

## CONTINUING EDUCATION

### The CLE Journal

M T Carroll (ed.)

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#### Editor's Note

Readers should note that a new journal for CLE professionals has been launched in the United States, with the first issue appearing in October, 1998. *The CLE Journal* aims to provide readers with a new opportunity 'to obtain information and practical advice on the operation of their organisations, the creation of their educational products and the marketing of those products'. The first issue includes short articles on the use of sophisticated audio-visual aids in CLE presentations, the Bar Association's role in setting practice management standards and the experience in the state of Georgia of handling CLE professionalism content and presentation. Under the section 'CLE around the Country' it is of particular interest to read that New York has recently joined the ranks of the other 38 states which have mandatory CLE schemes in operation. Whilst this first issue is only 32 pages in length and the journal is scheduled to be published twice yearly only, this periodical does promise to provide a wealth of practical how-to-do information and advice for those managing CLE programs.

## CURRICULUM

### Evaluation of an innovative model for teaching an LLB program

H Saenger, M Hayden, S Garkawe & J Jackson

9 *Legal Educ Rev* 1, 1998, pp 59-81

In 1993 the Faculty of Law and Criminal Justice at Southern Cross University, Australia, developed an innovative 'block' or 'intensive teaching' model for the delivery of the first and second years of its three-year graduate LLB program.

This model represented a significant departure from the standard format for the teaching of LLB programs in Australia. In this article, the authors report on an evaluation of the effectiveness of the model.

There were two distinguishing features of the block model introduced in 1993. First, it employed sequential six-week teaching blocks for the delivery of core subjects in the first and second years of the three year program. During each of these blocks, students attended class for between 16 and 20 hours per week. Upon completing each teaching block the students undertook an examination in the subject taught.

The sequential six-week teaching blocks were seen as being potentially attractive to graduates seeking to undertake an LLB course because of the opportunity each block provided for students to engage deeply with the body of knowledge and skills in a subject area. The teaching blocks were also expected to enable better use to be made of guest lecturing time and to provide staff with the timetabling freedom required to give students access to the courts and to community-based learning resources.

Evaluation of the block model involved methods of naturalistic inquiry and grounded theory to collect and analyse the data. The informants were 15 third-year law students and five lecturing staff.

The principal strengths reported were that the model allowed for a focused approach to learning, provided a good deal of structure, gave students a contextual framework, was efficient in its use of time, and allowed for extended learning, continuous learning, and shared learning. Some students also felt that the model required less effort in preparing for exams. About two-thirds of the students reported that the block model was very attractive because it encouraged learning to be highly focused. Over one-half of the students reported being satisfied with the highly structured nature of the block framework and that the pres-

sure to keep up with the work imposed a valuable routine on learning. The structure also encouraged better personal organisation.

The block model was considered to provide a valuable integration of learning by about one-half of the students interviewed. There was a strong sense of the importance of being able to build on a framework. For a little over one-third of the students, the block model was popular because it enabled an efficient use of time. These students felt that it was good to get individual units completed in the six weeks. One third of the students referred to the fact that the block model had allowed for extended learning, for example, it enabled them to have six months work experience.

Another attractive feature was that there was more opportunity for shared learning. The fact that everyone's attention was focused on one subject at a time enabled better discussion both inside and outside class. Several students commented that, because of the intensive nature of studying under the block model, the information was still recent and fresh in their minds as they approached examinations.

The main weaknesses of the block model raised by the students were: the inappropriateness of the block system for some kinds of subjects; insufficient time for study, reflection and consolidation during the six-week teaching blocks; the potential for falling behind with the work; monotony through being confined to the study of one subject at a time; and stress associated with juggling commitments.

The teaching methods employed by staff varied. Some staff were reported as having adopted a highly structured and strongly directive approach. Others encouraged a high level of class discussion and participation. A criticism was that use of the approach allowed outspoken students to dominate in class, with the result that other students felt inhibited about contributing in discussions. It was considered critical by these students that

staff teaching in the block system should be well organised and adequately prepared prior to commencing a block. Student learning should be directed through the use of clear objectives accompanied by lecture outlines and summaries which focused attention on the main issues.

The students surveyed suggested that the semester model represented a substantially different context for learning. Its flexibility meant that learning could be more student-directed. Students generally placed less emphasis upon the importance of lecturing ability and teaching styles in their comments about the semester model, and learning was felt to depend a great deal more upon motivation and personal organisational skills than had been the case in the block model.

The five lecturers interviewed reported that teaching in the block model was very demanding in time, energy, knowledge, experience and good preparation. It was generally agreed that one of its major attractions was its capacity to allow flexibility and innovation in course delivery. The six-week blocks enabled visits, excursions, and guest lecturers to be arranged for all students. Within the classroom setting there was more flexibility and greater opportunities for duplicating real life situations in the conduct of moots. Several lecturers reported that block teaching had forced them to redefine their conceptions of teaching in ways that were more student centred and required them to become more concerned with their students' individual learning needs.

The block and the semester models represented two markedly different settings for learning. The experiences of the same group of learners, and their needs from the lecturing staff, varied substantially across the two settings. In the block model, for example, the students portrayed their learning as having been dependent to a large extent upon the quality of the direction provided by their lecturers. Learning in the semester model was generally felt to have been self-di-

rected and largely dependent upon self-motivation and personal organisational skills. The change in context, therefore, brought about a different set of interactions, which affected teaching and learning.

## LEGAL EDUCATION GENERALLY

### REVIEW ARTICLE

#### New foundations in legal education

J Goldring, C Sampford & R Simmonds  
(eds)

Cavendish Publishing, 1988  
222pp

New foundations in legal education is a collection of 17 essays about the challenges facing legal education in Australia, contributed by leading academics and members of the judiciary. All but three chapters appear to be modified and updated versions of articles or addresses that have been published beforehand and the majority come from the pens of the three editors, who are three prominent law deans. However, this in no way detracts from the value of this monograph as a convenient compendium of the writings of the foremost thinkers about legal education in Australia.

The scene is set by an address delivered at the opening of a new law school by Sir Anthony Mason, a former Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia, who, while extolling the need for a law course that offers a liberal education as the foundation for a career in a wide range of legal work, nonetheless laments:

*I doubt that all the rhetoric in the past about the importance of providing law students with the benefits of a broad and liberal education has been matched by the results achieved. The...legal profession is noted for its specialised technical competence rather than for its contribution to the development of the law or for its constructive capacity to mould the law to the needs of society in association with other disciplines. While techni-*

*cal and professional competence is what you expect above all from a practising lawyer, the community is, I think, entitled to expect something more from the profession. Unfortunately, the practice of law has tended to contract the horizons of many professional lawyers. (p.x)*

The 17 essays which follow are divided in accordance with four themes: (1) tradition and progress: legal education in context; (2) theory and practice: designing legal education; (3) new law schools: the future of legal education; and (4) debating change: practitioners respond.

In the first chapter Sampford and Blencowe carefully review the considerable changes over the past ten years in the face of legal education and pose a series of questions (while remaining silent on the answers) for the major players in the current system, namely the universities, the practical legal training courses and the practising profession. They also question whether the tradition of the rigid three-stage division of legal education should be retained but warn that no single stage should not be foisted with the entire task of turning a bright young student into a competent lawyer.

In the second chapter Jack Goldring underscores the importance of understanding the aims and objectives of legal education by examining the expectations of the legal profession and the community about the content of the law course. He concludes that, whether legal education is envisaged primarily as a foundation for a career in professional legal practice or as a process of fitting a student for a wider range of careers, the best thing it can provide to students is *a curiosity, skill and an ability to learn and face new challenges. (p.26)*

Two of the essays deal with the most fundamental structural changes for law schools over the past ten years: the growth in law schools accompanied by the unprecedented growth in student numbers. Simmonds in chapter 4 examines the expansion in the number of Aus-