

What is the Primary Task of Law Schools in a Changing World? What are We Educating Students For?

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In my short paper I would like to take a think about legal education, its main goals and objectives and to provide also some information about legal education in the Czech Republic.

It could seem to be easy to answer the question what is the primary task of Law schools in the present-day world. Simply told the main task is legal education of students. Such an answer is true indeed but too simplyfied. Legal education is an demanding and complex process covering many levels and areas. It does not mean only providing of basic knowledge in the field of law or of some professional skills. It should help students to become good lawyers. Of course, a good laywer has to know law and to be able to apply knowledge in practice. But a good lawyer has also to be able to identify relevant legal issues from the body of unstructured facts and to identify various legal sources. He or she has to have interpersonal skills (ability to relate to other people), to have ability to communicate with non-experts in the field of law, to be a good speaker, to have written communication skills etc. The ethical commitment is also one of the most important competences. Owing to the changing world, to the fact that legal cultures evidently influence each other and often blend together, with regards to the processes of integration and to the development of information technologies, other abilities are required especially ability to use foreign (legal) languages, the knowledge of foreign legal cultures and legal systems as well as ability to use relevant IT-tools, i.e. standard information retrieval systems and web-resources. This all makes increased demands on the Law schools and their educational programmes and of course on the their teachares and students, as well. It reguires also new methods of teaching and learning.

In my opinion the measure of all above mentioned skills and competences depends on the study programme and on the system of futher professional education. I would like to present Czech Republic, namely Faculty of Law, Masaryk University experience.

The primary and traditionally study field at the Faculty of Law in a full-time form within the ***Master's degree programme Law and Legal Sciences*** is the field „Law“. The standars study length is five years. The graduates find careers in the area of justice, public administration and commercial professions. As there is special professional education od judges, public prosecutors, notaries and advocates in the Czech Republic organized by Ministry of Justice, Notarial Chamber of the Czech Republic and Czech Bar Association, the legal education was traditionally concentrated more on the knowlegde than on the skills. The situation has been changed during the last fifteen years. At present the programme's main aim is for the students to gain the theoretical knowledge based on the latest scientific status quo, to be able to apply the knowledge in practice and to further their creative skills.¹

¹ Faculty of Law, Masaryk University, MU 2008, p. 14

The study is divided into three blocks. The first block covers the more theoretical and historical legal disciplines. The second block consists mainly of the private law courses, the third block focuses on the area of public law. The study programme is not concentrated only on legal disciplines. An integral part of the programme is foreign language learning. The study programme covers courses of economics and management, as well.

The law degree in the Czech Republic is not divided into first (Bachelor's) and second (Master's) cycle. However, the **Bachelor's degree programme Legal Specialisation** is offered at the Faculty of Law, Masaryk University. This programme takes the form of a combined study, which consists of a full-time study component (instruction via lectures and consultations), as well as a distance study component (controlled self-study).² The standard study length is three years. As the target group of this programme are mostly people working in the public administration area, in the area of police, in social security companies etc., the main aim of this programme is different from the aim of Master's degree programme. The bachelor's degree programme is more practically oriented. Its main aim is preparation the students for professions where current findings and methods are instantly used; the programme also covers selected theoretical issues.

The Faculty of Law offers also the doctoral degree programme **Theoretical Legal Sciences** in both a full-time and combined form in 11 study fields. The standard study length is four years. The doctoral degree programme is aimed at scientific research and independent creative activities in the area of research or development.³ The main purpose of the Ph.D. studies is to prepare students for their research career, nevertheless students should gain deep knowledge of their chosen field of study and they also should learn teaching skills.

For those who does not suppose to become academics or researchers there are other forms of continuing education such as the **"LLM in Corporate Law"** and the **"MPA"** (Master of Public Administration) which are organized in cooperation with Nottingham Trent University, Great Britain. The "LLM" programme targets not only the lawyers involved in the commercial area wishing to further develop their expertise, but also the middle and higher management of national and international corporations wishing to acquire additional legal skills and knowledge. The "MPA" study programme's aim is to offer this participants the possibility of broadening their knowledge and skills in the area of public administration, which they can apply in practice. This programme is targets public administration executives, managerial staff and professionals aspiring to those positions and also districts council members, managerial staff in non-profit organisations, universities, hospitals, police, army etc., as well as lawyers involved in public administration.⁴

It is necessary to mention that legal education covers lifelong learning, too. There are various form of lifelong learning at the Faculty of Law, Masaryk University. As an example we can mention courses and seminars concentrated on the current issues of changes in the Czech legal system. The Faculty of Law currently offers also a general lifelong learning

² Faculty of Law, Masaryk University, MU 2008, p. 14

³ Section 47 of the Act No. 111/1998 Coll., as amended (The Higher Education Act)

⁴ Faculty of Law, Masaryk University, MU 2008, p. 18

programme, which is implemented within the framework of the accredited “Law” masters degree programme, and specialised lifelong learning programme, which is implemented within the framework of the accredited Bachelor’s degree programmes.

In conclusion, I would like to sum up this paper by stating that the Law schools in the present-day world face a big challenge. They should provide legal education in the widest sense of the word. They have to reflect the changes mentioned above. They should be able to provide not only the knowledge of law and professional skills but also the knowledge of ethical principles and relations between law and other normative system (such as morals, religion). They should contribute to the intelligence, culture and legal conscience of the society.