

learning process and they will learn more.

The use and effectiveness of various learning materials in an evidence class

S J Shapiro

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The author's choice of materials has been based on his own notions of what would be useful and helpful to students in learning the topic, preparing for class, succeeding in the exam and preparing to be lawyers. However, the choice of materials is rarely evaluated and the fact that there have been very few studies in the law school context suggests that more systematic research is needed into student use of assigned materials and their effectiveness. In conducting his own study, based on his Evidence class, the author's objectives were to determine whether the materials assigned were used by the students and the effect that their use had on their grade point average.

A casebook was listed as required reading and a hornbook as recommended reading. Students were advised to read the hornbook first to gain a grasp of the basic concepts and then the cases in the casebook. An informal poll revealed that less than half of the class was using the hornbook, so next year the hornbook was upgraded to the required reading list. In addition Computer Assisted Legal Instruction (CALI) exercises were assigned as recommended at first and then after three years upgraded to the required list, as both computer access and the programs improved. A further informal poll indicated that most students had at least completed some of the CALI

exercises but had found them difficult.

The study into student use of assigned materials was conducted by way of a survey and the results were to be correlated with the exam grade of the student. The survey contained six questions, including two questions on each of the materials — casebook, hornbook and CALI. The first question of the pair concerned the extent of use of the material by students, ranging from never, to occasionally, usually, and always. The CALI exercises were phrased differently in that students only had to indicate if they had done one or more of the optional exercises. The second question inquired as to whether the students found the material very helpful, somewhat helpful, or not helpful at all. Students were also asked to comment on the materials if they desired.

The results of the study showed that most students completed exercises in the casebook. However, a larger percentage of students did not use the hornbook. Seventy-four percent of students reported doing at least all three required CALI exercises. In terms of perceived helpfulness to the students the hornbook rated lowest and the CALI exercises rated highest.

By factoring in the students' grade point average it was possible to make the students' score in the exam the dependent variable so as to see whether use of materials corresponded with exam result. Use of the CALI exercises showed a slight but positive correlation with exam performance, whereas use of the case and hornbooks revealed no significant improvement in grade. In response to the results of the study,

the hornbook was removed from the required reading list to the recommended reading list, leading to a moderate decrease in its use. It also meant that students would not feel compelled to buy a resource they would probably not use to any great extent. Surprisingly, many students found the casebook helpful and not simply a necessary evil. Students also enjoyed the CALI exercises which have been retained on the required list.

The results show that student use may be more affected by how useful the students find the materials than by whether they are required. This is contrary to teacher expectations that when compulsory reading is assigned most students will do it. Of all three materials, only the CALI exercises seemed to have an effect on student performance with a moderate positive correlation between number of exercises done and performance.

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