endeavours to have students engaging in deep learning and to instil in students a desire and capacity for lifelong learning. This is axiomatic in a constructivist understanding of learning: that the most meaningful forms of learning – learning as the abstraction of meaning and learning as an interpretative process aimed at understanding an outside reality – can be undertaken by the learner her or himself.

In this light, two revisions to Introduction to Law can be envisaged, which might go some way towards countering the negative reaction and simultaneously improve the pedagogical aspects of the subject.

First, the self-learning emphasis could be made more explicit. That is, there needs to be a clearer and more frequent explanation to students why there are too many questions without answers, and why the web-lectures differ from the lecture process in other subjects. Second, if the self-learning emphasis is shifted from the periphery to the centre of course design, Introduction to Law becomes as much about the learning process as about the course content. Further, the content of the course can possibly be driven by and derived from the learning process itself.

It is claimed that it is teaching and not technology that matters. While that observation may at first blush seem a little trite, for two reasons this is not so. The first reason is that the attempt in this article has been to give some concrete form to what might otherwise remain an abstract point and in doing so to illustrate the rationale for developing a course in a particular way. The second reason lies in the very fact that the rapid shift to flexible delivery appears all too frequently to be driven by concerns of budgets, technology and marketing – rather than by teaching.

The Internet is a tool that holds great potential for teaching and learning in higher education, but only if teaching and learning remain the fundamental objectives. The questions which need to be asked do not turn on the capacity of the Internet to perform different functions at ever-increasing speed and volume, but on what we as teachers might best be able to do with the wide range of capabilities new technologies offer.

www.legaleducation.edu: using technology to educate the public
S M Johnson
50 J Legal Educ 3, 2000, pp 393-397

While the primary focus of any law faculty will always be its law students, the Internet and other new technologies enable law teachers to assume a central role in providing free legal education to the public. Although many schools are experimenting with distance learning and computer-assisted legal education to train law students, the real power of those tools may be their potential to facilitate public access to legal information. Traditionally, educating the general public has not been a primary responsibility of law professors, but today we have not only an opportunity, but also an obligation, to develop computer-based legal education materials for the public.

The provision of legal education to the general public should not be left to the media or market forces. Law teachers should not be so constrained. We could design materials that could be provided to the public for free. Free universal access to basic legal education materials would increase public understanding of the law far more effectively than any materials that could be marketed by commercial providers or delivered by the media.

Finally, law faculty are uniquely qualified, and perhaps obligated, to create public educational materials because they have the expertise and the flexibility to devote adequate time to the project.

The key to the development of useful public educational materials will be collaboration. Law faculty should work in teams with specialists in learning theory and cognitive sciences, software designers, government agencies, and faculty from other disciplines that are related to their field of law. The learning modules that they create might be interactive tutorials, lectures, or even games that focus on a discrete area of law.

Collaboration in development of the materials is vital for several reasons. Collaboration with software designers and education specialists is important because law faculty will be presenting their material to a new audience.

Collaboration with faculty from other disciplines is important because the law can be made truly accessible to the public only if it is described in context. Finally, collaboration with government agencies is important because their direct contact with the public may be the best source of distribution of public education materials.

Some may argue that it is inappropriate for law faculty to design legal education materials for the general public because it is outside our primary mission – to train our students to be lawyers. But that vision of the law teacher's role is far too limited. Law schools usually expect faculty to excel in teaching, scholarship and service. While our responsibility to our students is primary, it is not exclusive. Development of the materials would be consistent with law teachers' obligation – as lawyers – to improve the quality of justice for all persons and to provide pro bono legal services. Further, when faculty take an active role in teaching the public about the law, it sends a strong message to students that public and pro bono service is an important responsibility for all lawyers.

Finally, development of public legal education materials by faculty could also improve the legal profession by enhancing the public perception of lawyers. Public opinion of lawyers has been low for many years, perhaps because of lack of information, misperception, and misunderstanding.