

INTEGRATION OF ICT IN TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH AT A FACULTY OF LAW OF A DEVELOPING COUNTRY- TANZANIA

By

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Introduction

A country exists and operates in the context of a complex, ever changing socio-economic world macrocosm. Similarly, an institution exists within a country or countries that experience internally caused and externally influenced changes of various socio-economic types, significance and magnitude. This presentation uses Faculty of Law of University of Dar es Salaam as a window into the challenges facing a developing country in far off East Africa trying to live up to the changes of the new millennium.¹ Through this window, one may observe efforts made by a law faculty to face up challenges posed by independence of a developing country, later liberalisation of its economy and politics; and challenges posed by globalisation and its aftermath.

Faculty of Law was established on 25th October 1961 to cater for then emerging newly independent East African states of Kenya, Uganda, Tanganyika and Zanzibar. At its inception, the faculty was affiliated to the university of London and followed the curriculum of this university. Despite being affiliated to the University of London, the focus of the faculty curriculum in the early 1960s was designed to cater for local situations that were in line with the aspiration of the newly independent states of the region. The young law faculty of 1961 had to advise the young government on the then topical areas requiring urgent attention (e.g. codification of customary law, integration of court systems and matters of constitutional making).

¹ KANYWANYI, Josephat L., "An Outline of a History of Faculty of Law of the University of Dar es Salaam" in S. E. Mvungi (edt), Forty Years of the Faculty of Law University of Dar es Salaam 1961-2001, Faculty of Law, University of Dar es Salaam, 2002.

Global Impact on Faculty of Law Curriculum

Changes taking place in globally and within Tanzania manifest themselves on various changes in law degree curriculum.

The mission of the Faculty when established in 1961 was to provide the new independent states of Africa with indigenous skilled lawyers in the shortest possible time for the government and public service. Private enterprise and private legal practice were given very little room within the curriculum and later career. University research also focused on serving the government and providing public service.

When Tanzania tried its hand in socialism in its politics and economy (1967-1985), Faculty of Law played its handmaiden role by accordingly realigning its curriculum and research.

Then came the liberalisation of politics, economy, globalisation and the attendant private enterprises. The original mission of Tanzania and its Faculty of Law had to change. For almost three decades after 1961, faculty offered a three-year Bachelor of Laws LL.B degree program. Since October 1999 a four- year LL.B program was introduced during the reforms to re-define the curriculum to accommodate the global changes taking place around Tanzania. The new courses that were introduced to reflect the changing times include- Computer Skills; Arbitration and Alternative Dispute Resolution; Capital Markets and Securities; Cultural Property and Antiquities Law; Environmental Law; Investment Law etc.

Though Faculty of Law was the first law faculty to be established in East Africa in October 1961, up to 1974 it was only Tanzania that still had not made provision for giving graduate lawyers practical experience before joining respective permanent jobs. Kenya and Uganda had by 1974 established law schools Today Kenya and Uganda have law schools. A 12-months internship/ practical training covered a stopgap measure in

view of absence of a law school. All law graduates regardless of what job they would thereafter take, were required to undergo a compulsory 12-months practical training.

Internship programme was the practical addendum to the LL.B degree till 1999 when Faculty of Law in view of problems facing the internship programme, reviewed its curriculum.

The 4th year of the LL.B programme was introduced to impart students with sufficient practical legal skills to enable them to join legal practice immediately after graduation in accordance with the regulations set by the Council for Legal Education. With the collapse of centrally controlled economy, the government was no longer the main employer. Law graduates were now expected to join private enterprise and establish their law firms upon graduation. The Council itself was consulted and it approved the 4th year law programme.

Faculty of Law's Response to ICT Revolution

A Faculty of Law of new millennium has to contend with very different sets of challenges set in motion by globalisation. A developing country Tanzania has to contend with a number of global challenges taking place simultaneously and at tremendous pace.

We would like to share with you this overview on how a Faculty in a developing world contends with ICT revolution and movement towards a global classroom. There is no doubt that information technology is slowly finding its way into teaching, learning and research at Faculty of Law of the University of Dar es Salaam. We realised some few years ago that ICT provides an answer to Faculty of Law wishing to remain relevant to challenges posed by the new millennium and remain an active participant in the global economy. There is no alternative but to conform to the revolution ushered under information technology.

Our experience at University of Dar es Salaam can as well be said to takes its cue from a captivating caption reminding us all to conform to the inevitability of information technology,

The migration to the use of electronic information and technology in the US legal system is a *fait accompli*. One might well puzzle over whether one had sufficient resources to be on the cutting edge of change, but even the most stuffy traditionalists had acknowledged that the change was well under way: Robert C. Berring.²

Our ICT is connected to the Internet through a VSAT link of 512 bps capacity. Foundations for ICT development at the University of Dar es Salaam are rooted in the gradual events that took place from the year 1990 to 1994. Corporate strategic plan for the whole university was formulated and approved by relevant university organs. This marked the beginning of institutional transformation and initial ideas on ICT activities. Other events included the introduction of the dial up e-mail services.

Between 1995 to 1999 ICT Master plan was drawn and approved, a computer laboratory for students was established at Faculty of Law, and a Master Time Table was done centrally under the help of a computer on the main campus. New programmes in ICT were introduced, namely the Academic Register Information System (ARIS), Financial Information System (FIS) at Finance department and Library information system (LIBIS) at the main campus library. The Technology Enhanced Independent Learning project was launched with Blackboard as digital learning environment. TEIL (Technology Enhanced Independent Learning Environment) provides the University of Dar Es Salaam with an online Learning Environment, through Blackboard. TEIL is Online Software that is a definitive e-learning software platform encompassing a course management system.

² DANNER, Richard A., 'Facing the Millennium, Law Schools, Law Librarians and Information Technology,' Journal of Legal Education, pp. 43-58, at page 43.

By middle of 1997, the entire main campus of the UDSM had already been covered by a fibre optic network, linking all faculties, the main library and finance/administrative departments.³ Faculty of Law Building has been cabled and all its rooms wired to allow connections to PCs. It is now possible to tap IT from Faculty of Law offices.

Faculty of Law of the University of Dar es Salaam was selected to pioneer in the introduction of Technology Enhanced Independent Learning (TEIL) Environment Project coordinated by UDSM Computing Centre (UCC). Inauguration of the Students' ICT Laboratory of the Faculty of Law, took place on Thursday, 19th October 2000.

The ICT laboratory at Faculty of Law is mainly meant for First Year Students taking a course which was introduced in 1999- **IS 131: Computer Skills Course**. Computer Skills course is designed introduce law students into various aspects of the computer system.

Conclusion: Salient Challenges Facing the Integration of ICT

We can conclude by acknowledging the important role ICT has so far played to facilitate such number of tasks as keeping of students' and other records; desktop publications; access to Internet and e-mail. There are several other factors that are likely to determine whether Faculty of Law is able to maintain its current level of integration of information technology in learning, teaching and researching.

(a) Transformation of the *Dramatis Personae*

Integration of IT requires transformation of the *dramatis personae* involved in the integration of IT in teaching, learning and research. These *personae* are the lecturers, students and the supporting staff. Three quarters of members of staff have PCs in their

³ See NFUKA, E.N., "Integration of ICT in teaching and learning at University of Dar es Salaam through Technology Enhanced Independent Learning (TEIL) Environment," A paper prepared for presentation in a panel discussion on the African University Day at University of Dar es Salaam, 13th November 2000, Dar es Salaam.

offices connected to Internet. Only about a quarter use ICT in teaching, research and consultancy.

Teaching at Faculty of Law is still based on the conventional teacher-in front of students-in-lecture rooms. This arrangement is set to continue for quite some time to come. But potential for the role of ICT is great because the basic infrastructure is already in place. Most members of my Faculty who have spent their time searching information from the Internet are in agreement that their respective teaching has been embellished, streamlined and much improved by considerable amount of available information beyond the conventional source (Law Library).

(b) Raising the utilisation of TEIL facilities

Faculty of Law needs to take certain concerted measures to move beyond reliance on Internet for research but facilitate also computer assisted learning and teaching. These measures can be divided into short and long-term goals. Short-term goals will include raising the utilisation of TEIL facilities.

(c) Students Access to PC and Internet

When Faculty of Law's ICT lab was opened, there were 647 undergraduate students competing over the 20 personal computers in the lab. The ratio of PCs to students was calculated at 1:32. Undergraduate student population now stands at 994. The number of PCs has slightly risen to 25! One of the major challenges facing the Faculty of Law in its integration endeavours is availability of PCs and accessibility of staff and students to the few PCs available.

A close examination of the trends in ICT suggests that expanded student enrolment is the most critical issue that requires wider use of ICT to address. However, integration of ICT

to improve the quality of teaching and learning, research and consultancy, and the growing demand for training in ICT and e learning instructional design skills, which are the main activities of the University of Dar es Salaam, have not been well addressed. This calls for more innovative strategies in using ICT to improve the main terms of reference of the university.

It further shows that the number of students is increasing with the same quantity of facilities, and this suggests that there is a need to increase such facilities in order to continue improving teaching quality.

ICT offers some great potential to a Faculty of Law in a developing country to access and read the same script read by other more endowed universities of the developed nations. Before tapping the vast resources available in the Internet, a developing country must put in place some basic ICT infrastructure on the ground. University of Dar es Salaam and its law faculty have tried. A long distance remains.

This conference on "Educating Lawyers for Transnational Challenges" can serve to reduce that distance.