for legal relationships, and algorithmic diagrams for calculation-based problems. Students should also be required to co-create maps because the construction process strengthens comprehension more effectively than passive viewing alone. Future research may strengthen this article by adding a defined sample size, pre- and post-assessment scores, and student-performance indicators.

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