

Citation: Ms. Karishma Jain & Dr. Meenu Verma “Gamification in Legal Education: Transforming Pedagogy for 21st Century Legal Education in India” St. Soldier Journal of Law and Social Science, Vol. 2:2, July 2026, pp. 56-68

Gamification in Legal Education: Transforming Pedagogy for 21st Century Legal Education in India

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Introduction

Legal education is dynamic and is developing in response to the shifting socio-economic realities and rapid technological progress. Over the past few decades, education as a whole and legal education in particular has undergone significant changes, largely driven by the growing role of technology in teaching and learning. Digital education, which includes a wide range of practices and tools based on information and communication technologies (ICTs), has transformed how knowledge is taught, learned, and assessed. Within this increasingly digital environment, gamification has emerged as a creative and impactful teaching strategy, offering new ways to engage students and enhance the learning experience.¹ It is pertinent to

¹ Alfonso Renato Vargas, Ilda Nadia Monica, *et.al.*, *Virtual Gamification Strategies and Their Impact On Legal Education Experiences: A Systematic*

mention over here that the students of today's generation are too much exposed to the digital technology from their birth² which further necessitates that the traditional pedagogical methods must be transformed in order to develop the interest of students in the classroom teaching and to make them feel motivated throughout entire class and the introduction of gamification is one such medium to such transformation.

Epistemological and Conceptual Understanding of Gamification

Though the term gamification is a relatively new term, however the concept has deep historical roots. An early example of gamification can be traced back to 1896, notably the use of trading stamps by Sperry and Hutchinson. These stamps functioned as a reward-based incentive system, whereby consumers received redeemable benefits in proportion to the monetary value of their purchases at supermarkets, filling stations, and retail establishments.³ While Nick Pelling is given the credit of coining the term "gamification" in 2003, however, it didn't receive widespread popularity within the context of education and training until 2010.⁴ Gamification means the use of game-like elements like points, levels, rewards, simulations, and competitive or collaborative

Review, International Conference on Distance Education and Learning, Beijing, China, June 9-12, 2023, *available at*: <https://dl.acm.org/doi/epdf/10.1145/3606094.3606100>, (last visited on February 01, 2026).

² Patrick Buckley, Elaine Doyle, "Game On! Students' Perceptions of Gamified Learning" 20(3) *Educational Technology and Society* 1 (2017).

³ Leah Sera and Erin Wheeler, "Game On: The Gamification of the Pharmacy Classroom," 9 *Currents in Pharmacy Teaching and Learning* 155 (2017).

⁴ *Ibid.*

activities in settings that are not traditionally games.⁵ In recent years, it has gained attention as a creative and effective teaching strategy in higher education. Gamification is particularly more relevant to legal education now a days.⁶ Within legal education, which has long been dominated by lectures, case analysis, and doctrinal teaching, gamification introduces a more interactive and hands-on way of learning. This approach can increase student engagement, help learners better retain complex legal concepts, and support the development of practical skills, including legal reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making. As the legal profession continues to evolve and places greater emphasis on technological awareness and practical readiness, the inclusion of gamified learning tools in law curricula may help close the gap between theoretical instruction and real-world legal practice. Overall, the growing interest in gamification reflects a wider movement toward student-centred, skills-based, and technology-driven approaches to legal education.⁷ Gamification is commonly implemented through digital platforms with the objective of addressing problems, enhancing user engagement, and motivating individuals to achieve specific goals. By incorporating game-like elements, it creates an interactive and engaging environment that supports users' sense of autonomy, competence, and social connectedness.

⁵ Andrew Stott and Carman Neustaedter, "Analysis of Gamification in Education", *available at*: <https://carmster.com/clab/uploads/Site/Stott-Gamification.pdf>, (last visited on February 01, 2026).

⁶ Daniel M. Ferguson, "The Gamification of Legal Education: Why Games Transcend the Langdellian Model and How They Can Revolutionize Law School" 19(2) *Chapman Law Review* 630 (2016).

⁷ Mohammad Hakim Bin Khaiunnizam, Norhazren Izatie Mohd, *et.al.*, "Review of Gamification Approach in Legal Studies" 9(3) *Internatioinal Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science* 5153 (2025).

Originating from diverse fields such as education, business, marketing, and service industries, gamification has evolved into a flexible and widely applicable approach for enriching user experience and generating value across multiple contexts. Its growing adoption across sectors has significantly reshaped traditional modes of engagement, particularly within the educational domain.⁸

Gamification, a term commonly associated with Deterding, broadly refers to the application of game-like elements in settings that are not traditionally games. Although it is often described as a relatively new and fast-developing area of study, gamification is clearly distinct from educational or serious games. Serious games involve the creation of complete games designed for learning or training purposes, whereas gamification works by selectively integrating individual game elements such as points, badges, or rankings into existing activities or systems. The expression “gamification” itself gained prominence only in recent years; while its earliest documented use dates back to 2008, it did not enter mainstream academic and professional discourse until around 2010. However, the underlying idea is much older. Practices resembling gamification can be traced to historical contexts, including the long-standing use of ranks and medals in military institutions and the early Soviet Union’s reliance on symbolic rewards and competitive mechanisms to motivate workers in place of financial incentives. These examples illustrate that, although the terminology is new, the motivational logic behind

⁸ Athanasios Christopoulos and Stylianos Mystakidis, “Gamification in Education” 3(4) *Encyclopedia* 1223 (2023), *available at*: (last visited on February 2, 2026), *available at*:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/374420015_Gamification_in_Education, (last visited on February 03, 2026).

gamification has been embedded in social and institutional practices for decades.⁹ The diagram below illustrates the essential components of gamification in education:



Significance of Gamification in Education

Gamification enables the learners to actively participate in the process of learning by drawing on the intrinsic motivational factors such as autonomy, mastery, and a sense of purpose. It allows the students to exercise choice and to further track their progress, and ultimately fosters deeper involvement in the learning process. Carefully structured games and competitions and rewards can enhance students' motivation to achieve. Importantly, it enables learners to connect theoretical

⁹ Darina Dicheva, Christo Dichev, *et.al.*, "Gamification in Education: A Systematic Mapping Study" 18(3) *Educational Technology and Society* 75 (2015).

knowledge with real-world applications and thereby strengthening the overall educational experience.¹⁰ It enables the learners to refine their critical abilities, problem solving skills and collaborative skills.¹¹ It enables the teachers to identify the individual interests, needs and problems of the students which is otherwise not possible in the traditional classrooms. Gamification provides personalized learning experiences to the students and enables continuous assessment of the learners.¹²

Theoretical Foundations

Gamification in education has various theoretical foundations that explain how elements of games influence the learners' motivation, engagement and cognitive development. Various learning theories seek to justify the use of elements such as points, levels, feedback, challenges, and narratives within educational contexts. Among these foundations, Self-Determination Theory (SDT) occupies a pivotal place as according to this theory learner can remain motivated by the satisfaction of three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Gamification in learning environments support autonomy by offering choices and self-paced progression, competence through immediate feedback and achievable challenges, and relatedness by incorporating collaboration, competition, and social recognition, thereby

¹⁰ Available at: <https://schoolofscholars.edu.in/blog/gamification-in-education/>, (last visited on February 3, 2026).

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

fostering intrinsic motivation rather than reliance on external rewards alone.¹³

Another theory is the Flow Theory, which explains that how the learners become deeply engaged when tasks given to them are well balanced between challenge and skill. Gamification leverages this phenomenon by structuring educational activities into progressive levels, clear goals and continuous feedback allowing learners to experience immersion and sustained focus. When educational tasks are neither overly simple nor excessively difficult, students are more likely to enter a state of flow, resulting in improved concentration, persistence, and learning outcomes.¹⁴ This theoretical lens is particularly relevant in digital and experiential learning environments, where engagement is a critical determinant of success.

From a pedagogical perspective, Constructivist Learning Theory provides a strong foundation for gamification in education. Constructivism emphasises that learners actively construct knowledge through interaction, exploration, and problem-solving rather than passively receiving information. Gamified educational designs align with this view by embedding learning tasks within meaningful contexts, simulations, and challenges that require learners to apply concepts, make decisions, and reflect on outcomes.¹⁵ Similarly, Experiential Learning Theory supports gamification by highlighting the role of concrete experience, reflection, and

¹³ R M Ryan and E L Deci, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivations: Classic Definitions and New Directions" (2000) 25(1) *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 54.

¹⁴ Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience* (Harper & Row, New York 1990).

¹⁵ Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children* (International Universities Press, New York 1952).

active experimentation in the learning process, all of which are facilitated through game-based scenarios and iterative feedback mechanisms.¹⁶

Behavioural theories also contribute to the theoretical basis of gamification, particularly Reinforcement Theory and Goal-Setting Theory. Reinforcement theory explains how rewards, badges, and points can strengthen desired learning behaviours when applied strategically, while goal-setting theory underscores the motivational value of clear, measurable objectives and progress indicators.¹⁷ In educational gamification, these elements help structure learning pathways, encourage persistence, and make abstract academic goals more tangible. However, contemporary scholarship cautions that over-reliance on extrinsic rewards may undermine intrinsic motivation, reinforcing the importance of integrating behavioural approaches with motivational and constructivist theories.¹⁸

Collectively, these theoretical foundations demonstrate that gamification in education is most effective when it is theory-driven rather than mechanically applied. By integrating motivational, cognitive, and pedagogical principles, gamification can enhance learner engagement, promote deeper understanding, and support sustained learning. The convergence of these theories positions gamification as a pedagogically sound approach that aligns educational design

¹⁶ David A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1984).

¹⁷ Edwin A Locke and Gary P Latham, *A Theory of Goal Setting and Task Performance* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1990)

¹⁸ Edward L Deci, Richard Koestner and Richard M Ryan, "A Meta-Analytic Review of Experiments Examining the Effects of Extrinsic Rewards on Intrinsic Motivation" (1999) 125(6) *Psychological Bulletin* 627.

with how learners are motivated, how they engage with tasks, and how meaningful learning is constructed over time.

Traditional Pedagogy and the Need of Innovation in Legal Education in India

In India, legal education has mostly followed traditional teaching methods, where lectures and textbook-based learning are the primary modes of instruction. In majority of the classrooms imparting legal education worldwide, the teachers employ lecture method and case method accompanied by Socratic method while teaching.¹⁹ While these methods help in delivering theoretical knowledge, it often fails to keep students actively engaged in the classroom.²⁰ The law students must be provided with the necessary practical skills as the success in legal profession depends more on practical skills rather than alone theoretical knowledge but only a fraction of skills are provided to the law students which is not at all defensible.²¹

Law classrooms consist of students with different learning abilities and interests, but the traditional “one-size-fits-all” approach does not address these differences effectively. With the rapid growth of digital technology, legal information is now easily available through online platforms, databases, and artificial intelligence tools. As a result, teachers are no longer seen as the only source of knowledge, and many students lose interest in passive classroom learning. This situation has been further aggravated by the problem of “infodemic,” where students are exposed to an overwhelming amount of information, including inaccurate or misleading content. In such a scenario, traditional teaching methods are unable to meet the learning needs of today’s law students. Therefore,

¹⁹ *Supra* note 8 at 636.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

there is a growing need to adopt innovative and interactive teaching methods in legal education that can capture students' attention and help them understand the practical application of legal principles. Gamification has emerged as one such approach, as it makes learning more engaging, encourages active participation, and helps students develop both theoretical understanding and practical legal skills. The application of gamification in legal education has emerged as an innovative pedagogical response to the growing demand for experiential, skills-oriented, and student-centred learning within law schools. Traditional models of legal education, which predominantly rely on lecture-based and doctrinal teaching, have been criticised for limiting student engagement and practical preparedness.²² Gamification addresses these concerns by incorporating game design elements—such as simulations, role-playing, challenges, feedback mechanisms, and progression systems—into legal curricula, thereby transforming abstract legal principles into interactive learning experiences. By situating legal instruction within structured problem-based tasks, gamification enables students to actively engage with legal content while simultaneously developing analytical reasoning, argumentation, and decision-making skills essential for legal practice.²³

In doctrinal subjects, gamification is commonly applied through case-based challenges, competitive quizzes, and structured problem-solving activities that encourage students to interpret judgments, apply statutory provisions, and distinguish

²² William M Sullivan *et al*, *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law* (Jossey-Bass, San Francisco 2007).

²³ Karl M Kapp, *The Gamification of Learning and Instruction* (Pfeiffer, San Francisco 2012).

precedents in a dynamic environment.²⁴ The use of point systems, leaderboards, and achievement badges can motivate sustained engagement with legal materials, while immediate feedback supports self-assessment and conceptual clarity. When pedagogically aligned with learning objectives, these gamified elements enhance comprehension without diluting the intellectual rigour inherent in legal reasoning.²⁵

Gamification assumes particular significance in clinical legal education and skills training, where simulations and role-play exercises closely mirror real-world legal practice. Moot courts, mock trials, negotiation exercises, and mediation simulations exemplify gamified learning environments in which students assume professional roles and apply doctrinal knowledge in authentic contexts.²⁶ These activities align with experiential learning theory by allowing students to practise advocacy, client counselling, drafting, and ethical decision-making within a structured and low-risk framework. Progressive levels of complexity within such simulations reflect professional development and help bridge the gap between theoretical learning and practical competence.²⁷

The integration of digital technologies has further expanded the scope of gamification in legal education. Online learning platforms and legal education tools increasingly incorporate scenario-based modules, adaptive assessments, and progress-

²⁴ Paul Maharg, *Transforming Legal Education: Learning and Teaching the Law in the Early Twenty-First Century* (Ashgate, Farnham 2007).

²⁵ Sebastian Deterding *et al*, 'From Game Design Elements to Gamefulness: Defining Gamification' (2011) 15 *Proceedings of the International Academic MindTrek Conference* 9.

²⁶ Roy Stuckey *et al*, *Best Practices for Legal Education* (Clinical Legal Education Association, Columbia 2007).

²⁷ David A Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development* (Prentice Hall, New Jersey 1984).

tracking mechanisms that personalise learning pathways and reinforce procedural and skills-based subjects.²⁸ Collaborative gamified activities also promote peer learning, teamwork, and professional communication, reflecting the collaborative nature of contemporary legal practice.²⁹ Overall, the application of gamification in legal education represents a shift towards engaged and learner-centred pedagogy that complements traditional instruction while enhancing motivation, contextual understanding, and professional readiness.

Conclusion

Thus, infusing gamified elements meaningfully in legal education represents a pedagogical shift in Indian legal education system. It enables the alignment of traditional doctrinal learning with the practical skills and competencies which are required in a 21st-century legal professional. With the integration gamified elements such as simulations, role-play, problem-based challenges, and feedback mechanisms in the legal education curriculum, student engagement, critical thinking, and practical skills are developed. It shifts learning from rote-memorisation of statutes and case laws to actively apply legal principles in real life based scenarios based on professional practice. Particularly in the Indian context, where legal education often grapples with issues and challenges large class sizes, examination-oriented teaching, and limited experiential learning opportunities, gamification offers a viable pathway to the educators to bridge the gap between theory and practice. When thoughtfully designed, it can foster collaboration, ethical reasoning, advocacy skills, and a deeper

²⁸ Jan L Plass, Bruce D Homer *et.al.*, 'Foundations of Game-Based Learning' (2015) 50(4) *Educational Psychologist* 258.

²⁹ Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (Oxford University Press, Oxford 2017).

understanding of procedural and substantive law. Importantly, gamification also supports inclusive learning by accommodating diverse learning styles and promoting continuous assessment rather than one-time evaluation. However, the transformative potential of gamification depends on institutional support, faculty training, and careful curricular integration. It should complement, rather than replace, foundational legal teaching and must be guided by clear learning outcomes to avoid superficial engagement. At present the Indian law schools are increasingly responding to global standards and the evolving demands of the legal profession, gamification can play a crucial role in reimagining the legal pedagogy. Lastly, it has the potential to produce reflective, practice-ready, and socially responsive legal professionals equipped to navigate the complexities of contemporary legal systems.