

coverage of substantive topics, vagueness of assessment criteria for skills assessment and the lack of appropriate teaching materials.

Using group skills in honours teaching: the European Human Rights Project

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The need to promote skill development has been fuelled by criticisms from employers, such as perceptions of the lack of transferable skills in university graduates. Innovation in higher education is being assisted by the agendas of the Higher Education Funding Councils. However, staff and students are suspicious of anything but the tried and tested means of teaching and assessing undergraduate law.

The University of Glasgow's School of Law sought to develop certain enterprise skills through the use of student-run 'syndicates' and group assessment within a mainstream Honours level course in which critical appreciation of subject matter remained essential. The project involved a group of 10 senior Honours students being set the task of preparing written and oral pleadings on a fictitious case giving rise to issues under the European Human Rights Convention.

Students are allocated to two teams, one for the applicant and the other for the government. The work involves intensive research and preparation culminating in a presentation to the 'court' comprised of lawyers involved in human rights work. Teaching staff play the role of mentors and

counsellors and monitor standards. Students are entirely responsible for their own learning and project management over a four month period. The teams are left to their own devices with no 'information providers' or 'command figures'.

The learning process was split into three different stages: (1) an area of research on the case was allocated to each student in a group. Each team member had to give a seminar on the case law on their individual area of research and its relevance to the moot problem; (2) condensing of the five sets of individual research into a single word-limited presentation; (3) preparation for oral presentation.

The motivation, enthusiasm, depth of learning and time expended by students on the project was exemplary. The acquisition and development of critical thinking, independence, research, organisational abilities, oral and written communication skills, ability to apply knowledge and self reliance are highlighted by the participating students. Many students recorded increased confidence from participation in the project. However, care may be needed to ensure that the groups achieve and sustain adequate cohesion.

Assessment was an integral part of the project and involved four elements: (1) individual assessment, with each student grading each member of the team's contribution; (2) peer group assessment, involving team group discussion of individual assessments; (3) internal assessment by the course convenor who would monitor group and individual performance; and (4) external assessment of individuals

and teams by lawyers acting as judges in the 'court' exercise.

The project achieved its objectives of encouraging active learning and the development of transferable skills, thereby bridging the gap between the 'academic - vocational' divide.

Legal skills for non-law students: added value or irrelevant diversion?

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The challenges faced by those who teach and learn legal subjects on non-law programs differ from those faced by their colleagues on law degrees. A legal skills workshop has been established for Accountancy students at the University of Portsmouth. The workshop developed due to the move in higher education generally towards a realisation that the acquisition of knowledge and the application of knowledge are twin objectives, the increased emphasis on competences in professional accountancy training and the growing interest in skills-based courses in legal professional education. Although there is a gulf between the aims of a legal skills program for non-law students and the integrated teaching of skills in a law degree, students on any course which includes an element of law can benefit greatly from skill development through the medium of the law course.

Four issues were considered in the design of the workshop: (1) The territorial nature of disciplines: lawyers teaching on non-law degree programs are isolated from their colleagues, with law being just one

subject among others. Skills cannot be mastered in one hour each week. One of the aims of the workshop was therefore to raise awareness of the fact that skills, such as analysis, synthesis, problem-solving and communication are used by students across every subject. (2) Teaching a specialist discipline to non-specialists: a survey of students asked whether they thought law was relevant to their studies. There was an overwhelmingly affirmative response to this question. Practitioners were used to give students a first hand account of the relevance of law to the accountant. (3) The expanding syllabus: law is seen as a marginal subject by accountancy educational bodies. The teaching resources generally used in professional non-law courses perceive law as a body of rules to be learnt by rote and no real understanding of legal concepts is fostered. Furthermore accountancy accreditation bodies only require a small amount of time to be dedicated to the study of law. Such time constraints militate against a real understanding of the law by non-law students. (4) Rigour versus relevance: anxiety about the gap between the knowledge taught by universities and the competences required by the practitioner also affect the design of the course.

The legal skills workshop gave students the confidence to use the library through an assessed library familiarisation exercise. Students were responsible for their own learning. The skills that the workshop sought to develop were basic legal skills which have been observed to involve generic human skills, especially the skill of clear thinking. The workshop focused on basic research skills, the

intellectual skills of analysis, reasoning, problem-solving and evaluating, and communication skills, which were all regarded as transferable skills and are central to the work of the lawyer.

One of the problems is that professional accounting bodies have their own educational and training requirements to be met after university education is complete and are suspicious of innovations in assessment methods which might be seen to be leading to a lowering of entry standards. How should skills be assessed when there is a heavy bias toward assessment through the traditional medium of examination and submission of assignments?

REVIEW ARTICLE:

Competences, learning outcomes and legal education

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This paper is based on the findings from a project carried out in the United Kingdom, entitled *Competences, Education and Assessment in Undergraduate Law Courses (CASEL)*. It is concerned with the identification of competences suitable for learning and for assessment programs in undergraduate law courses and the development of valid methods of assessing those competences to prescribed award standards. The project was grounded in the belief that competence based approaches, incorporating performance, knowledge and skills, could provide an integration of 'theory' and 'practice' in professional education,

specifically in applying the knowledge gained in the law degree and in subsequent practical training to legal practice.

Chapter 2 provides a handy overview of the developments and innovations in competence based education in the United Kingdom. It suggests that the term 'capability' provides a better way of defining competence in the context of professional education. Moreover, 'learning outcomes' is a more appropriate term than competence within higher education. The specification of learning outcomes provides a more precise means of describing the objects of learning. Learning outcomes might specify core outcomes, subject specific outcomes and general or specific vocational outcomes.

The author contends in chapter 3 that contemporary legal education is marked by a proliferation of statements of competency, learning outcome statements and skills 'guides', designed to provide a specification of the standard against which a skills performance might be judged. He then examines two of them critically, the ABA Statement of Skills and Values and the UK Law Society standards, both of which endeavour to provide an articulated model of the competences which define what lawyers should be able to do at different levels of their education and training. The ABA Statement identifies the values and skills that underpin competent practice at appropriate points on the continuum of the legal education process, but it is not designed as an instrument for assessment because it is expressed too generally. On the other hand, the Law Society standards are concise and measured but leave questions open which