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Mooting as a Pedagogical Intervention to Overcome Challenges of Learning Law in Distance Mode: Initiative in Sri Lanka

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Abstract

Legal education is a multifaceted study with a varying focus on knowledge, competence, skills, ethics and practices. The Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) is the only state University in Sri Lanka that offers legal education via Open and Distance Learning (ODL) mode. In the ODL system, legal education is severely challenged by physical separation and limited interaction with teachers and peers, leaving graduates unprepared for legal practice. Hence, there is a need for innovative approaches to address the challenges of learning law in ODL. The present study reports on an innovative pedagogical approach of introducing mootng into the legal curriculum of the Department of Legal Studies, OUSL. Moot court is a simulation of a real court hearing that allows participants to analyze and argue fictional or hypothetical legal cases. A considerable amount of literature has reported the positive attributes of mootng in improving knowledge, skills, and professionalism among law students. However, there are very limited studies that develop a comprehensive adoption framework for mootng into ODL legal curricula. Thus, the current study proposes a framework for integrating mootng through a blended-learning approach that aligns with the ODL mode. The framework reported herein is grounded in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) on the integration of mootng into distance and online learning modes and by the author's two decades of experience in mootng and ODL delivery. The proposed framework is built on three main levels: Foundation, Integration, and Institutional support and Sustainability. This framework provides step-by-step guidelines for blending the traditional mootng concepts with the ODL delivery mode. Overall, this study encourages educators to incorporate mootng into the curriculum of legal studies delivered via ODL mode to cultivate the next generation of competent legal professionals.

Keywords: Distance learning, Framework, Legal Education, Mooting, OUSL, Pedagogical tool

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Introduction

The momentum for sustainable education has never been stronger than since the COVID-19 pandemic, which has demanded the transformation of traditional classroom education into novel learning models and pedagogies that rely on technology. Many higher educational institutions around the world have adopted the emerging Open and Distance (OD) paradigm for sustainable education (Orie & Aare, 2026). Even before COVID-19, there was an interest in delivering education via ODL mode to create equal and inclusive education. The open and distance learning (ODL) mode of education is also endorsed by UNESCO's movement due to its ability to provide unequivocal access to education, regardless of age, gender, race, or social standing (UNESCO, 2001).

Among all fields of education, legal studies were the most reluctant field to adopt the ODL mode. Traditional legal education is heavily reliant on the teacher-centered pedagogical method (Kumarage, 2019). In many countries, legal education is offered only for selected student categories to maintain the quality of learning (Bisare, 2021). The traditional model of law education hinders the learning opportunities of individuals with various barriers, such as age, geographical separation, work or family commitments, financial constraints and disability. As a response, many law schools adopted the ODL learning mode to meet the increasing demand for law graduates in the 21st century and to provide an inclusive, equitable and sustainable education.

Delivering law in ODL mode has several other advantages, such as greater flexibility in learning, learner autonomy (Evans & Shortall, 2011), fostering lifelong learning, exposure to novel digital technologies and cost-effectiveness of the programmer. Moreover, the ODL delivery mode would address the growing demand to reform legal education worldwide in response to dynamic changes in societal, economic, and technological aspects.

Despite the advantages of the ODL mode of education, there are a few intrinsic challenges that operate at various academic and administrative levels. Several studies have highlighted that, in ODL mode, students can develop the feeling of isolation, where the tutor and student, and students themselves, are temporarily and physically separated. Studies have also identified that the ODL students who lack sufficient academic and administrative support have a higher tendency to develop anxiety (Hillesheim, 1998). Along with social isolation outside of the classroom, distance learning mode provides less engagement in their learning (Brainard et al., 2024). The lack of tutor and peer interaction in the ODL mode lessens the effectiveness of the learning experience and excludes an active and collaborative learning aspect (Croft et al., 2010). Moreover, in ODL mode, students have fewer opportunities to develop legal skills such as negotiation, client communication, legal writing, advocacy, time management and decision making under pressure, which require court proceedings (de Silva, 2025). ODL students could be challenged to bridge the gap between theory and practice and fail to develop competent legal professionals. In addition, students might face technological and network constraints, and a lack of devices may magnify the issues of the ODL mode. In this light, legal educators are in search of pedagogical interventions to address these challenges.

Incorporation of a stimulated learning experience is an effective way of assisting law students in actively engaging in legal learning and developing professional skills while they are motivated through peer and tutor interaction. Educational theories that have emerged over the years, such as the Experimental Learning Theory (Kolb & Kolb, 2018), Social Learning Theory (Bandura, 1969), Distributed Cognitive Theory (Hutchins, 2020), Activity Theory (Jonassen, 2000) and Situated Learning Theory (Resnick et al., 1991), have given insights into professional and skill development through stimulated learning experiences. Clinical legal education and moot court competitions are held as the effective gold standard learning tools in legal education, which promote and improve both knowledge and skills of law students (Kumar

Yadav, 2025). Clinical legal education tool is much more challenging as they comprise real clients and cases (Du Plessis, 2013). In this light, mootng is at the forefront of legal education as an effective pedagogical tool that transforms law students from academics into legal practitioners.

Mooting is a hypothetical court proceeding. In this, a group of students are given a hypothetical legal problem, which they are required to argue in front of a 'judge' or panel of 'judges' (Lynch, 1996). It is designed to simulate a real court hearing, allowing participants to analyze and argue fictional or hypothetical legal cases (Snape & Watt, 2010). Mooting has a profound effect on a student's legal knowledge, peer interaction, critical thinking skills, and public speaking ability. It is assumed that this pedagogical tool would ideally address the challenges associated with learning law through the ODL mode (Thomas & Craddock, 2013). Despite the wide adoption and recognition of the value as a knowledge and skills potential of mootng, limited information is available on the integration of mootng into legal curricula that are offered via ODL mode (de Silva, 2016). Moreover, there is a limitation in developing a holistic framework for the integration of mootng as a pedagogical tool to address the challenges of delivering law via ODL mode.

In this context, the current study aims to propose an educational framework for introducing mootng into the LLB program of OUSL, to address the challenges of learning law through ODL mode. The OUSL is the only state institute in Sri Lanka that offers legal qualification via a distance mode (de Silva, 2024). It offers open and flexible access to Sri Lankan learners, ensuring equitable access to legal education in Sri Lanka. The OUSL uses printed instructional materials and an online Learning Management System (LMS) to deliver instructional materials, where students mostly engage in independent learning of theoretical concepts (de Silva, 2024). Interactive learning sessions further support the learning process of students to clarify difficult content. Formative and summative assessment methodologies are employed for student evaluation (de Silva, 2025)

This current study aims to propose a unified competency framework that integrates the theoretical insight and practical guidance of mootng into the LLB program offered by the OUSL, aligning with the concepts of the ODL mode of learning. The framework is grounded in the available literature on educational practices and the two-decade-long experience in the ODL system. It is anticipated that this framework will offer guidance for educators to harness the potential of moots in upholding standards of legal education delivered via the ODL mode. This paper broadly discusses the need for this type of innovative approach in the OUSL setting, its introduction and sustainability. Moreover, this discusses the challenges faced at the time of the introduction of moot court sessions into ODL settings, where students have minimal physical interaction and a diverse student population from all over the country. Further, this paper presents the future development of this approach.

Literature Review

Legal Education via Open and Distance Learning in Sri Lanka

The modern livelihood with social and economic demands has necessitated obtaining educational qualifications while balancing other commitments, such as employment and family matters. The open and distance learning system, which is endorsed by UNESCO's movement, provides flexible learning possibilities and ensures everyone unequivocally has access to education, regardless of age, gender, race, or social standing (UNESCO, 2001). Mainly in this system, the learning is not confined by space, time, or the teacher-student relationship and provides more independent and flexible learning opportunities for students. With the advancement of science and with facilities such as the internet and video conferencing, online

learning is growing rapidly, and ODL is shifting to e-learning and teaching (Chaudhary & Dey, 2013).

The concept of ODL emerged in 1969 in the United Kingdom with the establishment of the Open University. Subsequently, many countries initiated Open Universities, intending to remove the barriers to education for many people. The most popular and in-demand program that the bulk of these Open Universities offer is legal education. This has significantly altered the way legal education is currently delivered and transformed the way law programs are delivered (Nwabueze & Abazie, 2020).

The Open University of Sri Lanka is at the forefront, and it is the only state university that offers legal education in open and distance modes of education in Sri Lanka. In 1978, the Open University of Sri Lanka was established under the Universities Act No. 16. OUSL is one of the 19 national universities which are under the authority of the University Grants Commission. Today, more than 40,000 students are studying at the OUSL, including eight Regional Centers and 18 Study Centers located around the country. The Department of Legal Studies (DLS) at OUSL offers a Bachelor of Laws honors Degree Program (LLB) and a Master of Laws in Criminal Justice Administration (LLM) (Selvaras, 2021).

OUSL initiated online learning in 2003, under the guidance of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia. The OUSL emphasizes blended learning in combination with online academic delivery platforms, such as learning Management Systems (LMS). The integration of ICT into OUSL courses was mainly facilitated by the Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe) (Selvaras, 2021). Academic staff at OUSL are well-trained in using technological innovations in course development and delivery. The LLB program at OUSL is offered through a blended learning approach, in which course content is delivered to learners via printed materials and online through the Learning Management System (LMS). The process of learning is facilitated through the Interactive Learning Sessions (ILS), which are mostly conducted online via Zoom or in person using smart boards.

Challenges in Teaching Law via Open and Distance Learning Methods

Despite being widely acknowledged as an alternative learning method, open and distance learning (ODL) has its challenges, specifically in professional program like legal education. Compared to other fields of study, legal education was slow to adopt distance learning approaches. Traditionally, legal education has relied on the traditional teaching model, where theoretical knowledge is transferred from the teacher to the student in a classroom. Teaching law in ODL mode is much challenged due to the physical separation of teacher, students and peers, which could lead to social isolation and learning anxiety Kechil et al., 2022).

Social isolation is the widely reported challenge of the ODL mode of education (Sarimah et al., 2023). Studies have also identified that the ODL students who lack sufficient academic and administrative support have a higher tendency to develop anxiety (Zirkle, 2001). The social isolation in distance learning also caused many students to be less engaged in their learning process (Brainard et al., 2024). The lack of tutor and peer interaction in the ODL mode lessens the collaborative learning approach (Croft et al., 2010). A study conducted in Bangladesh has revealed that the ODL mode can lead to academic stress and social isolation that can subsequently lead to anxiety (Jabin, 2025).

The ODL demands that students have high self-discipline, be resourceful and self-motivated in their self-learning. Previous reports also revealed that the ODL students are less motivated for learning due to fewer interactions with teachers and peers (Pulist, 2018). Legal education extends beyond theoretical knowledge and cultivates the development of critical skills essential for success in the legal profession. It needs to cultivate strong oral

advocacy skills, which include presenting arguments, negotiating settlements, and persuading judges, juries, or clients. The recent dynamic changes in the legal profession have compelled the need for skilled, competent and dynamic legal professionals. In Sri Lanka, also, in recent years, major concerns have been raised related to the standard of legal education in terms of skill development (Hlalele et al., 2018). However, the ODL has limited opportunities for skill development, where students have minimal student-teacher and peer-to-peer interaction. Students participate in the minimum discussion classes held in a face-to-face mode, where there is minimal interaction for the development of communication skills and advocacy. Hence, legal education through the open and distance mode required substantial reforms from traditional pedagogical methods to more practical, experimental approaches, which ensured the nurturing of competent legal professionals.

Bridging the gap between theory and practice is the most important aspect of legal education that prepares students for legal practice (Ribstein, 2010). However, in ODL mode, students have fewer opportunities to translate theory into practice, leaving them unprepared for the dynamic legal profession.

In response to these criticisms, ODL institutes need to adopt innovative teaching approaches to improve the quality of their graduates, adhering to the ODL guidelines. As a new development, many legal institutions have incorporated experimental learning experiences, such as legal simulation, legal internships, clinical legal education, and moot court competitions. By giving students real experience, these strategies help close the gap between theory and practice and improve their practical skills (Milstein, 2001).

Clinical legal education and moot court competitions are considered the most effective tools for stimulating learning in legal education (KumarYadav, 2025). Clinical legal education has long been the gold standard in legal education. However, this approach has been limited due to less access for students with interests outside general practice and the inability to cater for many students (Du Plessis, 2013). Hence, mooting is at the forefront of legal education, as an effective pedagogical tool that transforms law students from academics into legal practitioners.

These challenges collectively call for pedagogical reform in legal education offered via the ODL model at the Open University of Sri Lanka.

Mooting

Mooting is an essential component of legal education, serving as a bridge experience that transforms law students from academics into legal practitioners. This tradition is crucial to producing competent, confident future lawyers. Mooting has a profound effect on a student's legal knowledge, critical thinking skills, and public speaking ability. It is a challenging and rewarding activity (Thomas & Craddock, 2013). It is designed to simulate a real court hearing, allowing participants to analyze and argue fictional or hypothetical legal cases. Improving Public Speaking and Legal Advocacy: Delivering oral arguments allows students to refine their ability to present legal views convincingly.

Mooting is an imaginary court proceeding where students are given with hypothetical legal problems, and they are required to argue in front of a panel of judges (Lynch, 1996). These hypothetical courts allow students to analyze and argue hypothetical legal cases. (Snape & Watt, 2010). Mooting has a profound effect on a student's legal knowledge, peer interaction, critical thinking skills, and public speaking ability. It is assumed that this pedagogical tool would ideally address the challenges associated with learning law through the ODL mode (Thomas & Craddock, 2013).

Mooting and Knowledge Acquisition: Lessons from Educational Theories

Mooting is a stimulated and collaborative learning experience that bridges theory into practice. Educational theories that have emerged over the years, such as experimental learning theory, social learning theory, distributed cognitive theory (Hutchins, 2020) and Situated Learning theory (Resnick et al., 1991) have given insights into how important collaborative and Stimulated learning techniques can be used to address many challenges associated with the ODL mode (Cobb & Bowers, 1999).

David Kolb proposed the experimental learning theory to elucidate that knowledge is created through reflecting on the individual experience (Kolb & Kolb, 2018). This theory explains that learning is a dynamic cycle which includes the stages of concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Mooting allows students to construct knowledge via the learning cycle proposed by Kolb. During the mock trial in mootings, students immerse themselves in a concrete experience (the mock trial). Then they are allowed to reflect on that experience to develop new knowledge and skills for future legal practice.

The social learning theory, which was developed by Albert Bandura, suggests that the learning process extends to the social context where individuals learn new knowledge and skills by observing and imitating others. The social learning theory involves four key components: attention, retention, reproduction, and motivation (Bandura, 1969). During moot sessions, students observe how experienced mooters, moot coaches, and legal professionals present arguments and reasoning. This allows them to adopt their reasoning styles, tone, and courtroom etiquette (Thomas & Craddock, 2013).

Distributed cognitive theory explains that the individual's cognition is not only confined to the brain, but it is also a combination of the environment and social world they live in (Hutchins, 2020). This theory explains how social interaction, language, collaborative learning and digital tools enhance the memory of an individual (Hollan et al., 2000). In mootings, students rely on digital tools for legal research and writing, which will allow them to enhance their learning via distributed cognitive theory. Moreover, students get the opportunity to engage in collaborative learning during moot court competitions (Thomas & Craddock, 2013).

The situated learning theory explains that individuals learn more effectively when learning is coupled with real-world contexts through social interaction (Cobb & Bowers, 1999). This theory was first presented by Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in 1991. Mooting is the best example of situated learning in legal education. It simulates a courtroom environment and requires students to apply legal theory and reasoning collaboratively (Thomas & Craddock, 2013).

Interestingly, mootings is a powerful pedagogical tool that can reflect all these learning theories at once. Hence, moot court sessions can be incorporated into legal education in both traditional and online modes of instruction to prepare skilled, competent legal practitioners. Considering the wide array of benefits of the Moot court competition, it was introduced to the LLB program offered by the OUSL.

Mooting and Skill Development

Development of skills is essential for lawyering, such as legal writing, legal reasoning, and problem-solving, advocacy and negotiation, through the undergraduate curricula has always been a challenge (Hanson, 2009). Moot court competitions are excellent experimental learning models in which students can develop their various legal skills (Belladonna et al., 2025).

Legal awareness is the understanding of one's own rights, legal matters, and how the

legal system functions (Drozdova et al., 2019). A study conducted in Indonesia has identified that mooting can significantly increase students' legal awareness and foster the development of critical thinking skills (Belladonna et al., 2025). Additionally, this study revealed that actively participating in moot has strengthened their capacity for critical and persuasive thought as well as their legal understanding (Belladonna et al., 2025).

The ability to solve problems is crucial in the legal profession (Cassidy, 2012). The ability to solve problems is crucial for both studying and practicing law (Cassidy, 2012). In that setting, it enables pupils to build their knowledge from a challenge (Lynch, 1996). As a result, moot court is a perfect instructional instrument for problem-based learning that enables students to articulate accurate legal concepts and make fact-based arguments (Moen, 2006). According to Fletcher (2024), mooting can help students have a better understanding of the law, particularly if they are enrolled in the first year of a law degree program.

Moot court is also recognized as a problem-based learning pedagogical tool that allows the learner to explain the correct legal concepts and argue logically (Moen, 2006). It was suggested that mooting can be valuable in developing legal understandings of students, especially by applying in the first year of a law degree program (Fletcher, 2024).

Team-based learning (TBL) is another pedagogical strategy to enhance student active engagement in learning (McInerney & Fink, 2003). Moot court is a typical small team that mimics a real legal team, which requires close coordination and cooperation (Alimova & Golovina, 2019). In moot court, it is important to develop strong arguments. Effective communication, mutual support and diverse ideas of team members maintain the cohesive team dynamic in moot court (Alimova & Golovina, 2019).

Effective communication is a fundamental skill for lawyers. Mooting cultivates strong oral advocacy skills, enabling law students to confidently present arguments, negotiate settlements, and persuade judges, juries, or clients. Through moot competitions, students can brainstorm difficult legal theories and apply them to create strong arguments, and subsequently develop their advocacy skills (Alimova & Golovina, 2019).

Mooting and Professional Development

Moot court competition fosters self-assurance and professional Conduct among the students. This activity allows students to familiarize themselves with court procedures. Participation builds confidence in courtroom procedures, develops professionalism with courtroom etiquette, and better prepares them for legal practice (de Silva, 2025). Mooting facilitates the network among fellow law students, professionals, and academics in the legal discipline. Networking develops the skills of leadership, teamwork and interpersonal communication that will support the students to be career-ready as lawyers (Io Lo, 2010).

Objectives

The objective of this study is to synthesize a holistic strategic framework for integrating mooting as a pedagogical approach to address the challenges of learning law in an open and distance mode. This study sought to answer the question of how a traditional mooting methodology could suit the needs of the open and distance learners. The framework will be grounded by the systematic literature review on the integration of mooting into the distance and online legal curriculum of higher education institutions in other countries. The framework developed based on the literature survey will be further fine-tuned by the authors' two-decade-long experience in the ODL system. Hence, overall, this study intends to develop a comprehensive framework of integrating mooting into the Bachelor of Laws Honours Degree Program (LLB) offered by the Open University of Sri Lanka via ODL mode.

Methodology

Research Desing

This study is an educational innovation approach based on a Systematic Literature Review (SLR). This study reports the strategic framework that followed the introduction of mootting as a pedagogical intervention into the LLB programme of the Open University of Sri Lanka. This pedagogical reform was based on learning theories, empirical studies and expert opinions gathered through a systematic literature search. This study mainly employed an SLR approach to ground the framework in empirical evidence and theoretical insights from prior studies. This rigorous approach enhances the validity of the proposed framework, as it is built upon agreement and evidence rather than a single author's interpretation.

A systematic literature search was carried out, adhering to the PRISMA guidelines for systematic reviews to ensure methodological rigour and a comprehensive coverage of relevant literature.

Search Strategy

Literature was searched across multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, HeinOnline, and Scopus, to ensure broader coverage. The search included the literature published during the last 25 years (2000-2025). The relevant studies were retrieved using the following keywords with Boolean operators such as AND, OR to cast a wide coverage of the literature. "*Mooting Online learning law*", "*Moot Court Distance learning law*", "*Mooting online distance legal education*", "*Mooting framework for online legal education*", "*Moot distance education*". The search was carried out in January 2026.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

Studies published in peer-reviewed journals or conferences were selected for the study. Original research articles, reviews, conceptual papers, expert opinions, and conference proceedings were selected for the study.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies published in a language other than English were excluded. Articles without full text were not included in the study. Not available in full text (abstracts without full papers). Studies not focused on educational settings were also excluded. Studies published before 2000 were also excluded.

Study Selection Process

A PRISMA-based selection process was employed as indicated in the flow diagram to retrieve the literature for this study, following the basic steps of identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion:

1. Identification: The database searches yielded a total of 3258 records (approximately 3208 from databases and 50 from other sources, including reference lists. After removing duplicates, approximately 1,160 unique records remained for screening.
2. Screening: A total of 1,160 records by reading titles and abstracts to assess relevance. At this stage, about 1100 records were excluded because they clearly did not meet the inclusion criteria, leaving 50 articles for detailed evaluation.
3. Eligibility for full texts for these 50 articles. The remaining 50 full-text articles are to be subject to full-text reading.

4. Inclusion: Ultimately, 11 studies were deemed fully relevant to the search strategy. These included empirical research and conceptual framework papers that collectively supported the integration of mootting into online and distance modes of learning.

Analysis and Results

The systematic literature search identified articles in the respective databases: Google Scholar (n = 1200), Scopus (n = 1150), and HeinOnline (n = 858). Another 50 articles traced from reference search were also included. Total number (n= 3258) of articles were screened for duplicates. After removing duplicates 1160 articles were retrieved. Total of 1160 were screened by reading titles and abstracts. After excluding the papers based on the exclusion criteria, 11 articles were included in the present review. Figure 1 presents the search strategy used in selecting the articles.

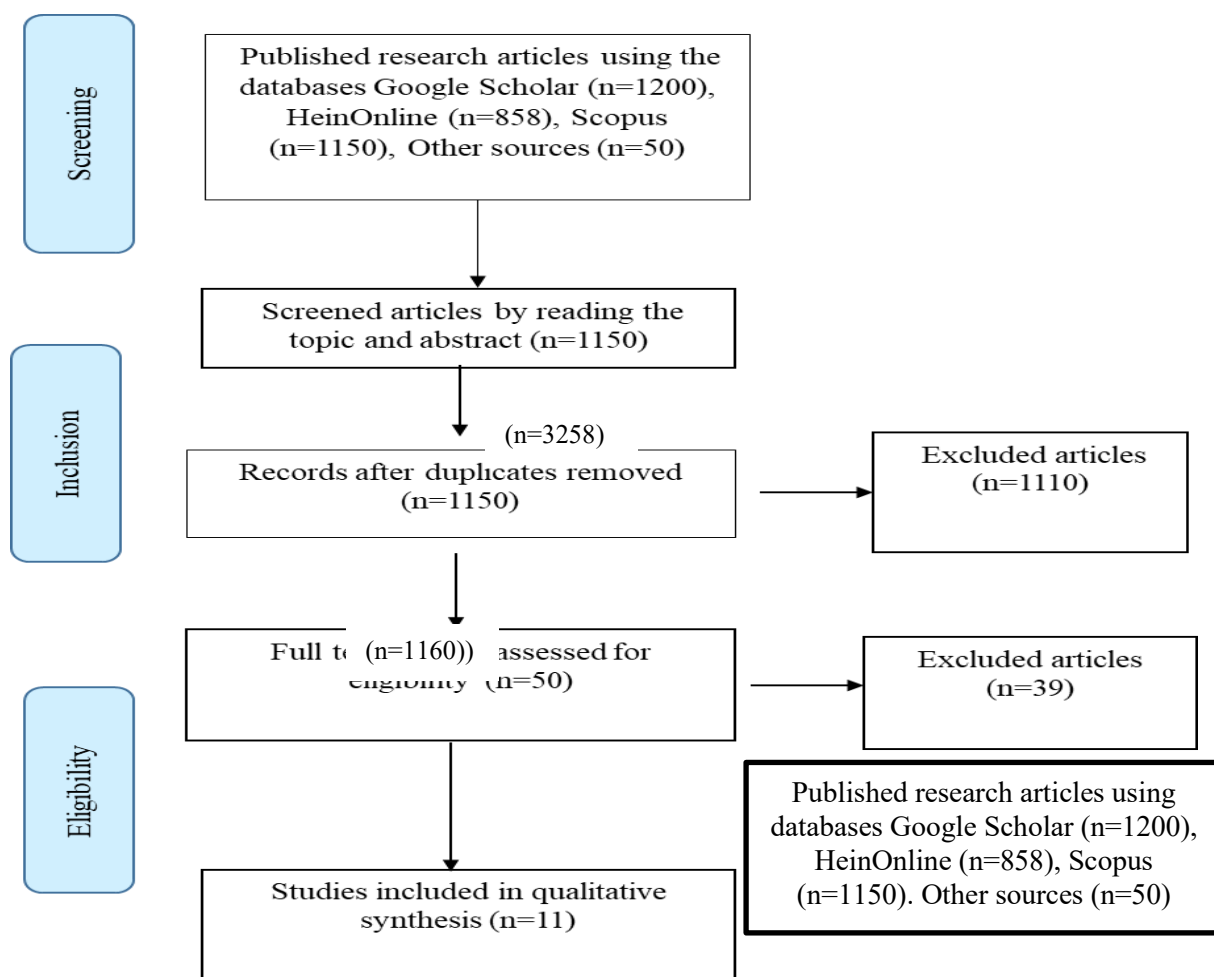


Figure 1: PRISMA Search strategy followed to recruit the scientific evidence for the systematic review

Drawing on the systematic review findings, the available information were categories into several themes. The main themes included a novel mode of delivery of mootting, an innovative approach to improve the delivery of moot sessions, and surveys on the students' and staff's perceived preference for innovation of mootting and the educational framework of integration of mootting into the curriculum as blended or e-mootting. Table 1 provides an overview of the categories and reference supporting each theme.

Table 1*Summary of main themes and supporting references for delivering moot using ODL modes.*

Country	Theme	Aim	outcome	Reference
Multimedia University (MMU), Malaysia	Novel mode of delivery and Survey	To introduce distance/blended and online mooting and compare the two modes based on students' and instructors' perceived preference	Students and instructors preferred e-mooting over distance mode	Khan et al., 2020.
Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Law School	Survey on the importance of integrating technology into mooting	To survey the students' perception of introducing technology-driven mooting to address the impediments associated with face-to-face mooting.	The paper highlighted the importance of integrating technology to conduct distance mooting and recommended new tools like Second Life, Illuminate and video conferencing as options	Yule et al., 2009
Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Law School	Innovation	Introducing virtual classrooms such as Illuminate & Second Life and video conferencing for online mooting	Among these three platforms, videoconferencing was identified as the ideal for mooting	Yule et al., 2010
Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Law School	Survey	To investigate the effectiveness of technology such as Illuminate, an online communication platform for mooting	Technology and be effectively used for mooting. However, the technology must also be available to all students, ensuring the diverse set of student with increased participation	Yule et al., 2012
Charles Darwin University (CDU), Australia	Innovative approach and framework	Developed pedagogical Space Technology (PST) and the use of the Blackboard	Highlighted the importance of designing space for learning and integrating technology into the	Ng, 2015

		Collaborate TM for internal students. And introduced online moot sessions for external students	space to conduct moot sessions online for both internal and external students	
Faculty of Business and Law, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK	Innovation, Survey and Theoretical Framework	Introduction of virtual reality to conduct moot sessions and proposed a framework for integration	Virtual reality in mooting is found to be effective, and the framework's effectiveness, suitability, and emotions.	Cho et al., 202
Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang, Malang, Jawa Timur, Indonesia	Innovation and survey	Developing a virtual reality using different stages, followed by 3D asset optimization, user interaction design, multi-user design, and testing.	A higher user satisfaction was observed in this study and experts have highlighted that it is 98% identical to the Constitutional Court courtroom. Lecturers and students, this is proposed as a learning mode for the Court Procedural constitutional law course	Hidayah et al., 2024
Taylor's University, Malaysia	Survey	Effectiveness of online mooting	Recommended the mooting can be operated online while maintaining the expected learning outcomes	Onn, 2022
Australia	Novel mode and recommendation	To introduce online moot competitions and to develop a framework for online moot competitions	This study highlighted the benefits of law students participating in mooting and this method is recommended as an equal and accessible approach that provide multiple benefits	Ray & Thampapil, 2021.

Discussion

Traditionally, moot sessions are held in a face-to-face mode to obtaining its perceived benefits such as widening legal knowledge, the development of practical skills in advocacy, legal research, and writing, analytical ability, improvement in self-confidence, the development of professional networks, and enhanced professionalism. In face-to-face mooting, scheduling of moot sessions, group forming and attendance marking are done manually (Khan et al., 2020). However, conducting moot sessions on campus is challenging due to the lack of physical infrastructure to cater to a large number of students and the requirements for resources. Hence, some institutions have adopted blended and online learning modes to conduct moot sessions as a solution to address these challenges (Khan et al., 2020).

The Multimedia University in Malaysia shifted into blended and online or e-mooting to conduct the moot session. In blended learning mode, moot sessions have been conducted face-to-face, but session scheduling, group formation and material distribution have been done via an online platform (Whilst e-mooting, the session has been conducted through Skype or other online methods (Khan et al., 2020). A comparative study of both modes has revealed that students and instructors support e-mooting over the distance mode. The instructors believed e-mooting would allow them to invite more experienced legal practitioners to be the judges of moot courts, as they can participate from anywhere. The majority of students supported the idea of e-mooting, as it exposes them to new digital technologies that will be used in future courts, and some introverted or anxious speakers are more comfortable with e-mooting. However, students have highlighted that a stable internet connection is good without any interruption during the mooting course (Khan et al., 2020).

Provided the benefits of mooting in developing competent legal professionals, many legal institutions believed students should participate in mooting. However, students with geographical barriers have less access to mooting. Therefore, technology should be utilized to provide the opportunity to moot. A survey conducted in Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Law School in 2009, identified the students' preference for online mooting and motivated authors to introduce novel technologies such as video conferencing, Second Life and Illuminate to conduct moot sessions (Yule et al., 2010). An extension of their study in 2010 introduced technology-driven moot court sessions into legal education. Illuminate and an online communication platform were made available to students through Blackboard for mooting (Yule et al., 2010). In 2012, they introduced three platforms to conduct moot sessions in electronic form: videoconferencing, virtual classrooms such as Second Life and Illuminate. The effectiveness of using these electronic modes was evaluated by the focus group comprising the mooters and audience members, and by feedback obtained from the moot judge. Second Life was not perceived by the students as an ideal model for mooting as prevent mooters from engaging with the bench through subtleties of facial expression and body language. However, the Illuminate platform was preferred over Second Life due to the availability of the webcam feature, which provides an authentic experience and allows students to develop effective remote advocacy skills that are required in the real world. Although videoconferencing is the ideal platform due to low cost and for remote mooting, it has the significant drawback that students located off campus are unlikely to be able to access videoconferencing equipment (Yule et al., 2012). Introduction of technology into the moot at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT) Law School highlighted that technology should be available to all students to ensure greater participation at moot sessions (Yule et al., 2012).

At Charles Darwin University (CDU), an innovative pedagogical framework has been proposed to accommodate both internal and external students learning law. This study has introduced a novel framework known as the Pedagogical-Space Technology (PST) where both space and technological aspects are considered for pedagogy. This study highlighted the

importance of utilizing the physical space integrated with technology to optimize the learning process of pedagogical interventions such as moot. The comprehensive framework introduced for PST allowed both internal and external students to participate in moot sessions and enhance their learning potential (Ng, 2015).

After a decade of time, Hidayah et al., 2024 have developed a virtual Reality (VR) Moot Court that reflects real-life conditions in the trial of the Constitutional law Court. They have utilized technological advancements such as developing and testing VR. These technologies include 3D asset optimization and user interaction designs (Hidayah et al., 2024). Satisfactory user response was observed in this study and experts have highlighted that it is 98% identical to the Constitutional Court courtroom. Lecturers and students, this is proposed as a learning medium in the moot court Constitutional Court Procedural Law Course. However, developing a VR is a complex task; it requires technical expertise, which may not be available in many other universities (Hidayah et al., 2024).

Though many universities have adopted distance and online modes of was a concern whether the learning outcomes could be achieved, and whether students could benefit from the module. Onn (2022) has delivered moot sessions through online mode using pre-recorded lectures, online submission of tutorial exercises as well as 'live' briefing sessions at Taylor's University. Actual mooting sessions have been conducted via the Zoom platform. The student survey revealed that students have achieved their learning outcomes of the module and have developed essential digital skills. This study revealed that the Mooting module can be delivered online and achieve pedagogical benefits (Onn, 2022).

Compared to the other pedagogical methods used in law schools, mooting requires considerable funding for the continuation of moot court sessions and participating in moot competitions. With the increased cost of law degrees, mooting can be inclusive for all students if it can be held online (Ray and Thampapillai, 2022) highlighted the importance of mooting in developing prospective legal professionals in terms of skill development. This study also indicated the importance of introducing online mooting sessions, which ensure the equity and accessibility benefits for students constrained by finances and geographical barriers. This study also provides guidelines to operating online moot competitions in Australia. It was further suggested to maintain online competitions at both a national and international level, where law schools ensure student participation (Ray and Thampapillai, 2022).

Synthesis of the framework for introducing mooting into the LLB program offered by the OUSL, Sri Lanka

Based on themes extracted from the available literature, a framework with four essential levels was proposed to integrate mooting into the LLB program of the OUSL. This approach was followed by a blended mode where moot sessions were held face-to-face, while student recruitment, group formation, and learning resources were distributed via the Learning Management System (LMS). The process of integration was divided into three levels, and each works in an integration for effective implementation of the framework: Foundation, Integration, Institutional support and sustainability. Each level addresses a specific question, and the actions proposed are described in detail below. The levels and the integration of the proposed framework is graphically represented in Figure 2.

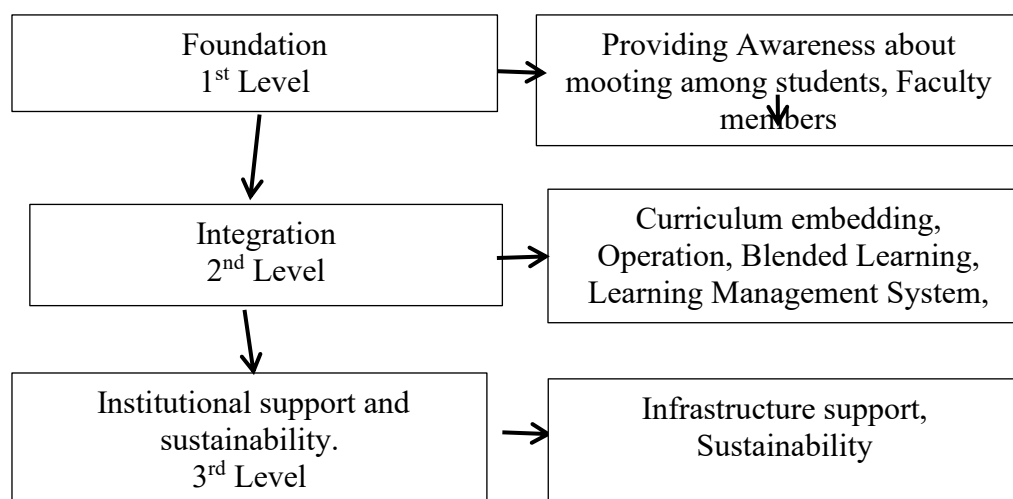


Figure 2: Three main levels of the proposed framework for integration of Mooting into Legal Studies at the Open University of Sri Lanka

Foundation

The first step of the framework is the foundation level. This level emerged from numerous studies highlighting the knowledge and awareness of mooting as a prerequisite for effective integration into the curriculum. This level addresses stakeholder knowledge and awareness of mooting as a pedagogical tool that facilitates the stimulated learning of students as well as the development of skills.

Basic Knowledge of Mooting Among the Faculty Members

To ensure the awareness of mooting among the faculty members, a series of seminars and webinars was organized. These workshops were conducted by the experts in the department of legal studies as well as from other state universities in Sri Lanka.

Basic Knowledge and Awareness Among Students

Prior to the introduction of this intervention, students were informed about the moot court practices via a series of seminars. In order to facilitate the academic cooperation and coordination among students in the Open University of Sri Lanka on moot sessions, the Moot Court and Debate Society was established on the 9th of May 2023. This society was the first ever co-curricular society of the Department of Legal Studies of OUSL. It mainly focused on the development of the oratory, Advocacy, analytical, and communication skills and knowledge of the student that are essential for mooting.

Continuous Learning

To ensure the sustainability of moot sessions, students were encouraged to obtain membership in the society and participate in moot court sessions. Moreover, the Moot Court and Debate society organized several group work and trial sessions to improve the knowledge and skills required for mooting. Moreover, students were encouraged to participate in a moot court competition to develop their confidence in competing with fellow law students. The responsibility of creating moot teams and preparing for moot competition was distributed among the students. A student-centered learning approach was established.

Integration

The Integration level addresses questions like: How can mooting be integrated into the curriculum? How does it enhance teaching and learning? How do we train moot coaches? How does mooting align with the ODL style? What would be the structure and operation of a moot session delivered via ODL mode?

Curriculum Embedding

Initially, moot was first introduced to the LLB program of OUSL in 2022 as a co-curricular activity (De Silva, 2016) with the focus on the development of oratory, Advocacy, analytical, and communication skills and knowledge of the student. Interested students were encouraged to participate in mooting. Considering its success and teaching and learning tool and based on students' interest, mooting was introduced as a course which did not account for the credit load of the LLB degree program. It was introduced as a continuing education course, which is a prerequisite for graduation but does not count towards the credit load.

Operation of the Moot Session

Moot court sessions at the OUSL are operated through a standardized process that replicates the physical atmosphere of actual court proceedings (Figure 3). The interested students were allowed to prepare the teams and participate in practice sessions. Each team consisted of three members. A few selected lecturers of the Department of Legal Studies served as the moot coaches. Moot sessions were conducted face-to-face. Moot teams were then provided with a legal scenario to analyze relevant precedents and formulate legal arguments. Then they were guided to prepare formal written arguments that articulate their legal strategies and evidence. Teams were allowed to present their arguments orally before a panel of judges, emulating real courtroom experiences. Then the Judges will provide constructive feedback on advocacy, legal reasoning, and presentation skills. Moreover, prompt and constructive feedback was given to students about their mooting performances to motivate them in participation in this activity.

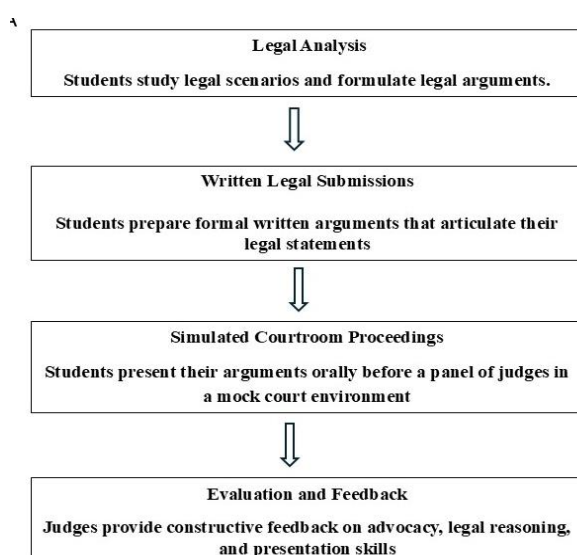


Figure 3: Structure and Functioning of the Moot Court session of the LLB program, OUSL

Training Moot Coaches

Moot coaches were selected from the Department of Legal Studies and provided a specific training program for the moot court procedures. Coaches were encouraged to develop skills in coaching students for mooting and moot session administration. They were trained to use the technology to recruit mooters, schedule, and manage moot sessions via online mode. Special workshops were conducted to train coaches and they were encouraged to participate in the National and International Moot Court competitions to get exposed to the novel trends in mooting.

Blended Delivery Mode

Mooting as a pedagogical tool demonstrates notable effectiveness in achieving the attributes of an LLB graduate who will be successful in the legal profession. However, some challenges were identified, especially in the ODL system, including physical absence, time constraints, language barriers, geographical barriers, lack of awareness and motivation for participation in moot sessions. The most challenging aspect of incorporating any pedagogical reforms into the ODL curriculum is the physical presence of the student. Students find it difficult to attend physical activities with their commitments at work, family and geographical barriers. Hence, initially, mooting was introduced as a co-curricular activity to provide a flexible learning environment for students. This experimental learning model is expected to bring students into one forum and develop their communication and legal skills.

Developing a Learning Management System

Moot sessions were delivered using a blended approach. Students who registered for the moot sessions were uploaded into the LMS. All relevant information and guidance for mooting were delivered to students via the LMS. Students were allowed to select their moot sessions via the LMS. This gave great flexibility for students. The LMS content and prompt update on activities make mooting more engaging and an inclusive learning experience for OUSL students. The legal profession is recently adopting new dynamics emerging in society, such as social complexity and technological advances. It is anticipated that several competencies, like data literacy and technological proficiency, will become valued in the next decade (Du Plessis, 2008). Moreover, several learning resources in the form of pre-recorded sessions were uploaded to develop the prior knowledge of students.

Equity and Inclusiveness

The ODL student community has a diverse student composition of different age groups, educational backgrounds and geographical localities. To address the needs of this diverse student community, initially, moot teams were based on students' interests. The interested students were allowed to participate in moot sessions.

Students' participation and performances in the moot session can be affected by language barriers. Sri Lanka is a multilingual nation, and three main languages, Sinhala, Tamil, and English, are the official languages of education. To ensure language equity, moot sessions were conducted in all three languages to ensure the confidence and comfort of the students. All these sessions were guided by the trained moot coaches of the Department of Legal Studies, who are proficient in all three languages. To overcome the geographical barrier, moot sessions were also held in the main regional centers: Colombo, Kandy, Matara, Jaffna and Batticaloa (Figure 4), clustering the students spread in all geographical areas in Sri Lanka. Moot sessions were conducted physically in selected regional centers as cluster groups to overcome the geographical barriers. Students can select a center close to their residence or workplace and participate in moot sessions.

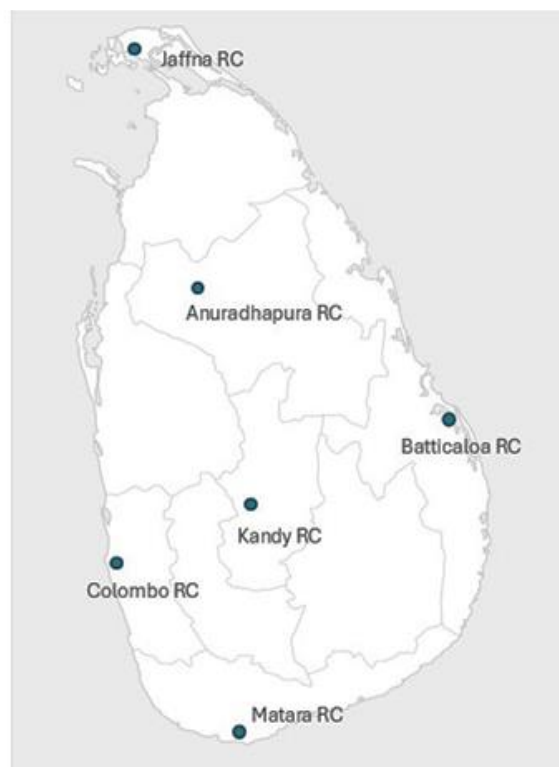


Figure 4: t is requested to please review the article and give valued feedback so that we may proceed to publish the article.

Institutional Support and Sustainability

In this level, several questions have arisen. How do institutions support moot operations? What actions should be taken to sustain the moot sessions via ODL mode? These challenges were addressed by following these solutions.

Infrastructure and Support

Successful integration of moot as a blended learning experience requires physical, technical infrastructure (adequate computing resources, software platforms) and support mechanisms. The moot sessions were held on the main campus and other regional centers and physical facilities at the centers were utilized. This level also entails providing robust support and addressing technical barriers. Wi-Fi facility was made available for students to access online content, group booking and session planning. Separate study rooms at the main campus and other regional centers were allocated for the moot sessions. Expert moot coaches at the main campus travelled to other regional centers to conduct the moot sessions. Moreover, moot coaches who are competent in respective languages are assigned to moot sessions to reduce the language barrier of student participation in moot sessions.

Sustainability

Lack of awareness of the importance of moot is the other main challenge. Many students hesitate to participate in moot due to lack of awareness and exposure. Hence, at the time of initiation of this practice, many awareness programs were conducted as webinars and physically at various regional centers to provide awareness to nurture confidence about this activity. Students were further encouraged to participate in moot court competitions held at the National and International levels. The best performing teams were sent to the moot competitions. In 2022, the OUSL moot team participated in the Henry Dunant Memorial National Moot Court competition and won second place. They further participated in the Henry

Dunant Memorial Moot Court Competition South Asia region held in Nepal and were qualified for the Asia Pacific region rounds to be held in Hong Kong. Students were able to connect with professionals and expand their network of legal professionals and other experts.

Moreover, students' and tutors' perceptions on moot sessions, their administration and other important aspects were inquired about using self-assessment questionnaires. Necessary modifications and developments were done based on their views and perceptions.

Collectively the proposed framework is mainly focusing on integration of moot concepts while aligning with the Open and Distance Learning concepts where students are provided with more flexibility, personalized, equitable and inclusive approach. This mainly focuses on using technology such as Learning Management System for the administration and operation of the mooting where students have more flexibility for participation for moot sessions. Moreover, this operating moot session around the country in three main languages of Sri Lanka greatly enhance the participation of students overcoming the geographical and language barriers.

Recommendation and Suggestions

The integration of a new pedagogical intervention into a curriculum represents a strong urge for reforming traditional teaching methods. It should foster active learning, skill development and professional development. However, the success of any intervention depends on the reflective implementation, accessibility and inclusive to all students and adaptability. There is an urgent need to perform an in-depth and reflective analysis of this intervention to validate this pedagogical application. A survey and focus group interviews with students and educators will be carried out to investigate the effectiveness of mooting as a learning tool. Depending on their perception, mooting can be introduced into the curriculum of the LLB program. It is anticipated that this tool will prepare both educators and learners for a more dynamic, interactive learning experience.

Conclusion

The present study informs that integration of mooting into the LLB program of the OUSL as a co-curricular activity. This paper mainly highlighted the innovative approach that addressed the main challenges of ODL, such as social isolation, lack of active learning opportunities, fewer opportunities for skill development, diverse learners, and geographical barriers between the learner and the institution. The proposed framework operates in three main levels which are interconnected; Foundation, Integration and Institutional Support and Sustainability. This framework would pave the way to introducing mooting as part of the curriculum of the LLB program, which is delivered through ODL mode. The approach will encourage educators to integrate novel and effective learning strategies that would cultivate the next generation of competent and skillful legal professionals.

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