



Back to (Con)Textuality: Using Chat Services to Teach Legal Reasoning
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In this paper, we are examining several of the challenges faced in teaching legal reasoning, debating and court process to undergraduate students, whose major subject is not law, with the use of real-time online chat platforms. We will elaborate on the technologically enhanced learning (TEL) environment named indicatively the 'Virtual Courtroom'. The Virtual Courtroom was designed to introduce the general dynamics of legal reasoning – i.e. in particular the argumentative character and open texture of the law – to a multidisciplinary cohort enrolled in an Introduction to Law module. With the intention to empower students and to help developing their hands on knowledge, this TEL environment was designed to allow its users to work towards resolving controversial legal cases, both individually and in groups. Drawing from the use of mooting and its reported success in enhancing the development of practical knowledge and in activating student participation, the Virtual Courtroom incorporates role-play and experiential learning, by using a commercial chat service to recreate the discussions happening between lawyers working for the defence, for the prosecution and between judges. This presentation, thus, will reflect on the educational approach, the technological medium, the benefits and limitations of the learning environment and the experience of learners and educators over the three years that the Virtual Courtroom has been running. Additionally, this presentation would elaborate on the fact that despite the emergence of increasingly sophisticated educational virtual environments to emulate real life experiences, there is still room for a meaningful educational use of less advanced technologies.