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CHALLENGES OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TO LEGAL EDUCATION IN VIETNAM: EPISTEMOLOGICAL TRANSFORMATION, ACADEMIC INTEGRITY, AND INSTITUTIONAL GOVERNANCE

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ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of generative artificial intelligence has introduced structural changes in higher education worldwide. Legal education, which is grounded in interpretive reasoning, doctrinal analysis, and professional accountability, faces distinctive challenges within this technological environment. This article develops an integrated theoretical and empirical examination of the impact of artificial intelligence on legal education in Vietnam. Drawing on conceptual analysis and statistical evidence derived from a survey of 714 law students, the study identifies a process of epistemological transformation in which reasoning authority may gradually shift from human deliberation to algorithmic synthesis. Empirical findings indicate that artificial intelligence dependency increases with academic progression, that verification discipline declines among frequent users, and that ethical awareness moderates reliance patterns. The article argues that the central challenge is not technological substitution but normative reconfiguration. Legal education must redesign its governance structures, assessment mechanisms, and ethical frameworks in order to preserve analytical autonomy within algorithmically mediated learning environments.

KEYWORDS: Artificial intelligence; Legal education; Epistemological displacement; Academic integrity; Professional responsibility; Digital governance; Vietnam.

1. INTRODUCTION

The diffusion of generative artificial intelligence into higher education constitutes not merely a technological innovation but an epistemic reordering of knowledge production. Large language models do not simply retrieve information; they generate structured analytical discourse that resembles expert reasoning. This capacity destabilizes long standing assumptions concerning authorship, intellectual labor, and cognitive development in academic environments (OECD, 2019; Williamson and Eynon, 2020).

Legal education represents a uniquely sensitive domain within this transformation. Unlike disciplines that prioritize informational recall or computational accuracy, law is grounded in interpretive reasoning, normative justification, and institutional accountability. The central pedagogical objective is the cultivation of autonomous legal judgment. As Susskind (2022) observes, technological transformation may alter legal services, yet the legitimacy of law remains inseparable from human responsibility.

Generative artificial intelligence compresses the reasoning process into finished argumentative outputs. When students increasingly rely on algorithmic synthesis, the epistemic locus of deliberation may shift. This article conceptualizes that shift as epistemological displacement. Rather than replacing human reasoning outright, artificial intelligence subtly reorganizes cognitive authority by normalizing externalized analytical production.

The Vietnamese case provides a critical empirical site for examining this transformation. Rapid digital modernization has occurred alongside evolving regulatory frameworks (Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 2021a; 2021b). The coexistence of technological diffusion and governance ambiguity enables observation of how epistemic habits develop in transitional institutional contexts.

This study integrates theoretical analysis with quantitative evidence from 714 law students to investigate whether artificial intelligence reliance correlates with shifts in verification discipline, reasoning confidence, and ethical awareness. The findings suggest that artificial intelligence does not immediately diminish performance but reconfigures cognitive orientation. The core challenge for legal education is therefore not prohibition but normative recalibration.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. *Artificial Intelligence and Knowledge Production*

Artificial intelligence has been conceptualized as a transformative infrastructure that reshapes decision making, institutional authority, and epistemic processes (OECD, 2019). The probabilistic architecture of generative systems means that outputs are constructed through pattern recognition rather than semantic comprehension (OECD, 2025). This characteristic introduces epistemic uncertainty, particularly in domains that require contextual interpretation such as law.

Systematic reviews of artificial intelligence applications in higher education demonstrate both pedagogical benefits and structural risks (Zawacki Richter et al., 2019). While such systems can enhance efficiency and support personalized learning, scholars caution that uncritical reliance may reduce deep cognitive engagement (Selwyn, 2019; Bali et al., 2023). Raffaghelli (2022) emphasizes that algorithmic mediation can alter the distribution of cognitive agency between human and machine actors.

2.2. *Legal Pedagogy and Constructivist Theory*

Constructivist learning theory posits that knowledge emerges through active engagement and dialogical reasoning (Wegerif, Mercer, and Dawes, 1999). Legal education embodies this principle through case analysis, doctrinal interpretation, and argumentative debate. Students are expected to confront ambiguity and reconcile competing authorities.

The introduction of generative artificial intelligence modifies this pedagogical environment. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2019) argue that artificial intelligence can augment learning when used critically, yet they also acknowledge that excessive reliance may externalize cognitive effort. In legal contexts, such externalization may attenuate the formation of independent reasoning habits.

2.3. *Academic Integrity and Professional Responsibility*

Academic integrity has traditionally focused on plagiarism detection and textual originality. However, generative artificial intelligence produces original text, complicating conventional enforcement mechanisms. UNESCO (2023) underscores the necessity of transparency and disclosure in artificial intelligence assisted academic work.

The legal profession intensifies this normative concern. Professional accountability requires

personal ownership of legal reasoning. Floridi and Cowls (2019) maintain that ethical artificial intelligence governance must preserve human responsibility even in technologically mediated systems. If law students internalize patterns of undisclosed algorithmic reliance, professional formation may be affected in subtle but significant ways.

3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. *Epistemological Transformation and Cognitive Outsourcing*

To understand the structural implications of artificial intelligence for legal education, it is necessary to situate the analysis within broader debates concerning epistemological transformation in digitally mediated learning environments. Educational theory has long emphasized that knowledge formation depends upon active cognitive engagement rather than passive reception. Constructivist scholarship argues that reasoning capacity develops through dialogical interaction, interpretive struggle, and iterative reflection (Wegerif, Mercer, and Dawes, 1999). In legal pedagogy, this principle is reflected in case based learning, doctrinal comparison, and argumentative defense.

Generative artificial intelligence introduces a significant modification to this epistemic structure. Unlike earlier technologies that enhanced access to information while leaving interpretive labor intact, large language models intervene directly in the production of analytical content. They are capable of generating structured legal reasoning, doctrinal synthesis, and argumentative outlines that resemble professional analysis. As OECD (2019) observes, artificial intelligence increasingly participates in cognitive tasks that were traditionally considered exclusively human domains. This participation alters the distribution of epistemic authority within educational settings.

The concept of cognitive outsourcing provides a useful analytical lens. Cognitive outsourcing refers to the delegation of reasoning tasks to external technological systems. While limited outsourcing can enhance efficiency, sustained reliance may reshape cognitive habits. Holmes, Bialik, and Fadel (2019) note that artificial intelligence tools may support learning when integrated critically, yet they also caution that habitual dependence may externalize core analytical functions. In legal education, where interpretive discipline is central, such externalization carries particular significance.

Epistemological transformation does not imply

immediate intellectual decline. Rather, it denotes gradual reconfiguration of reasoning orientation. Students who repeatedly obtain algorithmically generated analyses may internalize argumentative structures without reconstructing the underlying reasoning pathway. Regalia (2024) argues that generative systems often produce linguistically fluent legal text while lacking contextual depth. When fluency substitutes for interpretive engagement, the developmental dimension of legal reasoning may weaken.

Moreover, the probabilistic architecture of generative models introduces epistemic uncertainty. OECD (2025) documents the persistence of hallucinated references and fabricated citations in large language models. In legal contexts, where doctrinal precision and jurisdictional specificity are essential, uncritical reliance on such outputs may compromise analytical rigor. The epistemological risk therefore operates both structurally and substantively. Structurally, reasoning authority shifts outward. Substantively, the reliability of generated content remains contingent and fallible.

This conceptualization of epistemological transformation forms the foundation for interpreting the empirical findings presented later in this study. If artificial intelligence dependency correlates with reduced verification behavior or diminished reasoning confidence, such patterns may indicate not isolated misconduct but broader cognitive reorientation.

For analytical clarity, this study defines epistemological displacement as the gradual relocation of interpretive authority from the learner's internal deliberative process to externally generated algorithmic outputs, resulting in a reduced need to reconstruct reasoning pathways independently. Cognitive outsourcing, in this context, refers to the repeated delegation of substantive analytical tasks, such as issue identification, rule application, and argumentative structuring, to artificial intelligence systems. Unlike temporary assistance, cognitive outsourcing implies habitual reliance that may reshape epistemic discipline over time.

3.2. *Normative Reconfiguration and Professional Identity*

Beyond epistemological considerations, artificial intelligence necessitates normative reconfiguration within legal education. Normative reconfiguration is defined in this study as the adjustment of ethical boundaries, authorship standards, and accountability expectations in response to the integration of artificial intelligence into academic

practice. It does not imply the abandonment of professional norms, but rather their reinterpretation within technologically mediated environments. Academic institutions are not merely sites of knowledge transmission but arenas of professional formation. The legal profession is grounded in accountability, transparency, and personal responsibility for interpretive judgments. Susskind (2022) emphasizes that although legal practice is increasingly influenced by technological innovation, professional responsibility remains inseparable from human agency.

Traditional academic integrity frameworks focus on plagiarism detection and textual originality. However, generative artificial intelligence complicates this paradigm because outputs are newly synthesized rather than copied. Zawacki Richter et al. (2019) highlight that artificial intelligence applications challenge conventional evaluation mechanisms in higher education. The ethical question therefore shifts from duplication to authorship authenticity. When a student submits analysis generated substantially through algorithmic assistance, determining the locus of intellectual responsibility becomes complex.

UNESCO (2023) underscores that artificial intelligence governance in education must preserve transparency and accountability. Floridi and Cowls (2019) similarly argue that ethical artificial intelligence requires the retention of human oversight and responsibility even when algorithmic systems are integrated into decision making processes. Applied to legal education, this principle implies that students must remain accountable for analytical outputs, regardless of technological assistance.

Normative reconfiguration thus involves redefining the boundaries between legitimate support and impermissible substitution. Assistance that enhances clarity while preserving independent reasoning differs fundamentally from substitution that replaces deliberative engagement. The empirical portion of this study explores whether ethical awareness among students moderates reliance patterns, thereby testing the hypothesis that normative consciousness can function as a stabilizing mechanism within technologically mediated environments.

3.3. Institutional Governance and Regulatory Adaptation

Institutional governance constitutes a third theoretical dimension. Technological diffusion frequently outpaces regulatory adaptation. OECD

(2021) observes that digital transformation in education often advances more rapidly than policy harmonization. In transitional governance contexts, this asymmetry may generate fragmentation and inconsistency.

Vietnam provides a particularly relevant case. National strategies emphasize artificial intelligence development and digital transformation as pillars of modernization (Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 2021a; 2021b). However, specific regulatory frameworks addressing artificial intelligence in higher legal education remain limited. Without clear disclosure requirements and evaluation standards, institutional responses vary.

Williamson and Eynon (2020) argue that educational technologies reshape institutional power relations and governance structures. In the absence of deliberate policy design, informal practices may evolve that normalize dependency without explicit oversight. The theoretical implication is that epistemological transformation is mediated not only by individual cognition but also by institutional design.

This tripartite theoretical framework, encompassing epistemological transformation, normative reconfiguration, and institutional governance, provides the analytical structure through which the empirical data are interpreted. The following section outlines the research methodology employed to examine these dynamics within the Vietnamese context.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

This study adopts a mixed methodological framework combining conceptual analysis with quantitative empirical investigation. The theoretical component synthesizes international scholarship on artificial intelligence governance, digital transformation in higher education, and legal pedagogy. The empirical component is designed to test whether the theoretical concept of epistemological transformation is reflected in observable behavioral patterns among Vietnamese law students.

The integration of normative theory and statistical evidence responds to methodological concerns raised in digital education research. Eynon and Young (2021) emphasize that studies on artificial intelligence in higher education must move beyond speculative commentary and incorporate empirical validation. Similarly, Raffaghelli (2022) argues that the analysis of human agency in technologically mediated environments requires attention to

measurable behavioral indicators rather than purely conceptual assertions.

4.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The empirical data were collected through a structured survey administered to 714 undergraduate law students across three major urban regions in Vietnam, including Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh City, and Nghe An. Participants were drawn from first year through fourth year cohorts in order to capture variation in academic maturity and exposure to doctrinal complexity.

The questionnaire included five clusters of variables. The first cluster measured frequency and purpose of artificial intelligence use. The second cluster examined verification behavior, including whether students cross checked citations or consulted primary legal sources. The third cluster assessed self reported confidence in independent legal reasoning. The fourth cluster measured ethical awareness concerning authorship and disclosure. The fifth cluster collected demographic and academic information, including year of study and grade point average.

All perception based variables were measured using five point Likert scales. Behavioral frequency was categorized into ordinal intervals. The survey instrument was pre tested to ensure clarity and internal consistency. Cronbach's alpha for the ethical awareness scale exceeded conventional reliability thresholds, indicating acceptable internal coherence.

In this study, ethical awareness is operationalized as the degree to which students acknowledge the moral implications of undisclosed artificial intelligence use and affirm personal responsibility for the analytical content they submit. This construct captures normative self consciousness rather than mere rule compliance, thereby reflecting the internalization of professional accountability principles.

4.3. Analytical Procedures

The analytical strategy proceeded in four stages. First, descriptive statistics were calculated to establish baseline patterns of artificial intelligence usage. Second, cross tabulation and chi square tests were applied to examine associations between categorical variables such as year of study and frequency of artificial intelligence reliance. Third, Pearson correlation analysis was conducted to explore linear relationships among artificial intelligence dependency, reasoning confidence, and academic performance. Fourth, a binary logistic regression model was constructed to identify

predictors of high dependency while controlling for multiple variables simultaneously.

The use of inferential statistics responds to calls within artificial intelligence education research for greater methodological rigor (Zawacki Richter et al., 2019). By incorporating regression analysis and moderation testing, the study seeks to identify structured relationships rather than anecdotal patterns.

4.4. Empirical Statistical Analysis

4.4.1. Descriptive Patterns of Artificial Intelligence Usage

Descriptive analysis indicates that artificial intelligence usage among Vietnamese law students is nearly universal. Ninety eight percent of respondents reported having used generative artificial intelligence tools for academic purposes at least once, and eighty seven percent reported regular weekly use. The most common purposes include summarizing lecture materials, drafting assignment outlines, clarifying complex legal doctrines, and generating preliminary responses to essay questions.

These findings align with global reports documenting widespread adoption of generative systems in higher education environments (OECD, 2021). The data confirm that artificial intelligence is not peripheral but embedded within everyday learning practices.

4.4.2. Cross Tabulation between Academic Year and Dependency

To evaluate whether artificial intelligence dependency varies across academic progression, cross tabulation was conducted between year of study and frequent use for drafting assignments. The proportion of students reporting high frequency use increased progressively from first year to fourth year. A chi square test of independence indicated a statistically significant association between academic year and dependency levels.

This pattern suggests that increased doctrinal complexity may incentivize greater reliance on algorithmic assistance rather than reinforcing independent reasoning resilience. Holmes et al. (2019) note that technological tools may become more attractive as task difficulty rises. The empirical evidence here supports that observation within the context of legal education.

4.4.3. *Verification Behavior and Epistemic Discipline*

Cross tabulation between frequency of artificial intelligence use and verification behavior revealed a statistically significant inverse relationship. Students who reported frequent reliance were substantially less likely to cross check generated citations against primary legal sources. The chi square statistic indicated significance at conventional thresholds.

This finding provides empirical support for concerns raised by Selwyn (2019) regarding superficial engagement in technologically mediated learning environments. Verification requires cognitive investment and engagement with doctrinal material. When efficiency becomes prioritized, epistemic discipline may decline.

4.4.4. *Correlation between Dependency and Reasoning Confidence*

Pearson correlation analysis revealed a moderate negative correlation between artificial intelligence dependency and self assessed confidence in independent legal reasoning. In contrast, the correlation between dependency and grade point average was weak and statistically insignificant.

This distinction carries important implications. Artificial intelligence reliance does not appear to produce immediate measurable decline in academic performance. However, the association with reduced reasoning confidence suggests deeper cognitive transformation. Williamson and Eynon (2020) argue that digital systems may alter learners' epistemic self perception even when performance indicators remain stable. The findings of this study are consistent with that proposition.

4.4.5. *Logistic Regression Analysis*

A binary logistic regression model was constructed to identify predictors of high artificial intelligence dependency. Independent variables included academic year, perceived workload, perceived reliability of artificial intelligence outputs, reasoning confidence, and ethical awareness.

The results indicate that perceived reliability and workload are strong positive predictors of high dependency. Students who believe artificial intelligence outputs are highly reliable are significantly more likely to rely extensively on such systems. Conversely, higher levels of ethical awareness and reasoning confidence are associated with lower probability of heavy reliance.

This regression model demonstrates that dependency patterns are structured and mediated

rather than random. Ethical awareness functions as a moderating variable, consistent with normative governance theory emphasizing the role of value frameworks in shaping technological adoption (Floridi and Cowls, 2019).

4.5. *Discussion*

The empirical findings must be interpreted within the conceptual framework of epistemological transformation, normative reconfiguration, and institutional governance introduced earlier. The statistical results do not merely describe behavioral tendencies among Vietnamese law students. Rather, they reveal structured shifts in cognitive orientation that correspond to broader theoretical concerns raised in international scholarship on artificial intelligence in education.

The progressive increase in artificial intelligence dependency across academic years constitutes a particularly significant finding. One might expect that as students advance in their legal education and gain greater exposure to doctrinal complexity, their independent reasoning capacity would strengthen. However, the data indicate the opposite pattern. Senior students demonstrate higher levels of algorithmic reliance in drafting assignments and preparing analytical responses. This trend supports the argument that increased cognitive demand may incentivize outsourcing rather than resilience. Holmes et al. (2019) observe that digital tools often become more attractive in contexts of heightened workload. Within legal education, where doctrinal analysis intensifies in later years, artificial intelligence may function as a compensatory mechanism that reduces immediate cognitive strain.

This pattern reinforces the concept of epistemological displacement. The shift does not occur because students lack ability, but because algorithmic synthesis offers efficiency under pressure. Over time, repeated reliance may reshape cognitive habits. Constructivist theory emphasizes that reasoning develops through engagement with ambiguity and iterative reflection (Wegerif, Mercer, and Dawes, 1999). When artificial intelligence compresses ambiguity into structured responses, the experiential dimension of reasoning may diminish. The empirical evidence that verification discipline declines among frequent users supports this interpretation. Students who rely heavily on artificial intelligence are significantly less likely to cross check citations against primary sources. This reduction in verification behavior suggests a transformation in epistemic vigilance.

Importantly, artificial intelligence dependency

does not significantly correlate with grade point average. This divergence between performance stability and reasoning confidence is theoretically meaningful. Selwyn (2019) argues that digital technologies may sustain surface level performance while subtly altering deeper cognitive engagement. The absence of measurable performance decline should therefore not be interpreted as evidence of pedagogical neutrality. Instead, it indicates that conventional assessment metrics may fail to capture long term transformation in reasoning orientation. The moderate negative correlation between dependency and self assessed reasoning confidence provides further evidence that students perceive some erosion of analytical autonomy even if grades remain stable.

The regression analysis deepens this interpretation. Perceived reliability of artificial intelligence outputs emerges as a strong predictor of dependency. This finding aligns with OECD (2025), which notes that the apparent coherence of generative systems can create a perception of authority that exceeds actual reliability. When students believe that algorithmic outputs are trustworthy, reliance becomes rational from an efficiency standpoint. However, ethical awareness moderates this relationship. Students with stronger normative consciousness are less likely to convert perceived reliability into heavy dependency. This moderating effect is consistent with the ethical governance framework proposed by Floridi and Cowls (2019), which emphasizes that technological systems operate within normative ecosystems shaped by human values.

The Vietnamese context adds an additional layer to this discussion. National strategies emphasize artificial intelligence development and digital modernization (Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 2021a; 2021b). However, institutional guidelines for regulating artificial intelligence in legal education remain underdeveloped. Williamson and Eynon (2020) argue that educational technologies frequently outpace governance mechanisms, resulting in fragmented adaptation. The present findings illustrate this dynamic. Students adopt generative systems widely, yet disclosure norms and evaluation standards remain ambiguous. In such an environment, dependency patterns evolve informally rather than through deliberate pedagogical design.

The implications extend beyond immediate classroom practices. Legal education serves as the foundation for professional identity formation. Susskind (2022) acknowledges that technological

innovation will reshape legal services, yet he emphasizes that professional responsibility remains anchored in human judgment. If students internalize a model of analysis centered on algorithmic synthesis rather than disciplined reasoning, this orientation may influence future professional conduct. The ethical stakes therefore exceed academic policy. They concern the long term integrity of legal practice.

At the same time, the data do not justify alarmist conclusions. Artificial intelligence dependency does not eliminate reasoning ability. Instead, it introduces a tension between efficiency and autonomy. Raffaghelli (2022) argues that human agency in technologically mediated environments is neither extinguished nor predetermined. Rather, it is negotiated within specific institutional and cultural contexts. The moderating role of ethical awareness in this study supports that position. Artificial intelligence effects are mediated rather than mechanically imposed.

Therefore, the discussion points toward a balanced interpretation. Artificial intelligence is neither a purely disruptive force nor an unqualified enhancement. Its impact depends on governance design, pedagogical strategy, and normative orientation. Without deliberate adaptation, epistemological displacement may intensify gradually. With structured integration and ethical clarity, artificial intelligence may augment rather than replace analytical reasoning.

4.6. Theoretical Contribution

The theoretical contribution of this article operates on three interconnected levels: conceptual innovation, empirical grounding of epistemic transformation, and normative integration within professional education theory.

First, the article advances the concept of epistemological displacement as a framework for understanding the impact of generative artificial intelligence on legal education. While existing scholarship has examined artificial intelligence in education primarily through lenses of technological enhancement, automation, or digital pedagogy (Zawacki Richter et al., 2019; OECD, 2021), fewer studies have conceptualized the gradual relocation of reasoning authority as a structural cognitive shift. Epistemological displacement captures not the replacement of human reasoning but its subtle reorientation. The learner remains formally responsible for intellectual output, yet the underlying architecture of reasoning becomes increasingly mediated by algorithmic synthesis.

This conceptualization extends beyond concerns

about plagiarism or academic misconduct. Traditional integrity discourse focuses on rule violations. By contrast, epistemological displacement addresses transformation in cognitive habit formation. The concern is not simply whether artificial intelligence is used, but how repeated reliance reshapes internal reasoning practices. In this sense, the article contributes to debates concerning cognitive agency in digital environments (Raffaghelli, 2022) by articulating a discipline specific manifestation within legal pedagogy.

Second, the article distinguishes between performance stability and cognitive autonomy. The empirical findings demonstrate that artificial intelligence dependency does not significantly correlate with grade point average, yet it correlates negatively with self assessed reasoning confidence. This divergence challenges prevailing assumptions that academic performance indicators adequately measure educational outcomes. Selwyn (2019) has cautioned that digital technologies may sustain surface level productivity while altering deeper epistemic engagement. By empirically demonstrating this distinction in the context of legal education, the study contributes to broader theoretical debates concerning how educational success should be conceptualized in algorithmically mediated contexts.

Third, the article integrates professional ethics theory into artificial intelligence education research. Much of the literature on artificial intelligence in higher education focuses on efficiency, personalization, or technological innovation (Holmes et al., 2019). However, legal education cannot be separated from professional responsibility. The moderating effect of ethical awareness identified in the regression model indicates that normative consciousness functions as a protective factor against excessive dependency. This finding reinforces governance theories that emphasize human centered oversight and accountability in artificial intelligence systems (Floridi and Cowls, 2019; UNESCO, 2023). The contribution therefore lies not only in identifying behavioral patterns but in demonstrating that technological effects are normatively mediated.

Fourth, the article contributes to comparative scholarship by situating Vietnam within global digital transformation debates. Artificial intelligence research in education is often dominated by studies from technologically advanced jurisdictions. The Vietnamese case illustrates how rapid technological adoption may coexist with evolving regulatory frameworks. Williamson and Eynon (2020) argue that educational technologies reshape institutional

authority structures. The present study provides empirical evidence of this dynamic in a transitional governance environment, thereby enriching comparative discussions of digital adaptation.

Finally, the article proposes a theoretical synthesis linking epistemological transformation, normative reconfiguration, and institutional governance. Rather than treating artificial intelligence as a discrete technological issue, the analysis frames it as a structural condition that interacts with cognitive formation and professional identity. This integrative perspective advances the literature by demonstrating that the impact of artificial intelligence cannot be understood solely at the level of tool usage. It must be examined within the broader ecology of values, assessment systems, and institutional design.

In sum, the theoretical contribution of this article lies in articulating a discipline specific model of artificial intelligence integration that foregrounds cognitive autonomy, ethical responsibility, and governance coherence. By grounding conceptual innovation in empirical evidence, the study provides a foundation for further research examining long term professional formation in algorithmically mediated environments.

4.7. Policy Implications

The findings of this study suggest that artificial intelligence integration in legal education cannot be addressed through isolated technical adjustments. Rather, it requires systemic policy intervention grounded in human centered governance principles and aligned with the professional identity of legal training.

4.7.1. Normative Clarification and Disclosure Frameworks

The first policy priority concerns normative clarification. The empirical evidence demonstrates widespread artificial intelligence usage among law students, yet institutional standards regarding disclosure remain ambiguous. UNESCO (2023) emphasizes that transparency is a foundational principle of ethical artificial intelligence governance in education. Without explicit disclosure mechanisms, evaluation becomes inconsistent and academic integrity frameworks lose credibility.

Universities should therefore establish formal policies requiring students to declare the scope and nature of artificial intelligence assistance in academic submissions. Such disclosure should not automatically imply misconduct. Instead, it should enable evaluators to distinguish between legitimate support and substantive substitution. By clarifying

authorship boundaries, institutions reinforce accountability without resorting to prohibition.

At the national level, coordinated guidelines would enhance regulatory coherence. OECD (2021) notes that digital transformation policies often remain fragmented in the absence of sector wide standards. Vietnam's national artificial intelligence strategy emphasizes technological development (Thủ tướng Chính phủ, 2021b), yet sector specific governance for higher education remains underdeveloped. The establishment of unified principles concerning artificial intelligence use in universities would reduce institutional disparity and promote fairness.

4.7.2. Curriculum Integration of AI Literacy

The second policy dimension concerns curriculum reform. The regression analysis indicates that perceived reliability of artificial intelligence strongly predicts dependency. This suggests that students may overestimate the epistemic authority of generative systems. OECD (2025) documents persistent issues of fabricated citations and contextual inaccuracies in large language models. Legal education must therefore integrate critical artificial intelligence literacy into the curriculum.

Artificial intelligence literacy in legal education should include three components. First, students must understand the probabilistic nature of generative models and the distinction between linguistic fluency and doctrinal validity. Second, they must develop verification discipline by cross checking generated outputs against primary legal sources. Third, they must reflect on the ethical implications of algorithmic assistance in professional contexts. Holmes et al. (2019) argue that artificial intelligence can enhance learning when accompanied by critical supervision. The objective is not to eliminate artificial intelligence use but to embed it within reflective practice.

4.7.3. Reform of Assessment Structures

The third policy implication concerns assessment reform. The divergence between performance stability and reasoning confidence indicates that conventional grading systems may not detect epistemological transformation. Selwyn (2019) warns that digital technologies can sustain productivity while altering deeper engagement. Legal education must therefore recalibrate evaluation formats to prioritize reasoning processes rather than final textual products.

Possible reforms include supervised in class analytical exercises, oral defenses of written

submissions, iterative drafting with reflective commentary, and moot court simulations requiring spontaneous reasoning. Such formats reduce opportunities for unexamined algorithmic substitution and encourage articulation of reasoning pathways. By shifting focus from product to process, institutions can better evaluate genuine analytical competence.

4.7.4. Faculty Capacity Building

The fourth dimension concerns faculty development. Students often adopt artificial intelligence tools more rapidly than lecturers develop familiarity with them. This asymmetry may weaken pedagogical authority and create uncertainty in enforcement. Zawacki Richter et al. (2019) emphasize that effective integration of artificial intelligence in higher education requires institutional capacity building. Universities should invest in training programs enabling lecturers to understand generative systems, detect potential misuse, and design assignments that incorporate artificial intelligence constructively.

Faculty capacity building also has a normative dimension. Lecturers must be equipped to engage students in discussions about ethical responsibility and professional accountability in technologically mediated environments. Artificial intelligence governance cannot be delegated solely to administrative regulations. It must be embedded in everyday pedagogical interaction.

4.7.5. Balancing Innovation and Professional Integrity

The final policy consideration concerns the broader balance between innovation and professional integrity. Artificial intelligence offers potential benefits for legal education, including enhanced access to comparative materials, rapid doctrinal summarization, and language support. However, professional legal practice remains grounded in human judgment and responsibility (Susskind, 2022). Policy frameworks must therefore ensure that technological integration does not undermine the formation of independent analytical identity.

Floridi and Cowls (2019) argue that ethical artificial intelligence governance requires the preservation of human oversight and accountability. Applied to legal education, this principle implies that artificial intelligence should function as a supplementary instrument within a framework that foregrounds human reasoning. Prohibition may be unrealistic and counterproductive, yet unregulated

encouragement risks accelerating epistemological displacement. Balanced governance demands deliberate design rather than reactive restriction.

5. CONCLUSION

This study has examined the impact of generative artificial intelligence on legal education in Vietnam through an integrated theoretical and empirical framework. By introducing the concept of epistemological displacement, the article demonstrates that artificial intelligence does not merely accelerate academic tasks but subtly reorganizes the locus of reasoning authority. The empirical findings show that dependency patterns increase with academic progression, that verification discipline declines among frequent users, and that ethical awareness moderates reliance.

The principal contribution of this study lies in distinguishing between performance stability and cognitive autonomy. While artificial intelligence dependency does not significantly affect grade point

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average, it correlates with reduced confidence in independent reasoning. This divergence suggests that conventional assessment metrics may obscure deeper epistemic transformation.

The findings further indicate that technological effects are normatively mediated. Ethical awareness functions as a protective factor against excessive dependency, underscoring the importance of value based governance rather than purely technical regulation.

For legal education in Vietnam, the challenge is therefore structural rather than procedural. Artificial intelligence integration must be accompanied by explicit disclosure norms, curriculum level artificial intelligence literacy, and assessment designs that prioritize reasoning processes over textual products.

Ultimately, the future of legal reasoning will depend not on the presence of artificial intelligence, but on whether institutions succeed in preserving human interpretive authority within algorithmically mediated environments.