

Legal Education Review

Cooper, Graeme; Wade, John --- "Editorial" [1989] LegEdRev 1; (1989) 1(1) Legal Education Review 1

EDITORIAL

This is the inaugural issue of the *Legal Education Review*. The editors hope that the *Review* will provide a forum for ideas that will stimulate discussion, debate and experimentation on the variety of topics that touch legal education — questioning and re-evaluating its purposes, philosophy, content and methods. These are exciting times for legal education. Vigorous debates continue within law schools and now extend to the legal profession and the community, about the purposes of legal education and the nature of legal and academic cultures. Teachers are experimenting with the tools and techniques of learning, designing new teaching methods to accommodate a variety of learning styles, re-constructing teaching materials, seeking student feedback and changing assessment theories and practices. These debates, particularly as they arise in and are relevant to the South Pacific region, are the subject of the *Review*. Yet few issues in legal education are new. Instead, there seem to be cycles of rediscovery, renewed emphasis, re-definition and repeated experimentation. Some legal educators, aware of historical insights, strive to avoid both repeating the mistakes of prior generations and reinventing the wheel. Others have imperialistically recycled faulty mousetraps as grand unified visions of a new order. Grand visions, vigorously expressed, possess great appeal. Too much circumspection and balance (the “death by a thousand qualifications”) threaten to dampen the personal growth and enthusiasm of law teachers. Both are vital for successful teaching and research. Academics, and law academics perhaps more than any other profession, find themselves inextricably caught in the paradox of complexity and simplicity. A glance at current debates in legal education reveals a number whose time has come again. Those revived involve the feasibility of ubiquitous interdisciplinary studies; the tension between doctrine and context; the nature of student and teacher cultures at law school; the sociology, ethics and psychology of various types of legal practice beyond the hackneyed stereotypes; admission practices of law schools; rising expectations of competence and the myth of omnicompetence; teaching management and communication skills; the ongoing academic-practitioner divide; the need for systematic definition of teaching goals and methods; diversity in assessment regimes and discovering appropriate roles for training in skills. A dash of humility and humour will undoubtedly assist when approaching such a daunting agenda, for many of these topics are beyond the research competence and training of the traditional law teacher, pandering in splendid and rarefied isolation. This issue has as its theme, Theory in Legal Education. Perhaps the papers contained in this issue offer examples of this re-constitution for modern audiences of old ideas. Many see in critical legal studies a resurrection, adaptation and reformulation of ideas many of which were once current in the legal realist movement of the 1920s. Similarly, economic analysis has been compared to a grander version of Benthamite utilitarianism. Whether or not either view is accurate, the papers published here expound current debates for a modern audience. Some of the articles and comments in this issue gather major papers delivered to the Australasian Universities Law Schools Association annual conference in Sydney in August 1988.
