A questionnaire designed to measure changes within the learning environment of a law school was administered to 274 first-year law students at the University of Montreal before they began classes and again after the end of the first term. The largest changes occurred on the Goal Direction and Breadth of Interest scales. Considerable changes appeared on the Intellectual Maturity, Student Interaction, Evaluative and Academic Enthusiasm scales. The smallest change was associated with the Authoritarianism scale. All changes were in a negative or undesirable direction and were statistically significant. It was proposed that certain specific features of the first term's program might in part explain the results. In addition it was suggested that in part the results could be attributable to a general loss of enthusiasm and interest that occurs once the excitement associated with the study of a new discipline wanes. (Author)
EXPECTATIONS VERSUS PERCEPTIONS OF A FIRST YEAR LAW CLASS #

by

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and

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INTRODUCTION

In recent years educators have become more aware of the plethora of influences that affect student learning. As a result the traditional definition of the word "curriculum" as a series of courses interrelated by their contribution to the achievement of a single goal has given way to a much broader definition. Curriculum is now considered by some to include all factors in the educational milieu that affect learning.

The process of curriculum evaluation is a vital component of the modern view of curriculum. Its goal is to determine whether the effects on students of the constituent parts of the curriculum are in agreement with the institution's educational objectives. In some contexts the evaluation process extends even to an examination of the educational objectives.

Information generated by curriculum evaluation is intended to facilitate rational modification of curriculum directed towards more relevant educational objectives, more effective teaching, as well as greater staff and student satisfaction.

The educational or learning environment is a term that has been used to describe several different specific views or perspectives of the curriculum. Of the many methods used by researchers to describe learning environments, the three most common are: 1) students' reports of their perceptions of the activities and emphasis of their institution along with its social and psychological characteristics; 2) students' reports of their personal involvement in various activities, their goals, and their demographic background characteristics; and 3) objective institutional data, including the average academic aptitude scores of enrolled students, the faculty-student
ratio, enrollment, college income per student, as well as the size of the library. Each of these different methods of assessing educational environments generate discrete bodies of information.

Contemporary thought in education is student-centred. Thus, a valid approach to curriculum evaluation may be the determination of whether students' perceptions of the learning environment concur with the educational objectives of the institution. This paper will examine the development of the Law Learning Environment Questionnaire and the learning environment of a first year law class.

I. THE LAW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (LLEQ)

Over the last 15 years published reports of research related to the measurement of students' perceptions of learning environment have appeared with some frequency in the literature. The initial work in this area involved the development of a 300-item instrument called the College Characteristics Index (CCI). This instrument generated thirty scales that were based on Murray's classification of personality needs in that each of the CCI's thirty scales described a characteristic of the college that


4. Termed a "college press" in the literature, this is a general label for stimulus, treatment or process variables.
corresponded to one of Murray's hypothesized needs. For example, where a particular need was that of "Order", the corresponding college characteristic would be defined by items that described the aspects of a college environment that tended to reward an individual who had a high need for order. In 1958 the authors administered the CCI to students and faculty of five colleges and found there were significant differences in the pressures of the environments of the different schools. Moreover, they found high agreement between student and faculty responses within each institution. In a more recent study, Stern identified the dimensions of college environmental characteristics by analyzing the interrelationships among the thirty CCI scale scores from 1,076 students at twenty-three schools. His analysis revealed six factors. They were: intellectual orientation, social effectiveness, play, friendliness, constraint, and dominance-submission.

In a more applied vein, Thistlethwaite studied the item validities of the CCI in an attempt to identify features of effective learning environments. The criterion of item validity was the extent to which items differentiated between institutions with high and low academic productivity. In a following work, Thistlethwaite modified the CCI by grouping the most valid items into clusters on the basis of item content and item scale.


correlation and by adding some items of similar content to each cluster. He used the new instrument in an attempt to explain changes in study plans among a highly talented group of university undergraduates.

Whereas the development of the CCI was based on the assumption that the organization of environments would follow a pattern similar to the organization of personalities, Pace 9, the developer of College and University Environment Scales (CUES), postulated that the variables that would account for institutional differences in environments would do so because of educational rather than psychological content. Thus, the development of CUES was based on an educational structure rather than a psychological model. CUES is made up of 150 items that generate five scales. The scales are: practicality, community, awareness, propriety, and scholarship. According to the author the purpose of CUES is to identify differences between institutions.

In the area of professional education, Hutchins 10 provided a detailed description of the environmental characteristics of medical schools. His questionnaire, the Medical School Environment Inventory (MSEI) consists of 180 items adapted in part from the work of Pace, Stern and Thistlethwaite. First data


were gathered from 700 students at twenty medical schools and factor analysed. From this analysis six scales were generated. They are: general esteem, academic enthusiasm, extrinsic motivation, breadth of interest, and encapsulated training.

At the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, development in this area took a different tack. Whereas previous work was directed at differentiating between institutions, the University of Toronto instrument called the Learning Environment Questionnaire (LEQ) was designed to detect students' perceptions of changes in the environment of a single institution. At this time a new curriculum was being instituted at the University of Toronto medical school. It was felt that periodic measures of the perceptions of cohorts of students passing through the new undergraduate course of studies would contribute significantly to a program of curriculum evaluation when considered relative to stated or implied educational objectives.

The development of the LEQ involved the creation of a sizeable pool of items describing particular aspects of the learning environment. This item pool consisted of items written by the developers and was augmented by items adapted from CUES and MSEI. These items were administered to 145 first-year medical students. The response distributions were calculated, and items were discarded if there seemed to be no well-defined class consensus concerning the issues raised in respective items.

At this point a procedure that involved the clustering of interrelated items was used to develop seven scales consisting of a total of 65 items. These scales are as follows:

1. Evaluative: The items in this scale describe situations that, as far as effective learning in a medical school is concerned, can be clearly appraised as good or bad. For example, "The academic atmosphere here is not very helpful to the student who wants to get down to the business of practising medicine".

2. Academic Enthusiasm: The items in this scale describe an environment where academic success and enthusiasm about subject matter are either high or low. For example, "Faculty members typically exhibit great interest in and enthusiasm for their special fields of interest".

3. Goal Direction: The items in this scale describe the extent to which the objectives of the course come through very clearly and are so perceived by the students. For example, "The goals and purpose of the work are clearly defined for the students".

4. Authoritarianism: The items in this scale describe the pattern of control used in making decisions that affect the students' learning experiences. For example, "Students are encouraged to criticize administrative policies and practices". The high end of this scale reflects an environment free of authoritarian influences.

5. Breadth of Interest: The items in this scale describe an environment where student interest and activity stretch beyond objectives directly related to the field of medicine. For example, "Students are so
preoccupied with their medical studies that they rarely concern themselves with anything else in social and in formal discussions".

6. **Student Interaction:** The items in this scale describe the amount or pattern of student participation or interaction. The high end of the scale reflects friendly cooperation. The low end suggests aloofness, hostility, and cliqueness. For example, "There are tensions among certain types of students that tend to interfere with learning".

7. **Intellectual Maturity:** The items in this scale describe situations that might appeal particularly to an intellectually mature group of people. For example, "Many students here develop a strong sense of responsibility about their role in contemporary social and political life".

Students are instructed to respond to each of the items on a five-point scale: (A) definitely false; (B) mostly false; (C) no opinion; (D) mostly true; and (E) definitely true.

The first study with the LEQ compared the expectations and perceptions of a first-year medical school class. The class entering first-year medicine in the fall of 1969 was administered the LEQ early in September before classes began. At this time students were asked to record their expectations concerning the learning environment of the medical school. Early in February, about two weeks after the first term's comprehensive examination, the LEQ was readministered and students were asked to report their perceptions of the learning environment. Decreases on all scales

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were statistically significant at $p < .005$. The study proposed that certain specific features of the first term's program could explain the decreases. It also suggested that in part the decreases could be attributed to a general loss of enthusiasm that occurs once the novelty associated with the study of a new discipline is worn thin by the reality of hard work.

This study was replicated with the class entering first-year medicine in the fall of 1970 with essentially the same results.

It was hypothesized that the issues treated by the LEQ in medical education could also be validly considered in the context of legal education. The two professional schools receive highly motivated beginning students, selected by criteria related to previous academic achievement, from a large pool of applicants. Both the law and the medical students have a concrete role concept of their professional career and they are highly motivated towards attaining that professional image. Consequently, the theoretical aspect of course material, especially in first year, and its seeming unrelatedness to their professional career, has an especially frustrating effect on the students. 13

So that the LEQ could be used in the context of legal education, items specific to medicine were rewritten relative to law (re-relevanced).

13. The traditional curricula of the educational institutions of both professions are quite similar in form. Both begin with at least one year's total dedication to the study of subject matter considered basic to the respective professions. This first year programme is viewed by the students as being remote from practice. In medicine these courses are the basic medical sciences such as anatomy, biochemistry and physiology. Their equivalents in law would be contracts, torts and criminal law. Both systems demand a final year or more of total commitment to clinical/professional activities prior to the granting of licences.

The medical curriculum involves more clinical/professional activities from the second year on than does the law school curriculum. However, the trend in law is towards more clinical programs. As well many law students do legal or law related work during the academic year and/or during the summer months.
For example, the item "Students are concerned only with the physical aspects of medicine" was rewritten "Students are concerned only with the practical aspects of law" 14.

II. THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT OF A FIRST YEAR LAW CLASS

The design used in the expectations versus perceptions study of first-year medical students was repeated. Entering students were administered the LLEQ early in September soon after classes began, and were asked to record their expectations concerning the learning environment of the law school. Soon after the first term's examination, early in February, 274 students who had participated in the first testing were readministered the LLEQ and asked to record their perceptions of their learning environment 15.

Based on the results of the medical school study and the suggested similarities between the law and medical school curricula it

14. See appendices 1 and 2 for instructions given to students at both testing sessions as well as the questionnaire. The French version of the questionnaire was used at the University of Montreal.

15. Due to the new higher education program in effect in Quebec, the first year class was made up almost exclusively of students who had a two year college diploma rather than the traditional B.A.. This was the first law faculty class so constituted. Normally the follow up test would have been administered in early January, the exam session having terminated before Christmas. However, during October 1971 the University was closed due to a strike of non teaching personnel and consequently the exam period was postponed to January.
was hypothesized that the February follow up test scale scores would be significantly lower than the scale scores derived from the September initial testing. Appropriate statistical procedures were used to test these hypotheses 16.

Results of the statistical analyses are shown in table 1. A graphical representation of the change scores appears in Figure 1. It should be noted that the five response options were scored from 0 to 4 with 0 the 'definitely false' end of the scale and the 2.0 point on the scale representing "no opinion".

All seven null hypotheses were rejected with respect to the pre-set limits. In part, the general decrease across all seven scales may be explained in terms of the expected loss of enthusiasm that occurs once the original romanticisms associated with the study of a new discipline have been dispelled by hard work. This argument was presented earlier with respect to the results of the medical study and is supported by previous work 17.

Major factors contributing to this general decrease may be inferred from the results. The large downward shift in the Goal Direction

16. The null hypotheses of no differences between the seven pre-mean and post-mean scores were tested using one-tailed matched t-tests. This procedure permits the testing of the null hypothesis with data from correlated samples. See, G.A. Ferguson, Statistical Analysis in Psychology and Education (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2nd ed., 1966). For each of the seven null hypotheses the rejection level was set at $\alpha = .01$.

scale score suggests that during the first term course objectives were not made clear, nor did students perceive their instruction as being obviously relevant to their definitions of the objectives of legal education. The large decreases on the Breadth of Interest and Intellectual Maturity scale scores suggest that students felt driven to study to the exclusion of most extracurricular activity in order to succeed academically during the first term. The fact that the initial test scores of both scales are above 2.0, the neutral points on these scales, suggests that the extent of this commitment was not expected by the students.

In the medical study the initial and follow up test scores on the Student Interaction scale were 1.93 and 1.78 respectively. The marked difference between these results and the results of the present study (initial 2.06, follow up 1.60) is worthy of note. If it may be assumed that people interested in becoming lawyers are more sociable and outgoing than those aspiring to medicine 18, then the relatively high law initial test score may be a reflection of this characteristic. The drop to a lower follow up test score may be the result of the high degree of competition among students that must pervade much of the academic activity in first-year law. The combined failure and dropout rate is much higher in first year law at the University of Montreal than it is in first year medicine at the University of Toronto. It seems therefore that the educational environment perceived by first-year law students is not conducive to friendly cooperation. Students' high motivation to achieve (to "survive academically") apparently has significant effects on their modes of interaction.

The decrease in the Authoritarianism scale score, although statistically significant, was small. It is possible that in terms of the situations represented by this scale, the past and present experiences of the students were similar, and that the small decrease represents the general disenchantment referred to earlier. Nevertheless, it is worth noting that students reported expectations and perceptions of an authoritarian learning environment.

It is reasonable to consider the results on the Evaluative and Academic Enthusiasm scales together, since these two scales in a rather gross way represent the major responsibilities of an institution of higher learning. These are the responsibility to educate and the responsibility to nurture scholarship. According to the data, students have higher expectations and more favourable perceptions of the school's posture relative to the maintenance of scholarship (Academic Enthusiasm) than to teaching (Evaluation). Scores on both scales decreased by a considerable amount, with the follow up test score on the evaluative scale falling below the neutral point of 2.0. It seems that students enter the program with generally positive attitudes that are, however, not capitalized on or maintained by the educational environment.

CONCLUSION

In the past few years the University of Montreal law faculty has undergone profound changes, as is the case elsewhere. The curriculum has been changed considerably: almost all courses are elective after first year, many new courses have been added and old courses have been re-structured. Various course materials and aids have been added and
old ones have been re-worked. Teaching methods and evaluation techniques not used a few years ago have become standard fare. The dynamics of legal education are such that more innovations and changes are just over the horizon.

One improvement that should be attempted is in goal direction or in the objectives of the faculty as a whole and individual courses in particular. Admittedly, it would be quite difficult to formulate a coherent, all inclusive statement of faculty objectives. Inversely setting out course objectives can be readily realized and some effort is being made at the faculty in this direction.

It has become fashionable to advocate the demystification of the law. Some consideration and effort should also be given to a demystification of the study of law, especially in relation to the first semester of first year.
TABLE 1
RESULTS OF MATCHED t TESTS: SCALE SCORE α RELIABILITIES

Number of Students = 274

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCALE</th>
<th>INITIAL TEST</th>
<th>FOLLOW UP TEST</th>
<th>Results of Matched t Tests</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEAN</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>α</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVALUATIVE</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACADEMIC ENTHUSiasm</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOAL DIRECTION</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AUTHORITARIANISM</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>0.36</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BREADTH OF INTEREST</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STUDENT INTERACTION</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTELLECTUAL MATURITY</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SD = Standard Deviation
α = Reliability
APPENDIX 1.

LAW SCHOOL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT QUESTIONNAIRE (LLEQ)

Directions

Law schools differ from one another in many ways, and different people within each institution feel differently about each aspect of the learning environment. The climate of a law school is a mixture of various features, facilities, rules and procedures, faculty characteristics, courses of study, classroom activities, students' interests, extra-curricular programs, informal activities, and other conditions and events.

Initial test directions: You are asked to give your expectations as to the situation you expect to find at the law faculty. We would like to have your honest and frank opinions as to what you expect the atmosphere will be in this law faculty.

Follow up test directions: You are asked to give your perceptions about the law faculty. You have lived in its environment, participated in its activities, sensed its attitudes. What kind of a place is it? We simply want your objective description of the climate in your law faculty.

NOTE

1. The items in the questionnaire do not judge whether the characteristics are desirable or undesirable. Therefore, in no way are the questions to be considered a "test" of the law faculty or of the person answering the questions.

2. The questions concern your law faculty, and not the larger body of the multi-faculty, University of Montreal.
APPENDIX 2

Instructions for Answer Sheets

PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME ON THE ANSWER SHEET BEFORE BEGINNING THE QUESTIONNAIRE.

Record your answer to each of the items on the separate answer sheet provided. Please make no marks on the answer sheet itself.

In answering each item go through the following steps:

1. Read each item carefully.
2. Think about how well the item describes your law school.
3. Find the number on the answer sheet that corresponds to the item you are considering.
4. Blacken the space on the answer sheet according to the following instructions:
   - If the item is definitely false about your law school, blacken space A.
   - If the item is mostly false, blacken space B.
   - If you have no opinion, blacken space C.
   - If the item is mostly true, blacken space D.
   - If the item is definitely true, blacken space E.

Answer every item. Please do not omit any.

TWO SAMPLE ITEMS

1. One of the general goals of this school is to produce qualified and certified individuals in the field of law.
   A B C D E
   || || || ||

2. There are definite times each week when students are expected to participate in organized discussion groups.
   A B C D E
   || || || ||
LAW LEARNING ENVIRONMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

1. The goals and purposes of the work are clearly defined for the student.  
   A B C D E

2. Faculty members here typically exhibit great interest in and enthusiasm for their special fields of interest.  
   A B C D E

3. Faculty members usually go out of their way to establish friendly relations with students.  
   A B C D E

4. There are tensions among certain groups of students that tend to interfere with learning.  
   A B C D E

5. Decisions affecting the class tend to be made democratically.  
   A B C D E

6. Students are concerned only with the work at hand and have few interests beyond this area.  
   A B C D E

7. Most people here seem to be especially considerate of others.  
   A B C D E

8. Most of the professors are very thorough teachers and really probe into the fundamentals of their subjects.  
   A B C D E

9. Careful reasoning and clear logic are valued most highly in grading student papers, reports, or discussions.  
   A B C D E

10. Certain students in the class are responsible for petty quarrels.  
    A B C D E

11. Students hesitate to express their real opinions.  
    A B C D E

12. The environment of the law school stimulates interest in things other than pure law.  
    A B C D E

13. Many students here develop a strong sense of responsibility about their role in contemporary social and political life.  
    A B C D E
14. The academic atmosphere here is not very helpful to the student who wants to get down to the business of practicing law.

15. Class discussions are typically vigorous and intense.

16. Instructors clearly explain the goals and purposes of their courses.

17. The students are encouraged to help each other.

18. Students are disciplined by an outside group.

19. A lecture by an outstanding social scientist would be poorly attended by the students here.

20. Many of the faculty seem enthusiastic about their teaching assignments.

21. Course offerings and faculty in the basic areas of law are outstanding.

22. The goals of the law school are well defined.

23. Student organizations are closely scrutinized to guard against mistakes.

24. Very few of the professors here try to get students interested in the humanities or in the broad social context of law.

25. Students are concerned only with the practical aspects of law.

26. Student competition facilitates acquisition of knowledge.

27. Each student has a clear idea of the purposes of each course.

28. Students cooperate equally well with all class members.

29. The values most stressed here are open-mindedness and objectivity.
<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30.</td>
<td>There is a lot of interest here in poetry, music, painting, sculpture, architecture, etc.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31.</td>
<td>Students here learn that they are not only expected to develop ideals but also to express them in action.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32.</td>
<td>Most students here seem to enjoy studying law.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33.</td>
<td>Most of the courses stress basic law or scholarship and really probe into the fundamentals of their subjects.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34.</td>
<td>Examinations here provide a genuine measure of a student's achievement and understanding of what has been taught.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35.</td>
<td>Some students refuse to mix with the rest of the class.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.</td>
<td>Students are encouraged to criticize administrative policies and practices.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.</td>
<td>Students here are actively concerned about national and international affairs.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38.</td>
<td>Students commonly share their problems.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39.</td>
<td>Long, serious, intellectual discussions are common among the students.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40.</td>
<td>Examinations here generally provide a good opportunity for the student to display his knowledge and understanding of the course material.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41.</td>
<td>There is an undercurrent of feelings among students that tend to pull the class apart.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42.</td>
<td>Faculty members rarely or never call students by their first names.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43.</td>
<td>A controversial speaker always stirs up a lot of student discussion.</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
44. Students gather frequently in informal social activities.

45. Most courses are a real intellectual challenge.

46. The objectives of the class have never been clearly recognized.

47. Certain students don't like other students.

48. Only certain kinds of ideas may be expressed freely within the class.

49. Modern art and music get little attention here.

50. The law faculty seem unaware that a well-rounded program of study includes courses in the social sciences.

51. Most of the professors are thorough teachers and are dedicated scholars in their fields.

52. The objectives of legal education are well defined.

53. Certain students are considered uncooperative.

54. Some of the professors react to questions in class as if the students are criticizing them personally.

55. There is a lot of interest in the philosophy and methods of law in general.

56. Many famous people are brought here by the law school for lectures, student discussions, etc.

57. Students are serious and purposeful about their work.

58. There is considerable interest in the analysis of value systems, and the relativity of societies and ethics.
59. Instructors usually outline course objectives at the beginning of each course.

60. The class is made up of individuals who do not know each other well.

61. The expression of strong personal belief or conviction is pretty rare around here.

62. Students are so preoccupied with their legal studies that they rarely concern themselves with anything else in social and informal discussion groups.

63. Counselling and guidance services are really personal, considerate and extensive.

64. Most students cooperate well with other class members.

65. Students are encouraged to take an active part in social reforms or political programs.