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Legal Regulation & Education: Doing the Right Thing?

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A Low-Tech Solution to Teaching: The Book Club as an Educational Tool

Educators today seem to be continually investing in newer technologies and tools for education. The current educational environment is a veritable alphabet soup of MOOCS, SPOCS, VLE's and others. Against this background I would like to discuss the advantage of the BOOK. A BOOK or Bio-Optic Organised Knowledge system is a traditional non-digital educational tool used for several years in leading academic institutions. It is therefore a tried and tested system which has advantages of portability, durability, flexibility and low initial start-up costs.

This paper will discuss the successful adoption of the BOOK system as a supplementary educational teaching and support tool for the Cyberlaw (Masters Level) course at LSE in 2013. Our book club discussed elements of regulatory systems, governance and control tools through the media of three classic books, 1984 by George Orwell; A Brave New World by Aldous Huxley and The Trial by Franz Kafka. Each book brings a different message about control and direct or indirect governance: Orwell on direct state regulation, Huxley on indirect state regulation and on self-regulation while Kafka discusses bureaucratic forms of regulation and the power of bureaucracy as a form of regulation. The club was introduced following extensive feedback from students that online learning tools were impersonal and created room for independent but not shared study or experiences. A book club by distinction is a shared experience of a piece of media. In effect a book club about any book even one as educationally inconsequential as say Dan Brown's The Da Vinci Code teaches vital interpretive and discursive skills. To select educationally themed texts, as the LSE book club has done, reinforces not only these transferable skills but also gives students fresh insights and perspectives into the subjects they are studying.

The experience of the experiment suggests students developed a much deeper understanding of classical cyber regulatory texts such as Lessig, Wu, Benkler or Zittrain by referring back to classic works of literature.

This paper will explore why this is so and in particular what it is about classic works of fiction which deepen the understanding of students, many of whom are not from a UK educational background, of complex theoretical concepts such as governance and control. It will also suggest ways classical works of fiction can be used to supplement learning in concepts such as these without fogging the key message of the lesson.