

Some Comments

By:

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The University and, within it, the Law School should not be perceived only as a center for the production of knowledge. Both provide an environment where to think different world conceptions, they are a laboratory for studying and understanding what is going on in the society, and especially in the one where we live.

Our society, the Argentinean in Latin America and the Caribbean, calls for a university education that contributes efficiently to democratic coexistence, to the acceptance of diversity and dissent, to the promotion of solidarity and comprehension, to the construction of a continental identity, to the contribution, through knowledge, to the social and productive transformation of our societies.

For these goals to be reached, it is necessary to promote universal respect of and observance of human rights, to support the struggle against all forms of discrimination and for equality, social justice and gender equity, as well as to support and contribute to the defense of our cultural and environmental patrimony, our food security, the eradication of hunger and poverty, the intercultural dialogue and the promotion of a culture of peace.

At the University of Buenos Aires, we are teaching law in the context of a public institution, autonomous from government administration, free and with no religious engagement. However, this does not mean that the public university is or should be apolitical; rather, it is very much engaged in supporting democracy and promoting observance of the Constitution. In our time, this commitment is a commitment to the rule of law, to separation of powers, to republican institutions, to free and fair and periodical elections and to the respect and observance of human rights for all human beings.

The law debate is the debate on power and authority, a debate that takes place in a society and in a law school that recovered democracy on December 10, 1983.

The law school is the institution where judges, prosecutors, litigators and counsels have studied. However, the monopoly of law schools in the production of the human resources of the Judiciary does not exhaust its mission. We are forming future presidents, governors, also cabinet ministers, members of parliament, members of the organized civil society, researchers and those that frame the cultural policy of the country. In a certain way, the law schools produces brokers, law brokers.

What do we teach? The answer is Law. But not all the law, by heart, statute after statute. Structural and well as contextual changes require a different answer. Law evolves rapidly. It tries hard to adapt to changes, positive and negative. Law crosses borders. Our graduates should be prepared for transnational challenges.

A solid basic legal formation -with a multicultural approach and a clear understanding of law's role as a social regulator and in ensuring freedom and dignity, on an equal footing, of all human beings- and a good training in the art of law reasoning, are some of the most important goals to be reached in a first cycle of studies. Peculiarities of the different branches of law, new subject

matters, should be the focus of a second period where the student is given the opportunity to practice the learning he or she has previously obtained.

In 1985, after the restoration of democracy in the country, public universities reassumed their government and reviewed their curricula. The Law School adopted a new curriculum organized in two cycles: in the first cycle, the Common Professional Cycle, the main contents of almost all traditional branches of law are taught in fourteen compulsory courses.¹

Afterwards, in the second cycle, the Professional Oriented Cycle, five courses – International Law, Corporations, Family Law, Tax Law and Conflict of Laws – are compulsory. Students may also take elective courses, given each student's chosen area of expertise. In the Professional Oriented Cycle, students must earn at least sixty-four credits. Twenty of these credits must be in the student's chosen area of expertise – such as Administrative Law, International Law, Criminal Law, Private Law, Commercial Law, Tax Law, Labor Law and Notary Law. In addition, students are required to fulfill four credits in courses dealing with regional or international integration, four credits in Constitutional Law, four credits in Social Sciences, four credits in Jurisprudence, six credits of clinical legal education providing free legal aid and eight credits freely chosen by students from our vast course offerings. These two cycles plus the introductory period last almost five academic years.

Practical knowledge and training are enforced through a course on practical litigation, fellowships in law firms and government agencies, and clinics established together with specialized NGOs. Moot courts and other pedagogical resources are also promoted. Student Exchange Programs are in place with partner law schools abroad, and the grades obtained in such programs are included on transcripts at the home institution.

Students are also required to pass exams on a foreign language. This requirement aims to ensure that students can understand judicial decisions and legal authorities written in a foreign language. At present, only English as a foreign language (through three compulsory levels requiring progressive proficiency) is taught at UBA Law School; however, students can also pass exams on Portuguese and French.

As a Law School, we must produce technically competent and ethically minded graduates who can pursue successful careers in a variety of occupations. Our society, as many others in Latin America and other parts of the world, is characterized by its unequal distribution of wealth and income and in access to rights, and we should empower and motivate our graduates to engage pressing issues of social justice, law reform, and the struggle against poverty.

Our graduates should be prepared to face a world whose legal order is undergoing significant change. To prepare them for this reality, we provide them with both a sound grasp of general legal principles and the nuances of particular branches of law and this has been the guiding principle in the shaping of the program of studies at the School of law of the University of Buenos Aires.

¹. See Monica Pinto, *Developments in Latin American Legal Education*, 21 PENN ST. INT'L L. REV. 61, 65 (2002).