Use of flipped learning in the legal skills classroom to improve outcomes for law students

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Overview

- Background
- Flipped Learning – Overview
- Legal Education and Teaching Legal Research Skills
- Flipped Learning in Legal Education
- Implementation of Flipped Learning in Legal Research Skills
- Conclusions, Lessons, Next Steps
Problem: Learners proceeding to 2\textsuperscript{nd}/3\textsuperscript{rd} year and still producing poor legal writing

Possible path for solutions:
- Include more opportunities for students to practice these skills
- Encourage students to take more responsibility for their learning
- Create a more personalised approach to learning
- Reflect the world as the students already know it
- Improve teacher efficiency

Overall – explore the flipped learning approach
Background

- Project: Use flipped learning in my Introduction to Legal Research Skills module and evaluate if this improves outcomes for law students.

- Literature review

- Implementation and Evaluation
  - Some issues
Flipped Learning - Overview

**Traditional Learning**
- Before class: lecturer prepares content
  Learners have limited knowledge of lecture content, lecturer has limited knowledge of learner prior knowledge
- During class: lecturer delivers content, learners listen and take notes
- After class: Learners work independently to assimilate lecture material

**Flipped Learning**
- Before class: Learners guided through new content that includes quizzes to test understanding and preparation for in class activities
- During class: learners practice skills and lecturer guides the process and provides short demonstrations/mini-lectures as required
- After class: learners work through more complex tasks; lecturer posts any additional resources to help students
Flipped Learning – Opportunities

- Increases active learning
- Supports cooperative and collaborative learning
- Increases time for the student reflection
- Helps learners to develop employability skills
- Permits tailoring to accommodate different learning styles
- Promote greater flexibility
- Can reduce student anxiety as students know what to expect before attending class
- More efficient use of contact hours
- Requires a review of the module
- Can cover additional topics
Flipped Learning - Challenges

- Significant time and effort required
- Lack of technological skill/access
- Lack of student engagement
  - Failure to devote enough time
  - Students do no see value in approach
- Risk of overwhelming students with too much content
- Risk of focusing too much on the method rather than the objective
Legal Education – The Push for Reform

- Critiques and recommendations for reform of legal education: Focus on outcomes and development of skills; away from subject based curriculum
  - Australian Learning and Teaching Council, Bachelor of Laws Learning and Teaching Academic Standards Statement (2010) [knowledge only 1 of 5 threshold learning outcomes]
- Legal practice experiencing change and challenges
Teaching Legal Research Skills

- Essential Elements:
  - identifying and analysing a problem
  - finding appropriate information to solve the problem
  - presenting the results of the analysis and research in an appropriate and effective manner

- Learning Approach
Flipped Learning – Some pointers from the literature

- Main challenge: how to facilitate active learning for 90% of class time
- Not one size fits all so each lecturer needs to develop own process
- Organisation and communication of expectations are key
- Technology should only be used when appropriate to achieve the required outcomes
- Videos should be short
Flipped Learning in Legal Education

- Does flipped learning originate in legal education?
- Slow in introduction, but growing number of examples in over last five years.
- Literature reflects a cautious optimism

**SUBSTANTIVE V SKILLS**

- Skills 55%
- Substantive 45%

**JURISDICTION**

- USA 45%
- Australia 18%
- Canada 9%
- UK 18%
- Hong Kong 5%
- Ireland 5%
Flipped Learning in Legal Education

- Face to face classes and workshops supplemented by online material.
- Lecture, then online activities containing most of the substantive content, then workshops based on the assumption of completion of online content.
- Online knowledge based lectures, face to face skills based (critical reasoning) lecture, face to face workshop.
- Replacing two hour weekly lecture with online lecture content. Workshops face to face where students apply lecture content in group work exercises.
Implementation of Flipped Learning in Legal Research Skills

Topics:
- Introduction to Studying Law
- Types of Legal Sources
- Locating Legal Sources

Materials on Moodle:
- Videos
- Screencasts
- Lessons
- Quizzes
- Documents/Guides

Activities in Class:
- Class discussion
- Writing exercises
- Group quiz
- Evaluating sample assignments
Week 1 - 20 and 24 Sept

- Welcome Video 2018-19
- Introduce yourself
- Presentation - Module Overview
- DEIS Information - Online Scavenger Hunt
  It is your responsibility to be familiar with the policies and procedures, various services and supports available within DEIS. Spending a little time exploring the DEIS Students Website is essential to help you to find out where you can find all this information.
  The answers to all questions in this quiz can be found on the DEIS Students Website.
- Studying Law Survival Skills
  This unit examines what you need to do to be successful in your study of law. Watch the video and answer the questions.
  - Week 1 Activity Checklist
    In class
  - Week 1 Task List
    If you have completed all the pre-class activities, here is an task list to set you up for the year.
  - Class presentation - for reference - do not print

Week 2 - 27 Sept and 1 Oct

- Introduction to Legal Sources
  This unit looks at what kinds of legal sources are available and how to understand their citations.
- Evaluating Sources
  This short document introduces the questions you should ask when evaluating whether the sources you have found are worth using in your work. We are going to practice evaluating sources in class.
- Evaluating Sources - the CRAAP test
  In class
- Evaluate these sources
  Well done to all who evaluated sources correctly. Please review to see what you got right and wrong and make sure you know why. If there is anything you don’t understand please ask. (in class, message me through Moodle or email me)
  Notable participants in the forum today were Amy and Dami - well done, you both did really well.
- Bibliography Guidelines
# Results – Location of Sources Quiz

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2019</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pass on first attempt</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average Mark</td>
<td>8.6</td>
<td>8.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Feedback – Week 5

OVERALL I FEEL MY KNOWLEDGE, UNDERSTANDING AND SKILLS HAVE IMPROVED IN THE AREAS COVERED SO FAR

Strongly disagree or disagree 25%
Neither agree nor disagree 13%
Strongly agree or agree 62%

I FIND IT EASY TO LOCATE THE MATERIALS I NEED ON THE MOODLE PAGE FOR THIS MODULE

Strongly disagree or disagree 29%
Neither agree nor disagree 21%
Strongly agree or agree 50%
Feedback – Week 5

So far I have completed most of the activities posted on Moodle in advance of class:

- Strongly agree or agree: 65%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 9%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 26%

The activities completed in class follow on from the online materials and help me to apply that material:

- Strongly agree or agree: 73%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 4%
- Strongly disagree or disagree: 23%
Feedback – Week 5

Materials in order of preference:
1. Activity such as a quiz or forum
2. Video
3. Lesson (text and questions)
4. Document to Read
5. Screencast (information on screen with voiceover)
6. Podcast (audio only)
Feedback – Week 5

Qualitative
- Very few comments
- Felt module could be improved by a class on referencing, which was the next scheduled topic
- Takeaway: Communicate organisation and structure of module more clearly
Conclusions / Lessons Learned

- Implementing a flipped learning approach
  - Value is not in flipped learning itself as a mechanism but as vehicle for:
    - Module review
    - Introducing variety
    - Assisting monitoring of and interaction with students over first few weeks
  - Organisation is key:
    - Preparation of quality materials and teaching scheme
    - Communication of structure and methods to students

- Conducting research on flipped learning
  - Requires a clearer evaluative mechanism
Next steps

- Roll out flipped learning throughout rest of legal skills curriculum
- Develop a system to capture and evaluate effectiveness of flipped learning
- Take learning from this process and test in substantive law modules
Bibliography

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- Leslie Taylor, ‘Five Flippin’ Good Reasons to Flip Your Legal Research Class’ (2016) 25 Perspectives: Teaching Legal Research and Writing 9;