Creative Podcasting as a Tool for Legal Knowledge and Skills Development

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Abstract

This article draws on the authors' experience of introducing a student-led legal podcast in their law school in September 2017 to explore creative podcasting's potential as a tool of legal knowledge and skill development. Drawing on the authors' observations as the coordinators of the podcast, as well as a survey conducted amongst student participants, it considers the value of creative podcasting as a means of enhancing legal knowledge, aiding skills development, and fostering a feeling of collaboration and community. The article also reflects on the practical challenges associated with running a project of this type outside the school's curriculum, focusing particularly on the challenge of encouraging student buy-in.

Keywords

Introduction

This article draws on our experience of running a student-led legal podcast from September 2017-July 2018 to explore creative podcasting's potential as a tool of legal knowledge and skill development. The use of technology enhanced learning has created significant changes in the delivery of legal education within classrooms, as well as in the systems of communication and collaboration outside the classroom.[1] Technology has been shown to assist in recognising different learning styles, incorporate new teaching methods, enhance communication and accommodate different abilities.[2] As technology has advanced, so has

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[1] Anne Williams Shavers, 'The Impact of Technology on Legal Education' [2001] 51(3) *Journal of Legal Education* 407.

[2] *Ibid.*

the literature exploring its implications on higher education in general and legal education in particular.[3] One area that has garnered growing interest is the use of podcasting as a learning tool. This interest been reflected for example in the formation of an Informal Mobile Podcasting and Learning Adaptation project, established to assess the impact of podcasting on student learning in UK higher education institutions.[4] There is now a significant body of scholarship exploring the influence of podcasting on traditional lecturing,[5] its impact on student achievement,[6] and its broader implications for teaching and learning.[7] In a review of their use within higher education, McGarr identified three main uses: *substitutional* (e.g. recordings of past lectures), *supplementary* (e.g. recordings of additional material), and *creative* (i.e. student-led).[8] Studies have shown an increased use of supplementary and substitutional podcasts, with podcasting being used for distance learning[9] and as an on-campus learning tool.[10] While formal student evaluation is limited, these studies suggest that students have favourable attitudes towards podcasts as a source for learning. In the context of legal education, Baskaran and others have highlighted how podcasts and other multimedia might be used to introduce law students to substantive law concepts, critical topics and core lawyering skills.[11]

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[3] See for example Pearl Goldman, 'Legal Education and Technology II: An Annotated Bibliography', [2008] 100 *Law Library Journal* 415.

[4] Palitha Edirisingha, Chris Cane, Robert Cane, Samuel Nikoi, 'Informal Mobile Podcasting and Learning Adaptations for Transition, e-Learning Research Project Report 08/09' [2009] *The Higher Education Academy.*

[5] Oliver McGarr, 'A review of podcasting in higher education: its influence on the traditional lecture' [2009] 25 *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 309.

[6] Blanche W. O' Bannon, Jennifer K. Lubke, Jeffrey L .Beard Virginia G. Britt, Using Podcasts to Replace Lectures: Effects on Student Achievement' [2011] 57 *Computers and Education* 1885.

[7] Stephen Lonn and Stephanie D. Teasley, 'Podcasting in Higher Education: What are the Implications for Teaching and learning?' [2009] 12 *Internet and Higher Education* 88.

[8] McGarr, *ibid*, n.5.

[9] Mark Lee and Anthony Chan, 'Reducing the effects of isolation and promoting inclusivity for distance learners through podcasting' [2007] 8(1) *Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education* 1302; Margaret Maag, [2008] 'Podcasting and MP3 players: emerging education technologies' 24(1) *Computers, Informatics and Nursing* 9.

[10] Crispin Dale, 'Strategies for using podcasting to support student learning' [2007] 6(1) *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education* 49; Li Liu, Marie-Pierre Huguet and Thomas Haley, 'Work in progress - SAGES: Podcast, wikis, and emerging technologies in the engineering classroom' [2008] *38th ASEE/IEEE frontiers in education conference*, Saratoga Springs, NY. SEJ-13–14.

[11] Priya Baskaran, Laila Hlass, Allison Korn, and Sarak Sherman-Stokes, 'Experiential Learning Through Popular Multimedia' [June 2017] *Tulane Public Law Research Paper No. 17-10.*

In relation to creative podcasting, Lee et al have noted that it is rare that podcasting efforts go beyond the more passive substitutional or supplementary uses.[12] However, a small number of studies have introduced student-produced podcasts as required projects within courses.[13] These have suggested that student-created content can promote understanding, enhance engagement with learning materials, develop communication skills and encourage team work.[14] Less research has been done into extra-curricular creative podcasting, with one notable exception being Alpay and Gulati's 2010 study into an engineering student-led podcasting group. They evaluated the impact podcasting had on skills development, education and community. They found that students developed a sense of community, improved their links with other students, improved their understanding of podcasting technology, and their teamwork skills.[15] This suggests that creative podcasting is a potentially valuable source of skills development. However, the study was limited in that it did not investigate the impact of the podcasting on the students' course-specific learning and understanding. Furthermore, the study was based on a pilot, involving two teams producing one podcast each. There is therefore scope for further investigations into the impact of creative podcasting on students' course-specific learning, as well as into the experiences of students who have been involved in podcasting for a longer period of time, and on students from the humanities as well as the sciences. As creative podcasting is relatively under-researched in the context of higher and legal education (indeed, the author was unable to find any studies which specifically consider student-created podcasting in legal education), the use of case studies offers an opportunity to conduct exploratory research, considering whether there might be value in further examination of the topic.[16]

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[12] Mark JW Lee, Catherine McLoughlin and Anthony Chan, 'Talk the talk: learner-generated podcasts as catalysts for knowledge creation' [2008] 39(3) *British Journal of Educational Technology* 501.

[13] Mark Frydenberg, 'Principles and pedagogy: the two P's of podcasting in the information technology classroom' [2008] 6(6) *Journal of Information Systems Education* 1; Gary Armstrong, Joanne Tucker and Victor Massad, 'Interviewing the experts: student produced podcasts' [2009] 8 *Journal of Information Technology Education: Innovations in Practice* 79; Lee et al, ibid n.11; Ming Nie, Annette Cashmore and Chris Cane, 'The educational value of student-generated podcasts', in N. Whitton and M. McPherson (eds) *Rethinking the digital divide. Research proceedings of the 15th association for learning technology conference*, 9–11 September 2008, University of Leeds, UK.

[14] E. Alpay and Shelly Gulati, 'Student-led podcasting for engineering education' [2010] 35(4) *European Journal of Engineering Education* 415.

[15] Albay and Gulati, *Ibid.*

[16] John Gerring, 'What Is a Case Study and What Is It Good for?' [2004] 98 *American Political Science Review* 341.

This article is the result of such an investigation, which explores creative podcasting's potential as a tool of legal knowledge and skill development within a Law School. The case study used is a legal podcast that we set up within our Law School in September 2017. The podcast was initially established as a means of providing a platform for the research done by staff and post-graduate students within the school. However, following conversations between ourselves and other members of staff, as well as research into the potential educational benefits, the project was developed to incorporate a strong student-led element. We organised one round of student recruitment per term, one in September 2017, and one in February 2018. Students were required to submit an application identifying any relevant skills and knowledge, the areas of law they found of particular interest, and the role they would like within the team (researching, presenting or editing). Participation was entirely voluntary and was open to law students at any level of undergraduate or postgraduate study. However, students could use their involvement in the podcast as a project in their application to the university's 'degree plus' and 'research plus' programmes, which accredit extra-curricular activities. We recruited four teams of between four and six students during the first semester of term, followed by six teams in the second semester. Students were placed in teams with students from all stages of their undergraduate and post-graduate degree programme, ranging from first year undergraduate students to PhD and JD students. Our aim was to create diverse groups of mixed ability, gender and ethnicity, in order to encourage a range of perspectives within teach team. To facilitate the identification of podcast topics of mutual interest, we grouped students on the basis of shared interests as much as possible.

The students were tasked with conducting research into an area of law that had been written about by a member of staff within the school or a guest who would be visiting in the near future. They were then required to draft a pitch for a podcast episode, develop potential questions, and ultimately record an episode in which a member or members of the team would interview the member of staff or guest about the chosen topic. The teams were given training on how to use the podcasting equipment, as well as more general training on conducting legal research and preparing for and carrying out interviews. External guests with expertise in media were also invited to the school to provide additional training on interview technique and story-telling. We established an Executive Board, made up of four staff members and three students, who exercised quality control over the episodes, mentored the

student teams, and made decisions about the strategic direction of the podcast. This team met several times over the course of the semester to discuss the podcast's progress and share ideas for content. Student teams were able to meet with their mentors, and request additional practice time with the recording equipment, supervised by one of the Executive Board members.

To help generate a listenership for the podcast we established a marketing team, consisting of two students who were tasked with managing the podcast's social media accounts and publicising the podcast. We purchased a website domain name and built a website using an open source podcast content management system, Podcast Generator. After an episode is edited and an mp3 file of the episode is produced it is uploaded to the website using an FTP programme. To publish the episode the system creates an RSS podcast feed that, once submitted to various podcast repositories such as Apple iTunes, allows subscribers to get automatic access to an episode as it is published. The website also functions to provides a platform that displays episodes in an archive list making it easy for users to access each one and explore the show notes about the topics covered.

The podcast was publicly launched in February 2018 and released weekly episodes until July 2018 when it went on hiatus for the summer break. In addition to the episodes by the student teams, members of the Executive Board also created episodes, carrying out interviews with staff, each other, and guests to the law school. Three 'student focus' bonus episodes were also produced in collaboration with the School's Athena Swann Champion, featuring students interviewing legal professionals about their work in fields of law traditionally seen as masculine (corporate) or feminine (family). In total to date, thirty episodes were released. Between the launch on February 28th 2018 and the end of July the LawPod website had approximately 25,000 unique users that consumed over a terabyte of data downloading and listening to the episodes (Data taken from the web server AWStats package).

The end of the semester and thus the podcast's first 'life cycle' provided an appropriate time to reflect on the podcast's effectiveness as a tool of learning and skills development. Therefore, in April 2018, we circulated a short informal survey amongst those students who had been involved in the podcast. This evaluation survey was designed to provide a 'snapshot'

of students' experiences,[17] allowing data to be gathered on their knowledge, beliefs and attitudes.[18] Open questions were used to enable students to provide as much insight as they wished,[19] with the survey asking:

- What have you enjoyed about being involved in the podcast?
- What was challenging about being involved in the podcast?
- What have you learned from being involved in the podcast?
- What skills have you developed from being involved in the podcast?
- What could be done to improve your experience of being involved in podcast?

Nine students responded: two from the Executive Board, the two marketing students, one student who participated as a guest, and four members from the student teams.[20] Thus, the study cannot be considered fully representative of all the students who participated in the podcast, but can only be viewed as representing the views of the respondents. Students were encouraged to respond openly, and to feel free to give constructive feedback. However, it must be acknowledged that the students were aware that the authors, with whom they had been working closely over the course of the year, would read their feedback. This may have influenced their responses, and the data must be understood in light of these dynamics.

To supplement this data, we have also drawn from our own participant observation. This form of data collection involves looking, listening and asking questions of participants operating within their normal environment.[21] As the coordinator and technical supervisor of the podcast, the authors were able to learn through 'exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities' of the podcast.[22] Observer bias must be acknowledged as a potential influence over our findings; as coordinator and technical supervisor, certainly we hoped that

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[17] Martyn Denscombe, *The Good Research Guide: For Small-scale Social Research Projects* (4th ed. OUP, 2010).
[18] Ellen Taylor-Powell, *Questionnaire Design: Asking questions with a purpose* (University of Wisconsin Cooperative Extension, 1998)
[19] Kate Kelley, Belinda Clark, Vivienne Brown, John Sitzia, 'Good practice in the conduct and reporting of survey research' [2003] 15(3) *International Journal for Quality in Health Care* 261.
[20] Responses are available on request.
[21] Danny Jorgensen, *Participant Observation (*SAGE, 1989)
[22] Bruce G. Carruthers, Stephen L. Schensul, Jean J. Schensul, Margaret Diane LeCompte, and Margaret Diane LeCompte, *Essential ethnographic methods: observations, interviews, and questionnaires* (AltaMira Press, 1999), 91.

the project would be a success.[23] To mitigate against this influence, the study focuses predominantly on the students' views when considering whether students appeared to develop their legal knowledge and skills. We have drawn from our own observations to a greater extent when considering what worked and what did not work with regards to the implementation of the project. Acknowledging the risk of our bias towards the project being a success, we have aimed to be reflexive and open about the challenges we faced, in order to identify barriers to the podcast's effective use as a learning tool. Nevertheless, the data outlined below and our findings must be understood in light of the relationships between ourselves as observer participants, the students as the research participants, and the project itself. Our results suggest that creative podcasting can provide a valuable means of *enhancing legal knowledge*, *aiding skills development*, and *fostering a feeling of collaboration and community,* but that *fostering student buy-in* was a significant challenge. These are each explored in turn.

Enhancing Legal Knowledge

Research suggests that group work and social interaction can enhance learning and facilitate the construction of knowledge.[24] In their seminal work on situated learning, Lave and Wenger highlighted how learning involves engaging in 'communities of practice', with mutual engagement in common activities with a group facilitating learning rather than decontextualized studying.[25] Certainly, working with others has been shown to be superior to individualistic or competitive methods of learning, with many students learning best through 'active, collaborative, small-group work inside and outside the classroom.[26] Drawing from this literature, we therefore hypothesised that the students would enhance their legal knowledge through participation in the project. The student teams recorded episodes exploring a range of topics, including the use of force by UN peacekeepers in Haiti; the connections between activism, research and human rights; digital punishment and social control; competition law;

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[23] On observer bias, see Kathleen DeWalt, Billie DeWalt and Coral and Wayland, 'Participant Observation' in Russell Bernard (ed) *Handbook of Methods in Cultural Anthropology* (Altamira Press, 2000) 259-299.

[24] Amy Musgrove and Vicky Thirlaway, 'Are we Using Technology for Technology's sake? An Evaluation of a Simulated Employment Exercise at Undergraduate Level' [2012] 46 *The Law Teacher* 65.

[25] Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation* (CUP, 1991)

[26] Leonard Springer, Mary Stanne and Samuel Donovan, 'Effects of small-group learning on undergraduates in science, mathematics, engineering, and technology: A meta-analysis' 69(1) *Review of Educational Research* 21.

broadcasting regulations; stop and search laws, and incarceration. Students interviewed academic staff from within the school, professors from other schools, and academic visitors to Queen's. Mirroring the group task approach highlighted by Mudd in the context of 'thinking like a lawyer' and Donald in the context of 'disciplinary thinking',[27] the students worked together, and engaged in researching legal issues, assembling relevant facts, identifying legal, social and ethical issues, searching out relevant law, reaching a plan of action, and implementing it by recording an episode. The student teams prepared questions in advance and displayed knowledge of their topic during the recording of the podcasts. The pitches and episodes were subjected to review by members of the Executive Board and were all found to be of a sufficient quality to be released. Within the student study, participants spoke favourably of having the opportunity to explore new areas of law:

> *It's a nice way to learn about things outside the structured academic syllabus. I know much more about domestic implications of prison systems now and I've never even thought about that before!*

> *[I enjoyed] creating content outside my immediate area of study and having the opportunity to engage with other areas of interest.*

> *It's also been great to learn about new topics; as someone from a non-law background this was really helpful.*

> *[The] intellectual challenge may lead to discovery on new area of interest in law* [sic].

Participating was also praised as a means of learning about the "variety and depth of research and work being carried out in the Law School." It seemed that exploring topics beyond those covered within the students' modules encouraged greater interest in their legal studies and inspired new lines of thought with regards to the study of law. In addition to demonstrating the value of podcasting as a means of nurturing enthusiasm for legal studies, this finding

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[27] John O. Mudd, 'Thinking critically about 'thinking like a lawyer'' 33 [1983] *Journal of Legal Education* 704; Janet Gail Donald, *Learning to Think: Disciplinary Perspectives* (Jossey-Bass, 2002).

suggests that creative podcasting may provide a means of helping students identify areas of interest for dissertation topics or further postgraduate studies.

Students also highlighted the role podcasting had played in enhancing their understanding of the social and cultural context of the law. As noted by one student:

> *It's given me a fresh insight into current events which I may have not been aware about if I wasn't involved.*

Also reflected was the potential for podcasting as a means of educating students on the role of culture and value systems.[28] Students highlighted the benefit of meeting and discussing law with diverse people:

> *Working in a team…has allowed me to gain insight and perspective of others mainly on the reason and stand of view [sic].*

> *[I have learned] that podcasts are a worthwhile medium to … spark discussion beyond your immediate network.*

Another student noted that they had learned the importance of "being understanding and respect[ing] others for their view," while another cited "cultural awareness" as a skill they had developed. Thus, creative podcasting appeared to provide a means of educating students about the social and cultural context within which the law operates, and of the importance of considering diverse views on legal topics. LoDico has argued that students need to examine the social context in which they will be working, in order to avoid becoming cynical or disaffected about their legal education.[29] Kahn has also highlighted the need to educate law students on the cultural dimensions of law, developing their understanding that law is a collection of interpretive commentaries, with alternate meanings.[30] This need has led to

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[28] Paul Kahn, *The cultural study of law: Reconstructing legal scholarship*, University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[29] Maria Francesca LoDico, 'Learning while helping others', *McGill Reporter*, 20 April 2000, 12.
[30] Kahn, *ibid* n.28.

greater focus on critical thinking,[31] and the use of teaching methods such as negotiations and debates,[32] through which students can gain a deeper understanding of how their own values influence their stance on legal problems. It is arguable that this understanding can enhance students' ability to develop good lawyer-client relationships in practice as well as aid intellectual development.[33] As a platform for holding discussions and debates, these results suggest that podcasting may provide a means of facilitating this type of social and cultural learning. Involvement therefore appeared to both enhance students' legal knowledge on a range of topics they might not otherwise encounter, as well as their understanding of current events and different viewpoints on legal issues.

Aiding Skills Development

Skills development and employability are increasingly central aspects of legal education, due to the discipline's merging of professional requirements with academic intellectual development.[34] As such, legal educators aim to equip their students with knowledge and skills reflective of the need to balance academic learning and practice-focused development.[35] With regards to professional development, Mudd identifies the key aspects of 'thinking like a lawyer' as being the ability to evaluate facts, analyse problems, synthesise information and solve problems.[36] More broadly, law students require training in critical reading, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and other 'wicked' competences.[37] As technology has taken an increasingly central role in the legal profession, law students are also expected to develop a range of digital and technological skills.[38] This increased focus on skills and employability within law schools mirrors a growing search for 'added value' by students and

[31] Donald, *ibid* n.27 at 194.
[32] Melissa Nelkin, 'Negotiation and psychoanalysis: If I wanted to know about feelings, I wouldn't have gone to law school; [1996] 45 Journal of Legal Education 420.
[33] Nelkin, *ibid.*
[34] Lee Shulman, 'Signature pedagogies in the professions' [2005] 134 *Daedalus* 52.
[35] Carol Stolker, *Rethinking the Law School: Education, Research, Outreach and Governance* (Cambridge University Press, 2014)
[36] Mudd, *ibid* n. 27.
[37] Donald Weidner, 'The crises of legal education: A wake-up call for faculty' [1997] 47 *Journal of Legal Education* 92; Dan Berger & Charles Wild, 'Enhancing student performance and employability through the use of authentic assessment techniques in extra and co-curricular activities (ECCAs)' (2017) 51:4 The Law Teacher, 428-439
[38] Egle Dagilyte, 'Law Blogging with Formative Peer-Assessment: Improving Students' Writing, Digital Skills and Assessment Literacy' (2016) 3:1 ZDRW Zeitschrift für Didaktik der Rechtswissenschaft (Journal of Teaching of Law), 71 – 82.

employers alike.[39] Reflecting these developments, employability is also increasingly used as a marker for evaluating universities, as demonstrated for example by the HESA's 'Graduate Outcomes' survey and the focus on 'progression to employment' within the teaching excellence framework in England, Scotland and Wales.

This increased focus on skills and employability has led to calls for innovative assessments, workplace simulated learning, and greater focus on extra and co-curricular activities within law schools.[40] Studies have suggested that engagement with such activities can improve graduate outcomes and employability as well as academic performance.[41] While the legal education literature has explored examples such as mooting, blogging and workplace learning,[42] there is little written on how creative podcasting might assist in the development of the skills highlighted above. However, one method identified within the literature as helping students integrate their legal knowledge and skills is to have them work in teams to explore legal issues in greater depth, assembling and evaluating relevant facts, identifying legal, social and ethical issues, searching out and applying relevant law, reaching a plan of action, and implementing it by drafting a document or making oral presentations.[43] We found that podcasting involved a similar type of process, offering students a novel platform for developing and displaying their legal knowledge and skills. In addition, we found that being involved allowed students to develop a range of more general employability skills. For example, as noted by Alpay and Gulati,[44] creative podcasting can assist in developing communication skills, team work and practical podcasting skills. These skills were highlighted in the present study, with several students highlighting teamwork as a dominant skill they had developed. In relation to practical skills, students were trained on how to work the equipment and how to ensure quality audio. Students mentioned this favourably in their surveys:

> *I've learned a little more about the technological production of podcasts.*

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[39] M Tomlinson, '"The Degree is Not Enough": students' perceptions of the role of higher education credentials for graduate work and employability' [2008] 29(1) British Journal of Sociology of Education 49.

[40] Berger and Wild, *ibid* n.37.

[41] *Ibid* at 14.

[42] *Ibid;* Dagilyte, i*bid* n. 38; Judith McNamara and Rachael Field, 'Designing Reflective Assessment for Workplace Learning in Legal Education' [2007] ATN EAC2007: Assessment and evaluation for real world learning.

[43] Mudd, *ibid* n.27; Donald, *ibid* n.27.

[44] Alpay and Gulati, *ibid,* n.14.

The technical side of the podcast has also been a great learning experience.

[I have learned] technical skills – audio recording, editing, episode creation.

Students were also positive about the experience of being given training on how to communicate and interview effectively and having guests with experience in broadcasting providing additional training. The development of communication and digital literacy skills was frequently cited within the surveys:

I have developed presentation skills as well as the ability to make my research accessible for a wider audience.

I have developed further my interview and presentation skills.

…communication with people of varying levels of seniority.

The survey also highlighted a number of additional skills. This appears to reflect the variety of roles given to students. For example, the marketing students highlighted "social media management", "creative and compelling writing skills", and "event planning skills", while those students involved in the Executive Board highlighted the "ability to mentor and lead a group", "leadership", "project management" and "skills of participating in meetings". These findings highlight how skills development can be enhanced by allowing students to participate at every level of a project. Students also frequently highlighted time management and organisation skills, both as something they had developed and as one of their biggest challenges:

I have learned a lot more about time management not just for myself but when organising meetings with other people.

The most difficult thing has been trying to find times for all four team members to meet up.

The most challenging part so far has been communication and organising meetings.

Time management was undoubtedly a significant challenge, manifesting in delays in completing episodes, and a number of students dropping out of the project. This issue is returned to in the final section of this article.

Students had a number of suggestions for further skills development. The marketing team cited the challenge of learning how to write social media posts, demonstrating the need to provide training on skills beyond the production of the podcasts themselves. Several students also flagged their desire for more training on the "mechanical processes of the recording process", with one highlighting the challenges associated with "acquiring new skills regarding recording protocols and producing recorded output which is accessible, encompassing and relevant". Others flagged the desire for more training on how to research and develop content ideas. These suggestions highlight an ongoing commitment to the podcast which is encouraging and suggest the potential for the project to further enhance its contribution to skills development. Indeed, despite the challenges of time management and requests for additional training, overall it appears the podcast assisted in the development of a number of both practical and intellectual skills, reflecting legal education's balance between academic learning and practice-focused development.[45] These findings, while based on a small sample, therefore support the suggestion that creative podcasting may provide a valuable way for law schools to enhance the employability of their students, which may in turn contribute to their rankings in measures such as the Graduate Outcomes survey and teaching excellence framework.

Fostering a Feeling of Collaboration and Community

One notable development within legal education has been the move beyond simply teaching lawyering skills, to encompassing a focus on professional collaborative relationships and

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[45]Stolker, *ibid,* n.35.

human interactions.[46] Legal educators have long adopted pedagogies which feature student collaboration,[47] acknowledging the role this can play in providing students with skills relevant to the practice of law.[48] Collaborative projects which feature staff and students can also assist in making students 'active stakeholders in the research community',[49] encouraging student research and inquiry by seeing them as co-creators of knowledge production rather than passive recipients. Indeed, partnership between staff and students has been highlighted as a means of delivering 'enhanced engagement, motivation and learning; enhanced meta-cognitive awareness and a stronger sense of identity; enhanced teaching and classroom experiences; enhanced student–staff relationships and development of a range of graduate attributes'.[50] This was reflected in the student survey, with students praising the podcast as a means of meeting and developing relationships with staff, students and guests:

> *It has been an excellent way of networking and learning about various professionals and non-professionals alike.*

> *I've enjoyed meeting new people, including students (undergrads and postgrads) and lecturers in the School of Law. I probably wouldn't have had this opportunity otherwise.*

Others highlighted the value of collaboration:

> *It really aids the creation of a research culture and creates a sense of a greater project we are all part of.*

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[46] Catherine Gage O'Grady, 'Preparing Students for the Profession: Clinical Education, Collaborative Pedagogy, and the Realities of Practice for the New Lawyer' [1998] *Clinical Law Review* 485.

[47] Carrie Menkel-Meadow, 'Is altruism possible in lawyering?' [1992] 8 *Georgia State University Law Review* 385; Susan Bryant, 'Collaboration in Law Practice: A Satisfying and Productive Process for a Diverse Profession' [1993] 17 *Vermont Law Review* 459.

[48] David Chavkin, 'Matchmaker, Matchmaker: Student Collaboration in Clinical Programs' [1994] *Clinical Law Review* 199.

[49] Mick Healey and Alan Jenkins, 'Developing undergraduate research and inquiry' [2009] *Higher Education Academy*.

[50] Colin Bryson, Engagement through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education' [2016] 21 *International Journal for Academic Development* 84; C Bovill, A. Cook-Sather, P. Felten, L. Millard, N. Moore-Cherry, 'Addressing Potential Challenges in Co-Creating Learning and Teaching: Overcoming Resistance, Navigating Institutional Norms and Ensuring Inclusivity in Student-Staff Partnerships' [2016] 71 *Higher Education* 195.

[I have enjoyed] working with both staff and students – collaborative working.

What I have enjoyed most is being part of a pilot project that has excellent goals of achieving knowledge sharing among a broader demographic.

These responses highlight students' appreciation of being involved in their school's research culture, and how collaboration can be used to develop connections between staff and students. In addition to enhancing skills,[51] collaboration contributed to a sense of 'research community' amongst the participating staff and students.[52] For those postgraduate students involved in the Executive Board, cultural and social aspects of educational experiences can also become important aspects of their development into researchers and can combat the potential isolation that comes with postgraduate study.[53] Personally, the authors found one of the most enjoyable and positive aspects of the podcast to be the collaboration between staff and students, and gained important insights into the possibilities of podcasts as a means of learning and teaching within their own work. Such responses reflect findings within the literature that such collaborations bring benefits to staff as well as students.[54]

The Challenge of Buy-In

While the authors were pleased at the success of the podcast's first year, both in terms of the outputs and the student involvement, in this final section we wish to highlight some of the practical challenges we faced throughout the year. The biggest challenge proved to be that while the students surveyed were successful in creating content, over twenty students dropped out over the first year, citing difficulties around time management. As mentioned above, those who completed episodes also cited this as a challenge, with some requesting a more "structured timeline", and means of "keeping the presenters committed and on track

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[51] Chavkin, *ibid,* n. 48.

[52] Healey and Jenkins, *ibid*, n.49.

[53] Rosemary Deem and Kevin Brehony, 'Doctoral Students' Access to Research Cultures – are some more unequal than others?' [2000] 25 *Studies in Higher Education* 149.

[54] Richard Mihans, Deborah Long and Peter Felten, 'Power and Expertise: Student-Faculty Collaboration in Course Design and the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning' [2008] *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* 1.

for their goals". This high rate of drop outs impacted significantly students who still wished to participate, who found themselves with smaller teams, or in two cases, without a team at all. From our own perspective, the high percentage of drop outs raised issues around the staff time wasted on training, and our own time spent chasing students who had ceased to contribute and matching remaining students with new teams.

The risk of disengagement within group tasks has been well noted within the literature,[55] and poses an additional challenge when the group task falls outside with the curriculum, as there were limited negative consequences for drop outs beyond not receiving the benefits of participation discussed above. Encouraging student buy-in will remain a key challenge for the podcast moving forward. As has been noted by others,[56] buy-in from students depends on a range of factors, including the amount of support available,[57] and whether the activities are deemed valuable to the learning process, enjoyable, or as allowing for meaningful interaction with others [58] Thus, future strategies might involve more structured mentoring and support, sharing testimonies from students who considered involvement in the podcast as valuable, and highlighting the benefits of becoming involved. A relatively low number of students took advantage of the opportunity to use the podcast as a basis for a 'degree plus' or 'research plus' application; it may be that greater emphasis on this opportunity may also encourage buy-in. Research has also suggested that group work is more successful when teams are more 'academically aligned';[59] it may be that our favouring of diverse abilities and academic stages played a role, and that weaker students chose to stop contributing rather than seek help from stronger members within the team.[60] A more rigorous recruitment strategy may allow us to give greater attention to the formation of the team, as well as allowing students with greater

[55] Vreda Pieterse and Lisa Thompson, 'Academic Alignment to Reduce the Presence of Social Loafers and Diligent Isolates in Student Teams' [2010] 15 *Teaching in Higher Education* 355; Jennifer Cumming, 'Student Initiated Group Management Strategies for More Effective and Enjoyable Group Work Experiences' [2010] 9 *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport and Tourism Education* 31.

[56] E.g. Andrew Cavanagh, Oriana Aragón, Xinnian Chen, Brian Couch, Mary Durham, Aiyana Bobrownicki, David Hanauer and Mark Graham, 'Student Buy-In to Active Learning in a College Science Course' [2016] 15 *Life Sciences Education* 1.

[57] Marina Micari and Pilar Pazos, 'Connecting to the professor: impact of the student– faculty relationship in a highly challenging course' [2012] 60 College Teaching 41; Sharon Zumbrunn, Courtney McKim, Eric Buhs, Leslie Hawley, 'Support, belonging, motivation, and engagement in the college classroom: a mixed method study' [2014] 42 *Instructional Science* 661.

[58] Richard Yuretich, 'Science classes' [2004] 33 *Journal of Science Teaching* 40.

[59] Pieterse and Thompson, *ibid,* n.55.

[60] Musgrove and Thirlaway, *ibid,* n.24.

enthusiasm for the project to be identified and increasing the perceived value of participation. In future years, we may also explore the possibility of developing the initiative into a credit-bearing module. Summative assessment could feature the submission of episodes, as well as documents such as the episode plans, team meeting schedules and a reflective diary. Such an approach would likely mitigate against the risk of drop out, as the value of the activity for the students' learning process and academic achievement would be clear. However, before moving to include the project in the syllabus, our aim in the second year is to recruit less students, while introducing an interview element to recruitment. We will also be more prescriptive with regards to when the students meet – allocating a specific repeated time slot each week rather than attempting to arrange meetings on a rolling basis. We will also provide more written guidance, based on what we have learned over the past year. We hope that introducing more guidance and structure, and with it more consistent staff contact time, will provide students with the support they need to remain committed to their role in the podcast. In order to avoid over-burdening staff with repeat requests for interviews, we will also introduce alternative episode formats, for example encouraging students to research topics and host debates with their team mates.

Conclusion

This study has suggested that involvement in creative podcasting can contribute to legal knowledge, skills development and a sense of community and collaboration amongst student participants. Students gained insights into areas of law that they might not have had otherwise, as well as an enhanced awareness of the cultural dimensions of law and the possibilities of different interpretations and viewpoints. They were given a novel opportunity to explore legal issues in greater depth, assemble and evaluate relevant facts, identify legal, social and ethical issues, search out and apply relevant law, reach a plan of action, and implement it, thereby integrating their legal knowledge and skills. Students also developed skills likely to be of direct relevance to the study of law, including communication skills, teamwork, leadership and time management skills. With the constant evolution of technology in all lines of work, it is likely that the development of skills around the practicalities of podcasting may also be of value. The creation of podcast content and managing of the podcast more generally also facilitated the experience of being part of a large staff and

student collaborative project, which was appreciated and seen as having value by staff and students alike. Thus, while there were a number of practical challenges associated with managing student participation and encouraging buy-in, the findings demonstrate the value in pursuing the project in subsequent academic years.