criticism which might be ventured is the author's tendency to quote very large slabs from other writers (in one instance almost two pages), without following the usual practice of selectively using them in smaller doses to reinforce his own line of argument.

Chapter 2 identifies the original law access programs as springing from the desire to broaden the racial and class composition of the legal profession without the sacrifice of academic and professional standards. There is a description of the elements of the law access programs already in place at the Polytechnic of Central London (now Westminster University) and three Australian law schools. This is followed by the presentation of the findings from the author's interviews with a couple of law deans, covering criteria for entry to the program, the university's interest in participating in such a program and alternative methods of selection, such as interviews and tests for measuring legal abilities. Although the general view was that there was a need for access programs, there were a number of very real problems in design and implementation, including how to create a system which could adequately and validly rank disadvantage and embody the requirements and standards demanded by each participating university, while being 'pedagogically valuable, socially defensible and economically sound'.

The concluding chapter contains the author's blueprint for a model Law Access Program as an alternative gateway to legal studies for the educationally disadvantaged. He proposes a one-year preparatory program, integrating study and communication skills with an introduction to the study of law, the completion of which will operate as one factor in gaining acceptance into the full-time law undergraduate program. The outline of a syllabus is provided for the skills and law components, with prescriptions for appropriate assessment methods and for defining the target audience. Stress is laid upon the necessity for constant close contact with a counsellor to assist with personal, economic, cultural and social problems and upon the availability of personal tutors at all times.

Problems with inequality of access continue to bedevil legal education and flow on into the unrepresentative composition of the profession. Although this predicament is well recognised, only a handful of law schools have responded by constructing their own individual access programs, deterred by questions of cost, fairness and possible public criticism of selection criteria. This study is important because it is the first time that an attempt has been made to design and offer up a model program for the consideration of all law schools which will go some way toward redressing these inequities.

Nonetheless, it should be recognised this study has some limitations, especially in the research design adopted. It is difficult to see how the findings can be securely based in empirical research when it appears that, apart from the review of the literature, the only data collected come from three separate interviews with law deans and law teachers. Moreover, as so often happens there are other interesting questions to be answered which necessarily go beyond the scope of the initial research project. For example, in the foreword Justice Kirby calls for research to track the success of those given the benefit of access entry and wonders whether commercial and other pressures within the legal profession might ultimately divert them after graduation to replicate the professional experience of those who entered by the normal route.

Editor

EVALUATION

The quality of teaching quality assessment in English law schools
A Bradney
30 *Law Teacher* 2, 1996, pp 150–167

During 1993 and 1994, at the behest of the Higher Education Funding Councils for England and Wales (HEFCE), most academics in English law schools spent a great deal of time taking part in the quality teaching assessment exercise. Some have doubted whether the diversion of time from research and teaching to engage in TQA is justifiable. It has been argued that academic freedom and autonomy are abandoned in favour of accountability where TQA is concerned. If the HEFCE achieved anything it was that it excluded other governmental incursions into the autonomy of the university.

The English government in 1991 committed itself to the idea that there should be proper accountability for the quality of teaching in universities. Accountability for the government meant public scrutiny.

The HEFCE is a statutory body established under the Further and Higher Education Act 1992. Early in its life it stated that it recognised the diversity of institutional missions within higher education. However, the academic response to the idea of external assessment of

teaching was mixed, especially since little has been written about what quality university teaching is. Accordingly, HEFCE formulated its own bland and insubstantial ideas, some of which sparked controversy. For example, whether the university is there to produce a skilled workforce or cultivated human beings. Needless to say, the HEFCE was bent towards the former view. How far should the HEFCE be allowed to dictate what quality teaching is when it is still at issue?

To conduct its assessment, the HEFCE's used academic lawyers. However, no set criteria or qualifications for assessors were laid down. Doubts as to the quality of the assessors and the TQA may be assuaged if the assessors are properly trained. However, the training program taken by the assessors did not receive acclaim, with one assessor commenting that the only useful purpose it served was to reveal some of the major defects in the design of the exercise.

The HEFCE produced three reports on the quality of law teaching. The Quality Assessment Report (QAR) was produced after the institution had been visited and is a distillation of the Feedback Report. The Feedback Report, unlike the QAR is only available to the institution being assessed and is a detailed comment from the assessment team on the institution. The HEFCE also produces a Subjective Overview Report (SOR), which comments on the overall level of teaching within a discipline in the light of the assessment exercise.

To be useful QARs must allow a naive reader to compare one institution with another, and inform the reader about the form of the teaching and learning at that institution. HEFCE's assessors' handbooks recognised these needs. However, a survey of whether they were informative to a wider audience and well received revealed otherwise. The picture the reports present is partial and contradictory. There appears to be little consistency between the method of reporting and the content of the reports for each institution, thus making it difficult to compare one institution with another. Quantitative data do not tell all about an institution and need to be supplemented with qualitative assessment. The QARs were simply too thin to give a full qualitative assessment. The qualitative assessments in the QARs do not appear to sit comfortably with the quantitative data collected. Contradictions also appear when the content of the SORs is compared with that of the QARs. For example, the SOR stated that library resources were in all but one case excellent or satisfactory, despite two of the QARs specifically stating that library provision was inadequate for the course being taught.

In conclusion, HEFCE's assessments contain unexplained notions of quality, undertrained assessors, and opaque and probably inaccurate reports. Without more debate on what quality teaching is, it will be impossible seriously to assess university teaching. Whilst the HEFCE's attempts may have been unsuccessful, they did cause institutions to reflect upon their role and goals. Furthermore, the HEFCE did not produce the governmental incursions into law schools that were originally feared.

GENDER ISSUES

A feminist revisit to the first-year curriculum
A Bernstein
46 *J Legal Educ* 2, June 1996, pp 217–232

The article describes a seminar devised by the author that is taught at Chicago Kent College of Law. Fifteen students are gathered together to revisit six subjects that were taught to them that year: Civil Procedure, Contracts, Criminal Law, Justice and the Legal System, Property and Torts. Attention is paid to the feminist concerns embedded in this curriculum.

The seminar consists of two weekly meetings of two hours duration over a 14 week period. This seminar is not composed of the converted, as all students at Chicago-Kent are required to complete a seminar or an equivalent independent research project after their second year of study and a handful find Feminist Revisit simply the least of evils. The course is divided into two parts. Part 1 addresses doctrinal topics regarded as women's issues which are legal problems that fall within the first-year subjects listed above. Examples of the topics covered which come under the first-year curriculum courses are seduction, sexual fraud as a tort, prenuptial agreements, gender issues that arise in the dissolution of marriage, intramarital crime such as marital rape, domestic violence and battered wife syndrome as a defence to homicide, exclusion of jurors on the basis of sex and statutes of limitation that disadvantage women seeking redress for childhood sexual abuse.

The second part of the seminar begins with the *different voice* thesis of Carol Gilligan. The seminar