



# TEACHING LAW THROUGH VIDEOS



## Introduction

Students have described videos as 'deeper learning', that helps them 'connect on a deeper level with the subject material rather than theoretically', 'making the learning more fun', 'breaking up the lecture', and offering stimulation (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2015, p.1575). Students also described themselves as 'visual learners' (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2015, p.1575). The teaching of law has traditionally been linked to a Socratic form of teaching (Dillon, 1980, p.529), therefore, I wanted to experiment to see whether law students would prefer to learn through videos rather than lectures.

## Objective

To investigate whether law students would prefer to learn through videos or whether they are more satisfied/content with lectures.

## Literature review

Research has shown that the combination of display technology and verbal communication has been more effective than lectures alone, 'stimulating the senses of sight and hearing together allows for greater access to brain than hearing alone' (Galves, 1999-2000, p.186). As lecturers we need to adapt and familiarise ourselves with the increasing technological environment our students are coming from so we can engage with them effectively.

'Despite the increased use of visual communication in society, in education...the typical law school lesson largely resembles the law school lesson of over one hundred years ago; a law professor stands in front of the class, perhaps at a podium, presenting to students in some mixture of lecture, Socratic dialogue, and class discussion, all the while communicating almost exclusively through speech' (Galves, 2004, p.209). It is arguable that as this generation is so dependent on technology, the use of technology such as videos may be more effective when teaching. Be it through videos hosted on YouTube which allows students to view content in a 'dynamic way' or when they are having 'difficulty with a specific topic' (Henderson, Selwyn & Aston, 2017, p.1574).

'Visual displays can convey more information than words alone and enable viewers to understand more' (Sherwin, Feigenson & Spiesel, 2006, p.241-242). When students are provided with an opportunity to view a video, they are also provided with an opportunity to interpret the information and analyse it. They are learning. Videos can also create a more stimulating classroom experience and provide a positive environment (Lasso, 2002, p.44).

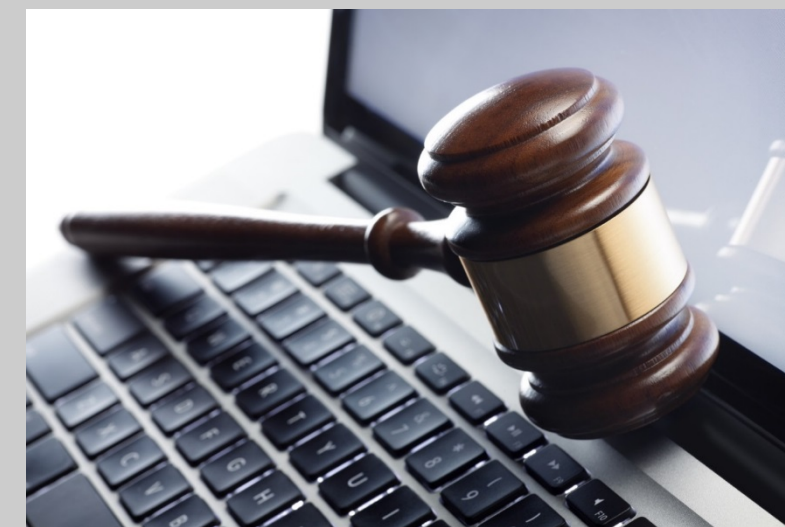
However, technology has been criticised in that it is feared that technology will take over and transform legal education reducing personal participation (Becker 2001, p.477). In addition, it has also been argued that videos will 'dumb down' students (Galves, 2004, p.234), however, it can be difficult to argue how lectures where students are effectively being spoon-fed would not dumb down students. It is also felt that the use of videos is time consuming. Further, some argue that videos are not a replacement to teaching and it is ultimately up to the lecturer as to how they use technology in their sessions.

## Methodology

I decided to show three videos to my mootings class on the LLB Foundations course. These were short videos of tips for successful advocacy and a short video of a student carrying out advocacy in front of a judge, which was similar to their upcoming assessment. In the past, I had provided a short lecture as to how they should carry out their advocacy.

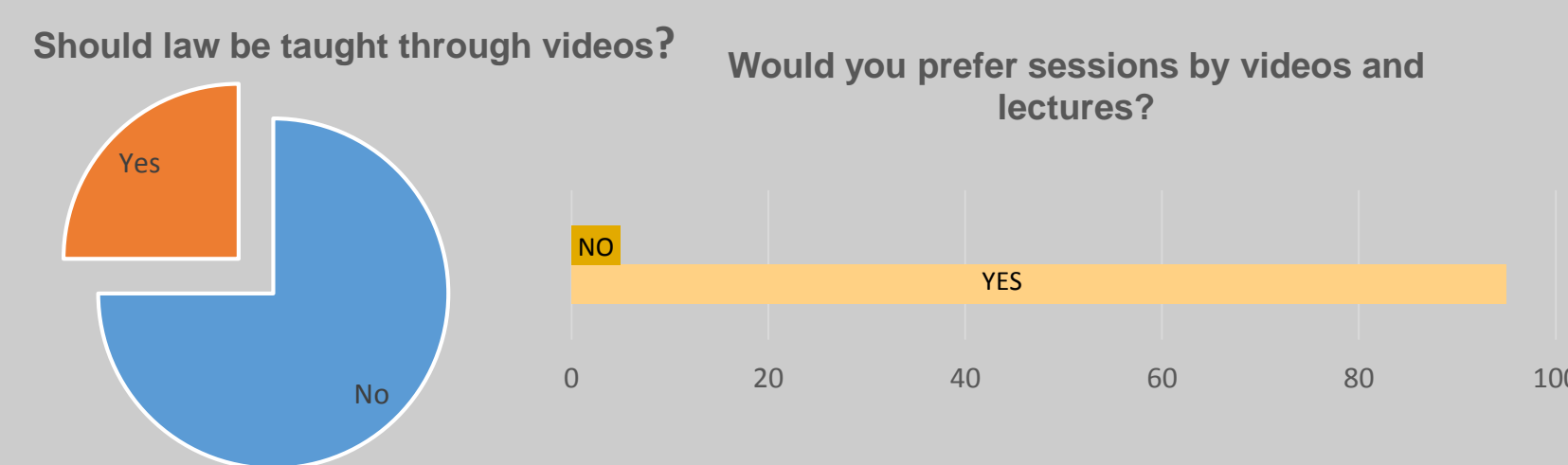
I chose to use questionnaires followed by two interviews to develop more detail. 15 questionnaires were completed.

The questionnaire asked the students whether law should be taught through videos; whether they had found the videos shown to them useful and their reason; what they had learnt; whether they preferred a lecture instead; whether they would prefer to watch more videos in the future as opposed to attending lectures, and their reasons for their preference. I also asked them about the length of the video and whether they would watch the videos again in their own time.



## Findings and analysis

75% of the class said that they did not want to be taught law exclusively through videos with 95% reporting they were happy with a combination of lectures and videos. 85% of the class reported that they had enjoyed the videos. Some of the reasons that were given were 'relevant to assessment', 'good to watch' and 'break from lecture', 'different'.



15% did not enjoy the videos because there were technical issues at the start, so the sound was not clear to the students sitting at the back of the class. 45% reported that they preferred videos instead of lectures. The main reasons were 'can watch later' or 'can watch in own time', 'easier to understand', 'not boring', 'better than reading textbooks'.

During the interviews, the student reported that without attending lectures they would not be able to pass assessments, they were worried that videos would not be enough – possibly an understanding that stems from the traditional approach in law. Another student found the videos useful and said that as they were videos they could view these as many times as they wanted in their own time.

The 55% of the class that did not prefer videos over lectures gave reasons such as 'not enough to pass', 'too short'. When answering this question, some students did not provide a reason. Students preferred a short video, 55% preferred a video of up to 15 minutes – possibly an indication of concentration span.

When asked why a lecturer may show a video to students. Some of the responses included 'explain point better', 'sometimes better to understand', and 'more enjoyable'.

## Conclusion

From my research, students are not comfortable with being taught law exclusively through videos however, most students preferred the use of both videos and lectures. There is a general consensus that they would be more satisfied/content with lectures however the content of lectures can be delivered in a variety of ways.

I would recommend carrying out further research covering all the academic years as views may change nearing the end of their degree. Further, this was a small study consisting of 15 students which may not necessarily portray the views of a larger group.

Technology has brought significant challenges to legal education and there must be a strategy for law schools to incorporate this into the curriculum to better achieve the goals of legal education and students who rely entirely on digital information in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Lasso, 2004, p3).

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