



The Teaching of International Law in Higher Institutions in the SADC region

Kholofelo MARUMA^{a*}

LLB Student. School of Law, University of South Africa^a

Corresponding author: kholomaruma307@gmail.com

Abstract

This paper explores the epistemic and pedagogical considerations in the teaching of international law in Southern African Development Communities. It aims to address various aspects of teaching international law, including innovative teaching methods, integrating technology, the role of case studies and simulations, assessment, and evaluation, pedagogical challenges and opportunities, theoretical and practical perspectives, global perspectives, teaching in non-traditional settings, and the role of international law in multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary education. By examining these areas, the paper seeks to contribute to the advancement of effective and comprehensive approaches to teaching international law in higher education

Keywords: International law, Higher education, Teaching methods, Pedagogical challenges, Interdisciplinary education.

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Introduction

The history of teaching International Law in higher learning is long and varied, yet it has shown a remarkable discontinuity (Huang et al., 2022). The study reveals a wide range of epistemic and pedagogical teaching of international law in higher education. Despite the publication of notable studies and the establishment of study groups, there is no permanent engagement with this issue, with perspectives changing continuously and motivations varying (Dwivedi et al., 2023). The field of International Law studies has a long list of publications, but they often focus on specific regional perspectives, transient curricular issues, or subjective moral or ethical pleas. Some studies focus on the "Teacher of International Law" rather than identifying the timeless traits of this figure. The role of the lecture in developing the discipline has been prominent in the past and continues to be, though in a modified mode in the present. However, recent changes have made the area of teaching seem like

a hidden room in the palace of International Law studies, with everyone believing they have already been there but not knowing how to find its front door or describe its content. This makes the subject of "outer space" easier to deal with than the adjacent field of the theory of teaching.

Well, I am convinced to say that teaching international law in higher learning is fashionable but still it is hard to structure the tools to address this interest and to see a solid and sustainable foundation behind the relevant utterances and initiatives. The discussion has numerous reasons, and this paper aims to address some of the most prominent aspects of the situation without claiming completeness. The teaching of international law in higher learning has been a neglected field due to a lack of academic recognition and institutionalization (LaCroix, 2022). This is particularly true for International Law, which requires continuous development and followers for its continued growth and success. This neglect can stem from genuine enthusiasm for the subject or practical or opportunistic professional reasons.

Humboldtian education ideal affecting the teaching of international law in higher learning will be examined (Compagnucci & Spigarelli, 2020); (Albers et al., 2023); (Macfarlane, 2024); (De Souza & Dollmaier, 2021). Research-based teaching, deeply rooted in university reality, often faces challenges in practice (Sjöström et al., 2017). With increasing demands for university teachers, single teachers may find themselves between a rock and a hard place if they want to fully satisfy the ambitions of the Humboldtian model. The concept of "New Public Management", "Lean Management", and "VUCA" have been applied to the teaching of law, aiming to understand the implications for teaching international law in higher learning. This approach is based on insights from both teachers and universities, as university teaching in a volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) environment must adapt to these new challenges to remain relevant and pertinent (Bratianu et al., 2021). This approach will help to understand the potential consequences of teaching international law in higher learning (Eslava, 2020).

While no global studies exist, the situations depicted in this text demonstrate that teaching international law takes various forms depending on factors such as traditions, relevance, and university structure (Montenegro-Rueda et al., 2023); (Collins & Stockton, 2018). Different teaching systems influence the meaning and relevance of international law in different countries, making the perspective dynamic (Rapp & Corral-Granados, 2024); (Meierding & Sigman, 2021). International law often in a marginal role in law teaching, with some countries or universities assigning it a prominent role due to its vast outreach and potential for change. The perspective must be dynamic and adaptable to the unique circumstances of each country and university. International law teachers play a crucial role in interpreting and forming international law, which can significantly influence the conception and creation of a better future, as the national and international legal framework aligns more closely with cherished values. It aims to address various aspects of teaching international law, including innovative teaching methods, integrating technology, the role of case studies and simulations, assessment, and evaluation, pedagogical challenges and opportunities, theoretical and practical perspectives, global perspectives, teaching in non-traditional settings, and the role of international law in multi-, inter-, and trans-disciplinary education.

Methodology

If a student's marks are based in part on their involvement in the lesson, the grade should reflect not only the student's level of preparation and knowledge but also their willingness and skill to explain that information. It is difficult for many people to express themselves in the foreign language of international legal discussion. Those who put a lot of effort into learning it and sharing their ideas with others deserve recognition. Although teachers' approaches to leading class discussions are certain to vary (as will the dynamics of each lesson), one of the most important concerns for novice educators is how much they should use the "Socratic" method of teaching that has tested the intellect of every African law student since. From one point of view, the traditional Socratic approach is possibly not the most effective teaching style outside of law schools. If it is used

at all, it ought to be used occasionally. The Socratic method is criticized for several reasons. First, students who are not familiar with the spirit and objectives of the Socratic method might view it as terrifying and aggressive given its widespread use in African law schools. Second, traditional university lecturing may be a more practical and efficient way to accomplish the goals of class time, which include promoting a general understanding of the subject matter, transferring information, and clarifying concepts from reading assignments. This is in contrast to the field of legal education, where the goal is to produce attorneys who possess advanced analytical skills suitable for practicing law professionally. Finally, various forms of course material debate where there are multiple viewpoints and should be promoted may be stifled by a teacher-student Socratic exchange. For instance, it is easier to start a lecture about political and legal matters when students are at ease voicing their opinions rather than just answering the instructor's questions. It's common knowledge that students pick up a lot from one another. Intense and transparent classroom discussion aligns with the finest traditions of liberal arts education. However, as part of a larger international law education plan, there is no practical damage in introducing students to the Socratic strategy.

Results and Discussion

How to make students get interested in studying International Law.

The lecture for this module should have passion so that the lessons can be effective. Students need motivation, motivation is a key to better learning (Revell & Wainwright, 2009); (Willmot & Perkin, 2011); . I believe students are driven by what they see, so lectures or instructors explain why they are passionate about the subject and why they entered the field. Lectures should know that it's their job to encourage the students to reflect on the importance of the subject of international law at the end of a semester as compared to their ideas about it when the semester began. Ask students to read a morning newspaper before the conclusion of the semester and identify instances of international law, even if they aren't stated explicitly as such. By doing this, students will come to see that the knowledge they have gained enables them to read the same news articles they have always read, but with a deeper comprehension of the legal background and implications of global events. The international legal system covers, among other things, Important global events including military battles, trade disputes, territory disputes, and environmental calamities. When students comprehend this, they might be eager to stay current in the field or pursue further instruction. If students are interested in keeping current with the subject, a good way for them to do so is with membership in a professional organization like the Black Lawyers Association Student Chapter, NADEL, SAWLA, Limpopo Law Society, or any other organization they might be interested in, the main point here is that students should always get involved in this organization which deals with their profession so that they can have that motivation. It is like living your dream before you live it. Membership in a key professional association not only provides access to valuable educational resources but also an opportunity to demonstrate commitment to an area of study on their curriculum vitae (Anjum, 2020). Some students might even decide to specialize in international law in law school, and eventually as a career. For an instructor, there aren't many moments quite as fulfilling as learning that they helped a student discover their life's passion.

International law teaching in higher education using an interdisciplinary approach.

Is there any need for interdisciplinarity in the study of international law?.. The answer to the question of whether international lawyers should study law depends on their perspective on international legal science. A positivistic approach to law may not require an interdisciplinary approach. In a Kelsenian perspective, only positive law is considered law, and its focus is on its validity criteria, without external values (Chas, 2023). Law should be separate from political, moral, economic, sociological, or other non-legal considerations. Lawyers do not need interdisciplinarity, as their role is simply to describe what the law is. Therefore, the answer to this question depends on the specific object of study for international lawyers. The University of Macerata's research project aimed

to address the risks of colonization and impose the vocabulary, methods, theories, and idiosyncrasies of different disciplines on each other. This risk was exacerbated by the difficulty in deriving a common vocabulary and the temptation for researchers from one discipline to impose their methods on others. Interdisciplinary scholarship also faces challenges due to an oversimplified image of neighboring disciplines, which can lead to a latitudinal and monolithic view of neighboring disciplines. The Macerata project engaged in a "soft" form of interdisciplinarity by bringing together scholars from different disciplines who have addressed the same problem from different perspectives (Hariri et al., 2022);. This form of cooperation may be considered a "multidisciplinary" dialogue rather than an interdisciplinary one, but it attenuates the risk of falling into these traps. Engaging in this dialogue requires participants to translate their discipline's language into an accessible language for all other participants, allowing for self-reflectivity. By participating in this dialogue, participants became aware of the different dimensions of the problems under discussion and acquired new inputs for theoretical reflections within their discipline (Aspers & Corte, 2019);. These lessons learned from the project represent two of the most rewarding results of this kind of initiative.

Conclusion

This paper has shed light on the various challenges and opportunities that exist in teaching international law in higher education. It has emphasized the need for innovative teaching methods that go beyond traditional lecture-style formats and instead encourage active student engagement and critical thinking. Integration of technology, such as online platforms and virtual simulations, can also enhance the learning experience and provide students with practical skills that are relevant in today's globalized world. It has highlighted the importance of interdisciplinary education in teaching international law. By incorporating perspectives from other fields such as political science, economics, and sociology, students can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complex issues that international law seeks to address. This interdisciplinary approach can also foster collaboration and dialogue among students with diverse backgrounds and perspectives. It has underscored the significance of recognizing the role of international law in shaping a better future. As global challenges such as climate change, human rights violations, and armed conflicts persist, international law plays a crucial role in promoting peace, justice, and sustainable development. By equipping students with a solid understanding of international law, higher education institutions can contribute to the development of future leaders who are equipped to address these pressing issues.

Conflicts of Interest

No conflict of interest.

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