

Legal Education and E-Learning: Online Fishbowl Role-Play as a Learning and Teaching Strategy in Legal Skills Development

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Online role-playing provides the opportunity for law students to engage in authentic learning activities. This paper describes and discusses design options in online learning that may be used to teach the theory and practice of selected legal skills, such as negotiation/mediation and legal interviewing. The paper outlines four online 'fishbowl' models of role-playing where students can consult theory and then interact in an online role-play. In these design choices students can interact in an online role-play or simply observe other students in roles online. All students are involved in the critique of interventions and choices made in the fishbowl role-play through the use of online tools. This approach has pedagogical benefits as the opportunity for reflection before choice of action in a role-play is often not possible in the faster paced classroom environment. In this paper the authors provide detail of four models of online fishbowls that may be used in a blended learning design, where role-plays are played out in the class room as well as online or solely in the e-learning environment. Additionally, options in the use of online tools, such as discussion boards, wikis and blogs, to play out and debrief the online role-plays are discussed.

1 Introduction

Legal education in Australia is under a number of pressures. There is the need to provide quality professional education,¹ and the need to do so under relatively tight budgetary constraints.² For students there are a number of substantive law disciplines that must be studied to gain admission to practice, these areas are often referred to as the Priestley 11.³ Additionally, there are a number of legal skills that are not required to be completed at undergraduate or Juris Doctor level, but are a part of practical legal training programs (PLT).⁴ Some of these legal skills are included in undergraduate or Juris Doctor law programs.⁵ According to legal academic Bobette Woliski⁶ relevant legal skills that should be included in legal education include: interviewing clients; legal analysis and problem solving; legal research; writing clear and concise letters and legal documents; advising clients on dispute resolution options; representing clients in negotiations and

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1 New standards in relation to quality have been recently articulated: Council of Australian Law Deans (CALD) *Standards for Australian Law Schools* (CALD, 2009).

2 Elizabeth Handsley, Gary Davis and Mark Israel, 'Law School Lemonade Or Can you Turn External Pressures into Educational Advantages?' (2005) 14 *Griffith Law Review* 108.

3 Dennis Pearce, Enid Campbell and Don Harding, *Australian Law Schools: A Discipline Assessment for the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission* (AGPS, 1987).

4 For example, in Victoria under the *Legal Profession (Admission Rules) 2008* those who wish to be admitted to the legal profession in Victoria must have completed academic qualifications approved for admission: Rule 2.01. Additionally, those persons seeking to be admitted must have completed practical legal training that includes competency standards: Rule 3.01. The competency standards require learning relating to a variety of legal skills such as negotiation.

5 David Weisbrot, 'Taking Skills Seriously: Reforming Australian Legal Education' (2004) 29 *Alternative Law Journal* 266.

6 Bobette Wolski, *Legal Skills: A Practical Guide for Students* (Law Book Company 2006) preface.

mediations and presenting a client's case persuasively in court. In the United States the report by the Carnegie Foundation into legal education⁷ emphasised the importance of legal skills and advocated for the return to some form of the 'apprenticeship' style of legal education.⁸ The Stuckey report⁹ recommends a number of best practices in legal education, many of which refer to legal skills. In Australia research into legal education has noted the importance of graduate attributes as a framework for organising the legal curriculum and legal skills are said to be a part of this framework.¹⁰

In order to teach legal skills in law school education this article considers the option of online fishbowl role-plays. Similar to the learning and teaching strategy of fishbowls in face-to-face role-plays¹¹, online fishbowls allow students to interact in a role-play, jumping 'in' and 'out' of role. At the same time fellow students critique the unfolding story of the role-play, and the intervention choices of the role-players, in a linked online discussion. Adopting this approach in the asynchronous, online environment allows students more time to consider theory in relation to what is happening in the role-play. This opportunity for reflection before choice of action in a role play is often not possible in the faster paced playing out of face-to-face role-plays.

The learning and teaching strategy of a fishbowl can be used in a fully online environment or where online learning is combined with face-to-face learning in an approach to education known as blended learning.¹² In this article the authors argue that blended learning is the preferred approach when teaching legal skills. These online strategies may be used in a legal skills setting, such as a clinical practice course or embedded in a substantive law course or may be used in a subject devoted wholly to legal skills. Importantly, the authors advocate a student centred approach to these simulations and discuss opportunities to incorporate authentic learning environments,¹³ a scaffolded approach to the building of skills and the option of modelling 'best practice.' In the designs¹⁴ discussed in this article the authors describe and discuss four models of online fishbowl role-plays that arguably offer an 'apprentice style' learning opportunity where inexperienced legal students can gain understandings of their professional role in

7 William Sullivan, Anne Colby, Judith Welch Wegner, Lloyd Bond and Lee S Shulman, *Educating Lawyers: Preparation for the Profession of Law* (Jossey-Bass, 2007) (the Carnegie Report).

8 Ibid, ch 1.

9 Roy Stuckey and Others, *Best Practices for Legal Education: A Vision and a Road Map* (Clinical Legal Education Association, 2007).

10 Susanne Owen and Gary Davis, *Learning and Teaching in the Discipline of Law: Achieving and Sustaining Excellence in A Changed and Changing Environment* (ALTC, 2009), 100.

11 See Marlene Le Brun and Richard Johnstone, *The Quiet (R)Evolution: Improving Student Learning in Law* (Law Book Co, 1994) 306.

12 A United Kingdom article dealing with legal education highlights the benefits of blended learning: Liz Polding, 'Delivering Blended Legal Learning by Open Source Methods' (2007) 1 *Journal of Information, Law and Technology* http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/law/elj/jilt/2007_1/polding at 10th March 2010. Blended learning has been canvassed in the context of teaching law using podcasts: Jennifer Ireland, 'Blended Learning in Intellectual Property: The Best of Both Worlds' (2008) *Legal Education Review* 139.

13 See Jan Herrington, Thomas Reeves and Ron Oliver, *A Guide to Authentic E-Learning* (Routledge, 2010).

14 This focus of this paper is upon describing and discussing design options in online fishbowls to teach legal skills and as such does not include evaluation of these online learning and teaching options. The authors confine themselves to 'fishbowl' options as learning and teaching strategy rather than traditional role-plays online.

negotiation/mediation and legal interviewing through the experience of the role-play. Additionally, online tools are discussed in their capacity to facilitate the role-plays and allow for effective debriefing.

The following section of this paper considers legal education and the present trends in learning and teaching and discusses in particular online learning in law. The next section of the paper canvasses the e-learning theory approaches chosen to assist with learning about legal skills, focusing on online 'fishbowl' role-plays. The following section of the paper describes and discusses four models of online role-plays to assist in teaching legal skills. The next section outlines a range of online tools that can be used to facilitate learning in online fishbowls. The authors conclude with a discussion of the need to ensure that online learning in law includes some interactive options and the hope that these designs may assist other law teachers to experiment with online fishbowls in their teaching.

2 Legal Education

Legal education in Australia is changing¹⁵ due to a number of factors including the higher numbers of students in law schools.¹⁶ Legal education, like much of higher education, is affected by the trend to mass tertiary education and the decade long reduction of funding under neo-liberal policies.¹⁷ Particularly, in the last decade or more there has been a growth in law schools, both in the intake of students into established law programs and of international students.¹⁸ This has meant that many law teachers are coping with significant increases in their teaching work-loads. Other issues of importance include the need to provide professional skill based training, often through clinical training¹⁹ and the need to develop professional ethics.²⁰ Decreasing real funding to law programs makes it increasingly difficult to provide professional and clinical education to students.²¹

In 2003 the Johnstone report²² identified pressures for large classes in its research on law program offerings. Where once Australian lawyers were apprenticed in law offices and learnt through work-integrated modes of instruction²³ the focus of present day legal

15 Mary Keyes and Richard Johnstone, 'Changing Legal Education: Rhetoric, Reality, and Prospects for the Future' (2004) 26 *Sydney Law Review* 537.

16 Margaret Thornton, 'The Law School, the Market and the New Knowledge Economy' (2007) 17 (1-2) *Legal Education Review* 1. Thornton argues that neo-liberalism has affected the kind of knowledge valued in many law schools and by some law students, with an increasing emphasis upon knowledge workers to assist the economy.

17 *Ibid.*, 2-12.

18 Keyes and Johnstone, above n 15, 548.

19 For a brief history of clinical legal education and some ruminations regarding its future: Jeff Giddings, 'A 2020 Vision of Clinical Legal Education in Australia' in Ross Hyams and Bernadette Naylor, (eds) *Innovation in Clinical Legal Education: Educating Lawyers for the Future* (Legal Service Bulletin Cooperative, 2007).

20 Christine Parker and Adrian Evans, *Inside Lawyers' Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2007) 31-37.

21 Keyes and Johnstone, above n 15.

22 Richard Johnstone and Sumitra Vignaendra, *Learning Outcomes and Curriculum Development in Law: A Report Commissioned by Australian Universities Teaching Committee* (AUTC, 2003).

23 Le Brun and Johnstone, above n 11, 18.

education is the teaching of substantive areas of law taught largely in lecture theatres. Gradually, the teaching of law students has also included legal skills as well as substantive law,²⁴ but skills can be expensive to teach in law programs. The Carnegie²⁵ report has argued that there are three apprenticeships: legal analysis, expert practice and professional identity. These areas are taught through the interaction between the novice student and the expert teacher in a community of practice in both university teaching and clinical practice programs.²⁶ In Australia, many law schools integrate legal skills into either substantive law courses, clinical education or alternatively through a specific legal skills course²⁷ (which may be combined with ethics and legal management issues). In the most recent report on law school learning and teaching, *Learning and Teaching in the Discipline Area of Law*, researchers identified a number of learning and teaching practices used in Australian Law Schools, both in the face-to-face and online environment.²⁸ In this article the authors reflect upon the possible use of blended learning to enhance legal skills education through a combination of online and face-to-face learning.

The imperatives of legal education require law school academics to be more effective and efficient in the learning and teaching strategies that are adopted. Recently, Sally Kift has stated:

Further at a time when higher education has renewed its focus on learning and teaching professionalism and the quality of the student experience, the current fraught reality for all- academics and students alike- is that we need to be more effective and efficient in our daily practices and educational engagements.²⁹

Arguably, online learning can provide an option for law teachers to consider when exploring more efficient and effective methods of teaching law. In the next section of this article we discuss in more detail e-learning approaches, authentic learning online, blended learning, and Laurillard's³⁰ conversational framework, utilised in the online fishbowl role-plays to provide law academics with options to teach parts of legal skills theory and practice online.

3 Learning and Teaching Online: Authentic Learning

The need for learning that is 'situated' has been identified as an important consideration

24 Owen and Davies, above n 10, 30.

25 Sullivan et al, above n 7.

26 Ibid, 27-29.

27 For example see Bobette Wolski, 'Why, How, and What to Practice: Integrating Skills Teaching and Learning in the Undergraduate Law Curriculum' (2002) 52 *Journal of Legal Education* 287.

28 Owen and Davies, above n 10, attachment B.

29 Sally Kift, '21st Century Climate for Change: Curriculum Design for Quality Learning Engagement in Law' (2008) (1&2) *Legal Education Review* 1, 2.

30 Diana Laurillard, *Rethinking University Teaching: A Framework for the Effective Use of Learning Technologies* (Routledge-Farmer, 2nd ed, 2002).

in learning and teaching design.³¹ Learning is assisted by the realisation that knowledge, for example learning theory and practice relating to legal skills, is not separate from how we learn and how the knowledge will be used.³² Issues relating to the theory and practice of legal skills should not be taught simply as abstract but should be situated in the practice of law. Abstract technical concepts and vocabulary will be learnt more quickly in learning activities that are situated in real world contexts. Further, it is important that these contexts include the culture of the practice community. As Brown, Collins and Duguid emphasize, '[a]ctivity, concept, and culture are interdependent...Learning must involve all three'³³. The use of simulations and role-plays, already heavily utilised in the teaching of legal skills such as negotiation,³⁴ should therefore be used in teaching legal skills more generally.

For deeper learning to occur, abstract legal knowledge should be taught in such a way that a law student learns to apply the knowledge. By giving the student access to an 'authentic' activity³⁵ through which to learn we give them the chance to engage more effectively with concepts and prepare them to become reflective practitioners. We also give them the chance to engage in the culture of a particular activity.³⁶ That culture could be that of lawyers in a particular context such as a large law firm or as legal counsel in a corporation. Multiple contexts can give a breadth of learning opportunities.³⁷ The novice can learn from the expert, which may be the law teacher or legal industry representative, modelling for the student and allowing the building of knowledge. In this way students are undergoing a process of professional acculturation as part of their learning, as Brown, Collins and Duguid argue, '[t]o learn to use tools as practitioners use them, a student, like an apprentice, must enter that community and its culture'.³⁸ However, the culture of the activity may well have its perceived problems. In the legal arena there are criticisms of the dominant culture and its suppression of the voice of 'others' such as women and those from various ethnic groups.³⁹ Students will not necessarily need to adopt the dominant culture, but it may be a temptation and thus learning and teaching strategies should assist in reflective critique of dominant cultures. Additionally, there could be difficulties where the culture of an activity stems from specific group situations, such as the differing cultures of lawyers in various practice contexts.⁴⁰ There may well be a variety of methods of practice and problem solving so

31 Anna Reid, Vijaya Nagarajan and Emma Dortins., 'The Experience of Becoming a Legal Professional' (2006) 25 *Higher Education Research and Development* 85.

32 Herrington et al, above n 13, 14.

33 John Seely Brown, Allan Collins and Paul Duguid, 'Situated Cognition and the Culture of Learning' (1989) 18 *Educational Researcher* 32, 33.

34 Melissa Conley Tyler and Naomi Cukier, 'Nine Lessons for Teaching Negotiation Skills' (2005) 15 *Legal Education Review* 61.

35 Anthony Herrington and Jan Herrington 'What is an Authentic Learning Environment?' in Anthony Herrington and Jan Herrington (eds), *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education* (Idea Group, 2006), 4.

36 Ibid, 5.

37 Ibid, 6.

38 Brown et al, above n 33, 33.

39 Le Brun and Johnstone, above n 11, 75.

40 For example in family law where the culture of the lawyers may be less 'adversarial' than some other areas of practice: Becky Batagol, 'Formentors of Strife, Gladiatorial Champions or Something Else Entirely? Lawyers and Family Dispute Resolution' (2008) 8 *QUT Law and Justice Journal* 24.

that it becomes difficult for students to easily identify 'expert' activity.⁴¹

The use of online role-plays, in a blended learning design combining with traditional classroom activities, gives the opportunity for students to participate in authentic activities in two mediums, both face-to-face and online. Online role-plays are an authentic learning experience due to the framing of learning in 'real world' environments,⁴² such as a legal practice, in an online simulation. An authentic learning environment is not necessarily simply mirroring real world practice where an authentic environment is provided, but rather should provide the opportunity for cognitive authenticity, allowing interactions that provide realistic problem solving and interventions.⁴³ Legal skills can be taught through the interaction between the novice student and the expert teacher in a community of practice in both university teaching and clinical practice programs.⁴⁴

Scaffolding can be an important part of teaching in an authentic and situated manner in law.⁴⁵ Scaffolded learning is where the teacher or 'expert' provides a bridge for the learner to be able to progress from their current capability to a higher-level capability. It focuses on the gap between what a student is capable of carrying out independently and what they are capable of carrying out with guidance.⁴⁶ This is done through breaking a task down to its component parts but only to the point where the tasks remain challenging yet achievable. The goal of scaffolding is that when scaffolds are removed the learner is then able to achieve independently.⁴⁷ Scaffolding tools may be modelling, prompts or cues, partial solutions, and direct instruction or coaching. These approaches are also possible in the e-learning environment in such activities as online role-play.⁴⁸ The key to a scaffolded approach to learning is the idea that learning is fundamentally a social and contextual activity,⁴⁹ and it is well suited to learning practice-based skills. Although scaffolding may suggest an inflexibility towards what it is that the student must achieve, in a mentoring or coaching model it can be used sparingly to support the knowledge being constructed by the student ensuring that constructivist deep learning can still occur.

41 New practice approaches, advocated by some in the United States and Australia, include more therapeutic orientations to legal practice that holistically deal with client problems and engage with the emotional concerns of clients. See for example Michael King, 'Restorative Justice, Therapeutic Jurisprudence and the Rise of Emotionally Intelligent Justice' (2008) 32 *Melbourne University Law Review* 1096; Jean Sternlight and Jennifer Robbenolt, 'Good Lawyers Should Be Good Psychologists: Insights for Interviewing and Counseling Clients' (2008) *Ohio State Journal on Dispute Resolution* 437.

42 Herrington et al, above n 13, 86. For instance students can be asked to produce a negotiation plan: Tina Cockburn and Tracey Carver, 'Online Skill Development for Generation Y Students' (2007) 13(12) *International Journal of Education* 81, 85.

43 Herrington and Herrington, above n 34, 7. The authors provide nine guidelines for authentic learning design.

44 Le Brun and Johnson, above n 11, 73.

45 Ibid, 74.

46 Ibid, 73-74.

47 Herrington et al, n 10, 35.

48 Herrington et al, above n 10, 34-36.

49 John Baird 'Using Interactive Video-based Multimedia to Scaffold Learning in Teaching Education' in Som Naidu (ed.) *Learning and Teaching with Technology*, (Kogan Page, 2003).

This means that concepts and strategies can be developed with scaffolding⁵⁰ rather than scaffolding students towards one correct answer. This is important in developing legal skills as practice needs to be informed by theory and reflection. A sequence of activities, or occasional prompts, can scaffold a process of guided reflection⁵¹ so that a student develops the ability to reflect upon action in reference to theory without being instructed what the correct action is. As online simulations or role-plays enable more time for reflection, they are arguably ideal environments to utilise scaffolding to develop a reflective approach to legal practice.

In the online environment this more active support can be provided by including the educational approach of problem based learning⁵² (PBL) in the larger online role-play simulation of a legal problem. Within this larger PBL role play scenario, specific scaffolded online fishbowls can be incorporated. PBL (sometimes known as issue or inquiry based learning)⁵³ offers the opportunity to students to face the challenge of a problem and find a range of options to meet that challenge. It is an open-ended strategy that gives students the chance to work in groups to collaboratively and creatively engage with the issue presented.⁵⁴ This approach places a problem as the focus of, and the impetus for, student learning. The roles of teacher and student shift so that students assume responsibility for their learning while teachers act as facilitators, resource providers and evaluators.⁵⁵ The PBL approach has been used in some legal education contexts, often relating to clinical practice or practical legal training programs.⁵⁶ The PBL approach can be used in law simulations such as in virtual legal worlds where law students engage in online role-plays to practice their future professional role.⁵⁷

In our view, fishbowl role-plays can be held at key times in the larger PBL student experience or can be used as standalone scaffolded learning activities online. Online fishbowls can provide the opportunity for students to practice legal skills and also receive scaffolded instruction from the law teacher which ensures that skill building is supported while learning is as independent as possible. This is possible with the online fishbowl activity as students can jump 'in' and 'out' of role to practice interviewing a client, providing client counselling regarding legal options and engaging in a simulation of a

50 Ibid.

51 Herrington, et al above n 10, 35.

52 PBL has been used in practical training courses in Victoria. It has also been utilized in Canada as part of pre-admission training: Julie Macfarlane and John Manwaring, 'Reconciling Professional Legal Education with the Evolving (Trial-less) Reality of Legal Practice' (2006) 1 *Journal of Dispute Resolution* 253.

53 See for a discussion of the similar learning and teaching approaches in this area, Paul Kirschner, John Sweller and Richard Clark, 'Why Minimal Guidance During Instruction Does Not Work: An Analysis of the Failure of Constructivist, Discovery, Problem-Based, Experiential, and Inquiry-Based Teaching' (2006) 41 *Educational Psychologist* 75.

54 For resources regarding PBL in the legal context see UK Centre for Legal Education <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/index.html> at 4 June 2010.

55 For a detailed guide in the use of PBL in universities see Margaret Kiley, Gerry Mullins, Ray Peterson and Tim Rogers, *Leap into Problem Based Learning*, Centre for Learning and Professional Development, University of Adelaide, <http://www.adelaide.edu.au/clpd/resources/leap/leapinto/ProblemBasedLearning.pdf> at 25 February 2011.

56 David Boud and Grahame Feletti (eds.) *The Challenge of Problem-Based Learning* (Routledge, 2nd ed., 1997).

57 Paul Maharg, *Transforming Legal Education: Learning and Teaching the Law in the Early Twenty-first Century* (Ashgate, 2007), ch 7.

negotiation. Support can be provided in these fishbowls through the use of a concurrent discussion thread where students and teacher debate the interventions and choices available to the fishbowl role players. The teacher can jump into role to model 'best practice'. Additionally, the legal skills used online can be practised in the face-to-face environment through skills development in the classroom. This combination of face-to-face and online learning provides further scaffolding of the relevant legal skills.

There are three approaches to e-learning that the authors have utilised in skills development in negotiation/mediation and legal interviewing: online role-play, blended learning and Laurillard's conversational framework.⁵⁸

3.1 Online Role-plays

Role-plays that occur in the online environment are a growing phenomenon in e-learning in a number of disciplinary areas, including law.⁵⁹ Role-plays of this kind provide the opportunity for active learning that incorporates collaborative problem solving⁶⁰ and are generally asynchronous, that is, not in real time.⁶¹ In a recent report for the Australian Learning and Teaching Council on role based online learning environments the definition was provided in the following manner:

Online and blended role-plays are:

Designed to increase understanding of real life human interaction and dynamics

Participants assume a role in someone else's shoes or in someone else's situation

Participants undertake authentic tasks in an authentic context

Task involves extensive in-role interaction with other roles for collaboration, negotiation, debate.⁶²

Notably, the kinds of role-plays under discussion in this article are not engaged with through automated computer software,⁶³ but require roles to be taken by students. Online

⁵⁸ Laurillard, above n 30.

⁵⁹ Sandra Wills, Elizabeth Rosser, Elizabeth Devonshire, Elysebeth Leigh, Carol Russell and John Shepherd, *Project EnRole Blue Report: Role Based Online Learning Environments*, (ALTC, 2009).

⁶⁰ Sandra Wills and Anne McDougall, 'Re-usability of On-line Role-play as Learning Objects or Learning Designs' in Lori Lockyer, Sue Bennett, Shirley Agostinho and Barry Harper, *Handbook of Research on Learning Design and Learning Objects: Issues, Applications and Technologies* (IGI Group, 2008), 762.

⁶¹ Robert McLaughlan and Denise Kirkpatrick, 'On-line Role-Based Learning Designs for Teaching Complex Decision Making' in Lori Lockyer, Sue Bennett, Shirley Agostinho and Barry Harper, *Handbook of Research on Learning Design and Learning Objects: Issues, Applications and Technologies* (IGI Group, 2008), 306.

⁶² Wills et al, above n 59, 10.

⁶³ For a discussion of these kinds of simulations see Laurillard, above n 30, 127-134. Role-plays online can be part of larger virtual situated learning environments, such as a simulated restaurant: Sandra Jones, 'Using IT to Augment Authentic Learning Environments' in Anthony Herrington and Jan Herrington (eds), *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education* (Idea Group, 2006), 172.

role-plays of this kind can be used in an open ended fashion where a problem of some sort is provided and the end of the role-play can be the solution to the problem, or exploration of an issue posed or even in some circumstances the creation of something.⁶⁴ There is sophisticated software⁶⁵ available through the internet to assist in designing online role-plays including the opportunity to provide for multiple characters, a scenario, a chat room, an updating newsletter and a debriefing room. Participants can add to their character profile to build their own personal qualities in their character. Alternatively, email⁶⁶ or university systems such as the Blackboard Learning Management System can be utilized to play out an online role-play.

There may be designs where combinations of the use of technology and face-to-face role-plays are utilised. For example, Dracup⁶⁷ reports on a blended learning approach in a course run in intensive mode where character information and background is electronically distributed to students prior to role-plays being carried out in a face-to-face environment. This approach highlighted the benefits of students engaging in storytelling through role-plays. Online role-plays can be designed to require complex decision making that incorporates accommodation of diverse and competing perspectives.⁶⁸ Online role-plays have been used in the discipline areas of law⁶⁹ to assist with learning about negotiation strategies. The use of simulations of this kind allows students to trace back the moves in the negotiation through the printing and review of a transcript of the negotiation.⁷⁰

Limitations of role-plays online relate to the lack of visual cues⁷¹ but students can be briefed regarding the need to provide such cues through symbols. Potentially students could use emoticons to replicate non-verbal and body language responses. Students unfamiliar with technology may also need to be briefed how best to use technology and

64 Wills and McDougall, above n 60.

65 This software is available on the internet, see Fablusi, *The On-line Role-play Simulation Platform*, <http://www.fablusi.com/> at 25 February 2011.

66 Joshua Weiss, 'A View through the Bubble: Some Insights from Teaching Negotiation Online' (2005) 21 *Negotiation Journal* 71.

67 Mary Dracup, 'Role-play in Blended Learning: A Case Study Exploring the Impact of Story and Other Elements' (2008) 24 *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 294.

68 McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick, above n 61, 306.

69 Conley Tyler and Cukier, above n 34. See also for a discussion of online simulations in law: Maharg, above n 57, ch 6; Kathy Douglas, 'Mediator Accreditation: Using Online Role-plays to Teach Theoretical Issues' (2007) 18(2) *Australasian Dispute Resolution Journal* 92. Kathy Douglas and Belinda Johnson, 'Online Mediation Fishbowl: Learning about Gender and Power in Mediation' (2008) 1 & 2 *Journal of the Australasian Law Teachers Association* 95.

70 Weiss, above n 67. Students can also reflect upon cultural concerns in the online environment. This is particularly useful as many negotiations are now carried out online: Brooks C Holtom and Amy L Kenworthy-U'Ren, 'Electronic Negotiation: A Teaching Tool for Encouraging Student Self-Reflection' (2006) 22 *Negotiation Journal* 303. Negotiation simulations can be between students from different universities and can include international simulations: Robert B McKersie and Nils Olaya Fonstad, 'Teaching Negotiation Theory and Skills Over the Internet' (1997) 13 *Negotiation Journal* 363.

71 One option is to use web based video to provide these visual cues: Scott Peppet, 'Teaching Negotiation Using Web-Based Streaming Video' (2002) 18 *Negotiation Journal* 271.

strategies for dealing with the very real possibility of the technology breaking down.⁷² A further problem relates to the possibility that some students will be slow to respond in the online environment. The impact of tardy role-players on the success of simulations was recently discussed in the results of an online negotiation role-play carried out between students of Macquarie University and the University of Tasmania.⁷³ The teachers of the negotiation classes at the two universities noted the frustration of students who participated promptly in the online negotiation with those who failed to respond electronically in a timely manner.⁷⁴ This highlights one disadvantage of transferring a face-to-face role play method into the online environment where one student plays each part in a role-play, namely the potential for lengthy gaps in time between electronic responses and the role-play taking a substantial amount of time to complete. This drawback can be circumvented by the requirement of strict time limits for the completion of parts of the role-play. However, some students may still not respond in the designated times and thus hamper the completion of the role-play.

3.2 Blended Learning

Blended learning generally⁷⁵ refers to the combination of online and face-to-face teaching and learning modes within the one course.⁷⁶ Blended learning departs from the idea that one mode of learning such as a lecture is always superior to another such as an online discussion board and instead considers the diverse benefits that different mediums can offer to achieve the intended learning outcomes and asks for a purpose focussed approach to the learning design.⁷⁷ Both face-to-face and online learning have a unique set of characteristics that shapes how students engage with an activity. It is through blending these mediums that the advantages of different learning mediums can be combined⁷⁸ and lead to deeper learning.⁷⁹ The best medium for achieving a particular learning objective should indicate how the blending of learning mediums occurs. However, it is important not to 'essentialize' the learning modes,⁸⁰ for example by assuming that an activity online will necessarily require students to be reflective. Instead the focus needs to be on how

72 David Spencer and Samantha Hardy, 'Deal or No Deal: Teaching Online Negotiation to Law Students' (2008) 18 *QUT Law and Justice Journal* 93, 97.

73 Ibid, 97-110.

74 Ibid, 113

75 Some writers are critical of the broad range of definitions for blended learning arguing that anything at all can be described as blended learning: Martin Oliver and Keith Trigwell, 'Can "Blended Learning" be Redeemed?' (2005) 2 *E-learning* 17.

76 Charles Graham, 'Blended Learning Systems: Definition, Current Trends, and Future Directions' in Curtis Bonk & Charles Graham (eds.) *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*, (Pfeiffer, 2006), 3.

77 Linda De George-Walker and Mary Keefe, 'Self-Determined Blended Learning: A Case Study of Blended Design' (2010) 29 *Higher Education Research and Development* 1.

78 Jennifer Hoffman 'Why Blended Learning Hasn't (Yet) Fulfilled Its Promises', in Curtis Bonk & Charles Graham (eds.) *The Handbook of Blended Learning: Global Perspectives, Local Designs*, (Pfeiffer, 2006), 29.

79 Graham, above n 76, 13. Biggs and Tang state that deep learning means that students have engaged with the material meaningfully, John Biggs and Catherine Tang, *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*, (McGraw Hill Education, 2007) 24.

80 Oliver and Trigwell, above n 75, 22-24.

variation can be experienced by students in the activities in different learning modes. It is important that both practical benefits and pedagogical implications are considered in designing a blending learning course, so that each mode contributes to a positive learning experience, and the worst aspects of each medium are avoided.⁸¹

Some of the possible practical benefits of online learning are it can increase access and convenience if students are able to engage in interactive learning from any geographic location. It can also be a cost effective way to provide supplementary materials.⁸² Benefits to learning online are that it can allow greater control of the pace of activities being carried out giving students more time to reflect and refer to source material as they participate. Advantages of face-to-face environments are that they can allow for social connections to be made easily among a group of learners and may be a better environment for spontaneous interaction. For example, in a blended learning and teaching design in teaching law students can initially develop legal skills such as active listening and open-ended questioning through role-plays in face-to-face classes. Then, moving the activity online can provide an environment that offers greater time for reflection that means that theoretical concerns may be better engaged with through the activity. Following this, role-plays may be re-introduced into the face-to-face environment for students to learn to maintain their theory-informed responses in a faster moving scenario. In the context of the discussion of this paper dealing with legal skills the authors argue that blended learning provides a superior learning experience than attempting to teach legal skills simply in the online environment. Although, it is possible to use the fishbowls models solely in the online environment, and we believe that positive learning experiences will result, the blending of the two environments is ideal to teach the theory and practice of legal skills.

3.3 Laurillard's Conversational Framework

While first qualifying the ability of any theorist to provide a comprehensive approach to generating a learning and teaching strategy, academic Diana Laurillard provides us with a framework to utilise when teaching in higher education.⁸³ She cautions us against seeing this framework as a recipe for success in every situation as the link between student learning and 'what' and 'how' we teach is never so clear cut that a teacher can announce 'this is how to do it'.⁸⁴ Laurillard argues that the character of student learning is elusive as learning is dependent upon the student's former experiences of the world and of education, and on the nature of the current teaching situation that is being played out.⁸⁵

81 Graham, above n 76, 14-16.

82 This use of blended learning may assist tertiary teachers in developing efficient and effective learning designs that not only assist students' understanding but also are cost effective: Rachael Field, 'Favorable Conditions for Effective and Efficient Learning in a Blended Face-to-Face/On-line Method' *ASCILITE Conference Proceedings Balance, Fidelity, Mobility: Maintaining the Momentum?* December 4-7 Brisbane http://www.ascilite.org.au/conferences/brisbane05/blogs/proceedings/23_Field.pdf at 25 February 2011.

83 Laurillard, above n 30.

84 Ibid.

85 Ibid, 70.

Laurillard does however, articulate a principled approach to learning. This approach can be applied to all learning, but in particular Laurillard applies the approach to teaching with technology. It is rhetoric, dialogue with a student, which Laurillard argues is likely to give birth to learning in the online environment. A 'conversational framework' is an opportunity for dialogue that gives descriptions of the second order nature of learning that is academic learning.⁸⁶ These parts are described as: discursive, adaptive, interactive and reflective.⁸⁷

In the context of the four models of fishbowl role-plays discussed and described in this paper each role-play begins with a 'discursive' opportunity with students debating set critical literature relating to professional interventions in an electronic discussion board. The teacher then 'adapts' the role-play scenario to meet the learning needs of the particular group of students, as raised in the group discussion. That is where students appear to require further learning in relation to a professional intervention, such as using active listening techniques in a negotiation or legal interview, the role-play can be written in such a way that this issue is highlighted. The online role-play is then electronically posted and students 'interactively' engage in the roles, providing intrinsic feedback from role-players' choices. Finally, students can 'reflect' upon the experience of the online role-play in a journal. The adoption of the Laurillard's 'conversational framework' by the law teacher can assist students to become reflective legal practitioners, particularly through the final reflection⁸⁸ in the learning activity. Additionally, through the use of the fishbowl approach, students can debate professional interventions in a concurrent threaded discussion. In this way there is intrinsic feedback from the actions in the role-play taken by the various players and also feedback from the other students who debate the choices made by the role-players and co-construct appropriate practice.⁸⁹

There are a number of online tools, which will be discussed in detail in a later section of this paper, that work to facilitate the dialogue online. In the next section of this paper we discuss in detail the four models of online fishbowls that have been identified for use in developing legal skills.

⁸⁶ Ibid, ch 3.

⁸⁷ Ibid, 83-84.

⁸⁸ Kelley Burton and Judith McNamara, 'Assessing Reflection Skills in Law Using Criterion-Referenced Assessment' (2009) 19 *Legal Education Review* 171. Indeed this learning design may develop reflexive practice in law students where the aim is to promote a community of inquiry that questions established views and the student development of ideas that may result in change in practice: Joanne Robuck, 'Reflexive Practice: To Enhance Student Learning' (2007) 1 *Journal of Learning Design* 77.

⁸⁹ The use of the Laurillard 'conversational framework' can assist law teachers to develop media interactions for law students that are either fully or partially online such as through a virtual law school. Students can negotiate and co-construct meaning in the context of legal practice in the online environment where an appropriate learning design is adopted: Paul Maharg and Abdul Paliwala, 'Negotiating the Learning Process with Electronic Resources' in Roger Burrigge, Karen Hinett, Abdul Paliwala and Tracey Varnava (eds.), *Effective Learning and Teaching in Law* (Kogan Page, 2002) 81, 90.

4 Four Models of Online Fishbowls

There are a variety of approaches to playing out role-plays online. The most common approach is to allow students to be involved in an open-ended role-play that provides them with a role, a task or outcome to achieve and a background scenario.⁹⁰ Updated information can be provided periodically during the role-play and students will need to react to these changed circumstances.⁹¹ The authors of this paper have chosen a structured learning and teaching design which allows students to engage in stages, firstly reading relevant theoretical literature then applying this theory to professional interventions in the online role-play. Through reflection and experimentation we have developed four fishbowl models of structured role-plays to assist students to build professional skills. The authors argue that fishbowls are particularly useful for legal skill building as they provide the opportunity for scaffolding by the law teacher. As indicated previously in this article each model is preceded by a discussion online of the set literature or alternatively students can be asked to research the literature themselves.

4.1 Interactive fishbowl role-play

This approach mirrors fishbowl role-plays in the face-to-face environment. It begins with the online discussion of relevant theory and then progresses to adaptation of the role-play to meet the learning needs of the particular cohort of students. The scenario is then posted online and students can elect to take on roles in the fishbowl role-play. Ideally, all students participate by changing in and out of the roles in the designated scenario. However, some students may choose not to be active participants and may engage as observers. In a negotiation or legal interview role-play the scenario would be posted online with the background information for each player. Students would volunteer to take on roles, such as the client, a partner and a first year solicitor. The scenario is played out for a period and then another student takes up one of the roles. The teacher moderates roles, generally through email, to ensure an orderly progression of students through the roles. The teacher can also jump into role to model 'best practice' where students require scaffolding. Concurrently, students electronically reflect upon and debate the interventions and choices made in the legal interview role-play, ensuring active learning throughout the role-play for a large number of students. This discussion draws upon the literature canvassed by the students at the beginning of the learning activity.

4.2 Comparative fishbowl role-play

On occasion it may be helpful to demonstrate two differing approaches for a lawyer to adopt in practice. In this context a comparative fishbowl allows the students and teacher to engage in practice informed by differing theories. These theories would have been discussed in the first part of the learning activity. For example, a class may have discussed literature relating to legal interviewing, including the approach of participatory

90 McLaughlan and Kirkpatrick, above n 61, 301.

91 Shirley Agostino, 'Using Characters in Online Simulated Environments to Guide Authentic Tasks' in Anthony Herrington and Jan Herrington (eds), *Authentic Learning Environments in Higher Education* (Idea Group, 2006), 88.

client focused interviewing in a discussion board prior to the online role-play.⁹² An alternative theory, drawing from an interdisciplinary approach to practice known as collaborative practice, may also be discussed on the discussion board. Students can engage in an online fishbowl role-play using both theoretical approaches in turn. They can then debate the comparative advantages and disadvantages of the approaches online and reflect upon the two approaches in their assessable journal. Alternatively, two groups can use one of the theoretical models in their online role-play and then exchange the transcript record with the other group. The theories could then be debated online. This approach will save some time for students who may find the playing out of two role-plays time consuming.

4.3 Fishbowl role-play with a reference group

In this model an industry representative, for example a lawyer who is an experienced negotiator or a lawyer trained in collaborative interviewing techniques can be asked to contribute to the online fishbowl role-play. They can contribute to the concurrent discussion, take part in the role-play to model 'best practice' or simply be part of the debriefing of the role-play. The industry representative offers guidance to the role-players from their practice experience during the role-play and also reflection about practice after the role-play using online tools.

4.4 Fishbowl with a demonstrated role-play

In this approach to playing out a fishbowl online two or more students (depending on the scenario) play the roles of negotiators or clients being interviewed by lawyers. As only a small number of students are involved in the role play the scenario is played out at a fast pace and moderation is not necessary by the teacher. However, students are actively involved as the rest of the class act as observers and can make suggestions, based on the set literature, via a concurrent threaded discussion. Observation, whether building skills in negotiation or legal interviewing, can play a key role in learning. Students can observe and critique the actions of the role-players and are able to influence the scenario in that role-players may take up their suggestions for interventions in the fishbowl.

The following table summarises each of the models distinctive features and the major benefits and disadvantages:

Table 1: Major Benefits and Disadvantages of the Various Models

Type of online role-play	Distinctive Features	Major benefits and disadvantages
Interactive fishbowl role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult literature • consider theory • observe skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of engagement • capacity to demonstrate optimum skills • many students involved

⁹² Woliski, above n 6, 67.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • practice skills • reflective practice • critique responses of others • receive intrinsic feedback <p>(many students actively participate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • required skills are modelled or demonstrated to all participants • short term participation
Comparative fishbowl role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult literature • consider theory • practice skills • critique and distinguish models • reflective practice • receive intrinsic feedback 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level of engagement • critique theory and model different approaches
Fishbowl role-play with reference group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult literature • consider theory • consult experts • observe skills • practice skills • reflective practice • critique responses of others • receive intrinsic feedback <p>(small number of students actively participate)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high level practitioner feedback • activity is highly contextualised • Not all students actively involved in fishbowl but all involved in discussion and dialogue with industry representative(s).
Fishbowl with demonstrated role-play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • consult literature • consider theory • observe skills • practice skills* • reflective practice • reflective practice • critique responses of others • receive intrinsic feedback* <p>(*only some students play the roles, the rest observe)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • capacity to demonstrate optimum skills • required skills are modelled to all participants • few students actively involved

5 Online Tools

There are many types of software that could allow more activities supporting the online role-plays to be carried out within the online environment. For instance discussion boards are widely used in the online environment.⁹³ More recent software such as wikis⁹⁴ and blogs⁹⁵ are gaining more widespread use in universities.⁹⁶ Discussion boards, wikis and blogs have great potential as online learning tools as they require the active construction of knowledge by students rather than students passively being presented with content.⁹⁷ Students can also lead discussion using these online tools and thus enhance their learning, diminishing the dominance of the teacher in the learning process.⁹⁸ Digital media is transforming learning through the increasing use of the internet. Universities are starting to adopt a variety of online tools in teaching university courses, although the change to university practices is slower than the pace of change in the community in terms of transformation of socializing and learning.⁹⁹

5.1 Discussion Board

Harasim, Hiltz, Teles and Turoff¹⁰⁰ describe discussion boards as being useful in promoting a collaborative framework for learning. Discussion boards offer a shared topic focus for interaction. They also provide an opportunity for deeper analysis and reflection as students can access past discussions as well as making new contributions. Kim states that because computer mediated discussion boards are asynchronous communication tools they create opportunities for inclusiveness (particularly in intercultural encounters), potentially reducing social differentials such as age and gender, removing problems associated with language and accents or intonation differentials and providing opportunities to enhance creativity, and develop critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills.¹⁰¹ Discussion boards also provide time to reflect on, and structure, ideas and increase self-reflection.¹⁰² Increasingly, discussion boards can be used in

93 Linda Harasim, Starr Roxanne Hiltz, Lucio Teles and Murray Turoff, *Learning Networks: A Field Guide to Teaching and Learning Online* (MIT Press, 1995), 80.

94 Alison Ruth and Luke Houghton, 'The Wiki Way of Learning' (2009) 25 *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 135.

95 Hyung Nam Kim, 'The Phenomenon of Blogs and Theoretical Model of Blog Use in Educational Contexts' (2008) 51 *Computers and Education* 1342.

96 There are more recent technologies not discussed in this article that may be of interest in future teaching designs such as for instance the use of mobiles in teaching, cloud computing and smart objects. For detail see: The New Media Consortium, *The 2009 Horizon Report* (New Media Consortium, 2009).

97 Ian Robertson, 'Learners' Attitudes to Wiki Technology in Problem Based, Blended Learning for Vocational Teacher Education' (2008) 24(4) *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 425.

98 Dorit Maor, 'Changing Relationship: Who is the Learner and Who is the Teacher in the Online Education al Landscape?' (2008) 24 *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 627.

99 Cathy Davidson and Theo Goldberg, *The Future of Learning Institutions in a Digital Age* (MIT, 2009), 11-13.

100 Harasim, et al, above n 93, 80.

101 Kim, above n 95, 1343.

102 Hao-Chang Lo, 'Utilizing Computer-mediated Communication Tools for Problem Based Learning' (2009) 12 *Educational Technology and Society* 205.

learning designs that use mobile phones to access the forum.¹⁰³ Discussion boards can be used to play out the online fishbowl role-play models discussed in this paper as well as to debrief and reflect upon the online role-play periodically during the simulation and at the conclusion.

5.2 The Wiki

A wiki is a shared online site where published documents can be added to or amended by anyone who has access to the site.¹⁰⁴ Wikis are designed to be simple to use and are ideal for collaborative tasks.¹⁰⁵ Wikis are becoming more popular in higher education to facilitate the construction of knowledge in an active learning environment and may be used in collaborative learning, such as problem-based learning.¹⁰⁶ Wikis provide some benefits over discussion boards as the content of published documents can be added to, or amended, by anyone who has access to the site¹⁰⁷ creating one document.¹⁰⁸ A possible problem with wikis is that in some circumstances another person's contribution can be amended or deleted without consent.¹⁰⁹ This can be overcome by ensuring clear group rules are established about wiki behaviour before it is used.

Use of a wiki allows a teacher to track individual contributions that means assessment of individual students participation in a group task is clearer and students can be given specific instructions when to 'patrol' the wiki to ensure the appropriateness of content.¹¹⁰ The system gives individual students the opportunity to write, edit and submit written work.¹¹¹ Wikis may also be useful as a tool for multiple students to co-author written documents such as a group assignment or final report. In addition, the wiki's comments function can be useful for both teachers and students to provide input and suggestions, without changing the written piece. The teacher may also set up the wiki to restrict access to others' written pieces and prevent deletion or export of another student's written piece. Through wikis students can engage in a community of practice for knowledge creation.¹¹²

103 Fu-Hsiang Wei and Gwo-Dong Chen, 'Collaborative Mentor Support in a Learning Context Using a Ubiquitous Discussion Forum to Facilitate Knowledge Sharing for Lifelong Learning' (2006) 37 *British Journal of Educational Technology* 917.

104 The most famous example is the online free encyclopedia Wikipedia: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page at 3 January 2010.

105 For example students and teachers can collaborate to develop their own wikibooks as part of learning: Gilad Ravid, Yoram Kalman and Sheizaf Rafaeli, 'Wikibooks in Higher Education: Empowerment Through Online Distributed Collaboration' (2008) 24 *Computers in Human Behavior* 1913.

106 Ruth and Houghton, above n 94.

107 Samuel Kai-Wah Chu, 'TWiki for Knowledge Building and Management' (2008) 32 *Online Information Review* 745.

108 Ibid, 745-750.

109 Steve Wheeler, Peter Yeomans and Dawn Wheeler, 'The Good, the Bad and the Wiki: Evaluating Student-Generated Content for Collaborative Learning' (2008) 39 *British Journal of Educational Technology* 987.

110 Ibid, 991.

111 Chu, above n 107, 750.

112 Wheeler et al, above n 109, 989.

In regard to online role-plays, wikis can be used to engage students in preparation for the role-play, to play out the role-play or be used for group reflection after the role-play. For example, in the models under discussion in this article wikis may be used to develop a shared understanding of relevant theory. Wikis could also be used to design role-play scenarios,¹¹³ to create both the characters and scenarios that are the starting point of the role-play. This would help to develop a shared understanding among the group of the issues, characters and situation. A wiki can be used to play out the role-play itself or after completion of the role-play a wiki could be used to summarise critical issues brought up in a concurrent discussion thread.

5.3 Online blogs

Blogs are online journals where diary-type entries can be published online in chronologically reversed order. They do not require complex computing skills and are a popular social networking tool on the internet.¹¹⁴ They are most often used for keeping journals that are intended to be read by others.¹¹⁵ Their use in higher education is growing, and studies have shown that as long as they have reliable internet access students find blog journals easy and convenient to use. This explains why blogs can easily replace an offline reflective journal.¹¹⁶ Blogs can be used as part of online role-play activities for students to reflect upon the role-play experience they have just engaged in. The online aspect of blogging offers possibilities for expanding the use of a reflective journal as blogs can be made accessible to others.¹¹⁷ This means that blogging activities in a learning design can include components of peer or mentor contributions.¹¹⁸

Traditionally offline journals have been used to aid student reflection on their experience as part of the debriefing process. The advent of Web 2.0 technology that enables electronic journals may offer opportunities for better reflection that can draw on both individual and group insights.¹¹⁹ Like traditional journals, blogs offer the opportunity for student observation, reflection and confidentiality whilst employing familiar online technology.¹²⁰ Blogging is a means to increase participation, reinforce learning and provide opportunities for peer feedback.¹²¹ In the four models of fishbowl role-plays articulated in this article blogs can be used to derole and debrief students engaged in the

113 Research shows that there are some pedagogical benefits in students designing role-plays to learn negotiation theory: Daniel Druckman and Noam Ebner, 'Onstage or Behind the Scenes? Relative Learning Benefits of Simulation Role-play or Design' (2008) 39 *Simulation and Gaming* 465.

114 Blogs on the internet can display the tensions, resistances positioning and affinities of their creators: Victoria Carrington 'From Blog to Bebo and Beyond: Text, Risk, Participation' (2009) *Journal of Research in Reading* 6.

115 Erkan Tekinarslan, 'Blogs: A Qualitative Investigation into an Instructor and Undergraduate Students' Experiences' (2008) 24(4) *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology* 402.

116 Ian Macduff, 'Using Blogs as a Teaching Tool in Negotiation' (2009) 25 *Negotiation Journal* 107.

117 George Fessakis, Konstantinos Tatsis and Angeliqe Dimitracopoulou, 'Supporting "Learning By Design" Activities Using Group Blogs' (2008) 11 *Educational Technology and Society* 199.

118 Ibid, 202.

119 Macduff, above n 116, 108.

120 Ibid, 110.

121 Ibid, 116-119.

role-play. This might firstly be through a group blog that allows the students to share their reflections regarding the playing out of the online activity and may include comments by the teacher and/or an industry representative. After the opportunity for peer and expert commentary in the group blog students can then reflect in an individual blog that can be made assessable.

6 Conclusion

As indicated in this article structural changes in law programs include larger numbers of students in law programs. To meet the diverse learning challenges of large groups and to take advantage of technological innovations there is a greater use of online learning options in law. However, it is important that law teachers are not merely content to place large amounts of text online. Learning skills online can be potentially alienating to some students as the lack of interaction and development of skills in the face-to-face context may hamper learning. In this article the authors have suggested four models of online fishbowl as learning designs that can include blended learning to provide teachers with an option that builds legal skills online through scaffolded learning and draws on learning in the face-to-face environment.

A combination of face-to-face and online learning can provide an effective and efficient method of engaging in the teaching of selected lawyer skills. This approach offers the opportunity to integrate learning regarding theory with skills training in a self-paced online environment. In particular, the skills of negotiation/mediation and legal interviewing can benefit from student engagement in both online and face-to-face role-plays. The four models of online fishbowls allow students to learn skills in the face-to-face environment but also to enjoy the possibilities of the online environment where theory can be integrated with practice. Although these fishbowl options can be used in the online environment alone the authors advocate for the benefits of combining both face-to-face and online learning regarding selected legal skills. In this article the authors have outlined the learning and teaching strategies that take advantage of the opportunities of the online environment and have discussed a number of online tools that can assist with the use of online fishbowl role-plays. The four models of online fishbowl role-plays articulated here can be adopted and adapted to learning needs of law students developing legal skills in law school programs.