

"Skilled as Lawyers": A Review of Legal Skill Development through Moot Court Competition

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Abstract

The successful integration of skill development intervention into the undergraduate Law curriculum is one of the main issues faced by legal educators today. Over the years, mooting has been incorporated into legal pedagogy to facilitate legal skill development and career readiness. The present study intends to broadly review and analyse the existing empirical evidence and discuss a policy framework for effective integration of moot courts into Legal education. This review employed doctrinal legal research methodology. A systematic literature search for scholarly work published between 1990-2025 was carried out in four main academic databases: HeinOnline, PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Only 19 scholarly works were identified by the comprehensive literature search, and they were

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(Received 23rd September 2025; Revised 28th December 2025; Accepted 31st December 2025, © OUSL)



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categorised into key skill domains: problem-solving, teamwork and collaboration, legal writing, advocacy and legal awareness, and other benefits. The review highlights the scarcity of existing research and emphasises the need for more action research to fully capture the applicability of mooting as a skill development intervention. However, despite these limitations, the present review informs an education policy by formally integrating mooting into undergraduate Legal Studies. It is proposed that mooting will be effective when formative assessment, which focuses on skill development, is incorporated. Moreover, institutions are required to provide the necessary physical and human resources for mooting, along with quality assurance mechanisms for its sustainability. The review encourages educators to comprehend the importance of developing an educational policy that integrates moot court into legal pedagogy.

Keywords: *educational policy, lawyers, legal education, legal skills, literature review, moot court*

Introduction

The legal profession plays an important role in the society by upholding the rule of law in a thriving democracy. Legal professionals require a broad understanding of technical legal knowledge and a diverse set of skills, including strong communication skills (both written and advocacy), analytical and problem-solving abilities, legal research expertise, adaptability and the ability to work effectively in teams (Lynch, 1996). Legal professionals are largely shaped by their multifaceted legal education. For many years, legal education has solely prioritised knowledge transfer while ignoring the development of essential legal skills (Keyes & Whincop, 1997). However, legal curricula should go beyond the transmission of theoretical knowledge and foster the development of skills necessary for success in the legal profession. To cultivate these skills, many legal institutions have adopted innovative pedagogical interventions such as simulation exercises, internships, clinical legal education, and moot court competitions (Kumar Yadav, 2025).

Clinical legal education involving real clients and real cases was held as the gold standard of legal education for a long time. However, the

use of this methodology 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). In this light, mooting, which simulates appellate court proceedings, delivers excellent educational outcomes for legal practice (Chestek, 2002).

Recently, moot courts have become a significant pedagogical component in law curricula around the world. Moot court is a pretend court proceeding where a group of students or teams are presented with a hypothetical legal problem, which they are required to argue in front of a ‘judge’ or panel of ‘judges’ (Lynch, 1996).

The impact of mooting is two-fold: legal knowledge acquisition and the development of legal skills necessary to be successful in their future careers in courts (Alimova & Golovina, 2019). Over the years, moot court has been well discussed as a learning tool that could enhance deep and active learning. However, key concerns are raised about whether mooting is truly effective as a skill development tool. Some stakeholders may question both its adaptability and practical implications as a skill development tool. This could be attributed to the limited number of studies that have investigated the effectiveness of mooting as a skill development tool. Hence, this review paper aims to draw insights from scholarly works, such as research articles and case studies, to support the assertion of mooting as an effective skill development pedagogical tool. The review article begins with a brief literature survey on the history and operation of mooting. Subsequently, this article will critically analyse the available literature and discuss the advantages and challenges of incorporating mooting into legal pedagogy. This evidence-based systematic approach would encourage the stakeholders to establish an educational framework for incorporating mooting into academic programmes to strengthen the legal skills and competencies of students, which would make them ready for the legal profession.

Review of Literature

History of Mooting

Mooting originated in the historic medieval "inns of court" around 500 years ago (Fletcher, 2024). Early Anglo-American legal education (in the late 18th and early 19th centuries) adopted this hands-on Anglo-Saxon approach to legal education, with law school lectures being followed by mock court exercises (Fletcher, 2024). The evolution of the European Union legal system, whose substantive and procedural law is a synthesis of classical European legal cultures, had a significant impact on the adoption of mooting by nations of the European continental tradition (Ivančan & Petrić, 2019).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Gray's Inn Moot Society was the only known society to carry out the moot tradition at the Inns of Court (Fletcher, 2024). Then, the moot system became compulsory for English legal education (Fletcher, 2024), and these sessions were originally administered by universities. After 1870, student-administered clubs had taken the initiative to organise moot court competitions. In 1960, the Philip C. Jessup International Law Moot Court Competition was commenced as the first inter-university moot court competition opened to English universities. Since then, there have been more than twenty inter-university moot court competitions that are open to students. Research conducted since 2005 showed that around 93% of universities participating in moot court competitions involved their students in mooting, with 60% asserting that mooting is part of their curriculum (Gillespie, 2007).

Having explored the history of mooting, the structure and procedures of mooting will be discussed in the next section.

Structure of the Moot Court Competition

In Moot Court, students present compelling legal arguments on a fictitious case. Students must always formulate their arguments, regardless of whether the case facts are made up or taken from actual court cases. The moot case highlights certain contentious legal topics by presenting a fictitious account of factual events and the resulting legal challenges. Participants debate these topics in a manner that as

closely as possible reflects the procedure and constituents of the legal arguments in a real court of law (Snape & Watt, 2000).

Written submissions and oral arguments are the two main components of a moot court (Tasić et al., 2023). The teams draft their written submissions in the first section (on behalf of the applicant) and transmit them to the moot court organiser to "file them" with the court. The claims made by the other side are then submitted to each team, and they must prepare a rebuttal. These activities are all time-limited. The teams argue their positions verbally in front of the judges in the second section (Tasić et al., 2023).

Based on moot case conditions, the participants first lay out their arguments and establish the framework for debate. Using the case facts and their arguments, the responses address the claims. After these major addresses to the court, the applicants are given a chance to rebut the respondents' arguments and, if needed, to rectify any presented facts. Lastly, each participant has an equal opportunity to rebut with a time limit (Tasić et al., 2023).

Effective pre-preparation is necessary when presenting arguments in a condensed amount of time. The judges have the right to ask questions both during and after the speeches. The responses to these questions show how the team members work together and handle pressure (Tasić et al., 2023).

Typically, practising judges, lawyers, law professors, and legal professionals make up the moot court judicial panel. Judges evaluate the parties' performance rather than rendering a decision. Judges evaluate the participants' responses to questions (the speed and correctness of thought, the calibre of the answers, and the connections between the arguments and responses), their understanding of the subject matter (the substantive and procedural law), Courtroom demeanour (appropriate dress, professionalism), and personal presentation skills such as confident delivery and eye contacts (Snape & Watt, 2000).

The outcomes of the moot court are given to each team as several points rather than as a ruling on whether to accept the claims. The

winning team is the one with the most points. Judges are expected to provide a conclusion on the legal problems highlighted and to counsel participants regarding their performance while presenting the results (Snape & Watt, 2000).

Mooting as a Pedagogical Intervention

It is challenging to identify a pedagogical intervention that simultaneously promotes both learning and skill development in legal education. Interestingly, it is suggested that mootng is one such tool that promotes higher-order learning skills while developing essential legal skills (Thomas & Craddock, 2018). The problem-based learning methodology applied in mootng allows students to solve complicated legal issues and reach well-informed conclusions. David Kolb's experiential learning paradigm is successfully applied in moot court sessions, offering a methodical foundation for legal education. The four stages of Kolb's learning theory, 'experience', 'insightful observation', 'abstract conceptualisation', and 'active experimentation', are well achieved in moot court, where students move from initial experiences to deeper understanding and practical application by reflecting on their experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2018).

Mooting has converted the conventional legal education model, which is centred on the instructor's lectures, into a student-centered learning mode (Lynch, 1996). It has enabled students to convert passive knowledge into active participation and experience. Also, it focuses on developing skills in legal research, writing, and oral advocacy through simulated court proceedings (Thomas & Craddock, 2018). Further, this tool has enabled students to comprehend a deeper understanding of the legal systems and procedures through this simulation (Nakashidze, 2012). Moot court simulation enables students to comprehend and apply legal principles in a real-world setting and thus serves as a bridge that transforms a law student into a legal practitioner (John, 2023). It encourages student approaches to learning, which aligns with both motives and cognitive domains of learning (Lynch, 1996).

Empirical studies consistently demonstrate that mootng is an effective strategy to enhance critical thinking, problem-solving, and

analytical reasoning, which allows students to engage deeply with complex legal theories. Therefore, integrating mootings into educational policy is strongly encouraged to enhance the cognition of legal theories.

However, it is important to ensure that mootings not only makes students knowledgeable in legal doctrine but also competent in applying the law effectively and ethically in professional contexts.

Legal skills include a broad range of abilities vital for success in the legal profession (Macfarlane, 1992), such as legal awareness, reading and writing skills, legal reasoning, problem-solving, advocacy, mootings, negotiation, and drafting (Liu, S. 2013). It is suggested that mootings can be modified as a pedagogical tool that can be adapted to inculcate legal skills in students (Belladonna et al., 2025).

However, convincing empirical evidence is required to inform the inclusion of mootings into legal pedagogy and for the development of an educational policy. Though the cognitive development of mootings has been widely discussed and analysed in literature, the skill development domain is less investigated. Accordingly, a systematic search of existing scholarly work will be carried out to assess the extent to which mootings can function as an effective tool for skill development.

Methodology

A doctrinal legal research method was employed to conduct this review article. A comprehensive literature search was conducted across four main academic databases: HeinOnline, PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. The keywords were developed using a combination of keywords and using Boolean operators; *“Mootings AND Skill Development”*, *Moot Court Competition AND Skill Development”*.

Search limits were applied based on jurisdiction, publication dates, and document type where appropriate. Original research articles, reviews, conference proceedings, and case studies were included in this study, while editorials and commentaries were excluded. Studies published between 1990-2025 were included in this review article.

Findings and Discussion

The literature search identified the following number of articles in the respective databases: HeinOnline, PubMed, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. After removing duplicates and excluding the paper based on the exclusion criteria, a total of 19 articles were included in the present review.

The pedagogical aspects have been categorised into key skill domains: problem-solving, teamwork and collaboration, legal writing, advocacy and legal awareness skills. Further, scholarly work that discussed the contribution of mooting to establishing professional networks and cultivating positive attitudes is also presented in this review.

Problem Solving Skills

Problem-solving is an essential skill for the study and practice of law (Cassidy, 2012). It allows students to construct their knowledge from a problem within that context (Lynch, 1996). Moot court is an ideal problem-based learning pedagogical tool that allows the learner to explain the correct legal concepts and argue based on the facts (Moens, 2006). It is argued that students are more engaged in learning during the planning and reasoning stages. Moot court teaching methods have the characteristics of student-centred and active learning when they prepare their written submission for the given case (Tang, 2021).

Three case studies have produced convincing evidence that mooting can be valuable in developing legal understandings of students and their problem-solving abilities (Arsenijević, 2024; Fletcher, 2024; Siyuan, 2017).

A case study by Arsenijević in 2024 presented the students' perceived knowledge acquisition and problem-solving skills through participation in mooting. Fletcher (2024), in his study conducted with the first-year law students, highlighted that students perceived their problem-solving ability had been enhanced by their involvement in mooting (Fletcher, 2024). A case study conducted at the International Moots Programme in Singapore Management University School of Law noted substantial enhancement in problem-solving and critical

thinking abilities among students engaged in moot competitions (Siyuan, 2017).

Teamwork and Collaboration Skills

Team-based learning (TBL) has emerged over the past few years as an instructional strategy to enhance students' active learning and critical thinking. Furthermore, team members bring diverse skills and talents, enabling each to contribute their unique abilities effectively. Three case studies have supported the positive influences of moot on team-based learning (Alimova & Golovina, 2019; Consolo, 2015; Jones, 2023).

Santana et al. (2019) have highlighted that the moot court facilitates team-based learning for students, developing their creativity, analysis strategies, and critical thinking (Santana et al., 2019). The success of a moot competition largely depends on the team's efficiency and effectiveness. It involves identifying the common goals that team members seek to achieve (Jones, 2023). This study also highlighted the importance of proper and professional coaching of the team and of managing inter-team conflict sensitively to achieve success as a team (Jones, 2023).

Another study has indicated moot as a method of teaching International Commercial Arbitration, which constitutes an integrative experience that provides tools (Consolo, 2015). The team-based learning approach provided by moot court has been discussed in this study (Consolo, 2015) and has endorsed the qualitative construction process of searching and reviewing the literature. Additionally, this study has highlighted moot court as a learning tool that provides students gain access to a network of support that can offer insightful criticism (Consolo, 2015).

Legal Writing Skills

Legal writing is a vital skill that aspiring lawyers must possess. It involves creating legal documents that are convincing, succinct, and easy to understand using the facts and legal ideas (Rideout & Ramsfield, 1994). Gaining proficiency in writing improves a lawyer's

capacity to evaluate legal problems, formulate arguments, and interact with clients in a professional manner (Rideout & Ramsfield, 1994).

Two studies have discussed how mootng can improve the writing skills of law students (Alimova & Golovina, 2019; Ishnazarovna & Rozmatovna, 2023). Moot court buttresses legal writing skills when they prepare persuasive briefs and motions to support their arguments during these competitions (Ishnazarovna & Rozmatovna, 2023). Moot has given students the chance to apply contract law concepts and principles to real-world situations (Alimova & Golovina, 2019). However, none of these studies has conducted proper investigations on how moot can improve the legal writing skills of students.

Advocacy Skills

Black's Law Dictionary defines advocacy as "the act of pleading for, supporting or recommending active espousal." In national and international relations, advocacy is a "necessary skill" that "gives life to legal norms." (Alimova & Golovina, 2019). The required oral pleadings in practically all moot courts are an intricate exercise that mainly refines advocacy skills. Oral advocacy is viewed as a practitioner's skill that lies beyond the comfortable confines of doctrine and legal theory.

Two recent scholarly reports have broadly discussed the development of advocacy skills by mootng (Alimova, & Golovina, 2019; Guglya, 2008). Alimova & Golovina (2019) in their study demonstrated that, through moot competitions, students develop their advocacy and communication skills while learning how to recognise legal concerns, apply pertinent laws, create strong arguments, and handle difficulties. The scholarly article presented by Guglya (2008), as an expert note, has proposed a guide for students to develop their advocacy skills through mootng.

Legal Awareness Skills

Legal awareness is defined as the awareness of the rights of individuals, legal issues, and the operation of the legal system. It gives

individuals the ability to comprehend how laws impact them, make wise selections, pursue justice, and take part in the creation of legal frameworks (Drozdova et al, 2019).

A case study conducted in Indonesia confirmed that moot courts promoted the growth of critical thinking abilities and considerably raised students' legal awareness (Belladonna et al., 2025). This study has also identified that active participation in moot has improved their legal knowledge and fortified their ability to think critically and persuasively (Belladonna et al., 2025).

Digital Skills

According to the new challenges and opportunities 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).

The COVID-19 pandemic challenged the educational institutions around the world and converted the traditional face-to-face teaching and learning mode into an online learning mode. Furthermore, like all other fields, the legal profession is adapting to new opportunities and technologies. Online learning mode widens the learning opportunities of students by providing flexibility without the constraints of time and space. Online learning fosters the ability to learn by oneself and to understand and adapt to change (Ringel, 2004).

Two studies have emphasised that the mooting integrated with technical offers effective ways to promote digital skills (Onn, 2022; Yule et al., 2009).

Mooting, when combined with technology, can significantly facilitate the development of students' digital skills. Mooting can help students develop their digital literacy, communication, and teamwork skills by utilising online platforms, thereby equipping them for a world that is driven by technology (Yule et al., 2009). The legal research and writing skills required for moot court competitions can be significantly improved by using digital resources like online databases and writing

tools. This integration has helped the students to develop interdisciplinary knowledge to address the complex challenges and opportunities presented by digital transformation in the legal field (Yule et al., 2009). Taylor's Law School in Malaysia has offered moot court as a compulsory online module for its law curricula. This study has emphasised that the mooting module can indeed be completed entirely online, and students would still benefit to the greatest extent possible while meeting the module learning outcomes (Onn, 2022).

Networking

Mooting provides excellent ground for growing their network of contacts with fellow law students and beyond the law school community. Networking encourages the development of strong leadership, teamwork, and interpersonal communication skills that will serve the students well in their careers as lawyers (Lo, 2010).

Mooters frequently receive coaching or criticism from their fellow students. Strong friendships that persist well into a student's professional life are frequently the result of this "mentorship." Interacting with members of the judges and practising bar is an additional networking component of competitive moots. In fact, a lot of practising attorneys use moots as a way to network with other judges (Siyuan, 2017). A case study conducted in the Faculty of Law, University of Niš observed the contribution of mooting to promoting inter-university collaboration (Arsenijević, 2024).

Attitudes, Values, Confidence and Resilience

In the field of education, when evaluating the growth of students, we frequently concentrate on knowledge and abilities. The affective domain is an additional, equally significant component of learning. This area of study focuses on the attitudes, values, and emotions that influence how students react, feel, and act in classroom settings. Traditional teacher-centred legal education provides the least contribution to the development of the affective domain of learning. However, the incorporation of mooting in law curricula has filled the essential learning gap (Thomas & Craddock, 2018).

A few intrinsic characteristics of moot court, such as fostering an inclusive and supportive classroom environment, incorporating real-world issues, using active learning strategies, and providing opportunities for reflection, have facilitated the development of the affective domain of learning (Taylor, 2014).

Moot court facilitates the students' professional skills and moral consciousness. In this scenario, moot instructors should guide students to follow procedural norms, treat cases fairly, respect one another, and foster moral consciousness and a positive professional attitude (Tang, 2021).

Competitive mooting also helps students to build resilience skills for legal practice (Parsons, 2018). Parsons, in his research, has identified that the moot couches can play a vital role in cultivating a positive attitude and mindsets (Parsons, 2018).

Effective interaction between the advocate and the bench is a critical component of successful advocacy. However, even in cases where mooters possess natural abilities and skills, their shift from natural skill to competition may be hindered by anxiety, leading to suboptimal performance. In many professions, performing a repertoire in front of an audience is a key and determining factor of success, and stage fright is common. Although anxiety is an unavoidable and frequently detrimental component of any performance, there is, in fact, a spectrum of anxiety levels that promote maximum performance. Helping aspiring advocates identify their ideal anxiety threshold and control it during the court proceeding (Thomas & Craddock, 2018).

Discussion

The successful integration of skill development intervention into the undergraduate law curriculum is one of the main issues faced by legal educators today. The present study reiterated the efficacy of mooting as a legal skill development tool by critically reviewing the existing empirical studies. According to the literature, only a handful of case studies or original articles have investigated the skill development aspect of mooting. The ability of mooting to develop essential legal

skills is broadly discussed in several literature; problem-solving skills (Arsenijević, 2024; Fletcher, 2024; Siyuan, 2017), teamwork and collaboration (Alimova & Golovina, 2019; Consolo, 2015; Jones, 2023), legal writing (Alimova & Golovina, 2019; Ishnazarovna & Rozmatovna, 2023), advocacy (Alimova, & Golovina, 2019; Guglya, 2008), legal awareness (Belladonna et al., 2025), and digital skills (Onn, 2022; Yule et al., 2009). In addition to the skill development, two important factors are essential for legal professionals: networking (Arsenijević, 2024; Siyuan, 2017) and cultivating positive attitudes (Tang, 2021; Taylor, 2014; Thomas & Cradduck, 2018).

In addition to the positive attributes of mooting, these scholarly articles have discussed the challenges, including time constraints, balancing academic activities, and emotional pressure (Alimova & Golovina, 2019; Arsenijević, 2024). The comprehensive analysis of existing literature emphasises that most studies have been limited to expert judgment and practitioner experiences, rather than action research. Thus, further studies are required to validate and strengthen the effectiveness of mooting as skill development. The scarcity of action research may not fully capture the applicability of mooting as a skill development intervention for law undergraduates. However, despite these limitations, the present review informs the development of an education policy by formally integrating mooting into teaching, learning, and assessment practices for undergraduate legal studies.

Mooting can be introduced as a standalone elective course or integrated within course modules. Some educators purported, moot courts can be integrated into specific legal subjects, which facilitates expertise and specific advocacy skills relevant to the subject (Alimova & Golovina, 2019). Thus far, moot courts have been developed around specific areas of law, such as criminal law, commercial arbitration, media law, human rights, or specific legal sources (Cooper & McArdle, 2017). However, some policymakers argue that it is adequate to develop core legal skills by mooting that remain constant and essential for any legal career (Lynch, 1996); therefore, moot courts can be generalised.

Importantly, the policy should emphasise the contextualization of mooting activities to ensure that students engage with legal problems grounded and developed through a thorough and varied educational approach. Since the cases that are given in moot courts may not correctly reflect actual legal issues, participants may not get a full picture of the dynamics and nuances of a real trial (Belladonna et al., 2025).

Mooting can serve as a teaching–learning tool and as an authentic assessment tool. Some institutes adopt mooting only as a teaching–learning tool; however, it becomes more effective when coupled with structured assessment (Keyes & Whincop, 1997). Mooting serves both as a formative and summative assessment tool. Formative assessment with feedback makes mooting a powerful learning experience over the summative assessment that evaluates students' performance at a single point (Lynch, 1996).

However, formative mooting requires considerable resources and time (Keyes & Whincop, 1997). Hence, the policy should determine whether mooting exercises are to be implemented in a formative capacity or as summative assessments. There are concerning limitations in the traditional moot concept in assessing skill development (Belladonna et al., 2025). Hence, a novel model of mooting should be in order to improve the learning outcomes of skill development. This can be simply achieved by changing the assessment criteria by allocating marks corresponding to the necessary skills, and for feedback to be given, which addresses the level of achievement in these skills. Providing a clear rubric for evaluating research, argumentation, and presentation skills would enhance the assessment process with clear criteria (Keyes & Whincop, 1997).

Especially, in formative assessment methodologies, providing feedback is important for strengthening the knowledge, skills, and critical thinking of students. Particularly, in mooting, students may find it difficult to refine their reasoning skills if they get inadequate or inappropriate feedback. Moreover, if mentors or seasoned legal professionals are unavailable to assist throughout the simulation, the quality of the participants' learning experience may suffer (Keyes &

Whincop, 1997). Hence, when developing an educational policy using mooting, the mechanisms should be employed to provide immediate oral feedback, written feedback, peer feedback, or post-reflection sessions on their skill development.

Moot court requires both physical and human resources to have high-quality mooting experiences. The legal institutions willing to integrate mooting as a pedagogical tool must provide supportive structures, adequate resources training for an effective mooting programme. Further, institutions should be committed to fostering an inclusive learning environment in mooting sessions, avoiding barriers such as gender, language, disability, socioeconomic background, or other factors. Moreover, mooting should be guided by the continuous quality assurance mechanisms to sustain pedagogical practice which aligns with the learning outcomes of the legal programme.

Conclusions

The present review revisited the significance of moot court as a pedagogical tool that facilitates the skill development of students who will pursue their careers as legal professionals. This review highlights the scarcity of action research that investigates the skill development aspect of mooting. A few existing studies included herein highlighted the potential of moot court in developing essential skills like legal research, writing, advocacy, teamwork, and problem-solving. To maximise the benefit of skill development, mooting can be coupled with a formative assessment that specifically evaluates the acquisition of legal skills. Moreover, this review proposed that an educational policy can be developed, integrating mooting to enhance graduate attributes and produce well-rounded and confident legal professionals.

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