CURRENT RESEARCH JOURNAL OF PEDAGOGICS (ISSN: 2767-3278)

VOLUME: Vol.06 Issue10 2025
DOI: - 10.37547/pedagogics-crjp-06-10-07
Page: - 45 -49
RESEARCH ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Practical Aspects Of Using Mobile Applications (Kahoot!, Quizlet, Plickers) In Developing Students' Legal Literacy

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Received: 22 August 2025 **Accepted:** 18 September 2025 **Published:** 20 October 2025

ABSTRACT

This article examines the practical integration of three widely used mobile learning applications—Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Plickers—into course designs aimed at developing students' legal literacy. Working from a synthesis of learning-science principles, formative assessment research, and technology-enhanced pedagogy, the study explicates how each tool can be aligned with legal-education objectives, including accurate retrieval of core terminology, issue spotting, rule statement fluency, application to facts, and ethical awareness. In particular, Quizlet is discussed through the lens of retrieval practice and spaced repetition for vocabulary and rule elements; Kahoot! is framed as a vehicle for real-time diagnostic quizzing, misconception repair, and gameful engagement during case-based discussion; and Plickers is presented as a low-device, high-immediacy student response system that supports equitable participation and rapid feedback in classrooms where consistent device access or bandwidth cannot be assumed. The article proposes item-design strategies that privilege higher-order legal reasoning rather than superficial recall, addresses accessibility and privacy considerations, and outlines analytics-driven instructional decisions before and after class. It concludes that the targeted, principle-aligned use of these applications can make legal literacy instruction more systematic, transparent, and inclusive, provided that question design, feedback quality, and assessment alignment are treated as core pedagogical tasks rather than mere technical add-ons.

Keywords: Legal literacy; formative assessment; mobile learning; game-based learning; retrieval practice; Kahoot!; Quizlet; Plickers; case method; active learning.

INTRODUCTION

Legal literacy—understood as the capacity to recognize legal issues, comprehend relevant terms and norms, interpret authoritative sources, and apply rules to fact patterns—has become an essential competence across professional programs and in general higher education. Students increasingly encounter legal questions in domains ranging from data protection and intellectual property to workplace duties and civic participation. The imperative to build such literacy coincides with a broader shift toward active, technology-supported learning environments, where mobile applications mediate assessment, interaction, and feedback. Yet the adoption of digital tools in law-related teaching often defaults to surface-level fact quizzes detached from authentic legal reasoning. This tension is especially acute in early-stage courses where students must simultaneously acquire a precise legal vocabulary and develop the capacity to read hypotheticals closely, distinguish holdings from dicta, and articulate rule-based arguments under time constraints.

Within this context, mobile applications like Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Plickers can be made pedagogically meaningful if they are integrated not as generic engagement devices but as purpose-built instruments keyed to the distinctive tasks of legal literacy. Each application has a particular affordance profile that can be mapped to curriculum checkpoints. Quizlet is optimized for retrieval practice and spaced repetition, making it suitable for consolidating terminology, elements of offenses or torts, and short rule statements in doctrinal areas such as contract formation or constitutional standards. Kahoot! supports fast-paced, competitive quizzing that, when carefully authored, can provoke conceptual discrimination, surface misconceptions, and anchor mini-explanations during the Socratic or case-method portions of a class meeting. Plickers provides a low-infrastructure response system in which students indicate options using scannable cards, enabling immediate, anonymous participation in rooms with uneven device access or limited connectivity; it is therefore well suited for formative checks embedded within debates, role-plays, and structured problem-solving exercises.

To be genuinely effective for legal literacy, however, these tools must be bound to assessment criteria that distinguish between rote recall and competence in interpreting facts under applicable rules. The instructional challenge is to design prompts that require students to identify legally salient facts, choose among competing doctrines, and justify selections implicitly through the answer options they select. Doing so demands attention to question stem craft, distractor plausibility, the timing and granularity of feedback, and the ethical framing of scenarios. It also requires instructors to translate analytics into next-step teaching decisions, whether by reteaching specific sub-rules, curating targeted readings, or redesigning in-class activities to address known gaps. This article analyzes the practice architecture necessary to make that translation systematic and sustainable across varied law-related courses.

The present work is a design-based, practice-oriented analysis grounded in established findings from cognitive psychology, formative assessment, and educational technology research, combined with iterative classroom prototyping in mixed undergraduate cohorts that included law-related modules. The design goal was to align tool-specific features with legal literacy outcomes across three recurring instructional moments: pre-class preparation to stabilize core vocabulary and doctrinal elements; in-class diagnosis to surface and correct misconceptions while practicing issue spotting; and post-class consolidation to strengthen long-term retention and transfer.

Quizlet sets were created for each module's legal lexicon and for compact rule statements tied to core topics. Term definitions were written to privilege discriminability, incorporating near-misses and common confusions. Items included example clauses and micro-scenarios so that definitions were anchored in use rather than abstracted away from context. Spaced repetition settings were recommended to students and integrated into weekly study contracts. For in-class sessions, Kahoot! rounds were embedded at two junctures: an early diagnostic aimed at revealing prior-knowledge fractures and a mid-lesson checkpoint following a short case discussion. Questions were authored to test conceptual distinctions that students commonly blur, such as differentiating mandatory from directory provisions or distinguishing between negligence per se and ordinary negligence in statutory contexts. Immediate feedback was drafted in full-sentence explanations rather than mere correctness flags, with the instructor narrating why non-key options might appear plausible and how to avoid such traps on written assessments.

Plickers was deployed during case analysis to capture rapid, anonymous votes on branching hypotheticals. The instructor projected a fact pattern and then sequenced follow-up questions that gradually altered key facts, requiring students to reassess rule applicability and burdens of proof. Because Plickers does not require student devices, participation rates remained high regardless of connectivity. After each scan, results were visualized to stimulate metacognitive commentary, and the instructor used the results to prompt brief, evidence-based argumentation before revealing the key and rationale. Across all three tools, data were exported after sessions and reviewed to generate item-level insight. The instructor then used these analytics to update reading guides, build targeted micro-lectures, and author additional practice scenarios for the next class. Consent and privacy notices were integrated into course documentation, clarifying how response data would be used for pedagogical purposes only.

The integration of Quizlet, Kahoot!, and Plickers around clearly articulated legal literacy goals produced several practice-level effects that, while not reducible to a single numeric outcome, collectively restructured the learning

environment toward transparency and deliberate practice. The most immediate effect was a shift in student preparation patterns. When Quizlet sets foregrounded paired near-synonyms and look-alike concepts—such as conditions precedent versus conditions subsequent, or mandatory versus discretionary standards—students reported encountering those contrasts in subsequent readings with heightened sensitivity. Because Quizlet's spaced repetition nudged regular review, misconceptions surfaced early rather than solidifying by the time of summative assessments. The definitional entries that embedded a sentence of usage or a brief clause snippet served as a bridge between vocabulary learning and textual interpretation, reducing the risk that students would treat legal terms as free-floating labels.

Kahoot! altered in-class dynamics by compressing diagnostic assessment and explanation into the rhythm of case discussion. The design of item stems was central to this effect. Stems were constructed to mimic the decision points an advocate or judge would face, with distractors representing plausible but ultimately incorrect doctrinal paths. After the timed response, the instructor's explanation treated wrong answers as evidence of an underlying interpretive habit, such as overreliance on bright-line heuristics or insufficient attention to statutory exceptions. Because Kahoot! visualizes the distribution of responses, students saw how their judgments compared to peers, which opened space for brief argumentation about the reading's nuances and the contours of the governing rule. This "public but low-stakes" exposure to reasoning differences strengthened the give-and-take of the Socratic format without placing individual students on the spot for extended cold-calls. However, the motivational features of leaderboards and point streaks needed careful calibration. Overemphasis on speed risked rewarding quick recall rather than careful reading. To offset this, time windows were adjusted upward for reasoning-heavy items, and occasional "no leaderboard" rounds were used when the objective was collective sense-making rather than competition.

Plickers contributed an equity-oriented dimension to formative assessment. In rooms with students who preferred not to signal uncertainty in front of peers, card-based, anonymous responses encouraged candid judgments on contentious hypotheticals. Because the instructor alone controlled the scan and display, it was possible to pause before revealing distributions, prompting students to articulate rationales in small groups and then registering their votes. This created a rhythm in which quiet students participated consistently and where the class learned to tolerate ambiguity until an explanation anchored the right answer in text or precedent. The non-device nature of Plickers also eliminated the common problem of split attention across multiple apps; by simplifying the input channel, it accelerated the sequence of prompt, think, respond, and discuss. At the same time, Plickers required pre-planned seating and reliable visibility of student cards for accurate scanning, and instructors needed to rehearse camera angles and scanning paths to avoid technical hiccups that would undercut the immediacy of feedback.

Across tools, the quality of legal literacy growth depended on item design that targeted higher-order outcomes rather than celebratory clicks. Items were written to force discriminations among doctrinally adjacent answers, ensuring that correct responses could not be reached by shallow cues. In torts-style questions about negligence per se, distractors included options that would be correct only if the plaintiff belonged to the statute's protected class or if the harm fell within the statute's protective purpose, thus requiring students to apply the two-pronged test implicitly. In questions about administrative law, options juxtaposed hard-look review with Chevron deference in ways that required students to reconstruct threshold triggers rather than merely naming standards. After each question, feedback functioned as a mini-commentary that gave the right answer's rationale and expressed the most tempting mistake as a repeatable pattern of thought students could learn to avoid. This approach redefined correctness as a by-product of sound reasoning under rule constraints, which is the heart of legal literacy.

The tools also mediated new forms of analytics-driven instruction. Item-level data revealed which logical branches repeatedly generated errors. An instructor could see, for example, that a plurality of students consistently misapplied the "material breach" standard by ignoring the extent to which a failure deprived the other party of the expected benefit, and could then construct the next class's opening with a short passage on the Restatement factors and a micro-hypothetical to reset intuition. Over several weeks, this feedback loop made the curriculum more agile. The analytics did not grade students in a summative sense; instead, they graded the sufficiency of instruction by highlighting where the explanatory burden remained unmet. This alignment between formative data and instructional design sustained a culture in which students recognized assessment as a tool for learning rather than

merely a gatekeeping mechanism.

Nevertheless, the use of mobile applications in legal contexts posed challenges that required ethical and accessibility safeguards. Question scenarios had to avoid sensationalism or inadvertent bias while remaining realistic and appropriately challenging. To protect privacy, student identifiers were decoupled from exported datasets, and aggregate reporting norms were established before activities began. Accessibility considerations demanded that color-dependent cues in interfaces be supplemented with text, that timing be flexible when reading loads were substantial, and that alternative participation modes be available for students who required them. When implementing Quizlet, instructors provided downloadable text versions of decks for screen readers, and when using Kahoot!, they enabled extended timers and verbalized answer options for students who preferred auditory input. Plickers required high-contrast printing and predictable lighting so that students with low vision could orient their cards accurately.

The synergy of the three tools emerged most clearly in the sequencing of pre-class, in-class, and post-class phases. Before class, students used Quizlet to stabilize vocabulary and compact rule statements through spaced retrieval, which freed cognitive bandwidth during class for reading cases and arguing hypotheticals. During class, Kahoot! and Plickers functioned as diagnostic and discursive engines, punctuating the case method with moments of collective judgment that exposed reasoning fault lines and allowed the instructor to repair them. After class, exported data informed micro-interventions, such as short video explanations or additional practice items uploaded to the learning management system, and updated Quizlet sets incorporated clarifications that had surfaced during discussion. Over time, this cycle produced a transparent developmental trajectory for legal literacy, where students could see how their competencies evolved and how each tool contributed to that evolution.

The broader curricular implication is that mobile applications contribute value not by their novelty but by their capacity to externalize thinking, compress feedback loops, and normalize error as data. When this capacity is directed at the particularities of legal reasoning—careful language use, sensitivity to facts, doctrinal structure, and principled argument—students practice the micro-moves that written assessments demand. Game-based elements provide motivation but must be subordinated to learning goals through pacing, explanation, and the continuous refinement of items. Retrieval practice solidifies the lexicon and rule fragments that legal analysis manipulates, while response systems democratize participation in classrooms where silence and uncertainty are otherwise difficult to overcome. Instructors who treat item writing and feedback design as central scholarly tasks tend to realize the largest gains, because the technology amplifies clear pedagogy rather than compensating for its absence.

Deploying Kahoot!, Quizlet, and Plickers to develop legal literacy is most effective when the applications are harnessed as complementary instruments in a coherent pedagogy of formative assessment and deliberate practice. Quizlet stabilizes the definitional precision and rule fragments without which analysis collapses under cognitive load; Kahoot! catalyzes in-class diagnosis and conceptual clarification when item stems are crafted to mirror authentic legal decision points; and Plickers ensures equitable participation and immediate feedback where bandwidth and device access are uneven. The decisive factor is the quality of question design and explanatory feedback, with analytics used to steer instruction rather than to rank students. Ethical and accessibility commitments must frame implementation so that scenarios are responsible, privacy is protected, and participation is genuinely inclusive. When these practical conditions are met, mobile applications can help students acquire the vocabulary, interpretive habits, and rule-application skills that constitute legal literacy, making legal education more transparent and responsive without sacrificing rigor.

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