

Problem-based Learning: Legal Education for the 21th Century

Abstract

The ever-faster changing modern society results in dynamic transformation of law. Some phenomena as use of technology, liberalization of legal services or globalization of market shapes the reality of legal profession in unprecedented way. Such a turbulent process challenges law schools struggling to prepare students for the future of legal profession. As functioning democracy and the rule of law depends significantly on the work of legal professions (as judges, legislators, solicitors or human-rights lawyers) there is a concern of the whole society in the quality of legal education. However, as a result of change, tasks, skills and knowledge required from the graduates now can significantly differ from what is expected in the future. Therefore, it is argued the skills as adaptability, independence and ability to learn are becoming the crucial competencies to develop among students. Once acknowledged by the law schools there is still a question to be discussed: How?

The text examines problem-based Learning as possibly a more effective tool to prepare students for the uncertain future of legal professionals opposing the traditional approach to legal education. Problem-based Learning as other educational approaches based on constructivism stresses the importance of active role of the students, understanding context of received knowledge, collaborative environment and reflexive thinking. Introducing the approach to Czech environment is hoped to be an enrichment of the recent discussions about the reform of educational system at the Law School of the Charles University. Acknowledging the specific environment of the traditional educational institution text suggests variety of modules to implement aspects of problem-based learning into a new curriculum.

Key words

future of law, legal education, problem-based learning