

Access to Justice, Professional Consciousness & Legal Education

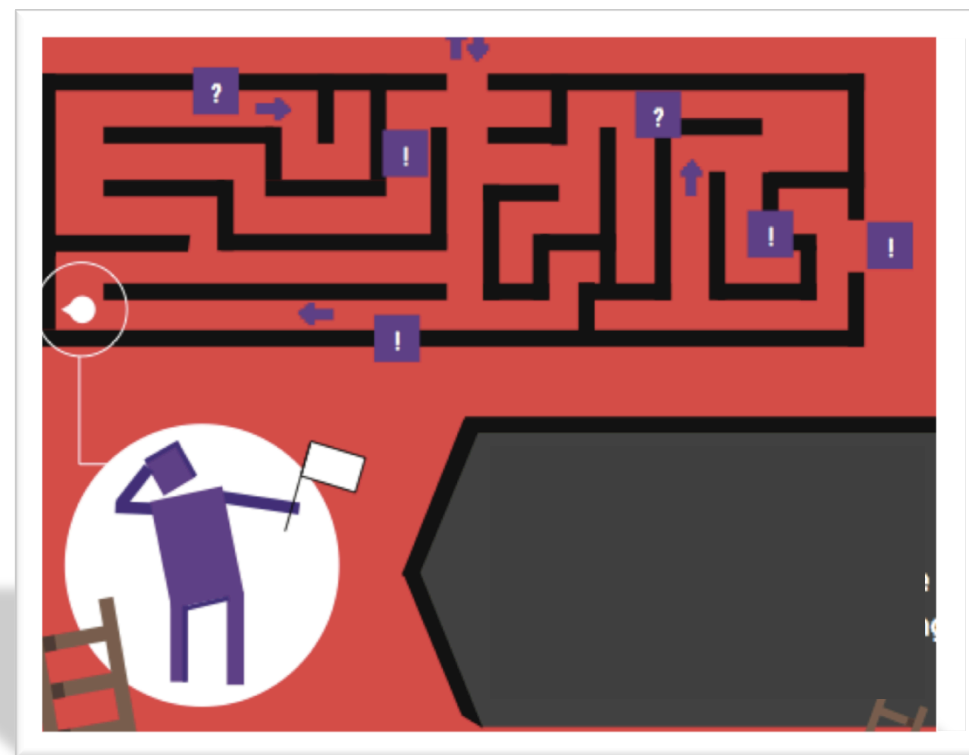
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Open Doors: Teaching and Learning Law for Justice
Canadian Association of Law Teachers Conference 2014
Faculty of Law, University of Manitoba, June 7-8, 2014



Access to Justice – a “crisis” in Canada

- Approximately 50% of people will experience a legal problem over any given 3 yr. period
- Marginalized groups (e.g. low-income; disabled, aboriginal, etc.) experience a greater number of legal problems
- There is an increasing number of self-represented litigants in the court room (who are not there by choice).
- Unmet legal needs come with substantial economic and social costs.



Access to Justice – a shifting policy landscape



A new policy landscape – key features

- Use a more expansive definition of access to justice.
- Put the public first
- Collaborate and cooperate
- Simplify and make the system sustainable
- Focus on action-oriented response
- Focus on outcomes



Another way of looking at it...

- **Subject**: provider to user
- **Object**: back-end to front-end
- **Method**: isolation to collaboration
- **Content**: process to outcome
- **Accessible**: complex to simple
- **Outlook**: unsustainable to sustainable



The “Culture Shift” & the challenge for legal professionals

Need a shift in professional consciousness.

- Need to see the profession differently.
- Need to see the way we provide services differently.
- Need to take seriously “public interest” and “access to justice” as the underlying interest of the profession – not a subtopic or subproject.

Why?

- We have a different public, with different needs.
- People are demanding different services.

The Role of Legal Education - learning to “think” like a lawyer

Some Ideas...

Guiding Principles For Change

1. Put the Public First
2. Collaborate and Coordinate
3. Prevent and Educate
4. Simplify, Make Coherent, Proportional and Sustainable
5. Take Action
6. Focus on Outcomes

- Program offerings that facilitate the new paradigm.
 - * Renewed energy towards law, family & relationships
- Encourage clinical education (but not at the expense of legal theory).
- Teach pluralism as a founding principle not a subtopic.
- Teach students how to be innovators.



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Thank you.

Contact Us

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