

[illegible][illegible]

Introduction and Background

The increasing prevalence in educational technologies and market demands as well as the ever-evolving landscape of tertiary education compels to adapt to the trends and learning methodologies required for a modern-day law student. These changes pose challenges as well as opportunities for law schools since re-evaluation of traditional pedagogical approaches, institutional policies and technological infrastructure is required for the effective delivery⁴⁸⁹ of legal education. This research aims to address issues related to integration of hybrid learning and remote work in IUM.

Legal education, traditionally delivered in an interactive nature often characterised by Socratic dialogues, professional close mentorship and moot court session; is not in the cusp of an unprecedented technological transition, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic⁴⁹⁰. The shift from traditional mode of legal education to hybrid and online learning models require immense understanding from any institution focused on delivering legal education⁴⁹¹. The revision, removal and inclusion of technological paradigms, infrastructure, institutional policies and pedagogical changes is a challenging issue faced by many institutions. However, these challenges should be faced to ensure the effective implementation, equitable delivery of legal education.

An instant deviation from the traditional learning pedagogical approaches in legal education to adoption and adapting to hybrid learning environments where digital tools are effectively and primarily used instead of in-person

interactions of the traditional method, gives an opportunity which could be beneficial for both educators and students⁴⁹². For instance, where asynchronous learning materials such as video recordings⁴⁹³, E-books, mobile interactive quizzes and other digital learning resources will be a positive supplement to live sessions either delivered on-campus or online. The possibilities of incorporating these models are endless and has the potential to be beneficial for students despite their learning habits and capabilities⁴⁹⁴. With the inclusion of a pedagogy that incorporates technology, no longer it would be impossible to participate in a virtual moot court competition conducted anywhere in the world nor, a student would be held back from understanding a particular issue upon the conclusion of the days' lecture as open 24/7 dissemination of information and continuous discussion would instil a cohesive yearn for learning among students⁴⁹⁵. However, it is important to note that this pedagogical shift would also require lecturers to be well versed in the technology as well as adapting to virtual platforms and to the pedagogical means of conducting lessons for effective teaching and learning⁴⁹⁶.

To support the new mode of teaching and learning the teaching environment should be upgraded with the required technological infrastructure. There should be a harmonised balance between hardware and software for the facilitation of online learning⁴⁹⁷. These would include hardware, subscription or availability of online discussion forums, availability of assignment submission, video conferencing and information sharing mechanism. At the same time security issues related to the implementation of these technologies

⁴⁸⁹ F Sulman, L Yulianti, S Kusairi and A Hidayat, 'Hybrid Learning Model: Its Impact on Mastery of Concepts and Self-Regulation in Newton's Second Law Material' (2022) 5(1) Kasuari: Phvsics Education Journal (KPEJ) 65–74.

⁴⁹⁰ A Raes, 'Exploring Student and Teacher Experiences in Hybrid Learning Environments: Does Presence Matter?' (2022) 4(1) *Postdigital Science and Education* 138–159.

⁴⁹¹ S Wang and others, 'An Evaluation of a First-of-Its-Kind Hybrid Law Degree Program' (2022) 34 *Journal of Computing in Higher Education* 517–544 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-022-09308-3>.

⁴⁹² I Zulfa, S Kusairi, E Latifah and MNR Jauhariyah, 'Analysis of Student's Conceptual Understanding on the Work and Energy of Online Hybrid Learning' (2019) Journal of Physics: Conference Series vol 1171, no 1, 012045 (IOP Publishing).

⁴⁹³ Wang and others (n 3).

⁴⁹⁴ H Hapke, A Lee-Post and T Dean, '3-in-1 Hybrid Learning Environment' (2021) 31(2) *Marketing Education Review* 154–161..

⁴⁹⁵ Wang and others (n 3).

⁴⁹⁶ Raes (n 2).

⁴⁹⁷ Wang and others (n 3).

should be given a high priority since sensitive legal documents and other personal information of students and faculty staff would be shared using this digital medium⁴⁹⁸.

Equity and accessibility are something that should be addressed when shifting to hybrid and online models of legal education. For this reason, ensuring equal digital representation, learning opportunities and accessibility for all students is an important factor⁴⁹⁹. This would mean regardless of the socio-economic status and background of the student; everyone should be able to benefit from this platform⁵⁰⁰. It has to be noted that this may involve providing technology acquisition assistance, creating resources for students and faculty staff who are differently abled⁵⁰¹ as well as offering support for those who require additional literacy with regards to the digital shift⁵⁰².

The other notable factor to consider would be the revision of institutional policies to reflect the realities of digital and hybrid learning⁵⁰³. The main policies required for revision would be the attendance policies, assignment and examination formats, class participation and discussion as well as policies related to modes of content delivery⁵⁰⁴. The maintenance of integrity of assessments in a virtual environment by adopting new tools for monitoring student activities and overall calibrating the view of the nature of assessment themselves is vital to maintain the quality⁵⁰⁵ of legal education provided by the institution.

Apart from the internal policy that needs to be revised. The input from the external stakeholders such as the accreditation body as well as collaboration with legal practitioners⁵⁰⁶ would provide insights into the changing nature of the legal profession in a digital world which would ensure the new hybrid programs would be up to par with the required educational standards as well as enrich the curriculum with the latest information in the legal field where technology could be used at an advantage⁵⁰⁷.

The transition from traditional to hybrid and online teaching methods in law schools is a significant evolution in legal education. It may have been necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic; however, this shift is an inevitable factor we should have faced sooner rather than later due to the exponential growth in technological advancements in every possible facet of life. However, changing the modality and paradigm of teaching requires a careful and holistic approach which would have to ensure pedagogical innovation would not be hindered or held back. Keeping in mind that the initial delivery of legal education through digital means would be faced with unprecedented challenges, but with careful consideration these challenges could be overcome, and we would be able to capitalise on the opportunities to provide a more dynamic, inclusive and effective learning environment for legal education.

Objectives of the Study

The transition to hybrid and remote learning in legal education presents both opportunities and challenges. A primary concern is the need for a comprehensive understanding and assessment of the impact of these learning models at institutions like the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM).

Adoption of Hybrid and Remote Learning Models

Evaluating the extent and manner in which IUM's faculties have adopted hybrid and remote learning models is crucial. Research indicates that blended learning, which combines traditional face-to-face instruction with online components, has been increasingly utilized in higher education to enhance teaching and learning quality⁵⁰⁸. However, challenges persist in sustaining and scaling these practices across courses and programs within institutions⁵⁰⁹. A proposed framework suggests that institutional strategic planning is essential for

⁴⁹⁸ Wang and others (n 3).

⁴⁹⁹ MM Alexander, JE Lynch, T Rabinovich and PG Knutel, 'Snapshot of a Hybrid Learning Environment' (2014) 15(1) Quarterly Review of Distance Education.

⁵⁰⁰ BH Chen and HH Chiou, 'Learning Style, Sense of Community and Learning Effectiveness in Hybrid Learning Environment' (2014) 22(4) Interactive Learning Environments 485–496.

⁵⁰¹ Ibid.

⁵⁰² Raes (n 2).

⁵⁰³ D Bennett, E Knight and J Rowley, 'The Role of Hybrid Learning Spaces in Enhancing Higher Education Students' Employability' (2020) 51(4) British Journal of Educational Technology 1188–1202..

⁵⁰⁴ D Griffin and others, 'Best Practices for Sustainable Inter-Institutional Hybrid Learning at CHARM European University' (2022) 12(11) Education Sciences 797.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ L Johnston-Walsh and A Lintal, 'Tele-Lawyering and The Virtual Learning Experience: Finding the Silver Lining for Remote Hybrid Externships & Law Clinics after the Pandemic' (2020) 54 Akron L Rev 735

⁵⁰⁷ X Bai and MB Smith, 'Promoting Hybrid Learning through a Sharable eLearning Approach' (2010) 14(3) Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks 13–24.

⁵⁰⁸ CP Lim, T Wang and CR Graham, 'Driving, Sustaining and Scaling Up Blended Learning Practices in Higher Education Institutions: A Proposed Framework' (2019) 1 Innovation and Education Article 1 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42862-019-0002-0>.

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

driving, sustaining, and scaling up blended learning practices in higher education⁵¹⁰.

Challenges Faced by Students and Faculty

Exploring the challenges faced by students and faculty in the new learning environment is vital. Studies have shown that while blended learning approaches can enhance student engagement and experience, they also create significant influences on students' awareness of the teaching mode and learning background⁵¹¹. Additionally, research on students' experiences with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic utilized thematic analysis to explore their perceptions and challenges⁵¹². This underscores the necessity for continuous professional development for educators to effectively utilize digital tools and adapt their teaching methods to the digital environment⁵¹³.

Institutional Policies and Infrastructure

Examining the changes in institutional policies and infrastructure to support hybrid and remote learning is essential. A study on blended learning adoption and implementation in higher education suggests that there is a need for more institutional adoption research to guide how higher education institutions shape policies as they transition from the traditional face-to-face delivery model to fully blended universities⁵¹⁴. The study adopts a grounded theory methodology to investigate institutional blended learning adoption initiatives, highlighting the importance of institutional support in the successful implementation of blended learning models⁵¹⁵.

Significance of the Research

This research is crucial in guiding IUM in navigating the shift towards hybrid and remote learning in the provision of legal education. It aims to provide actionable insights for educators and administrators to optimize these models for legal education. Furthermore, the study's findings will contribute to the broader discourse on the future of higher education in the digital age. The transition to hybrid learning and remote work is not merely a temporary response to global events but a significant shift in the educational landscape. This

research seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of this shift and to offer strategic guidance for IUM to effectively embrace this new era of legal education.

Methodology and Data Analysis

The research on hybrid and remote learning in legal education employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Quantitative data were gathered through surveys and structured interviews with students, educators, and administrators. These instruments aimed to capture experiences, challenges, and preferences regarding hybrid and remote learning models. Metrics such as years of experience for educators, satisfaction levels for students, and strategic challenges for administrators were included. Qualitative data, including open-ended comments, were collected to provide further context to the quantitative results and to capture the more subjective experiences of the stakeholders.

The analysis of this data was conducted through both statistical and thematic approaches. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics to identify common trends, such as preferred learning environments of students and challenges faced by educators in adapting to hybrid teaching. For instance, satisfaction levels and engagement issues were compared across different demographics, allowing for insights into specific challenges faced by younger students or educators with fewer years of experience. Meanwhile, qualitative responses were coded and analysed thematically to identify recurring issues, such as the need for improved technological infrastructure and more frequent professional development for educators.

This mixed-methods approach aligns with studies in legal education that have utilized similar methodologies. For example, an evaluation of a hybrid law degree program employed both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess student outcomes and the program's impact on access to legal education⁵¹⁶. Additionally, research on students' experiences with remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic utilized thematic analysis to explore their perceptions and challenges⁵¹⁷.

⁵¹⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹¹ J Poon, 'Blended Learning: An Institutional Approach for Enhancing Students' Learning Experiences' (2014) 51(4) Educational Media International 271–284 <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2014.971847>.

⁵¹² T Nguyen, T Nguyen and T Nguyen, 'Insights into Students' Experiences and Perceptions of Remote Learning Methods from the COVID-19 Pandemic to Best Practice for the Future' (2021) 6 Frontiers in Education 647986 <https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2021.647986>.

⁵¹³ E Perry and S Boodt, 'Supporting the Professional Development of "Hybrid" Teacher Educators in the Further Education Sector' (2019) 11(3) Teaching in Lifelong Learning 60–71 <https://doi.org/10.11120/tile.2019.00019>.

⁵¹⁴ A Antwi-Boampong and AJ Bokolo, 'Towards an Institutional Blended Learning Adoption Model for Higher Education Institutions' (2022) 27 Technology, Knowledge and Learning 765–784 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09507-4>.

⁵¹⁵ Ibid.

⁵¹⁶ Wang and others (n 3).

⁵¹⁷ Nguyen and others (n 24).

Findings and Discussions

Table 1: Educator Data

Years of Experience	Courses Taught	Challenges in Hybrid/Remote Teaching	Opportunities Identified	Preferred Teaching Model
10	Contract Law, Criminal Law	Student engagement	Flexible scheduling	Hybrid
5	Property Law, Torts	Technical issues	Increased accessibility	Remote
5	Constitutional Law	Adapting materials for online format	Use of diverse teaching tools	Hybrid

The experiences of educators at IUM with hybrid and remote learning models reveal the challenges and opportunities inherent in these teaching modalities. The table illustrates how educators with varying years of experience face different challenges, with some struggling to maintain student engagement, others dealing with technical issues, and a few encountering difficulties in adapting materials to online formats. These issues reflect broader concerns in legal education, where maintaining engagement and effectively utilizing technology are critical hurdles. Educators with varying years of experience have encountered specific challenges in adapting to hybrid and remote teaching environments. For instance, an educator with 10 years of experience teaching Contract and Criminal Law noted difficulties in maintaining student engagement. Similarly, a colleague with 5 years of experience teaching Property Law and Torts faced technical issues, while another educator teaching Constitutional Law struggled with adapting materials for online formats. These challenges are consistent with broader findings in legal education, where maintaining student engagement and effectively utilizing technology are common hurdles⁵¹⁸.

Despite these challenges, educators have identified several opportunities within the hybrid and remote models, such as flexible scheduling and the use of diverse teaching tools. The flexibility offered by hybrid learning can enhance accessibility for both students and faculty, fostering an adaptable learning environment. Furthermore, educators' preferences for hybrid or remote teaching underscore the diversity of teaching models in legal education, with some preferring in-person interaction while others appreciate the recorded lectures provided by hybrid setups. These opportunities align with research suggesting that hybrid teaching can offer increased

accessibility and the potential for innovative pedagogical approaches⁵¹⁹.

There is a significant need for increased training on technology. Educators require more professional development to enhance their proficiency with digital tools, ensuring that they can engage students effectively and deliver quality content in a remote or hybrid setting. Preferences regarding teaching models vary among educators. Some favor hybrid models, while others prefer remote or in-person instruction. For example, one educator expressed a preference for hybrid teaching, citing positive feedback on recorded lectures, while another preferred in-person interaction. These preferences reflect broader debates in legal education about the effectiveness and desirability of different teaching modalities⁵²⁰.

Educators have also emphasized the need for more training on technology to effectively navigate hybrid and remote teaching environments. This underscores the importance of professional development in equipping educators with the necessary skills to adapt to evolving teaching landscapes⁵²¹. The integration of hybrid and remote learning models in legal education offers both opportunities and challenges, as highlighted by the experiences of educators at the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM).

Table 2: Law Students

ID	Programme	Year of Study	Hybrid/Remote Learning Challenges	Preferred Learning Environment	Satisfaction Level (1-10)	Suggestions for Improvement
S001	LLB	2	Internet connectivity	Hybrid	7	More interactive sessions
S002	MCL	1	Lack of hands-on experience	Remote	6	Regular feedback and support
S003	LLB	3	Difficulty concentrating	In-person	8	Flexible deadlines

The experiences of law students at the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM) with hybrid and remote learning models reveal both challenges and opportunities that are consistent with broader trends in legal education. Law students at IUM have faced a variety of challenges in adapting to hybrid and remote learning environments, which is consistent with broader trends in legal education. The students' struggles include technical issues like internet connectivity, difficulty with concentration in online classes, and a lack of hands-on

⁵¹⁸ J Secker, M Melcher and R Wells, 'Researching the Challenges and Opportunities of Hybrid Teaching' (2021) Learning at City <https://blogs.city.ac.uk/learningatcity/2021/11/09/researching-the-challenges-and-opportunities-of-hybrid-teaching/>.

⁵¹⁹ A Raes and others, 'Designing Synchronous Hybrid Learning Spaces: Challenges and Opportunities' in Hybrid-Flexible Course

Design (Springer 2020) 123–138 https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88520-5_9.

⁵²⁰ A Thanaraj and others, Teaching Legal Education in the Digital Age (Routledge 2022) <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429351082>.

⁵²¹ Perry and Boedt (n 25).

experience, especially in a field like law where practical learning is essential. These challenges highlight the need for improved infrastructure, particularly reliable internet access and more interactive learning opportunities. Students have reported specific challenges in adapting to hybrid and remote learning environments. For example, one student in the LLB program experienced difficulties with internet connectivity, which is a common issue in online education⁵²². Another student pursuing a Master of Comparative Law (MCL) noted a lack of hands-on experience, highlighting the importance of practical learning in legal education⁵²³. Additionally, a third-year LLB student found it challenging to concentrate during online classes, a concern that has been observed in studies on online learning environments⁵²⁴.

Preferences regarding learning environments vary among students. The LLB student with internet connectivity issues preferred the hybrid model, which combines in-person and online instruction, possibly to mitigate connectivity problems. The MCL student favored remote learning, despite the lack of hands-on experience, indicating a preference for the flexibility it offers. Conversely, the LLB student who struggled with concentration preferred in-person learning, suggesting that face-to-face interaction enhances their focus and engagement. Satisfaction levels among students ranged from 6 to 8 out of 10. The LLB student suggested more interactive sessions to enhance engagement, a recommendation supported by research emphasizing the importance of active learning strategies in online education⁵²⁵. The MCL student requested regular feedback and support, highlighting the need for continuous communication between students and instructors in remote learning settings⁵²⁶. The LLB student who preferred in-person learning proposed flexible deadlines, acknowledging the challenges of online learning environments⁵²⁷.

Despite these challenges, students have expressed varying preferences for learning environments, with some preferring hybrid learning to mitigate connectivity issues, others favouring remote learning for its flexibility, and a few advocating for in-person learning to enhance focus and engagement. The fact that students' satisfaction levels range from 6 to 8 out of 10 suggests that while the hybrid and remote models have some benefits, there is still room for improvement in addressing their concerns. Students' suggestions for improvement, such as more interactive sessions, regular feedback, and flexible deadlines, echo research on the importance of active learning in remote

education. Incorporating these suggestions into future strategies could help improve student satisfaction and engagement.

The findings from IUM law students align with broader research on hybrid and remote learning in legal education. Studies have identified that while online learning offers flexibility, it also presents challenges such as technical issues, reduced engagement, and difficulties in maintaining concentration⁵²⁸. To address these challenges, it is essential to incorporate interactive elements, provide regular feedback, and offer flexible learning options to accommodate diverse student needs⁵²⁹. Furthermore, ensuring equitable access to technology and resources is crucial for the success of hybrid and remote learning models⁵³⁰.

Table 3: Administrators

ID	Role	Years in Role	Strategic Challenges	Technological Needs Identified	Future Plans for Hybrid/Remote Learning	Additional Comments
A001	Curriculum Developer	7	Integrating technology	Advanced LMS, reliable internet	Expand hybrid model	Need professional development
A002	Educational Technologist	4	Staff training	User-friendly platforms	Enhance remote learning infrastructure	More funds required resources
A003	Programme Coordinator	10	Coordinating hybrid schedules	Collaborative tools	Increase hybrid course offerings	Positive outlook on hybrid education

The integration of hybrid and remote learning models in legal education presents both opportunities and challenges, as highlighted by the experiences of administrators at the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM). Administrators at IUM play a key role in implementing hybrid and remote learning models, and their perspectives highlight the strategic challenges involved in integrating these approaches. The difficulties identified include the integration of technology into the curriculum, the need for more comprehensive staff training, and the coordination of hybrid schedules to ensure smooth course delivery. The administrators have also emphasized specific technological needs, such as advanced Learning Management Systems (LMS) and reliable internet infrastructure. These requirements reflect broader trends in higher education, where the effective integration of technology is essential for the success of blended learning.

⁵²² Raes and others (n 31).

⁵²³ Thanaraj and others (n 32).

⁵²⁴ Secker and others (n 30).

⁵²⁵ Raes and others (n 31).

⁵²⁶ Thanaraj and others (n 32).

⁵²⁷ Secker and others (n 30).

⁵²⁸ I Lomonosova and I Valentinovna, 'Role of Administrators in Blended Learning in Higher Education Institutions' (2018) 9(2) Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning 29–50 <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1413986>.

⁵²⁹ Thanaraj and others (n 32).

⁵³⁰ Secker and others (n 30).

Furthermore, the future plans outlined by administrators to expand hybrid learning and enhance remote learning infrastructure align with the broader movement towards more flexible and adaptable learning environments. Administrators have identified several strategic challenges in implementing hybrid and remote learning. A Curriculum Developer with seven years of experience noted difficulties in integrating technology effectively into the curriculum. Similarly, an Educational Technologist with four years in the role emphasized the need for comprehensive staff training to adapt to new teaching modalities. These challenges are consistent with findings in higher education, where administrators play a crucial role in implementing and supporting blended learning, ensuring its success⁵³¹.

To address these challenges, administrators have identified specific technological needs. The Curriculum Developer requires an advanced Learning Management System (LMS) and reliable internet infrastructure to support hybrid learning. The Educational Technologist seeks user-friendly platforms to facilitate teaching and learning processes. These needs align with research indicating that effective implementation of blended learning necessitates appropriate technological tools and infrastructure⁵³². Looking ahead, administrators plan to expand the hybrid learning model and enhance remote learning infrastructure. The Curriculum Developer aims to broaden the hybrid model’s reach, while the Educational Technologist focuses on improving remote learning capabilities. These plans are in line with trends in higher education, where institutions are increasingly adopting hybrid and remote learning models to offer flexible learning options and prepare students for evolving work environments⁵³³.

The need for professional development and additional funding is a recurring theme. For hybrid and remote learning models to succeed, continuous investment in staff training and infrastructure is necessary. Administrators have also highlighted the need for professional development and additional funding. The Curriculum Developer emphasizes the importance of ongoing training for educators to effectively utilize new technologies. The Educational Technologist points out the necessity for more resources to support the expansion of hybrid and remote learning. These considerations are crucial, as research underscores the importance of professional development and adequate funding in successfully implementing blended learning strategies⁵³⁴.

Table 4: Expert Opinion

ID	Area of Expertise	Years of Experience	Best Practices in Hybrid/Remote Education	Emerging Trends Identified	Recommendations for IUM	Addition Insights
X001	Legal Education	20	Interactive online tools	AI education	Invest in training and tech	Need regular feedback mechanisms
X002	Educational Technology	15	Adaptive learning technologies	Virtual reality in learning	Pilot innovative solutions	Emphasize accessibility and inclusivity
X003	Curriculum Development	18	Blended learning models	Data-driven decision making	Foster a culture of innovation	Importance of ongoing evaluation

External experts in legal education and educational technology provide invaluable insights into the evolving landscape of hybrid and remote learning. These experts stress the importance of integrating interactive online tools, adaptive learning technologies, and virtual reality into the learning experience. The use of AI in education is also highlighted as a promising tool for enhancing engagement and personalization in legal education.

Experts also recommend that IUM focus on fostering a culture of innovation and embracing new technologies. Implementing pilot programs for innovative solutions and focusing on accessibility and inclusivity are key strategies for ensuring that hybrid learning models meet the diverse needs of all students. The experts further emphasize the importance of regular feedback mechanisms, adaptive learning models, and data-driven decision-making to improve the effectiveness of hybrid and remote learning. These insights suggest that IUM should continue exploring cutting-edge technologies and continuously evaluate the effectiveness of its hybrid learning models.

⁵³¹ Lomonosova and Valentinovna (n 40).

⁵³² Raes and others (n 31).

⁵³³ Thanaraj and others (n 32).

⁵³⁴ Lomonosova and Valentinovna (n 40)..

Table 6: Available Facilities

Facility ID	Facility Name	Purpose	Technological Support Available	Challenges Identified	Potential Improvements
F001	Hybrid Learning Classroom	Supports hybrid classes with live streaming	High-speed internet, interactive displays	Occasional connectivity issues	Invest in more reliable internet infrastructure
F002	Remote Learning Hub	Offers students access to remote learning tools	Video conferencing software, laptops	Limited number of devices available	Increase device availability for students
F003	Legal Research Library	Provides access to legal resources	Digital databases, eBooks, online journals	Limited training on digital resource use	Offer digital resource training for students
F004	Technology Training Lab	Trains educators in using hybrid learning tools	Computers, LMS, interactive software	Lack of ongoing training	Introduce regular training sessions
F005	Study and Collaboration Space	Facilitates group discussions and projects	Smartboards, collaborative tools	Limited space for group work	Expand space and introduce booking system
F006	Virtual Classroom Studio	For recording and broadcasting lectures	Recording equipment, green screens	Difficulties in recording high-quality content	Upgrade audio and visual equipment
F007	Administrative Support Centre	Provides technical support for hybrid/remote issues	IT support desk, troubleshooting services	Delays in response time	Increase staff to improve response time

The table showcases the facilities at IUM that play a crucial role in supporting the institution’s shift towards hybrid and remote learning, with a focus on legal education. Each facility is designed to address specific needs for both educators and students in this new learning environment. The Hybrid Learning Classroom allows for live-streamed classes with interactive displays and high-speed internet, enabling a seamless blend of in-person and online learning. However, connectivity issues sometimes disrupt this process, indicating a need for enhanced internet infrastructure to ensure reliable access for all users. Improving the network’s reliability could significantly boost the learning experience, especially for real-time interactions during hybrid classes.

The remote learning facilities should be able to provide students with essential tools such as laptops and video conferencing software to participate in remote learning. While this facility is vital for students who cannot attend in-person sessions, the limited availability of devices hampers its effectiveness. Expanding the inventory of laptops and other remote learning tools would allow more students to benefit from it, reducing barriers to accessing online education. Additionally, ensuring that the software provided is user-friendly and fully integrated with the institution’s learning management systems would enhance the overall remote learning experience.

The Library’s legal research facility is another key facility, offering digital access to some legal databases, eBooks, and online journals. However, despite these limited yet available resources, many students struggle with navigating the digital

systems, highlighting a need for improved training. Offering workshops and tutorials on how to effectively use the library’s digital resources could enhance student engagement and make the facility more valuable. Similarly, the Computer Lab could be utilised to train students and educators in the use of digital teaching and learning tools as an essential resource. However, the lack of ongoing and regular training sessions means that educators may not always be up to date with the latest tools and technologies. Increasing the frequency of these training sessions would ensure that educators are better equipped to deliver high-quality hybrid and remote lessons.

The physical classrooms and the virtual classroom softwares further support IUM’s hybrid learning model. The physical classrooms are not equipped with smartboards and collaborative tools to facilitate group discussions and project work. Also, the space is limited, often leading to overcrowding and making it difficult for students to book time for group work. Expanding such a space or introducing a more efficient booking system could alleviate these issues. The virtual classroom software allows lecturers to record and broadcast lessons with high-quality recording equipment, but some challenges persist in maintaining audio-visual quality, particularly for those aiming to deliver professional-level content. Upgrading the software and related equipment would ensure higher quality recordings and improve the overall learning experience for students accessing recorded lectures.

Finally, the IT department provides essential technical support to staff and students navigating hybrid and remote learning. While they offer troubleshooting services and an IT support desk, there are delays in response time due to limited staff capacity. Increasing the number of support staff would reduce waiting times and ensure quicker resolutions to technical issues, thereby enhancing the overall efficiency of IUM’s hybrid learning model.

While IUM’s facilities are geared to be aligned with the needs of hybrid and remote learning, there is significant room for improvement. Enhancing internet infrastructure, increasing device availability, providing more frequent training for both students and staff, expanding collaborative spaces, and upgrading recording technology are key areas of focus. Implementing these recommendations would help ensure that IUM remains at the forefront of legal education in the digital age, providing a more seamless, effective, and accessible learning environment for all.

The facilities at IUM play a critical role in supporting hybrid and remote learning, with resources like the Hybrid Learning Classroom, Remote Learning Hub, and Legal Research Library providing essential tools for both students and educators. The availability of high-speed internet, interactive displays, and digital resources supports hybrid and remote learning, but there are notable challenges related to connectivity, device availability, and lack of ongoing training.

The Hybrid Learning Classroom faces occasional connectivity issues, highlighting the need for more reliable internet infrastructure. The Remote Learning Hub has a limited number of devices, which restricts access for students who cannot attend in person. Expanding the availability of devices and ensuring better integration with learning management systems would improve the remote learning experience.

The Legal Research Library's digital resources are underutilized by students who lack proper training in using them. Offering workshops and tutorials would significantly enhance the value of these resources. Similarly, the Technology Training Lab could benefit from more regular training sessions to ensure that educators remain up to date with the latest tools and technologies.

Improvements to physical spaces, such as expanding the Study and Collaboration Space or implementing a booking system, could help alleviate overcrowding and promote more collaborative learning. Additionally, upgrading the recording equipment in the Virtual Classroom Studio would ensure better-quality lecture recordings.

Discussion

The transition to hybrid and remote learning in legal education has introduced both opportunities and challenges, as evidenced by recent data. On the one hand, these models offer greater flexibility for students, enabling them to access learning materials and engage with the course at their own pace, which is particularly beneficial for those with time constraints or geographical limitations. However, the shift has also revealed significant challenges, including technical difficulties such as connectivity issues, which hinder students' ability to fully participate in learning activities. Additionally, many educators have struggled to adapt their teaching methods to the digital environment, highlighting a gap in digital literacy and pedagogical skills. As a result, there is a growing recognition of the need for continuous professional development for educators and investment in technological infrastructure to ensure equitable access to learning resources for all students. These findings underscore the complexity of successfully integrating hybrid and remote learning models into legal education, particularly when it comes to maintaining engagement, ensuring accessibility, and preparing educators to navigate the evolving educational landscape.

Active student engagement is crucial for the success of hybrid learning models. However, many students face connectivity issues and a lack of hands-on experiences, which

are particularly challenging in practical fields like law. Research indicates that online learning environments can often result in lower engagement compared to traditional in-person settings. To maintain student engagement in hybrid learning environments, incorporating interactive elements such as live discussions and real-time feedback is essential. While some students reported improved academic performance due to the flexibility of online learning, others highlighted challenges like decreased engagement and isolation.

The shift to hybrid and remote learning necessitates continuous professional development for educators. Legal education, traditionally reliant on direct classroom interaction, requires educators to adjust their teaching methods and enhance their technological proficiency. The rapid transition during the COVID-19 pandemic exposed gaps in many educators' abilities to effectively utilize digital tools. This underscores the need for institutions to invest in ongoing training and support to ensure educators can deliver high-quality education in digital formats. The success of a professional development program aimed at supporting educators in the Further Education sector, emphasizing the importance of such initiatives⁵³⁵.

The findings also underscore the role of infrastructure in supporting hybrid and remote learning models. Many students and educators reported issues with internet connectivity and access to technological resources, hindering the learning experience. Equitable access to digital tools is crucial for the success of hybrid education models. As institutions continue to adopt hybrid models, addressing these infrastructural challenges by investing in reliable internet access and ensuring all students have the necessary resources to participate fully in remote learning is critical. The Open University Law School's approach to blended learning, which combines asynchronous and synchronous methods, aims to enhance the student experience by creating a sense of community and support⁵³⁶. As IUM and other institutions continue to adopt hybrid models, it will be critical to address these infrastructural challenges by investing in reliable internet access and ensuring that all students have the necessary resources to participate fully in remote learning.

Recommendations

To optimise hybrid and remote learning at IUM, several strategic recommendations can be made. First, educators should be provided with enhanced training and support to better navigate the challenges of online and hybrid teaching.

⁵³⁵ Perry and Boodt (n 25).

⁵³⁶ The Open University Law School, 'Enhancing Distance Learning Student Experience by Creating a Feeling of Community' (2024) Scholarship and Innovation Blog

<https://www5.open.ac.uk/scholarship-and-innovation/scilab/blog/enhancing-distance-learning-student-experience>.

This includes upskilling in the use of technology and engagement strategies to ensure that course materials are effectively adapted for digital environments. Furthermore, addressing students' connectivity issues is crucial, and this can be achieved by investing in reliable technological infrastructure, making sure that students, particularly those in remote areas, have access to the necessary resources for seamless learning.

Additionally, fostering increased interaction and feedback within the learning process is essential. This can involve creating more interactive sessions, offering regular feedback, and providing opportunities for hands-on learning, which will help maintain student engagement and fill the gaps left by traditional in-person experiences. Lastly, IUM should continue exploring the potential of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence and virtual reality to enhance the learning experience. These innovations, if accessible and inclusive, can revolutionise legal education and ensure that the institution remains at the forefront of digital learning.

Conclusion

The transition to hybrid and remote learning models at the Islamic University of Maldives (IUM) represents a pivotal moment in the evolution of legal education. While these models present significant challenges—particularly in terms of student engagement, technological adaptation, and infrastructure—they also offer unique opportunities to enhance accessibility, flexibility, and the use of innovative teaching tools. The experiences of educators, students, administrators, and external experts highlighted in this study suggest that with the right investments in technology, professional development, and support systems, IUM can optimise its hybrid and remote learning strategies. To achieve this, it is essential to address existing barriers such as connectivity issues, the need for more interactive learning environments, and the importance of continuous training for educators. Additionally, leveraging emerging technologies such as AI and virtual reality could further enrich the learning experience and position IUM at the forefront of modern legal education. The recommendations outlined in this report provide a roadmap for IUM to refine and expand its hybrid and remote learning models, ensuring that they not only meet the immediate needs of students and faculty but also anticipate the future demands of legal education in an increasingly digital world. By embracing innovation, fostering continuous improvement, and focusing on inclusivity, IUM can successfully navigate the shift to a more flexible and dynamic educational landscape.

References

- Alexander, M. M., Lynch, J. E., Rabinovich, T., & Knutel, P. G. (2014). Snapshot of a hybrid learning environment. *Quarterly Review of Distance Education*, 15(1), 9–21.
- Antwi-Boampong, A., & Bokolo, A. J. (2022). Towards an institutional blended learning adoption model for higher education institutions. *Technology, Knowledge and Learning*, 27(3), 765–784. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10758-021-09507-4>.
- Bai, X., & Smith, M. B. (2010). Promoting hybrid learning through a sharable eLearning approach. *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, 14(3), 13–24.
- Bennett, D., Knight, E., & Rowley, J. (2020). The role of hybrid learning spaces in enhancing higher education students' employability. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 51(4), 1188–1202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjet.12900>.
- Chen, B. H., & Chiou, H. H. (2014). Learning style, sense of community and learning effectiveness in hybrid learning environment. *Interactive Learning Environments*, 22(4), 485–496. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2012.680971>.
- Griffin, D., et al. (2022). Best practices for sustainable inter-institutional hybrid learning at CHARM European University. *Education Sciences*, 12(11), 797. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci12110797>.
- Hapke, H., Lee-Post, A., & Dean, T. (2021). 3-in-1 hybrid learning environment. *Marketing Education Review*, 31(2), 154–161. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10528008.2021.1906732>.
- Johnston-Walsh, L., & Lintal, A. (2020). Tele-lawyering and the virtual learning experience: Finding the silver lining for remote hybrid externships & law clinics after the pandemic. *Akron Law Review*, 54(4), 735–757. <https://ideaexchange.uakron.edu/akronlawreview/vol54/iss4/6/>.
- Lim, C. P., Wang, T., & Graham, C. R. (2019). Driving, sustaining and scaling up blended learning practices in higher education institutions: A proposed framework. *Innovation and Education*, 1, Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s42862-019-0002-0>.
- Lomonosova, I., & Valentinovna, I. (2018). Role of administrators in blended learning in higher education institutions. *Pakistan Journal of Distance and Online Learning*, 9(2), 29–50. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1413986>.

Nguyen, T., Nguyen, T., & Nguyen, T. (2021). Insights into students' experiences and perceptions of remote learning methods from the COVID-19 pandemic to best practice for the future. *Frontiers in Education*, 6, 647986. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2021.647986>.

Perry, E., & Boodt, S. (2019). Supporting the professional development of "hybrid" teacher educators in the further education sector. *Teaching in Lifelong Learning*, 11(3), 60–71. <https://doi.org/10.11120/tile.2019.00019>.

Poon, J. (2014). Blended learning: An institutional approach for enhancing students' learning experiences. *Educational Media International*, 51(4), 271–284. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09523987.2014.971847>.

Raes, A., et al. (2020). Designing synchronous hybrid learning spaces: Challenges and opportunities. In B. Beatty (Ed.), *Hybrid-Flexible Course Design* (pp. 123–138). Cham: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-88520-5_9.

Raes, A. (2022). Exploring student and teacher experiences in hybrid learning environments: Does presence matter? *Postdigital Science and Education*, 4(1), 138–159. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42438-021-00274-0>.

Secker J, Melcher M and Wells R, 'Researching the Challenges and Opportunities of Hybrid Teaching' (2021) *Learning at City* <https://blogs.city.ac.uk/learningatcity/2021/11/09/researching-the-challenges-and-opportunities-of-hybrid-teaching/>

Sulman, F., Yuliati, L., Kusairi, S., & Hidayat, A. (2022). Hybrid learning model: Its impact on mastery of concepts and self-regulation in Newton's second law material. *Kasuari: Physics Education Journal (KPEJ)*, 5(1), 65–74.

Thanaraj, A., et al. (2022). *Teaching legal education in the digital age*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429351082>.

The Open University Law School. (2024). Enhancing distance learning student experience by creating a feeling of community. *Scholarship and Innovation Blog*. Retrieved from <https://www5.open.ac.uk/scholarship-and-innovation/scilab/blog/enhancing-distance-learning-student-experience>.

Wang, S., Griffiths, R., Christensen, C., D'Angelo, C., & Condon, K. (2022). An evaluation of a first-of-its-kind hybrid law degree program. *Journal of Computing in Higher Education*, 34(2), 517–544. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12528-022-09300-5>.

Zulfa I and others, "Analysis of Student's Conceptual Understanding on the Work and Energy of Online Hybrid Learning" (2019) *Journal of Physics: Conference Series* vol 1171, no 1, 012045 (IOP Publishing)