Why the LPAB PLT Proposal Is Misguided as Teaching & Learning Reform

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Abstract

Proposals to replace practical legal training (PLT) with a four-week, practitioner-led program respond to legitimate concerns about cost, duration, quality and relevance. However, shortening PLT does not by itself constitute meaningful educational reform. This paper argues that a highly compressed model risks reviving the weaknesses of articles of clerkship, where workplace exposure was often mistaken for structured professional education and learning depended heavily on the quality of individual supervisors and placements. Contemporary lawyer formation requires explicit performance standards, guided practice, authentic assessment, trained practitioner-educators and accountable workplace supervision. These requirements are becoming more important as artificial intelligence reshapes entry-level legal work. Graduates must be able not only to perform traditional legal tasks, but also to frame, verify and control AI-assisted work while protecting confidentiality, identifying risk and retaining professional responsibility. Drawing on developments in other professions, the paper contends that workplace learning should form part of a staged educational architecture linking law school, PLT and supervised practice. A shorter PLT may be defensible as an intensive capstone within that architecture, but without structured preparation and quality assurance it risks taking legal training backwards rather than preparing graduates for contemporary practice.

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