

Preface

The original idea of this book on academic learning in legal education resulted from a discussion meeting in Utrecht in the Spring of 2012 and at various academic conferences. What appeared to us, as editors, was that at conferences usually *research* topics are discussed, but the other main task of legal academic activity – teaching – is often neglected as a research topic.

Too often, research comes first and teaching second. However, in most law schools, we believe, teaching is essentially the core business as each year we ‘raise’ a new generation of lawyers that will shape tomorrow’s laws and, thereby, the whole political and legal system. Therefore, we believe that we should reflect more on our role as teachers, what it means to create an academic legal curriculum and design courses, how we should and could teach law, what type of lawyers we want to raise and about the nature of academic legal education.

The initial step was to dedicate a special issue of the journal *Law and Method* to academic learning in legal education, which was published in the Spring of 2013. It consisted of five contributions and it seemed to have hit a note.

Hence, we decided to draft a book proposal in which we could extend and expand upon the themes addressed in the journal’s special issue. The result is this book, published by Edward Elgar, in which theoretical perspectives about the nature of academic legal education is complemented by contributions about innovative courses and innovative teaching and learning experiments beyond the traditional ‘black-letter law’ education, each of which can be read in its own right.

Nevertheless, to guide the reader through this book, we suggest to not only read the introductory Chapter 1 (which focuses upon the general theme of academic legal education) but also the Epilogue (Chapter 15) in which Tim Bleeker, a graduate student and our Assistant Editor, provides an overview of the contributions, shows the interconnections between the themes and topics, and concludes with a student perspective on legal education.

A book like this depends on the assistance of many others. In particular we would like to thank the contributors whose professionalism

and scholarly high quality made our work as editors easy. We also thank the external reviewers for their timely feedback, that was full of constructive comments and suggestions. A special thanks also goes to Tim Bleeker, who joined as an Assistant Editor, for being meticulous in his editing work, and in the end also proved to be a valuable contributor in his own right.

Finally, we would like to thank Edward Elgar for taking on board this project and the trust given to us, a particular warm thanks to Ben Booth, Tori Nicols, Karen Jones and Iram Satti.

Bart van Klink and Ubaldus de Vries
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