conflict management, and task management. The teacher has primary responsibility for identifying what to teach through the collaborative setting and how to teach it.

Infusing passion and context into the traditional law curriculum through experiential learning
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Traditional legal education falls short in three major ways. First, we fail to feed our students' souls. We fail to nourish the passions and values that directed them toward law school. That is especially true for the students who were drawn to law school by the desire to help people or do public interest work. And for the group motivated by intellectual challenge, after the first year especially, law school often offers more rules, but no sense of developing skill. Second, we fail to provide the context for doctrinal learning that will both engage students and help them learn more effectively. Third, we fail to assess systematically what is actually happening in the classroom and to provide ongoing feedback to our students about their progress.

Two of the areas where legal education falls short — nourishing students' passion and providing context for doctrinal learning — are fundamental to effective student learning. Passion provides motivation for learning and provides a foundation for a satisfying life in the law. Context helps students understand what they are learning, provides anchor points so they can recall what they learn, and shows them how to transfer what they learn in the classroom to lawyers' tasks in practice. The role of passion in legal education cannot be separated from its role in our students' lives after law school. We are training students to participate in the legal profession.

As good teachers have always recognised, motivating and engaging students is the critical first step in helping students learn. This insight may underlie the claim made by adult learning theory that effective education of adults requires understanding that they are typically self-directed, oriented toward problem-solving, and motivated to draw on their own experience. These characteristics suggest that legal education will be most effective if we can either build on students' existing interests and their motivations for attending law school, or assist them in creating visions of a rewarding future in law. Some students — those most like the typical law teacher — derive passion from the inherent intellectual challenge of legal issues. But for many other students that intellectual challenge is too abstract, especially if the issues are presented with minimal context. Their motivation must come from other sources.

Where should we look for alternative sources? Both individual people and the rich factual context of real life are missing from the heavily edited appellate cases that constitute the bulk of the traditional first-year courses. As a result, students who have a passion for people are often alienated from their legal education. Students whose passion is justice often encounter significant unwillingness to grapple with overarching issues of justice in the law school classroom. According to surveys, 20 to 40 percent of entering law students are motivated by the hope of engaging in public service. Yet law schools typically do little to maintain those aspirations. Nor do they create a school culture that will inculcate the values of public service in those students who enter law school with other motivations.

That service is a primary path to a satisfying life in law is supported both by the literature on the legal profession specifically and by lessons from research in medicine. In order to motivate students in law school and help them develop satisfying careers, we should nourish the passions our students enter law school with and help connect them to opportunities for service. We also need to provide context for their learning.

What does that seemingly simple term context mean for law school and why does it matter? One aspect of context is exposure to the people in the cases students read, and to the real-life factual circumstances in which a legal doctrine arises. In many of the appellate cases that students read the facts are so heavily edited that students can easily forget that the legal doctrines are applied to disputes involving real people. A second aspect is familiarity with the institutions and practices giving rise to legal disputes. A third aspect is familiarity with the legal institutions and processes in which legal doctrines are applied. A final aspect of context is familiarity with the legal tasks lawyers perform, and the ways in which knowledge of legal doctrine is integral to those tasks. Context provides a critical role both in determining how students will organise the information they study and in determining whether they will be able to retrieve it later in life.

If passion and context are central to effective legal education, then developing teaching methods that will generate passion and provide context should be a primary concern. One important strategy for accomplishing that goal should be incorporating experiential learning approaches into the traditional doctrinal curriculum. Such activities can include field trips or assignments to observe legal processes in action, or assignments that gather empirical information about the workings of the legal system.

Experiential learning should be integrated into the curriculum in the first year, not deferred until the second and third years. If passion and context are central to effective legal education, then from the beginning we should be attentive to those central concerns. Second, experiential learning in the first year ideally should include some real-life experiences, preferably experiences involving contact with clients. Real-life clinical experiences have an immediacy that engages most students in a way that simulations do not.

Integrating experiential education into existing courses requires, of course, faculty who are open to the idea. Although such changes potentially offer significant rewards for a teacher in the form of more engaged students and richer class discussion, in some institutions those teaching doctrinal courses may be resistant.

Properly designed experiential education will often fill gaps but many teachers are deterred from trying experiential education by the fear that such a high level of detailed individual feedback is required as to make the entire enterprise impractical in a large class. Experiential learning exercises integrated into the traditional classroom require students to apply their understanding of the doctrinal concepts. Any confusion or lack of understanding is likely to be readily apparent. Especially when performed in small groups, with an accompanying written component, such exercises can be a useful form of classroom assessment. Prompt feedback is important but grading each exercise is not necessarily the most useful way to provide it. The feedback should be encouraging where possible; if errors must be corrected, an explanation should be given. If private feedback is not possible, feedback in a small group is better than feedback in front of a large class, and might come in part from self-assessment or from peers.

By integrating experiential education into the doctrinal curriculum, law teachers can play an important role in generating passion among students and enriching their learning by placing it in context.

Investigating a new way to teach law: a computer-based commercial law course

R M Lloyd

The University of Tennessee College of Law explored a new approach to teaching law. It conducted a two-credit-hour commercial law course without face-to-face class meetings and with minimal use of a course book. The students learned the UCC through interactive computer-based lessons, supplemented by online chats. The course was offered under a special one-time authorisation granted by the American Bar Association in accordance with its Temporary Guidelines and Principles of Distance Education.

The students were required to complete several computer-based secured transactions lessons developed for CALI. These lessons covered specific aspects of secured transactions in more depth. They required the students not only to understand the basic concepts, but also to dig into the statutory language. Through the use of the lessons, the course not only gave the students a basic understanding of the UCC, but also strengthened their skills in statutory analysis. These lessons were also available through the Internet, by purchasing the CALI CD-ROM, or at the computer lab. For the commercial paper part of the course, we used a series of lessons developed and posted on the school's web site. These lessons combined textual explanations with interactive learning through multiple-choice questions. For sales, the smallest component of the course, we used a textbook.

While we made the computer-based lessons the primary teaching vehicle, we also held online classes in which students and an instructor met in an online chatroom. A few days prior to each chat, the students were emailed with one or more complex problems. When we got online, the students were asked to discuss each individual issue in the problems.

Commercial law was an ideal course for this type of instruction. Commercial law has a large body of black-letter rules which are well adapted to the use of computer-based lessons.

The course allowed us to evaluate the effectiveness of online learning. The interactive computer-based lessons proved very effective. The students liked the format in which they were given a textual explanation of the concept or rule and then a series of problems in which they applied it. They especially liked those lessons which used branching multiple-choice questions. With branching questions, the student's response to a question does not elicit an immediate explanation of whether the answer was right or wrong. Instead, the student is asked a follow-up question. If the initial answer was correct, the follow-up question may probe to determine whether the student reasoned his way correctly to the answer or got it solely by luck. Alternatively, the follow-up question may attempt to shake the student's faith in his initial answer. If the initial answer was wrong, the follow-up question may probe to determine what misunderstanding of the law or what error in reasoning caused the wrong answer. The program then gives the student a textual explanation written for the express purpose of correcting that specific problem. Once the problem has been identified and (hopefully) corrected, the program sends the student back to the question. With her new understanding, she should be able to reason her way to the correct answer.

Anyone who has taught the material several times in a traditional class will know what misconceptions students commonly have and what errors in reasoning they commonly make. So a teacher designing a lesson can create questions to catch the common errors and correct them in a way that reinforces student learning.

Another advantage of the branching format is that it allows the student who grasps the material quickly to move quickly, while it forces the student who is having difficulty to move slowly, dealing systematically with his difficulties. This is an advantage over a textbook or traditional class. With a textbook, and even in a traditional class, a student who does not understand the