

Special Methods and Tools for Educating the Transnational Lawyer

Global Classroom/Technologies:

The example of Bucerius Law School

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1. Bucerius Law School – one of its aims: Educating the Global Lawyer

The Bucerius Law School was founded by the Gerd und Ebelin Bucerius ZEIT Foundation and is the first and only private law school in Germany having opened its doors for its first 100 students in October 2000. 400 students are currently being prepared for their first state examination in law, a preparation which takes place over a period of 11 trimesters. A Bachelor of Laws (LL.B.) is awarded after 10 trimesters. A major feature of the curriculum is the international element of the training: international legal languages, comparative law, moot courts, and an International Exchange Program with 70 partner universities in 22 countries, including 29 in the US. The exchange program of the American Law Schools with Bucerius is accredited by the ABA. Since 2003, Bucerius Law School has also offered courses for practising lawyers in Hamburg, which will, beginning in 2004, be extended to New York and Beijing.

2. Systems Support and Technology

Bucerius Law School is one of the most technologically advanced universities in Germany. About 1.3 Mio \$ of its construction budget has gone to hardware alone.

A core element of the media technology is the Electronic Classroom for 130 students with Global Telepresence Facility equipment. Each seat is equipped with its own microphone to facilitate discussion in the lecture hall. In addition, there are two translator's cabins, two web cameras to transmit live lectures via the Internet or in other classrooms, two super high-definition video screens and whiteboards used with digital pens. The Electronic Classroom

was by the Nixdorf-Foundation.

There are nine other classrooms, all outfitted with electronic smartboards, beamers, and Internet access, allowing a simultaneous range of media, e.g. a live recorded video image from a computer screen and paper in front of a document camera.

One challenge Bucerius has faced was easing the transition for its thirteen Bucerius law professors chalk and blackboard to the new technological possibilities. Two instructors are helping to point out the enormous advantages of the media-technology. Nevertheless every professor has to define his own way of using media-technologies. Now they wear a tiny wireless microphone, clipped to their dress shirts, enabling them to record the lecture onto DVDs as well as to the web cams which stream the lecture into the web. At the beginning, the professors experienced more time consumption in preparation and planning, having been used to less modern teaching methods. Now they command the technology through a simple touch-screen system on the podium. They create materials using their office computers, upload the materials to the servers and instantly call them up in the classroom.

The professors' use of technology has had a significantly positive effect on the students' evaluation of the faculty.

3. Campus Management System – Campus.Net

Since the year 2000 Bucerius has been developing together with a young software design company – Datenlotsen Informationssysteme GmbH - a standard software for the needs of higher education institutions, called “Campus.Net”.

Campus.Net digitalizes and supports entire operating processes, creating a central organizational information and action platform for all organs of the university. It encompasses the administration (i.e. the data bank) level on the one hand and the student (web based) area on the other.

The professors are able to confirm through the Internet how many and which students have registered for their courses, to furnish class schedules with document files for the students, and to put exam questions, texts and recordings online, as well as to retrieve documents from their own personal computers plus integrated Internet and databanks through intranet access.

The intranet system enables students to register and de-register for all courses and events, to check their individual time-tables, to call up examination results and a virtual total grade, to evaluate all courses and events, to select internship placements and even to consult the dining-room menu. Students can also communicate with each other regarding almost all student activities such as sports, music etc. as well as gain rapid access to the administration by means of the intranet organisation and communication platform, which maintains a close link between the two areas.

On the administrative level, the Campus.Net system incorporates the planning and administration of curricular and extra-curricular events, the administration of student data including examinations and examination results, address management, administration of internships and the careers office, the administration of fundraising. Every trimester a student prospectus in printed form is generated largely automatically containing comprehensive information from all these areas.

4. Further Development of Campus Net: The Global Classroom

The teaching and e-learning tool of the global classroom is an integral element of Campus.Net – it is a didactic installation, designed for universities, which facilitates distance learning in study groups formed especially within the context of international teaching co-operations and supported by extensive use of multi-media functions.

This principally involves developing web-based learning materials, ranging from those which supplement face-to-face teaching to largely network-based distance learning. Through the software platform the lecturer has the possibility of modifying and varying their set study tasks for the students according, for example, to student location or nationality (e.g. in the field of comparative law). The students, for their part, can select the most appropriate tasks for their individual needs. The lecturer puts in the net specific materials, papers studied during a course, references to externally available study materials and sources of general information (e.g. legal data banks).

Between the weekly real time meetings, the students address issues or engage in discussions either individually or in national or international groups in a forum. Here national differences in argumentation styles and learning approaches become apparent, reflecting differences in

jurisdictions, for example, but also in educational systems and cultures.

Weekly real time meetings with presentations and discussion are supplemented by a special chat page which facilitates structured discussions.

5. Implementation of the Global Classroom

a) The Examination Preparation Program

In contradiction to many German Law Schools Bucerius Law School offers its own examination preparation program, developed according to modern principles of curricular content and technical support. The program consists of a combination of lectures, case studies in small and mini-groups and self-study, as well as regular mock examinations and simulated oral examinations. Teaching in the program is based on readers and textbooks produced by the professors. These are made available to the student in a variety of forms: alongside or instead of hard copy, students receive a CD ROM which presents comprehensive material in a readily accessible and rationally interconnected form. Further, the teaching material is made available to students on the intranet and internet. The system enables the lecturer to place their lectures and material in the net and, by means of passwords, to regulate access to problem case studies and the solutions at determined times. Material is conveyed by combining text with graphics and sound recordings, enabling students to follow lectures simultaneously from home or abroad etc, or to refer to them at a later date.

The second German state examination in law offers an even greater potential for the application of blended and distance learning. Here German law students are required to spend a two-year clinical program (Referendariat) at various locations throughout the country or at times abroad. The aim is to provide the students with the requisite knowledge for this examination from their home university and to promote substantive dialogue by the most direct and rapid means possible. This project is still in development.

b) Executive Education

Since September 2003, the Law School has offered continuing education courses in so-called core competences for practicing lawyers. These courses include in particular foreign

languages for lawyers (e.g. “Legal English – Common Law Commercial Contracts”), contract drafting, negotiation techniques and external auditing. In addition, we offer a number of lecture series and conferences on specific topics in Hamburg. Currently we are organizing a continuing education seminar on European Law in Washington and New York (aimed toward an awarding of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Credits) and a summer seminar on German and EU Law to be held in China in late Summer 2004.

All of these activities are supported with the application of modern media. Besides the use of hardware such as smartboards, screen projection by beamers and discussion-facilitating hardware, which are standard in our seminar rooms, integrated multi-media modules and data bank research are also offered before, during and after courses. Participants in Executive Education Seminars and in-house training courses can gain access to the university’s own interactive platform “Weiterbildung” (continuing education) by means of passwords (“service over the net”). On this platform, online forums will be made available with information on current developments, professional literature, and further links.

c) Master’s Program

A program leading to an MBL or LLM is soon to come to fruition at the Bucerius Law School. This will be a combined curriculum shared between the Bucerius Law School in Hamburg and an American university. The entire program is to be supported by a global classroom project which will be prepared carefully.

6. Conclusion

Although there are still elements and fields to be developed the example of Bucerius Law School as one among different examples shows that Global Classroom Technology is going to become a core element of educating transnational lawyers. These technologies offer excellent possibilities for teaching and comparing different law systems in a world which is becoming smaller and in which the speed of communication and the need of understanding each other in different cultures is growing significantly. Nevertheless the major challenge lies in the implementation of technology for different teaching formats in an adequate way.