

RELEVANCE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES FOR LEGAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Two developments in legal studies over past generations are the development of a critical discourse and literature addressed to shortcomings of legal education, and the development of a rich, rewarding body of work in interdisciplinary legal studies, often referred to as law and society scholarship or socio-legal studies. To date, these two developments have been largely independent of one another, although scholarship in law and society or socio-legal studies has much potential to complement or reform legal education in many of the respects where it has been found to be problematic or lacking. A brief survey of many of the concerns which have been voiced about legal education, with significant attention to 'internal' critiques offered by legal scholars and educators themselves, is offered with the constructive goal of suggesting the relevance of social scientific scholarship and instruction for legal education, broadly conceived to include pre-law education, continuing legal education, dual degrees and paralegal studies. Important issues include the inevitably interdisciplinary nature of legal studies, issues of civics and public service, critical and reflective approaches to law, professionalism and ethics, specialization and multi-disciplinary practice, and skills training and legal practice more generally. Given the great potential for social science to contribute to legal education in many ways that are responsive to the internal critiques of legal education, it is well worth addressing difficult questions about how legal education could incorporate relevant social scientific scholarship and instruction.