

READING LAW: MOTIVATING DIGITAL NATIVES TO ‘DO THE READING’

LIESEL SPENCER AND ELEN SEYMOUR, SCHOOL OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN SYDNEY

ABSTRACT

Law teachers are concerned at the proportion of law students who do not do the set course reading. Law students are not so concerned about ‘doing the reading’, in part due to their perceptions of the value of traditional law school reading. Further, despite not undertaking the traditional set reading, many law students are managing to complete their courses through the compensatory behaviours of teachers. Course completion is only half of the university definition of a successful law graduate, however, and intrinsically motivated reading and lifelong learning are graduate attributes within the stated aims of most universities. Law teachers cannot, therefore, give up on motivating law students to read. This article suggests the way to reconcile intergenerational differences on the value of ‘doing the reading’ is for law teachers to adapt pedagogical methods, to motivate the ‘digital natives’ to read. In short, law teachers may need to stop trying to ‘get them to read the way we read’, accept the tools and learning styles favoured by this generation of law students, and integrate those tools into the teaching of law.