



Effectiveness of Public Legal Education initiatives

A literature review

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Our research has shown that about £3.6 million adults a year have an unmet legal need, involving a dispute. This might be because they did not get professional help, it took too long to resolve their issue or they would have liked more information or assistance. Bridging this gap is a key challenge for the sector.

We want to reshape legal services to better meet society's needs and this report considers the role that public legal education (PLE) can play in this. It follows our 2020 report - *Reshaping legal services to meet people's needs* – which demonstrated the strong link between legal capability and unmet legal need. It found that people with low legal capability are less likely to get professional help, are less satisfied with the service they receive and are less likely to feel the outcome was fair. This is where PLE initiatives can have a particularly big role to play. They can help those with lower legal capability find and access the information they need to get their legal need addressed.

Recognising the significant effort and resources already being devoted to PLE, our 2020 report recommended developing a better understanding of what PLE interventions work best and what limitations there might be. This literature review looked at what we already know about this.

There are three key messages that come out from this literature review:

- Evaluation is not widely used in PLE initiatives to determine effectiveness. This makes it hard to demonstrate a causal link between PLE interventions and improved outcomes.
- Overcoming the challenges in evaluating PLE are similar to those of demonstrating the effectiveness of social policy. In short, the challenges are not insurmountable.
- Successful evaluation methodologies need to:
 - define a set of measurable outcomes that the initiative might be expected to achieve
 - be able to assess any change that occurs as a result of the initiative.

Putting evaluation at the heart of how the sector approaches PLE will help to ensure that the time and effort already being devoted to this important issue is being targeted and coordinated to achieve the biggest positive change for the many citizens who currently have an unmet legal need. It will help us to do more of what works and to refocus or improve initiatives that are not making a difference. Being able to demonstrate positive impact could also help PLE providers in securing ongoing or additional funding.

So what next? We will be pursuing a programme of work aimed at lowering unmet legal need under our new 2021-24 strategy. Following on from this literature review, this will include using our convening and influencing powers to encourage greater adoption of evaluation and more collaboration and coordination of PLE initiatives, based around evidence of what works.

For our part, we will continue to measure and evaluate the impact of our work and of overall change in the market, using our State of Legal Services 2020 report as the most recent baseline from which to measure progress.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Public Legal Education (PLE) has been defined by the Public Legal Education and Support (PLEAS) taskforce as activities that provide “people with awareness, knowledge and understanding of rights and legal issues together with the confidence and skills they need to deal with disputes and gain access to justice.”¹

Dr Lisa Wintersteiger, Sarah Morse and Michael Abiodun Olatokun were commissioned by the Legal Services Board to conduct a literature review in relation to the effectiveness of PLE initiatives. This included considering the quality and quantity of the existing evidence base, methodologies employed and to identify gaps. The team conducted a systematic review of literature together with a targeted search of selected online resources. Literature published within the timeframe 2000-2020, in English language and focused predominantly in the UK (but with some narrative drawn from other jurisdictions) was examined. The team was assisted by Professor Elaine Hall and a research assistant, Dr Christopher Morris. The following points represent the review’s major findings.

Conclusions relating to the effectiveness of PLE

- The review team found a growing, but currently still limited, body of evidence regarding the effectiveness of PLE initiatives.
- There was strong evidence that well-designed PLE initiatives can increase the legal capability of participants by increasing knowledge as well as having a short-medium term impact on confidence building. There was some evidence that PLE can improve recognition of early action by individuals as well as supporting groups to act early to improve prevention and influence change
- There was moderate evidence that interventions can impact subsequent behaviours or actions although the role of increased understanding as a corollary to bringing about change was less clear, as was the influence of other factors or barriers to action.
- Where interventions were shown to be effective in the context of family law-related PLE, the research has shown that resulting behavioural changes can reduce court time and costs, in addition to moderate impacts on relationship and conflict factors.
- Evidence relating to the design of PLE initiatives suggests that short interventions can be just as effective as longer term interventions. In addition, timely and tailored interventions potentially achieved their goals more effectively than generic approaches.

¹ PLEAS Task Force, ‘Developing capable citizens: the role of Public Legal Education, the report of the PLEAS Task Force’, 2007, p.9 <https://lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/pleas-task-force-report-14.pdf>

Challenges in measuring the effectiveness of PLE research

The review team found that despite some limited examples of high quality evaluation work in this area, assessments of PLE face many challenges. The team found that PLE is not often assessed in a manner that enables stakeholders to derive clear, robust conclusions, and that a number of issues undermined the validity and reliability of several PLE evaluations, including:

- PLE programmes not establishing measurable outcomes from the outset,
- A lack of triangulation, or ‘backing up’ qualitative evidence with quantitative sources,
- Frequent use of self-reporting questionnaires rather than testing or observation in order to underline evaluation findings,
- Minimal use of randomised control trials or control groups, though the review team acknowledges that these may often be inappropriate in this environment,
- Infrequent use of medium-long term longitudinal research to follow up on participants to monitor behavioural change.

Examples of emerging best practice

The team acknowledges that all PLE initiatives serve specific aims, different communities and are applicable to distinct legal regimes, but the following recommendations for evaluation and research were discerned from the review and in our view are widely applicable:

- Use of pre and post-activity surveys to gauge the change that individual participants have undergone over the course of the initiative,
- A follow-up with participants, to see what impact the initiative had in the medium and longer term,
- Take a rigorous approach to data collection to produce the most robust findings including using a range of tools,
- Be flexible enough to recognise the multidimensional nature of the problems that participants encounter and the complexity of human interactions,
- Use mixed methods of research to reduce errors in self-assessment,
- Delivery teams should work with evaluators of initiatives to produce creative solutions to assessing the important areas of intervention,
- Consider whether the “process” of the initiative should also be assessed in addition to its “impact” where there have been complications in the delivery of the programme,
- There is potential for deploying PLE interventions in the context of large scale legal needs surveys since they offer larger population samples. However, this needs to be attentive to the design of the intervention given that generic PLE tends to be less effective.

PLE research might also benefit from exploring other thematic areas:

At the time of writing this report, the digitisation of the UK's court estate and the coronavirus pandemic rendered online PLE the dominant form of provision. The review flagged a number of issues concerning the validity of online research in relation to explaining its sample sizes and the number of participants. Strengthening understanding of the effectiveness of online PLE is therefore of particular value at this time.

Measuring the “effectiveness” of PLE often focuses on the extent to which an intervention helped to build legal capability with respect to individual legal problems, or derived cost-benefit in relation to wider justice expenditure (for example, the reduction of court resources). There is sparse evidence of the role that PLE plays in the overall strengthening of democratic institutions, community participation or awareness of the rule of law. The RIPPLE project illustrated that PLE projects aiming to encourage law reform, influence decision-making and encouraging public institutions to act lawfully can benefit participants' communities and the institutions that they aim to influence. Strengthening research in this area could yield further evidence on how PLE can impact access to justice and the rule of law.

While there is still a limited body of literature into the effectiveness of PLE overall, attention should be paid to growing our understanding of the role that PLE plays in providing legal support to vulnerable groups. This recommendation follows on from the thematic issues explored above. Increasing our understanding of the effectiveness of PLE involves disaggregating access to justice indicators that are responsive to key demographic characteristics. This has the potential of providing important evidence of the inclusivity of the justice system as a whole as well as to improve the targeting of legal assistance for underserved groups.

Introduction

There has been a growing interest in evidence based practice in education both in formal and informal settings.² However Public Legal Education is a domain that tends to be funded in piecemeal and inconsistent ways³, rendering research more challenging and often less rigorous. An assessment of the body of literature reveals significant gaps in our understanding about the impact and effectiveness of Public Legal Education. This finding illustrates that there is much to be learned from bringing together existing studies through a systematic literature review, a process that enables us to propose avenues for advancing the quality of practices and research endeavours in the field. The following report sets out the findings of such a systematic review analysing the effectiveness of Public Legal Education by ascertaining the quality and quantity of evaluation literature.

What is Public Legal Education?

History

Public Legal Education (PLE) has a long history spanning early experiments in democratic governance in ancient Greece, to the large scale promulgations of Roman law encompassing various practices aimed at educating and inserting citizenry into the vast territories of the Roman Empire.⁴ Historical practices include modes as diverse as early inscriptions of legal codes in stone placed at the heart of the community to the singing of laws at ceremonies and festivities to inform and educate a populace about its laws.

Yet it is not until much more recently that a body of research has begun to explore the field and its effects with some precision and specificity. In recent history PLE is associated in the Anglo-American legal tradition with the growth of civil rights agitation

² Cohen, L. Manion, L. Morrison, K. *Research Methods in Education* 7th Edition London: Routledge 2011

³ The PLEAS Task Force noted in 2007 that “PLE funding is often both short term and inadequate. As a result PLE projects are rarely if ever sustainable.” PLEAS Task Force, ‘Developing capable citizens: the role of Public Legal Education, the report of the PLEAS Task Force’, 2007, p.19 <https://lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/pleas-task-force-report-14.pdf>. Over the ensuing years of austerity this situation has worsened rather than improved.

⁴ Jaeger, W. 1967. *Paideia: The ideals of Greek culture*, Volume I. Archaic Greece; the mind of Athens (trans: Gilbert Highet). Oxford: Oxford University Press see also Maas, Michael, *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 2005: 164-184.

and wider demands for access to justice.⁵ A significant modern emergence of PLE has occurred within the context of the evolution of the Law Centres movement. The movement subsequently evolved in South Africa, parts of Europe and Australia and evidences a range of activities encompassing radio, community education, information campaigns and theatre.⁶

More recently formats have grown to include new media including television and information technologies. Initially the province of civil society with some state funded element, with the ability of reaching larger audiences and with more tailored and targeted interventions the field has more recently been populated by commercial actors.⁷ Document automation, prediction technology, and legal analytics offer opportunities to speed up and render more efficient the work of law firms as well as new online providers in an increasingly deregulated legal market.

There is limited scope here for describing and assessing these evolutions in the realm of PLE, however it is worth noting the need for stakeholders and practitioners to analyse and critically evaluate the objectives of differing actors in the field and to contextualise the relative successes and failure of the interventions within a wider historical arc. This report limits the systematic review of literature to a specified time period and geography therefore reach into global practices and its generalisability for different cultural and ethnographic settings is also limited. Moreover, as many projects were historically aimed at resistance to oppressive practices by State or commercial actors with vulnerable or marginalised communities, many instances of practices have not been formally recorded and are passed on in the literature through anecdotal evidence describing predominantly oral practices.⁸

Related fields

PLE is differentiated from formal legal education that provides professional legal qualifications, although there is some overlap in clinical legal education in which members of the public receive educational interventions from student lawyers. PLE is also closely related to but distinct from the provision of legal advice. In addition, some of the literature references more advanced but associated fields of health education and financial education for the public.

⁵ Gander, Lois 'The Radical Promise of Public Legal Education', Dissertation, University of Alberta, 1999 <https://www.cplea.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/radpromofple.pdf>

⁶ Garth, B. 1980. Neighbourhood law firms for the poor: A comparative study of recent developments in legal aid and in the legal profession. Alphen aan den Rijn. Amsterdam: Sijthoff and Noordhoff International Publishers.

⁷ Wintersteiger, L. Legal Education Beyond the Academy: The Neoliberal Reorientation of Public Legal Education. *Law and Critique*, 2019, 30 (2) 123-129

⁸ Gander, L. 'The Radical Promise of Public Legal Education in Canada.' MA thesis, University of Alberta, 1999.

While PLE is the most commonly used term in the United Kingdom, it shares considerable overlap with the English compulsory national curriculum subject Citizenship Education. In other jurisdictions, this type of education is referred to in different terms such as law related education and legal literacy in the United States and community legal education in Australia. Finally, the relatively new field of legal empowerment which is closely associated with development practices includes PLE practice within its broad umbrella term.

A working definition

The purpose of this review then is to bring together the necessarily partial picture of what makes for successful and effective PLE with a predominate emphasis on English language results. Research concerning PLE initiatives can be difficult to find; the authors acknowledge that in this field much research is conducted informally and thus unlikely to be indexed to tools such as Google Scholar or Westlaw. A large proportion of PLE research is 'grey literature' self-published by organisations or circulated within very confined circles. These limitations may mean that there is an extensive body of relevant material elsewhere. We would encourage a similar exercise in other jurisdictions to help grow this body of evidence from more diverse perspectives. Furthermore, the validity of the review results depends upon the careful determination of the scope of the search and the varying terms to describe practices. To this end adopting a working definition of PLE is a prerequisite.

For the purposes of this review, the authors have adopted a working definition of PLE as defined by the Public Legal Education and Support (PLEAS) Task Force in 2007 namely:

'PLE provides people with awareness, knowledge and understanding of rights and legal issues, together with the confidence and skills they need to deal with disputes and gain access to justice. Equally important, it helps people recognise when they may need support, what sort of advice is available, and how to go about getting it.

PLE has a further key role in helping citizens to better understand everyday life issues, making better decisions and anticipating and avoiding problems.'⁹

PLE aims to inform and educate the public about law and legal processes in order to tackle the legal problems that individuals or communities might encounter.¹⁰ Equally, PLE aims to underpin the democratic process by ensuring the rule of law is actively understood and participated in by the public. Here it falls into literature that

⁹ PLEAS Task Force, p.9

¹⁰ Wintersteiger, L. 'Legal Need, Legal Capability and the Role of Public Legal Education', The Legal Education Foundation, 2015 <https://research.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/research-learning/funded-research/legal-needs-legal-capability-and-the-role-of-public-legal-education>

encompasses wider citizenship studies.¹¹ This is reinforced by statutory guidance for schools laid down by the Department for Education which states that all pupils “should develop a sound knowledge and understanding of the role of law and the justice system in our society and how laws are shaped and enforced.”¹² PLE is recognised as an important aspect of citizenship education in English schools.

PLE works to increase the legal capability of the public (PLEAS Task Force, 2007:9). Its goals can thus be very broad to include population wide awareness raising campaigns¹³ creating the climate for participating in or influencing the law-making processes, and for pursuing law reform, through collective action if appropriate.¹⁴ It includes self-help and legal empowerment, and aims to ensure citizens are empowered within the legal market with greater capacity for solving problems early.¹⁵

Legal capability is still an emerging concept, but has been described as covering the things we should all know and be able to do, along with certain attitudinal characteristics, that will help us to contend with the legal issues in our every-day lives.¹⁶ In order to achieve changes in participants’ legal capability, the varied modes of practice work on various factors and competencies including the levels of knowledge, skills and attitudes and confidence.¹⁷ Spanning both basic information and intensive educational curricula means that the interventions may not simply aim to raise basic knowledge levels but include much deeper consideration of the ability of participants to critically evaluate the law and the legal system.¹⁸

¹¹ Rowe, Don Law-Related Education: An Overview in Human Rights. Education and Global Responsibilities Lynch, J Modgil, C and Modgil, S. eds London: Routledge Farmer 1992, 69-87

¹² Department for Education, National curriculum in England: citizenship programmes of study for key stages 3 and 4, 2013, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study/national-curriculum-in-england-citizenship-programmes-of-study-for-key-stages-3-and-4>

¹³ Barlow, A. Burgoyne, C. Smithson, J. The Living Together Campaign - An investigation of its impact on legally aware cohabitants Ministry of Justice Research Series 5/07 2007 <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/03/living-together-research-report.pdf>

¹⁴ Wilczynski, A Karras, M. and Forell, S. ‘The outcomes of CLE: A systematic review.’ Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Justice Issues 2014, (18)2.

¹⁵ Barendrecht, M. Kistemaker, L. Scholten, JH. Schrader, R. Wrzesinska, M. ‘Legal Aid in Europe’ Hiil 2014, 77 <https://www.hiil.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Legal-Aid-in-Europe-Full-Report.pdf>

¹⁶ Collard, S. Deeming, C. Wintersteiger, L. Jones, M. and Seargent, J. *Public Legal Education Evaluation Framework*. London: Law for Life (2011), 1. www.bristol.ac.uk/geography/research/pfrc/themes/advice/pfrc1201.pdf

¹⁷ Ibid. 2

¹⁸ Wintersteiger, L. and Mulqueen, T. 2017 Decentering law through public legal education. *Oñati Socio-Legal Series* 7(7): 1557–1880.

These factors result in a range of methodical considerations that can measure these changes with some degree of confidence and reliability. As the objectives of interventions are achieved through channels as wide ranging as community courses, drama, television and radio, digital tools including increasingly interactive offers, so research and evaluations must be adaptable and realistic to what can be attained.

Objectives of the review

The Legal Services Board (LSB) is committed to encouraging higher levels of legal capability in the population of England and Wales, and in particular in vulnerable groups disproportionately represented in the legal system. This is as part of their regulatory objectives specifically of ‘increasing public understanding of the citizen’s legal rights and duties’¹⁹ as well as one of the Board’s strategic objectives ‘making it easier for all consumers to access the services they need and get redress’.²⁰

To further these aims the LSB conducted research based on the legal capability components of the 2019 Individual Legal Needs Survey. Analysis of the survey found that “people with greater legal knowledge of their rights and responsibilities and higher legal capability are more likely to get professional help, which in turn tends to result in them perceiving that they got a better outcome.”²¹ Lack of legal capability was found to impact a significant minority of respondents (over one third) and those with disabilities affecting their day-to-day lives were found to be particularly susceptible to the consequences of low legal confidence.

This research recommended that there should be 1) a strategic reshaping of legal services to meet the needs of latent consumers of legal services and 2) additional evidence is required to better understand the difficulties encountered by individuals with actionable legal problems. This research seeks to better understand the current evidence base relating to the effectiveness of PLE initiatives, to improve that evidence base and identify gaps.

The LSB seeks a literature review on the effectiveness of PLE initiatives. In particular, to:

- Provide an overview of current research on the effectiveness of PLE initiatives, including:

¹⁹ Legal Services Act, 2007, c.29, s.1 accessed May 14, 2020, <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/29/section/1>

²⁰ Legal Services Board, Strategic Plan 2018-2021, [https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/news_publications/publications/pdf/2018/LSB_Strategic_Plan_2018-21_\(final\).pdf](https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/news_publications/publications/pdf/2018/LSB_Strategic_Plan_2018-21_(final).pdf)

²¹ Legal Services Board, Reshaping Legal Services To Meet People’s Needs: An Analysis of Legal Capability 2020 <https://www.legalservicesboard.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/PLE-Reshaping-Legal-Services.pdf>

- how often the effectiveness of PLE initiatives is assessed, and whether those assessments are of good quality;
- methodologies used to measure effectiveness, and any critiques of them;
- key insights from the research on what makes PLE initiatives effective or not; and
- Identify gaps in the current research base.

‘Initiatives’ includes any activity seeking to further the above definition and designed to advance legal literacy or legal capability, including but not limited to face-to-face teaching, distribution of written materials and online resources and for the purposes of this review ‘initiatives’ has been interpreted as including all such activities. This review will incorporate providers including but not limited to academic institutions, legal professionals, public authorities, international bodies, charities and other relevant organisations. We have included adult and child focussed PLE. It should be noted that this review excludes legal advice as distinct from education.²²

‘Effectiveness’ was interpreted in order to measure whether or not the intervention achieved its aim or intended outcome by virtue of a causal link between an activity (or intervention) and a desired outcome, rather than any other factor, that has actually made the difference. In order to establish the effectiveness of PLE, the key elements of evaluations which provide for reliability are²³:

- A clearly defined and measurable aim.
- A sufficient and representative sample
- Research design must allow for the isolation and measurement of relevant factors and the subtraction of extraneous factors
- Qualitative methods, in general, cannot be used to accurately measure outcome effectiveness
- Quantitative designs which include an appropriate control or comparison group are the most appropriate designs for accurately measuring outcome effectiveness.

However we also seek to address the gaps in research into effectiveness as well as the frequency of effectiveness evaluation:-

²² Wilczynski, A. Karras, M. and Forell, S. ‘The outcomes of CLE: A systematic review.’ Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Justice Issues 2014, (18)3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277558601_The_outcomes_of_community_legal_education_a_systematic_review

²³ Digiusto, E. Effectiveness of public legal assistance services: A discussion paper Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Justice Issues 2012, 16: 1 [http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/18C587ECBD959D50CA257D9D00021AAF/\\$file/JI_16_Effectiveness_paper_FINAL.pdf](http://www.lawfoundation.net.au/ljf/site/articleIDs/18C587ECBD959D50CA257D9D00021AAF/$file/JI_16_Effectiveness_paper_FINAL.pdf)

1. In terms of '*impact*'- for example when considering how often the effectiveness of PLE initiatives is assessed we will explore assessments based upon a change in *knowledge, skills* or *attitudes*.

Knowledge- awareness and understanding of the legal system and/or legal rights and responsibilities.

Skills- the ability to recognise when the problem is a legal one, to know how and where to get help/support or to take some action as well as the ability to participate as active citizens in society.

Attitudes - holding greater confidence to deal with disputes, self-belief or recognition of the fundamental value of the rule of law.

2. In terms of '*reach*'- for example when considering how often the effectiveness of PLE initiatives is assessed we will explore assessments based upon who and how many individuals, businesses or organisations are exposed to these initiatives;

Methodology

A systematic review of the literature was carried out. This rigorous process includes:-

1. 'Mapping the field through a scoping review
2. Comprehensive search
3. Quality assessment
4. Data extraction
5. Synthesis
6. Write up.'²⁴

Systematic reviews are a highly effective method of providing a robust, reliable and comprehensive review of the current research available as well as helping to answer specific questions such as those focussed on establishing 'how often' or 'what works' which is the case here. While systematic reviews aim to locate all available literature, caveats exist in the field of legal assistance due to the wide dispersal of evaluative

²⁴ Jesson, J. Matheson, L. and Lacey, F.M. Doing your literature review: traditional and systematic techniques' (SAGE, 2011) p.108.

and reporting literature in this sector.²⁵ More generally the variations of key words, and the embedded multidisciplinary nature of the field creates challenges for limitations of protocol driven reviews.²⁶

A highly focussed search was required and a systematic review enabled the authors to consider a greater range of databases and materials than a traditional literature review. The literature search identified relevant quantitative and qualitative literature from a wide range of peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed sources including local and national published reports, journal articles, books and conference proceedings.

The search was limited by language (English language only) and restricted to a timeframe from 2000-2020. The search focussed on the UK but some narrative was drawn from other jurisdictions. Within the scope of this review it was not possible to carry out a complete or full literature review of research outside of the UK. It is recommended that a further review should be undertaken to gain an understanding of the current research in relation to the effectiveness of PLE initiatives on an international scale.

Although traditionally systematic reviews were more commonly used to analyse quantitative work their value in analysing qualitative work is now well established. This methodology is being used increasingly in law particularly when researching legal education.²⁷ While recognising that qualitative methods do not in general afford accurate outcome measurement analysis of qualitative literature will assist with an assessment of research gaps. Such a review also potentially reduces the risk of bias as it does not rely upon a subjective selection of literature.

For the purposes of the search it was necessary to first carry out a broad search using agreed search terms before narrowing the results based upon clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria. Full details of the search process is set out in appendix 1.

As referred to above, due to the nature of the field it was likely that a body of literature existed within grey literature. For this reason, the systematic search was supplemented by a more targeted search of selected online resources. Within the

²⁵ Karras, M. and Forell, S. 'What works? Learning from the literature.' Law and Justice Foundation of NSW Justice Issues 2015, 19:3. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/277558766_What_works_Learning_from_the_literature. In this work the authors drew from health related literature to problematise issues of impact and reach and we have also drawn from this.

²⁶ Jesson *et al* 2001,107

²⁷ See Mkwebu, T., 'A Systematic Review of Literature on Clinical Legal Education: A Tool for Researchers in Responding to an Explosion of Clinical Scholarship', 2015, 22:3 International Journal of Clinical Legal Education 238-274, p.241 and Dunn, R., (2017) 'The knowledge, skills and attributes considered necessary to start day one training competently and whether live client clinics develop them.' Doctoral thesis, Northumbria University.

confines of this research and time frame it was not possible for an exhaustive targeted search to be completed. Full details of the targeted search are set out in appendix 1.

Findings and discussion of the studies included in the review

How often the effectiveness of PLE initiatives is assessed and whether those assessments are of good quality?

An existing body of literature lauds the value and effectiveness of PLE initiatives for all of the stakeholders involved including participants and those who deliver PLE such as law students, legal professionals, charities and community organisations. The value to those who deliver PLE is outside the scope of this review.

The authors found that there is a much more limited body of research which measures or evaluates effectiveness in a transparent, robust and complete way. Much of the literature focuses on describing and evidencing the specific legal needs which PLE initiatives aim to address. By contrast relatively little literature exists to show a causal link between PLE activity and a change or effect that can be determined in isolation from other potential causes with sufficient reliability. This research gap does not lead us to the conclusion that most PLE interventions are not effective, but rather begs important questions of the sorts of approaches to evaluation that are deployed, how and why they are limited and the context in which practices are being measured. All these probing questions should help to identify promising practices and support the sector in building an evidence base of what works.

1. 'The outcomes of community legal education: a systematic review.' (Wilczynski A, Karras, M and Forell, S. 2014)

The starting point was to build on the systematic review of face-to-face Community Legal Education (CLE) conducted in 2014.²⁸ The research was limited to published and unpublished Australian and International studies between 2000 and 2012. This report therefore provides important overlapping findings to the present systematic review.

The review identified 2 North American studies.²⁹ Ellis and Anderson (2003) related to overseas court-affiliated Divorcing Parent Education programs.³⁰ Fackrell *et al* (2011)

²⁸ Wilczynski *et al*, 2014

²⁹ *Ibid.*,5

³⁰ Ellis, D. and Anderson, DY. 2003, 'The impact of participation in a parent education program for divorcing parents on the use of court resources: an evaluation study', *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, vol. 21, no. 2, Winter, pp. 169-187

was a meta-analysis of 19 US and Canadian studies.³¹ These studies found that CLE on this topic changed participants' behaviour in a positive way and improved their outcomes, on most of the measures assessed. In a longitudinal cost-benefit analysis with a 12 month follow-up period, Ellis and Anderson found that participants in an education programme (divorcing Canadians) used less court resources, including court time, in comparison to non-participants. The findings of the meta-analysis by Fackrell *et al* on divorce education programmes concluded that evidence across five factors including re-litigation, and conflict/relationship factors produced moderate effect sizes. That is, half of participants had improved measures in these factors compared to non-participants.

Observations as to some of the limitations and constraints of the findings included the fact that the follow up period of twelve months provides evidence of medium term impact only while Fackrell *et al* only provides evidence of four studies with longitudinal measures. Although the studies provided 'some evidence that CLE is effective in changing participants' behaviour and outcomes in the short to medium term' as measured 'by the use of court resources and relationship/conflict factors' these findings did not correlate with changes in *knowledge*.

A key consideration that helps us to look at what contributes to effectiveness in PLE programmes is that the length of the educational intervention need not determine success. Rather, short and intensive courses of up to three hours can produce good results. Equally, while Ellis and Anderson explored effects in the context of mandatory attendance, Fackrell *et al* indicates that non-compulsory offers of education programmes can be just as impactful. Finally, a more complex picture of knowledge changes and behaviour patterns is presented by the research, since Ellis and Anderson were able to evidence small behavioural changes but this did not correlate with subjective assessments of knowledge, which had not increased. Wilczynski *et al* also draw conclusions from the health sector noting that whilst, in this field, education programmes have been found to be effective in increasing knowledge there are 'mixed findings' regarding whether it also improves behavioural change concluding that 'in the health sector education may be more effective in producing shorter-term and 'simpler' behavioural changes rather than longer-term, more complex and fundamental behavioural changes.' The key methodologic findings arising from the review are that robust evaluations require rigorous data collection which can be 'beyond the resources and responsibility of those providing CLE programs'.

³¹ Fackrell, TA. Hawkins, AJ. and Kay, NM. 2011, 'How effective are court-affiliated divorcing parents education programs? A meta-analytic study', *Family Court Review*, vol. 49, no. 1, January, pp. 107-119

2. Evaluation of the RIPPLE project – a New Model of Public Legal Education (Eureka 2018)

Following the findings of the systematic review conducted by Wilczynski *et al* the present review identified an evaluation of a programme conducted in the United Kingdom.³² The evaluation was commissioned by Central England Law Centre and documents the findings of a two year pilot involving health and social care service users and/or carers. The aim of the project was to enable citizens to have confidence and knowledge to use rights in day to day life to prevent problems occurring, and to pursue or enforce their legal rights in order to solve a problem shared by members of the group.

The approach was specifically designed to “provide public legal education rooted in and informed by casework practice and to explore the potential for people with shared problems and interests to connect knowledge transfer to real experiences. It was also intended to maximise the opportunity for the identification of systemic issues which, if addressed, have the potential for benefitting a whole community or interest group.” (Eureka, 2018,1).

Seven local groups were formed, each tackling a different, specific issue and supported by eight separate advocacy organisations. A facilitated approach was deployed using a legal specialist, rather than traditional training models. Each group had varying numbers (60 individuals in total) and met on a number of occasions (varying) in a group setting. Training/education sessions across a range of topics including the Care Act 2014, health checks, legal aid and Freedom of Information Requests amongst others were accompanied with legal information resources including crib sheets, template letters and ‘how to’ guides.

The evaluation deployed the PLE evaluation framework produced by Collard *et al* using 12 indicators with some adaptations. The focus was on measuring the impact of the intervention against legal capability measures using mixed methods. This entailed a set of responses to questions asked before the initiative (a ‘pre’ survey) followed by a survey after the initiative (a ‘post’ survey). The surveys sought to gauge participants’ knowledge, skills and attitudes. The pre-survey questionnaire provided a baseline of each group’s knowledge, skills and confidence completed by 50 participants. The ‘Post group’ survey was completed by 37 participants. Qualitative data involved eight semi structured randomly selected telephone interviews (plus interviews with other stakeholders).

³² Eureka Evaluation of the RIPPLE project – a New Model of Public Legal Education (2018) <https://www.centralenglandlc.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=97ebe458-44eb-4251-825c-be326cda4369>

The evaluation shows that the intervention achieved strong performance in raising the confidence of participants to know when to seek help (40% increase), albeit with less evidence that participants knew where that help could be obtained. Confidence in recognising legal issues and awareness of rights was also reported increasing by 26% and 36% respectively in the short-term.

In terms of behavioural change, the evaluation reported a 12% increase in the likelihood of seeking support and 25% increase in the likelihood of taking action on other similar issues outside of those covered by the intervention.

It is worth noting that this research did not speak to the statistical significance of these changes and also recommended adding a test/quiz to the post group survey to avoid the potential of over claiming knowledge.

However, this intervention was rooted in casework practices and so makes an interesting and important contribution to help the wider advice sector and legal profession consider how PLE can be integrated as a component of more traditional casework to produce wider outcomes. Moreover, the RIPPLE programme deployed elements of capability linked with law reform and influencing change.³³ This aspect of the programme also demonstrates the relevance of PLE to advocacy organisations in the charity sector that struggle to build capacity for lobbying amongst their beneficiaries. The training sessions used in the RIPPLE programme were an example of “using the law and human rights in the context of early action and prevention.”³⁴ This was core to the model from the outset as the project team sought to “identify practical steps that could be taken by them individually or collectively to try to tackle the shared problems they faced.”

The process of co-design of the evaluation is another interesting addition to the body of evidence of PLE practices. It appears that the process of working closely with the evaluator in assessing important areas of intervention design elicited the decision that a missing feature of the PLE evaluation framework was an indicator to capture the existence of ‘problem clusters’. This is an important and helpful measure that gets at the heart of the ‘how’ of effectiveness. Adapting the method to include an option to complete online surveys yielded improved sample sizes.

Although this evaluation lacked a control group the triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data points to the importance of integrating knowledge with

³³ The fourth domain fourth legal capability captures the goals of PLE in aiming to encourage people to engage and influence their own and others’ lives by learning about the ways in which they can act collectively to legitimately engage with and influence the world in which they live. Collard *et al* 2011, 23.

³⁴ Neil Crowther, Better use of the law and human rights by the voluntary sector, Baring Foundation, 2015, <https://www.baringfoundation.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/independent-research.pdf>

opportunities to apply knowledge and test skills in a trusted environment that contained lawyers. Wariness of lawyers, lack of understanding of community care law and previous negative experiences were overcome by tailored sessions, facilitated by lawyers, while providing an important element of peer support. While this makes it hard to clearly differentiate single causes and attribution this evaluation provides reasonably robust data on a holistic, integrated model of PLE for social care problems.

3. Does Community Education Work? Educating English Language Students and Consumer Contracts (Ferrari, M and Baglin, J. 2018)

This evaluation provided evidence of an intervention focused on consumer contracts that aimed to build legal capability in the context of Adult Migrant English Program delivery across Australia.³⁵ The intervention deployed legal education kits covering ten common issues. Delivery of the education kits to new arrivals occurred in the context of approved English tuition and involved videos, activity sheets and answers sheets for teachers including teaching notes.

The evaluation was targeted on one particular session which focused on buying a car since there was an overrepresentation of new migrants in the justice system with regard to debt and driving matters.

The study asks whether there is a measurable difference between students' understanding of the legal issues associated with buying a car, borrowing money, and seeking help, after they participate in a class on this topic. Further, whether students find the class about buying a car helpful, and if so how? There were 67 participants with 47 completing both a pre and post intervention survey in an interview setting.

The primary focus was to assess attitudinal changes, with some interpretive insights relating to the potential behaviour changes. The study was alert to the potential of cognitive bias in self-assessed knowledge among participants, choosing to adopt mixed methods to reduce validity errors.

Although it is not possible to exclude the influence of learning the participants may have experienced outside of the intervention, this research concluded that there was a 'strong effect' and statistically significant improvement was shown in the pre and post intervention survey scores albeit the follow up period was short.

³⁵ Ferrari, M. and Baglin, J. "Does Community Legal Education Work? Educating English Language Students about Consumer Contracts." *Journal of Law and Social Policy* 29. (2018): 29-46
<https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1311&context=jls>

This research project differs from other studies that measure legal knowledge in that its focus is on understanding a change in thinking or actions, in actual or hypothetical situations, and then assesses whether, after the education module, the participant changes their position.

4. The Living Together Campaign- An investigation of its impact on legally aware cohabitants (Barlow A, Burgoyne, C. Smithson, J. 2007)

The focus of this evaluation was to consider the impact of The Living Together Campaign on 'legally aware' cohabitants, former cohabitants or intended cohabitants who accessed information about the legal implications of co-habitation via a website.³⁶ The research sets out to assess the impact of the Living Together Campaign on cohabitants accessing the website who were 'legally aware' of how the law treated them; consider any effect this legal information and documentation resource had on such cohabitants taking appropriate legal action; and explore financial practices, attitudes to current cohabitation law and recommendations for reform.

Two phases of research involved an internet survey. 102 participants completed the online survey via the website with 20 of those (and 10 of their partners) taking part in semi structured interviews. The survey sought to gather the respondents' experience of the website, their attitudes to cohabitation law and their demographic status and financial practices. This was followed by semi-structured interviews with a purposive sample of 30 (18 men and 12 women) selected from the survey respondents.

This evaluation had a wider focus than is relevant for our purposes however it provides some evidence of the possible reach of web-based PLE initiatives and information delivery which can be harder to capture and which, it concluded, had a positive impact on awareness albeit less evidence of this resulting in action being taken.

Respondents felt more informed about their rights and obligations, in some cases 'very well informed'. Over one third recognised the need to take some form of legal action including making a will, seeking further legal advice, and nominating a next of kin. Reasons for inaction ranged from the lack of legally enforceable frameworks for cohabitants to worries about things 'turning sour' with partners.

This report recognised the importance of raising website profile, for example through a media campaign, and 'visibility' in internet search engines to increase traffic and potential reach. In terms of reach, it is certainly possible to measure 'hits' to a website but this alone does not provide a measure of effectiveness.³⁷

³⁶ Barlow, A. Burgoyne, C. and Smithson, J. (2007) The Living Together Campaign - An investigation of its impact on legally aware cohabitants. <http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/03/living-together-research-report.pdf>

³⁷ Issues with online surveys are discussed in the methodology section below.

5. Legal Capability for Everyday Life Evaluation report (Mackie, L. 2013):

This project set out with two objectives, the first was to test the value of the PLE evaluation framework created by Collard *et al.* The evaluation was the first to attempt to deploy the PLE evaluation framework. Hence, it forms an exploratory precursor to both the evaluation of the RIPPLE project identified above and the work of Ferrari *et al* more recently. Secondly the project aimed to test whether the intervention could achieve a measurable change in the levels of legal capability in the participants. Finally, it sought to assess the potential for measuring the wider socio-economic impacts of PLE.³⁸

The targeted intervention involved the delivery of a PLE curriculum between May and December 2012. Over this time three cohorts were created, each receiving six sessions of two hours delivered in partnership with external advice agencies and a specialist PLE provider to approximately 10-15 participants with the aim of improving legal capability. Participants included refugees, local people active in community hubs and individuals with brain injuries. In all, 45 participants took part, with 30 attending all three sessions.

The evaluation used mixed methods. It deployed 13 indicators of the evaluation framework via questionnaires, conducted semi structured interviews with advice agencies and the independent evaluators observed teaching sessions. Pre and post course questionnaires were collected which evidenced a 'strong improvement in legal capability' when compared to a control group of non-participants.

In terms of methodological benefits, paper-based surveys are cheap and transferable models. Difficulties in managing pre and post questionnaires with control groups were noted (only 10 control participants completed questionnaires), so too was the issue of cognitive bias. This is explored further below. Although 32 participants completed the before questionnaire and 32 participants completed the after questionnaire, only 21 before and after pairs could be matched.

The evaluation evidences strong changes in the legal capability and in both confidence and self-assessed knowledge of the participants. This included increased ability to recognise and frame legal issues, understanding of legal rights and obligations and confidence in being able to deal with legal issues when they arose. Limitations to this evaluation include some criticism of the questionnaire design and also a lack of clarity in the reporting of results in particular whether the reported average increases in knowledge, skills and confidence against the 13 indicators differentiated between

³⁸ Mackie, L. Law for Life, Legal Capability for Everyday Life Evaluation report (2013) <https://lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Law-for-Everyday-Life-Evaluation-report.pdf>

those who completed both the pre and post intervention surveys (matched) and those who completed only one of these.

Nevertheless, the evaluation offers valuable insights into the design of indicators seeking to measure legal capability across three domains, and sets out to identify how to go about assessing socio-economic impact more effectively. To an extent, the multidimensionality of legal confidence is reflected in Mackie's Capability for Everyday Life evaluation.³⁹ This included questions about confidence in relation to understanding legal rights and obligations and, separately, in relation to knowing when to get expert help to deal with a situation.

6. Evaluation of Public Legal Education for Advice Champions in the Community Links Early Action Advice Project (Mackie, L. 2015).

This two-year PLE intervention involved the delivery of courses (8 sessions x 2) to volunteer 'advice champions' as part of an Early Action Advice initiative.⁴⁰ The two aims of the project were to equip the Advice Champions with the knowledge, skills and confidence to help other people who are seeking advice and secondly to increase the legal capability of the clients who received help from the Advice Champions. Both aims were evaluated through mixed methods in March/April 2014 and in March/April 2015.

Participants were invited to complete pre and post course questionnaires. In addition, an online survey and/or telephone or face to face follow up interview was completed with 18 Advice Champions four to sixteen months after the completion of the course. The evaluation evidenced an increase in legal capability particularly regarding an increased confidence to understand and identify legal rights and responsibilities in the training participants.⁴¹ 43 (out of 46) participants completed either the baseline or the final evaluation questionnaire, with 25 participants completing both.

The second aim of the project was addressed through a client monitoring questionnaire which included three capability questions for clients between May 2014 and May 2015. 2,392 advice clients completed the Community Links client monitoring form. Of the 2,392 clients advised, 1,472 (62%) saw an adviser and 920 (38%) saw an Advice Champion. Each Advice Champion saw an average of 46 clients over the 13-month period, which is slightly less than one client per week per Advice Champion.

The novel nature of this PLE intervention meant that its evaluation was complex. This was the first attempt at a secondary measure of legal capability, i.e. an evaluation in which both the recipients of the PLE intervention and those that they engaged would

³⁹ The challenge of measuring self-efficacy and confidence is addressed further below.

⁴⁰ Mackie, L. Law for Life: Evaluation of Public Legal Education for Advice Champions in the Community Links Early Action Advice Project (2015)

⁴¹ Ibid, p.3

be assessed. Mackie reported it was challenging to implement and recommends cognitive testing of secondary measures. Results indicate “The data collected through the Early Action Advice project shows that over 90% of the clients supported by Advice Champions felt more confident about dealing with their problems because of the support they received. This is the same level of confidence reported by clients who saw a qualified adviser, suggesting that the support provided by Advice Champions is as effective as the support from advisers, on this measure of legal capability.”⁴²

It was not possible to say whether the clients who had been supported achieved improved outcomes, which could have been tackled with pre and post client surveys. A control group which received no intervention would also elicit useful data.⁴³

There are similar limitations to this evaluation as stated above for Mackie’s 2013 evaluation. These are:

1) the pre and post questionnaire findings were not matched; i.e. the results of an individual participant in the first survey could not be compared against their results in the second survey, providing a less complete or transparent indication of the percentage increase in responses for those who complete both.

2) that an unknown number of participants in the follow up survey or interview had not taken part in the PLE intervention. They had instead been exposed to other PLE training. The lack of clarity and detail regarding this provides some limitations in the reporting of results.

Three further articles were identified in the search which seek to measure the effectiveness of PLE initiatives albeit with limitations.

7. ‘Why Do I Need a Will Anyway? Assessing the Impact of a Public Legal Education Intervention Embedded in a Longitudinal Survey’ (Pleasence, P. Balmer, N. and Denvir, C. 2019)

This opportunistic intervention evaluated the impact of an experimental intervention aimed at improving the numbers of people completing a will and therefore reducing the numbers of people dying intestate.⁴⁴ This provides an interesting methodological

⁴² Ibid, 5.

⁴³ These gaps will be discussed further below.

⁴⁴ Pleasence, P. Balmer, N. and Denvir, C. (2019). Why Do I Need a Will Anyway? Assessing the Impact of a Public Legal Education Intervention Embedded in a Longitudinal Survey. *Social Policy and Society*, 18(2), 187-201. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/why-do-i-need-a-will-anyway-assessing-the-impact-of-a-public-legal-education->

example of a large-scale intervention via a longitudinal population wide survey. The experiment was designed to explore: (1) the impact of information provision on will creation; and, (2) how 'opportunistic experiments' embedded in longitudinal surveys might support PLE evaluation.

Participants were exposed to a simple PLE awareness raising intervention and differences in rates of will-creation as a result of a participant's random assignment to a control (no information) or test (information) group were observed and reported. Data was drawn from a large-scale Civil and Social Justice (CSJS) survey of the general population's experience of ninety-seven types of legal problem. Two waves of the survey interviews were conducted eighteen months apart.⁴⁵ The randomized experiment introduced an information leaflet about the importance of making a will.

Although evidence of behavioural change was below statistical significance, this evaluation highlights greater potential to measure effectiveness by way of a longitudinal study involving a greater sample size. Seen through a cost benefit lens, these finding may well still offer promising potential.⁴⁶

The selection of an existing awareness raising campaign which was not designed for this study is likely to have significantly undermined the effectiveness of this experiment. Legal information is most useful if it successfully meets the needs of its intended audience by being understandable and tailored to the problem at hand.⁴⁷ Evidence from the related field of health information points to the relative inefficacy of generic as opposed to carefully tailored interventions.⁴⁸

intervention-embedded-in-a-longitudinal-survey/A039E28826B8C7AC8A4874821EB1E0D2

⁴⁵ The first wave of the survey included 3,806 adults (aged sixteen plus), drawn from a random selection of 2,316 residential household addresses across 194 postcode sectors of England and Wales. The household response rate was 61 per cent, and the cumulative eligible adult response rate was 54 per cent. The second wave included 3,911 adults, 2,604 of whom had also been interviewed at wave 1. Of the remainder, 148 were resident in a household surveyed at wave 1, but not interviewed until wave 2, ninety-six were new residents in a household surveyed at wave 1, and 1,063 were new respondents from new households ((2019),192.

⁴⁶ Explored further below.

⁴⁷ Wintersteiger, L (2015),25

⁴⁸ Lustria, M.L.A., Noar. S.M., Cortese, J., Van Stee, S.K., Glueckauf, R.L. & Lee, J., (2013), "A Meta-Analysis of Web-Delivered Tailored Health Behavior Change Interventions", *Journal of Health Communication: International Perspectives*. www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10810730.2013.768727

8. 'Legal Education and the Ageing Population: Building Student Knowledge and Skills Through Experiential Learning in Collaboration with Community Organisations (Ries, N. Johnston, B. and McCarthy S. 2016)

One of the objectives of this project was to enhance the ability of older adults to plan ahead for incapacity.⁴⁹ To achieve this, 5 one-hour seminars covering making a will, healthcare decision making and appointing a financial decision maker were delivered in 2015 to targeted audiences- predominantly older adults, those with chronic medical conditions, family members and carers. Participants also received an information pack containing information and sample forms. They were asked to complete 3 short surveys- one pre and one post seminar and a follow up survey approximately 4 weeks later (administered in a variety of ways).

The pre-intervention survey obtained demographic information and gauged existing knowledge. It was completed by 43 participants, which amounted to a 69% response rate. The post-intervention survey addressed the participants' reaction to the information provided. It was completed, in all or part, by 39 participants, approximately a 60% response rate. A 90% increase in knowledge was reported by respondents. In addition, 61% of 36 participants who answered the question, indicated that they would like to make or update one of the documents discussed in the PLE intervention. The follow up survey asked whether participants had taken action since the intervention—behavioural change. Approximately 37% of participants agreed to complete the follow up survey but only a small number, just over a third of those, did so. Of those who completed the follow up survey, 63% indicated that since the intervention they had spoken to family and friends about their wishes. 37% had also met with a lawyer to help them make or update legal documents to plan for their future and 25% had actually taken the step of making or updating legal documents discussed in the seminar. Since the seminar, 25% had also looked up other resources to help them plan for the future.

Similar to a challenge of the Mackie 2015 evaluation, more robust conclusions could have been drawn as to the development of legal capability in individual respondents if the pre, post and follow-up survey responses had been "joined up" and attributed to individual respondents to monitor any change over the life of the programme. Findings are also limited by the small number of respondents to the follow up survey.

⁴⁹ Ries, NM. Johnston, B. and McCarthy, S. 'Legal Education and the Ageing Population: Building Student Knowledge and Skills Through Experiential Learning in Collaboration with Community Organisations' (2016) 37 *Adelaide Law Review* 495

9. 'Street Law in the 21st Century: Assessing the Impact of the 'Know the Law' Pilot Project' (Johnston, B. and McCarthy, S. 2019)

This PLE intervention involved the development of a mobile cache device for international students to access legal information about topics such as tenancy and employment rights as well as to access information regarding referral agencies.⁵⁰ An important consideration was the need for early intervention either at the point of need or before problems arose which in this case meant providing PLE to these students before the commencement of their studies and before they arrived in Australia. The intervention aimed to be accessible in terms of required resources (computer or mobile phone), convenience (as an online resource it could be accessed at any time and place) and language (English and, later, Mandarin).

The number of 'hits' to the website between early 2016 and June 2018 as well as a qualitative participant survey were reported. Over this period a total of 1004 users, 1643 sessions and 5019 page views were recorded. Details of session durations and 'bounce rates' provide further insight into usage. A sample of students who were shown the site were asked to complete a short, follow up survey. Those who did so indicated the usefulness of the site (with 67% finding it 'very useful') and 89% reporting a self-assessed increase in their knowledge of the laws in New South Wales pre and post use of the website. These findings, and any conclusions which can be drawn from this evaluation, must however be qualified by noting that the number of students with access to the website and the number of respondents to the survey is not stated. In addition, respondents to the survey also attended other PLE interventions therefore it is difficult to attribute any impact to the website alone. These are significant limitations however this article adds to a narrative around the potential for web-based interventions and evaluation by way of data analytics.

Methodologies used to measure effectiveness; and critiques of them

Recent years have seen a growing focus in educational research methods following in the footsteps of medicine and focusing on Randomly Controlled Trials (RCTs). As

⁵⁰ Johnston, B. and McCarthy, S. 'Street Law in the 21st Century: Assessing the Impact of the 'Know the Law' Pilot Project' *International Journal of Public Legal Education* vol 3:1 (2019) 27-49

the gold standard in evidence of what works the principle is fairly straightforward and helps us to think critically about how well suited they may be to the field of education.⁵¹ RCTs provide a way of calculating the effect size that can be attributed to an intervention. That is to say they are able to tell us with some accuracy the difference that an intervention makes. Compared to case-control studies, qualitative studies, expert views, or cohort studies, more robust, generalisable evaluations as to likely cost/benefit are possible with the use of random control trials (RCTs).⁵²

But RCTs necessitate costly trials, specific participant recruitment and observation of results over a longer period of time.⁵³ An alternative to a full trial comes in the form of opportunist experimentation a 'type of RCT that studies the effects of a planned intervention or policy action [in contrast to] other types of RCTs [which] examine an intervention or policy action of elements that is implemented for the research study'⁵⁴ The intervention of an RCT into a longitudinal survey was deployed by Pleasance *et al* 2019 above and offers an interesting opportunity to engage the wider funding dedicated to larger scale legal needs studies in creative ways.

While RCTs commonly ask whether an intervention works, process evaluation help us to gain insights into the implementation, receipt and setting of an intervention which support the interpretation of outcome data.⁵⁵ The ability to analyse the different components to an intervention are crucial, as with the large scale study into wills, understanding how to improve the information design and delivery would have been illuminating.

Nevertheless, RCTs are not without problems; these include a difficulty in pinpointing which factor contributed most significantly to the reported outcome, a potential problem in controlling for participants' background traits that may affect results and the need to 'blind' the allocation of groups to prevent bias.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Fitz-Gibbon, C. 'Evidence based education: Finding out what works and what hurts' in *Education Studies Critical Perspectives*, Edited by Kassem, D. Mufti, E. and Robinson, J. Open University Press, 2006, 18-32

⁵² Greve, B. 'Introduction: Evaluation as an instrument in social policy', in B. Greve (ed.), *Handbook of Social Policy Evaluation*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. (2017)

⁵³ Pleasance *et al* (2019), 190

⁵⁴ Resch, A. Berk, J. and Akers, L. *Recognizing and Conducting Opportunistic Experiments in Education: A Guide for Policymakers and Researchers* (REL 2014–037), Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Analytic Technical Assistance and Development, (2014).

⁵⁵ Oakley, A. *Process evaluation in randomised controlled trials of complex interventions.* (2006) 413

⁵⁶ Alexander Krauss (2018) *Why all randomised controlled trials produce biased results*, *Annals of Medicine*, 50:4, 312-322, DOI: 10.1080/07853890.2018.1453233

One way of ensuring that cause and effect can be distinguished and properly attributed is to test what happens to those people who do not take part in an intervention. The use of control groups helps us to identify the effectiveness of interventions by isolating the intervention from a range of environmental factors that might in themselves produce changes in the internal or external validity of the research. However, as noted by Mackie 2013, the efficient use of control groups within busy charity contexts with vulnerable communities is not always easy or desirable. We must be cautious in recommending this particularly when sample sizes are small, and evaluations will struggle to prove statistical reliability. In some cases, the task of causal inference may be better served with triangulation and repetition. Many of the evaluations above used mixed methodologies which help to identify the most promising interventions through aggregated evidence collected in a number of different ways. Moreover, in educational research there may be just as much value gained in understanding the ‘how’ of the changes rather than simply identifying the ‘what’ of the change being brought about.⁵⁷

As we have seen from one of the studies (Fackrell *et al* above), in certain circumstances cost-benefit analyses can field successful results. Cost-benefit analysis generally requires that all outcomes are measured in (or converted into) monetary terms to make them comparable to each other and to the costs. Important questions when considering cost benefit analysis are how much improvement you can get with which methods and with what cost. With some interventions it can be hard to establish the costs.⁵⁸ Legal information and legal education is a particularly promising strategy because the costs of distributing information have dropped dramatically. Moreover, literacy and education levels continue to rise, so an ever larger proportion of the population can potentially be reached by it. The costs of providing legal information are primarily the costs of collecting the information and presenting it in an understandable form, alongside the infrastructure cost to host and deliver or distribute the information format.

Once the information is presented, distribution costs are the costs of one extra download, one more printed copy brought to a client, or telling the story again. So, economies of scale can be huge.⁵⁹ For example, in Pleasance *et al*'s wills experiment, with further sampling size to ensure statistical significance, the 1% rise in individuals completing wills compared to control groups may produce meaningful gains. Speculatively, the authors note “supposing a cost of leaflet delivery of £2, the cost of each additional will made would be just over £500. The practical significance of the observed difference (were it not a product of chance) would therefore depend upon

⁵⁷ Cohen, 2011, 62

⁵⁸ Digiusto, 2012, 10

⁵⁹ Barendrecht, 2014, 6

the balancing benefits of avoiding intestacy (and, in social policy terms, who would bear the cost and reap the benefit).”⁶⁰

Cost benefit analyses do not appear to be prevalent in the PLE field but would merit consideration given that the proportions of funding to PLE programmes in the context of wider justice service funding are limited. Information is a public good, meaning it is difficult to exclude people from using it once it is supplied. Legal information is also an experience good, that is the quality of the information can only be assessed by the customer after delivery. Finally, the upfront production costs of the information are high in comparison to the marginal costs of producing an extra copy and distributing it or publishing it digitally.

As previously discussed, fundamental elements relating to defined, measurable aims, research design and methodology are also a pre-requisite to providing robust evaluations of PLE effectiveness.⁶¹

Research and evaluation challenges – key insights into what makes PLE initiatives effective

The limited number of studies that have been included in this review and that of previous systematic reviews points to some of the challenges in assessing the effectiveness of PLE. Wilczynski *et al* consider the surprising fact that in only two studies included in their review both dealt with court resources in the context of familial conflict. Yet these are mandated or recommended activities falling within the close ambit of formal court processes, and therefore render access to measures of impact more readily available since they compare the use of court resources. This suggests that informal practices aimed at early intervention or prevention, delivered in community settings need to adapt evaluation approaches better suited to the sample size and the useful comparators that can be derived from their specific environment.

⁶⁰ Pleasance (2019), 197

⁶¹ Digiusto, 2012

More broadly, in evaluating effectiveness the first challenge is to define a set of measurable outcomes that a PLE intervention might reasonably be expected to achieve, for example changes in knowledge, attitudes, skills, confidence or behaviours. The task of conceptualising the domains of legal capability has been undertaken in recent years, and many of the evaluations above demonstrate clarity in assessing the multidimensionality of what people need to be able to understand and do, in order to cope with common legal issues.

Given the scope of legal capability, there is some concentration around the more readily available outcomes, such as knowledge and confidence, and less on the skills elements as well as the domain of advocacy and influencing which form a core part of the spectrum through which citizens can actively participate in the formation and positive evolution of democratic systems.⁶² In the international sphere there is emerging literature suggesting that PLE also facilitates the preservation of the rule of law by encouraging citizens to challenge institutions and to develop a culture of lawfulness in decision making.⁶³ Nevertheless, some aspects of this domain have been developed, notably in Eureka 2018, indicating the potential for PLE to support citizens engagement and influence in systemic issues. Some questions still remain as to how and why knowledge and behaviour correlate. As Ellis and Anderson (2003, 174) suggests, changes in self-assessed knowledge do not necessarily correlate with changes in behaviour.

The second challenge is to robustly assess any change that occurs as a result of the intervention. Several of the evaluations have shown strong indications of changes relating to knowledge acquisition and confidence levels. Yet attribution continues to be challenging, whether as a consequence of sample size, difficulties in obtaining a suitable control group or due to weaknesses in self-assessed measures. The challenge in attributing any change to a specific PLE project or programme, in other words to ascribe impact to a PLE activity, as we have seen will generally require:

- A baseline measure and a follow-up measure of participants that tests specific areas of knowledge, skills etc. or asks participants to assess their own level of knowledge, skills etc.
- Similar measures with a control or comparison group which will help identify whether any change is the result of the intervention.
- Demonstration of whether the skills, abilities and understanding fostered by PLE interventions are actually used by participants to prevent or deal with issues in the future requires longitudinal research, e.g. participants are followed up at least three months after the intervention.

Behavioural changes are notoriously hard to attribute, and evaluations need to take care to avoid cognitive bias (Mackie, 2015). As we have seen, it is more difficult to get to the nuts and bolts of what influences behaviour in the realm of PLE interventions.

⁶² Collard et al, (2011), 23.

⁶³ United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, "Strengthening the rule of law through education A guide for policymakers" (2019) p27

Some of the evaluations above have shown promising results in achieving positive actions by participants but much more robust evidence is needed in the form of longitudinal research to establish the nature of people's barriers to acting and the changes to confidence levels over time.

Effectiveness goes beyond measuring the immediate outcomes of an intervention on levels of legal capability to wider impacts.⁶⁴ Trying to identify and measure any longer-term outcome from a project or programme is challenging, particularly for more complex community-based initiatives such as PLE. Defining interim activities and interim outcomes, and then linking those to longer-term outcomes, appears to be the hardest part of the process.⁶⁵ This challenge holds for online interventions, too. For example, Quinn *et al* 2018 explore the difficulty of measuring legal information interventions online and the wider impacts they might have. Are feasibly measured legal outcomes a reasonable proxy for whether "justice" occurred, or for the life outcomes secured?⁶⁶

The evaluation of cohabiting couples by Barlow *et al* 2007 points to other challenges arising from online surveys. Online surveys can create difficulties for securing fully representative samples due to varying levels of digital access and capability, and for rates of attrition in longitudinal studies. In some instances, where sensitive or personal questions arise, the participant may not feel there is sufficient privacy of data if completed online. In other cases, the anonymity of the Internet offers better yields of data.⁶⁷ However, in general, web-based surveys have become far more reliable in reflecting the wider population as access to the Internet has expanded. Advantages of using online research methods include the ability to implement experiments and controls with relatively low cost which has been found to be effective in terms of health interventions and online preventative health services.

Activities centred on prevention seek to encourage the public to take action to avoid unnecessary legal disputes or escalating conflicts.⁶⁸ As Buck and Curran recommend "Legal education is most helpful when there is a problem at hand and so it should target people at this stage of receptiveness. Timely education is crucial if a behavioural

⁶⁴ Ibid., 13

⁶⁵ James P. Connell and Anne C. Kubisch "Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects, and Problems." (1998), 5

⁶⁶ Quinn, L. Raby, J. Measuring Online Legal Resources: A Framework Inspired by the Drake Equation. Florida Justice Technology Centre (2018), 15.

⁶⁷ Wright K.B. (2019) Web-Based Survey Methodology. In: Liamputtong P. (eds) Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences. Springer, Singapore.

⁶⁸ Wintersteiger L, 2015

change is to be achieved”.⁶⁹ Awareness-raising designed to warn of new obligations, or to deal with common misconceptions,⁷⁰ has the potential to remedy public misperceptions regarding the law. Campaigns to deal with this element of legal capability tend to be large scale, less tailored or targeted and while they lend themselves to improved empirical methodologies due to the scale of samples, they may not achieve their goals as effectively due to the limitations of mass information design. As Pleasance and Balmer note in their experimental intervention in the world of wills, this is not unusual in other fields “evidence drawn from health suggests mixed results with respect to generic interventions and behavioural change.”⁷¹ Crucial to validity in these large scale experiments is randomized selection. Without randomisation, “comparisons (i.e. between those who may or may not have been exposed to information on will and probate) may be prejudiced, whether consciously or not, by selection of participants of a particular kind to receive (or not receive) information.”⁷²

Finally, some important consideration should be given to the fact that in education, we are contending with the complexities of human interactions. The extent to which it is desirable to provide robust measures for educational interventions needs to be weighed against the price we might pay for making education ‘work’ in order to render predictable and risk free outcomes. Education as a transformative endeavour is very often a dialogical process and the negotiation of outcomes such as empowerment and resilience are matters of degree rather than certainty in human subjects, particularly when incorporating diverse participants.⁷³ For practitioners, this means making choices about the extent to which their programmes offer opportunities for creative and sometimes opportunity designs and delivery of curricula with the resources at hand, and the concomitant weakness of evaluative endeavours when resource and time is limited.

The challenge of measurements of legal confidence have recently been tackled by Pleasance and Balmer.⁷⁴ While subjective measures were screened out of the systematic review reported by Wilczynski *et al*, the urgent need to address robust subjective measurements remain crucial to understanding how people behave as they encounter legal issues and as an intrinsic barrier to access to justice where confidence

⁶⁹Buck, A. & Curran, L. Delivery of Advice to Marginalised and Vulnerable Groups: The Need for Innovative Approaches, *Public Space: The Journal of Law and Social Justice* 3 (2009): 1-30

⁷⁰ Barlow et al (2007).

⁷¹ Pleasance and Balmer, (2019),190

⁷² Ibid, 192

⁷³ Biesta, GG Gert, *The Beautiful risk of Education* Boulder CO, Paradigm Publishers, 2013, 2-3

⁷⁴ Development of a General Legal Confidence Scale: A First Implementation of the Rasch Measurement Model in Empirical Legal Studies, *Journal of Empirical Legal Studies* Vol 16:1 (2019) 143-174

levels falter. As Mackie (2013) noted alongside practical difficulties in managing pre and post questionnaires in community settings with control groups, so too was the issue of cognitive bias in self-assessed knowledge and confidence.

Within the socio-legal tradition, the concept of subjective legal empowerment is rooted in the broader concept of legal empowerment, expounded by Golub and McQuay⁷⁵ (2001) in the law and development context. The links to inaction by the most vulnerable groups are complex and determined by both the legal problem characteristics and demographic characteristics.⁷⁶ These subtle interrelationships suggest a nuanced approach to evaluation design that focuses on service strategies and processes as much as outcomes to provide holistic help, as Forell *et al* suggest, objectives need to be realistic, modest and appropriate to the specific strategy and circumstance. Applying a framework of services as targeted, joined-up, timely and appropriate may well yield stronger results.⁷⁷

Gaps in the existing literature

As noted earlier, much of the literature in the field does not appear in academic databases and is located in more peripheral literature found in reports and small scale evaluations that may not be published beyond a service website or service report. This requires more targeted searches and valuable grey literature outside of England and Wales requires further investigation. Wider evidence can also be gleaned from the associated fields of health or financial literature, in particular where delivery channels mirror those in use by PLE practitioners. This literature provides important clues to the field as digital interventions grow, and a less well-resourced field like PLE can learn from the larger scale studies that health prevention work affords.

It is clear that medium-long term studies are relatively rare in the field at present and are thus not reflected in the evidence base. In addition, further evidence is required generally demonstrating effectiveness. It was apparent during the systematic search that much of what was written about PLE either did not seek to examine its effectiveness or did so in a way which lacked a complete, clear or transparent evaluation from which meaningful conclusions about reach and impact could be drawn.

We have discussed above the challenges associated with this but also the potential methods by which to do so with reference to key elements of evaluations which provide for reliability. A potential contribution to the lack of literature in this area may also be

⁷⁵ Golub S McQuay K Law and Policy Reform at the Asian Development Bank. Manila: Asian Development Bank. (2001)

⁷⁶ McDonald, H. and People, J. 'Legal capability and inaction for legal problems: Knowledge, stress and cost. Law and Justice Foundation 41, (2014).

⁷⁷ Forell, S. and McDonald, H. Beyond great expectations Modest, meaningful and measurable community legal education and information Land and Justice Foundation 21, (2015).

that many interventions are embedded in the associated field of advice and focus attention on more traditional elements of service delivery, particularly when primary stakeholders are solicitors or advisors whose focus may be on the casework elements of interventions.

Conclusion

This systematic review has found evidence of effectiveness in PLE interventions in a number of important ways. There is a growing, if patchy, body of literature that builds on earlier findings of how and why PLE can support legal knowledge acquisition in participants as well as short and medium term impacts indicating the effectiveness of confidence building in recipients of PLE. Eureka 2018 was able to show confidence increases and some initial evidence that programmes can support the ability of groups to act early and together to influence change.

Some weaker evidence suggests that interventions can impact upon the subsequent actions or behaviours that people adopt, though it is not yet clear how improving understanding may be a feature of this change in behaviour or how other issues may impact on inaction. Barlow 2007 shows how online campaigns can improve knowledge or rights and obligations and induce recognition that some form of legal action may need to be taken although we have yet to establish more about barriers such as a lack of enforceable frameworks or the potential that action may lead to conflict.

In moderate effect sizes, the few cost-benefit analyses we see evidence that court associated programmes can in fact reduce conflict in separating couples including co-parenting and child well-being, with associated positive behaviours which led to reductions in court time and resources.

Evidence suggests that short interventions can be just as effective as longer interventions, however there is a paucity of evidence giving a clear indication of where shorter dosage may be most useful and where potentially longer interventions may prove more effective (Fackrell *et al* 2011).

Methodological findings suggest positive results from mixed methods, reducing errors in self-assessment and deploying a range of tools including paper based and web-based follow ups to increase sample yields (Eureka 2018, Barlow 2007). Some evaluations lacked a control group however the triangulation between qualitative and quantitative data points to the importance of integrating knowledge with opportunities to apply knowledge and test skills in a trusted environment. As Eureka 2018 observed 'Wariness of lawyers, lack of understanding of community care law and previous negative experiences' needed tentative and iterative evidence collection to glean helpful results about the how as well as the why of the interventions. In this regard co-design of the evaluation is another interesting addition to the body of evidence of PLE

practices. It appears that the process of working closely with the evaluator in assessing important areas of intervention provided for creative design solutions.

The review found evidence that opportunistic use of larger scale legal needs studies may yield important findings, though the attentiveness to the design of the survey needs to match attentiveness to the design of the intervention. While RCTs commonly ask whether an intervention works, process evaluation help us to gain insights into the implementation, receipt and setting of an intervention which support the interpretation of outcome data.⁷⁸ The ability to analyse the different components to an intervention are crucial, as with the large scale study into wills, understanding how to improve the information design and delivery would have been illuminating. Beyond the more positivist approaches identified in the methods above, many of the studies that show promising effects have deployed mixed methods, frequently using both quantitative and qualitative design. This offers real benefits particularly with relatively small sample sizes. Although evidence of behavioural change was below statistical significance, this large scale RCT highlights greater potential to measure effectiveness by way of a longitudinal study involving a greater sample size. Seen through a cost benefit lens, these finding may well still offer promising potential in targeting informational or awareness raising programmes.

As recommended by some of the evaluations more needs to be done to assess wider indicators of legal capability and how the link to longer term outcomes including socio-economic, health and wider and societal benefits. Presently much is still to be drawn from associated fields. Wilczynski, *et al* for example draw conclusions from the health sector noting that whilst, in this field, education programmes have been found to be effective in increasing knowledge there are ‘mixed findings’ regarding whether it also improves behavioural change concluding that ‘in the health sector education may be more effective in producing shorter-term and ‘simpler’ behavioural changes rather than longer-term, more complex and fundamental behavioural changes.’ This review finds, as with the previous authors, that methodologic findings arising from the review are that robust evaluations require rigorous data collection which can be ‘beyond the resources and responsibility of practitioners, and require significantly more resources and expertise than can be found at the level at which most PLE programmes deliver.

⁷⁸ Oakley, A. Process evaluation in randomised controlled trials of complex interventions (2006) 413

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Appendix 1

Methodology: systematic review

Summary

- The aim was to identify literature examining the effectiveness of Public Legal Education (PLE) published since the year 2000 to illustrate any established approaches and identify any trends in practice and/or gaps that may exist.
- This was accomplished by searching a number of databases for literature which described metrics for assessing the effectiveness of PLE initiatives within the UK or comparable English language jurisdictions.
- A selection of relevant databases were screened for relevance using keywords which returned a large, initial sample of results. This was done in two parts- the first covering the period 2015-2020 and the second covering 2000-2014.
- From this initial sample, screening then proceeded in phases. Firstly, duplicates and spurious results were removed. Articles were then grouped based upon title, with irrelevant results removed. Remaining articles were then screened upon the basis of the abstract. Finally, remaining articles were comprehensively examined.
- This screening process resulted in a final sample of 5 articles addressing the effectiveness of PLE. The nature of the final sample suggests that the scholarship surrounding the effectiveness of PLE initiatives is limited in scope.
- It is possible to conclude that whilst there is a large volume of literature that engages with PLE, relatively little explicitly explores effectiveness in a clear, transparent and complete way.

Introduction

The background against which the study was conducted and the research questions addressed are detailed in the report. Definitions adopted in relation to specific terms such as PLE and 'effectiveness' are also detailed and will not be repeated here. The systematic review process furthers our ability to address these questions by employing a wide-reaching and broad, inclusive strategy to identify literature conducted in relation to PLE within a number of defined boundaries, before subsequently narrowing this to those that discuss 'effectiveness' within the context of PLE. The main value of this approach is that it is capable of providing a thorough overview of work published in the field, not simply capturing individual studies that have been cited extensively or conducted by established scholars. A systematic review does not however constitute an exhaustive review and should not be understood as intended to provide a definitive list of all publications relevant to a particular field. Ambiguities in titles and abstracts or the idiosyncrasies and limited scope of particular databases mean that relevant material may not be captured by the search terms. Whilst thorough, it is to be anticipated that a scholar of the field may be able to identify studies that may not be captured by this systematic review.

The specific contribution of the systematic review is to provide an overview of literature in the field of PLE that specifically addresses the effectiveness of such projects, encompassing studies published from 2000 to January/February 2020. This was accomplished by conducting a range of focused searches across several different online databases. The search focused on the UK although some work conducted in relation to comparable jurisdictions was included as part of the narrative. The review was limited to studies in the English language.

Database selection

The first task was to select databases likely to document content relevant to PLE. We considered that most scholarship was likely to be included in legal databases therefore several legal databases were included. We also considered that literature relevant to PLE potentially existed within the education field. Coverage was enhanced by a supplementary search conducted using google scholar, a general academic search engine, with this intended to reveal individual publications not captured by searches of more focused databases. Naturally, these different databases serve different user populations and are not entirely alike; it was anticipated that these differences could complicate the application of a truly systematic approach in each case.

Table 1 below details the databases selected.

Name of database	URL
Westlaw UK	https://uk.westlaw.com/Browse/Home/WestlawUK
Hein Online	https://heinonline.org/HOL/Welcome
EBSCO	http://web.b.ebscohost.com/ehost/
Web of science/ Web of Knowledge	http://apps.webofknowledge.com/
Lexis Library	https://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/legal
Google scholar	https://scholar.google.com/

Table 1: Database selection

First stage of the search/first screening

Having identified a number of possible repositories of PLE information, the first stage was then to conduct searches of each, following so far as is practicable, an identical process in each instance. In order to maintain as systematic an approach as possible,

the intention was to replicate the same searches, in sequence, on each database, with the number of results in each instance recorded. A number of search terms deemed likely to return results relevant PLE were identified for this purpose. Following some experimentation, some search terms were excluded, being too general to be of use. Searches for terms such as [education] and [justice] were simply not workable, returning a massive quantity of results. Others consistently returned relevant results. The search was carried out in two parts- the first part covered the time period 2015 to January/February 2020 and the second part covered the time period 2000-2014. The search was broken down into these two time periods simply to manage the scale of the search and return the most current literature first. Results returned from each database were recorded.

It was anticipated that some flexibility would need to be exhibited in moving across different search engines and databases. In instances where discretion was employed, the reasons for doing so would be recorded before moving on. For instance, based upon the specific focus of particular databases, it was anticipated that alterations and adjustments would be merited in each case. By and large, this was not necessary, however, in several cases the nature of the search engine dictated adjustments. Upon executing the systematic review, it became apparent that some compromises needed to be made in several different cases, these being dictated by the specific nature of the search engines utilised. The two instances where this is apparent are google scholar and Westlaw. For instance, when using google scholar, it was noted a specialised approach was needed. Due to the sheer number of results generated by google scholar, the decision was made to utilise only the most specific of search terms that related to PLE. Searches for ["public legal education"], ["community legal education"] and ["Streetlaw" or "Street law"] identified results useful in the context of this study. The decision was made to not conduct further searches using google scholar. In other cases, searches for multiple search terms was not effectively supported by a particular database, meaning multiple more discrete searches needed to be utilised. This approach was taken with Westlaw, which could not reliably handle multiple distinct search terms at a time.

In general, a more stable approach was possible with the more subject specific databases. All databases except google scholar can be considered subject specific. A general approach was to firstly search for all of the search terms identified as relevant to PLE; whilst this usually identified the majority of the articles available, it was not always possible to complete, with some search engines either not returning good results, or incapable of handling such an extensive list of search terms. Regardless, this search was generally supplemented with some more specific searches in order to ensure comprehensive coverage. A good strategy was to then use some of the other service words identified, searching within these results for articles specifically dealing with law (i.e. ["Citizens advice" AND law]). That said, such searches did not generally identify texts not already identified by the initial searches. Most databases, with the exception of google scholar and lexis library, permitted direct export of results onto

endnote, the preferred program for screening. The alternative was to enter results manually, a time-consuming task.

Education search terms	“community legal education” OR “public legal education” OR “Justice education” OR “legal literacy” OR “Legal capability” OR “Law related education” OR “citizenship education” OR “Legal empowerment” OR “citizenship education”
other service words	“Citizens advice” OR “Community legal” OR “Court support” OR “Legal Advocacy” OR “Legal advice” OR “legal aid” OR “legal assistance” OR “legal centre” OR “legal center” OR “legal clinic” OR “legal duty” OR “legal obligation” OR “legal entitlement” OR “legal intervention”

Table 2: Search terms

The first screening involved collating all the different searches into a single endnote file, before categorising each document for either inclusion or exclusion in the second stage/second screening. Categorisation means putting articles into distinct categories based upon shared terminology. Naturally, a fair amount of results needed to be excluded based upon quality control, not being academic in nature. Examples of texts excluded for quality control would be, announcements contained in journals, reviews or commentary. Additional categories for exclusion quickly coalesced out of an initial examination of the literature identified through database searching. For instance, many articles dealt with irrelevant populations or jurisdictions, were too globally focussed or inaccessible based on language. A full list of categories is detailed below on figure 1 (showing the search for 2015-2020), figure 2 (showing the search for 2000-14) and figure 3 (showing the collated results for the full period- 2000-2020).

It was clear that several different fields intersect with PLE, with some meriting inclusion, and others clearly not relevant. For instance, general educational theory, professional legal education, and articles contending with legal education for medical professionals. Whilst an effort was made to preserve as much as possible concerning PLE from parallel jurisdictions, some were excluded for being highly specific to groups and populations not replicated outside of a specific region. A sizeable number of results were excluded for visibly having nothing to do with PLE, though it was decided not to specify the individual reason; it was simply obvious they were not relevant.

Second stage of the search/second screening

The second stage/second screening took account of the title and abstracts of the literature which had made it through the first screening. Remaining studies were collated in a Microsoft Excel file for this purpose. This permitted a more comprehensive focus upon the nature of the remaining articles and for a decision to be made about those which should progress to the final stage. Numerous reasons

where given for rejection; many of these reasons reflected those specified in early stages of screening, for example, language, jurisdiction or being focussed on a disparate jurisdiction. In some cases, PLE was mentioned only in passing. In others, PLE was the focus of the article, but it was clear that the issue of effectiveness was not the matter contained in the article. In many other cases, viewing the abstract established a clear basis to exclude the article. For instances in some cases, the abstract of the article in question seems to have been contrived with as many operative search terms as possible so as to appear in results. Many clearly referred to key search words in sequence, whilst also having nothing to do with PLE for instance, articles dealing with 'public law' became apparent. Many contended with issues of social justice in education, and they therefore contained many key words apparently relevant to the study, whilst falling outside of the specified boundaries. The scale of articles contended with suggests that whilst PLE is widely prevalent in recent literature, it is often discussed in a very ephemeral manner, mentioned only in passing. As figures 1-3 below reflect, the second stage screening eliminated many remaining articles from consideration.

Final stage/full text screening

The final stage involved a full text screening of the remaining literature. This took account of the articles capacity to contribute to the knowledge base concerning the effectiveness of legal education. In all cases this was based upon the criteria set out in the initial project proposal. This full text assessment ruled out the majority of the remaining articles, with only a fraction of remaining articles discussing PLE capable of contributing meaningfully to the knowledge base specified in the proposal. This process is again detailed in the figures below.

Results

Following completion of the final stage/full text screening 5 articles were identified as a result of the systematic search (identified in table 3) and are examined within the report.

1	Pleasence, P. Balmer, N. and Denvir, C. (2019). Why Do I Need a Will Anyway? Assessing the Impact of a Public Legal Education Intervention Embedded in a Longitudinal Survey. <i>Social Policy and Society</i> , 18(2), 187-201. https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/social-policy-and-society/article/why-do-i-need-a-will-anyway-assessing-the-impact-of-a-public-legal-education-intervention-embedded-in-a-longitudinal-survey/A039E28826B8C7AC8A4874821EB1E0D2
2	Johnston, B. and McCarthy, S. 'Street Law in the 21st Century: Assessing the Impact of the 'Know the Law' Pilot Project' <i>International Journal of Public Legal Education</i> vol 3:1 (2019) 27-49
3	Ferrari, M. and Baglin, J. "Does Community Legal Education Work? Educating English Language Students about Consumer Contracts." <i>Journal of Law and</i>

	Social Policy 29. (2018): 29-46. https://digitalcommons.osgoode.yorku.ca/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1311&context=jlsp
4	Ries, NM. Johnston, B. and McCarthy, S. 'Legal Education and the Ageing Population: Building Student Knowledge and Skills Through Experiential Learning in Collaboration with Community Organisations' (2016) 37 <i>Adelaide Law Review</i> 495
5	Wilczynski, A. Karras, M. & Forell, S. 'The outcomes of community legal education: a systematic review' (2014), Justice issues paper 18, Law and Justice Foundation of NSW, Sydney

Table 3: Systematic review final sample

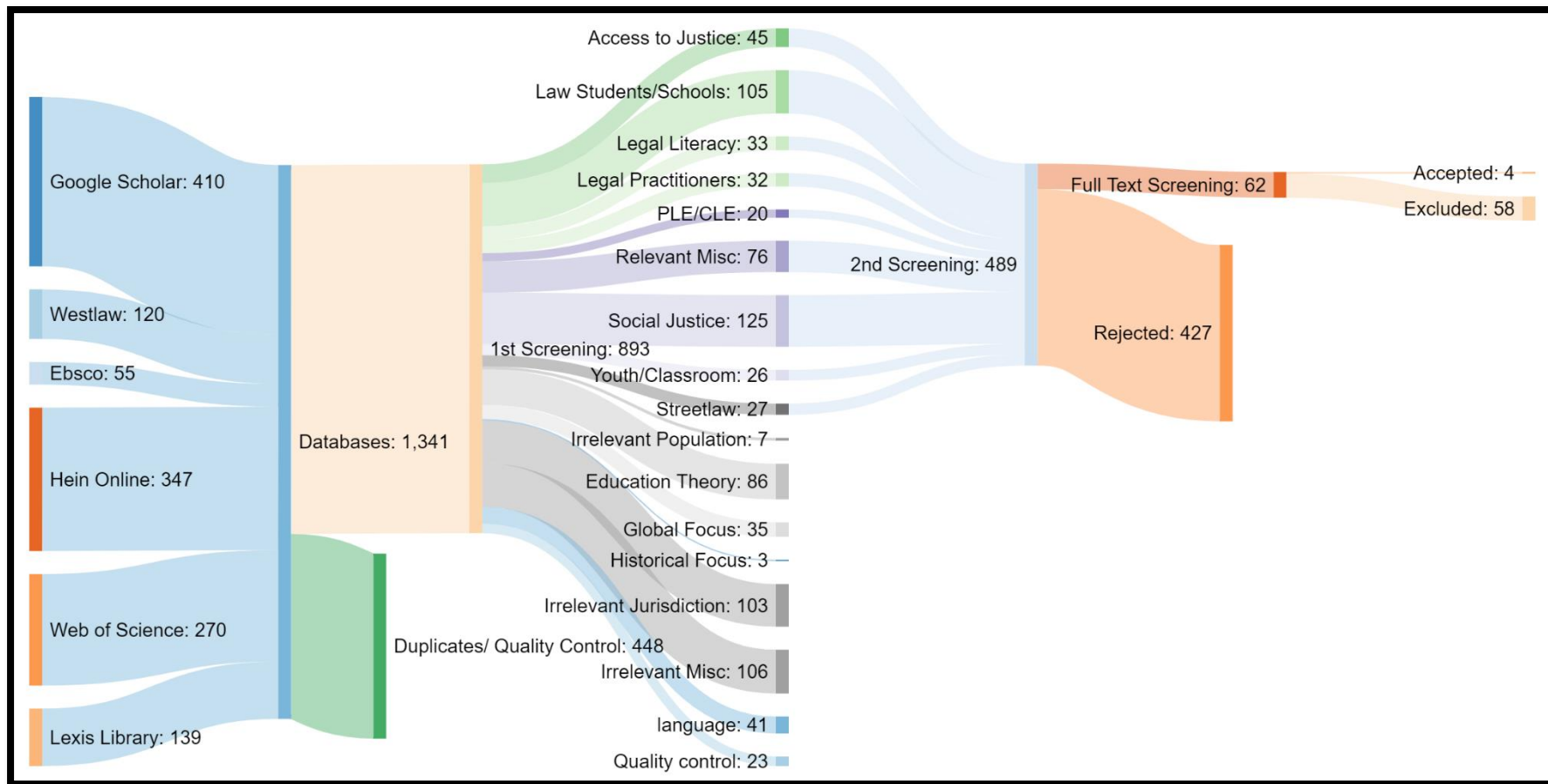


Figure 1: results 2015-January/February 2020

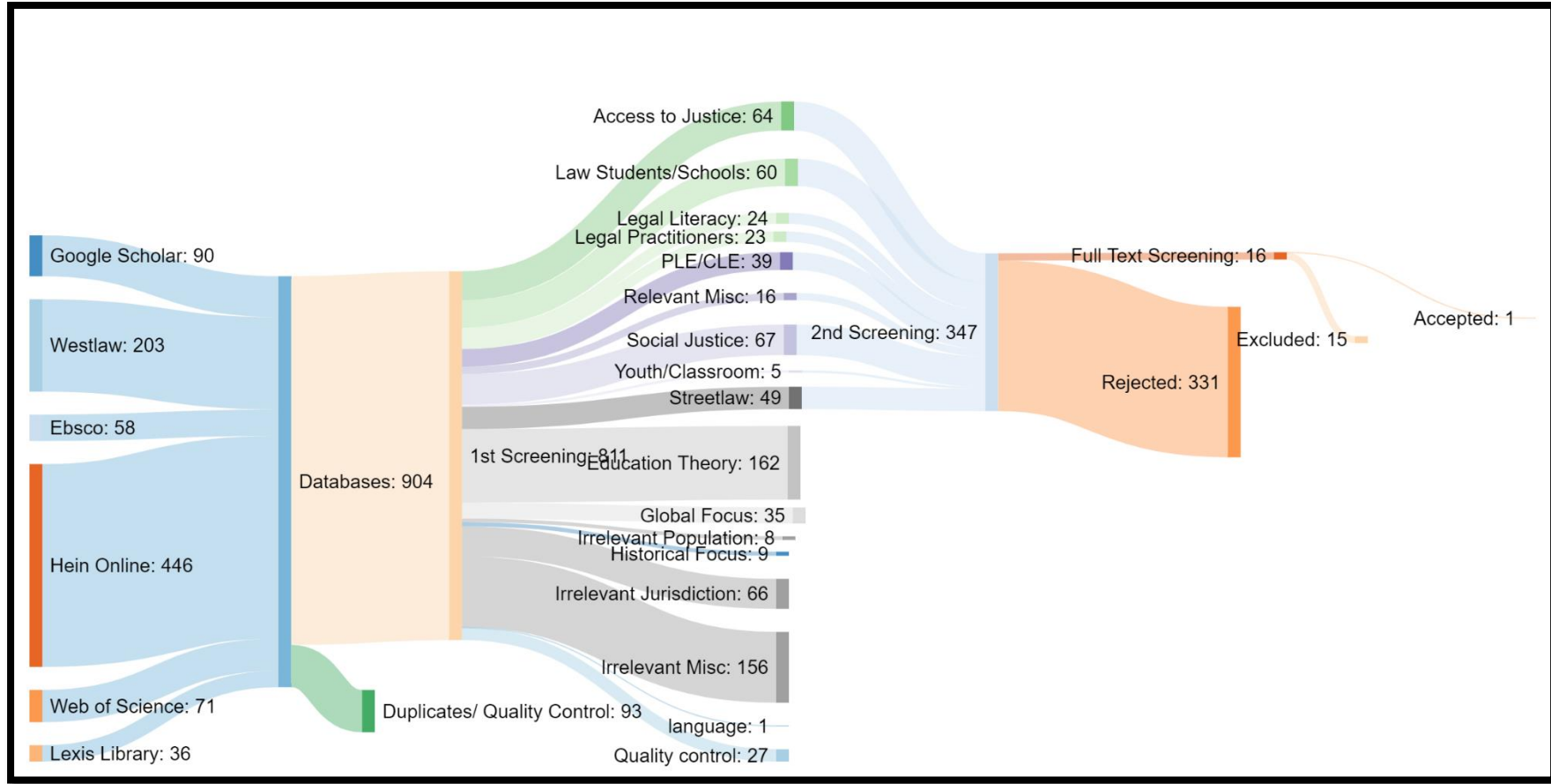


Figure 2 Results 2000-2014

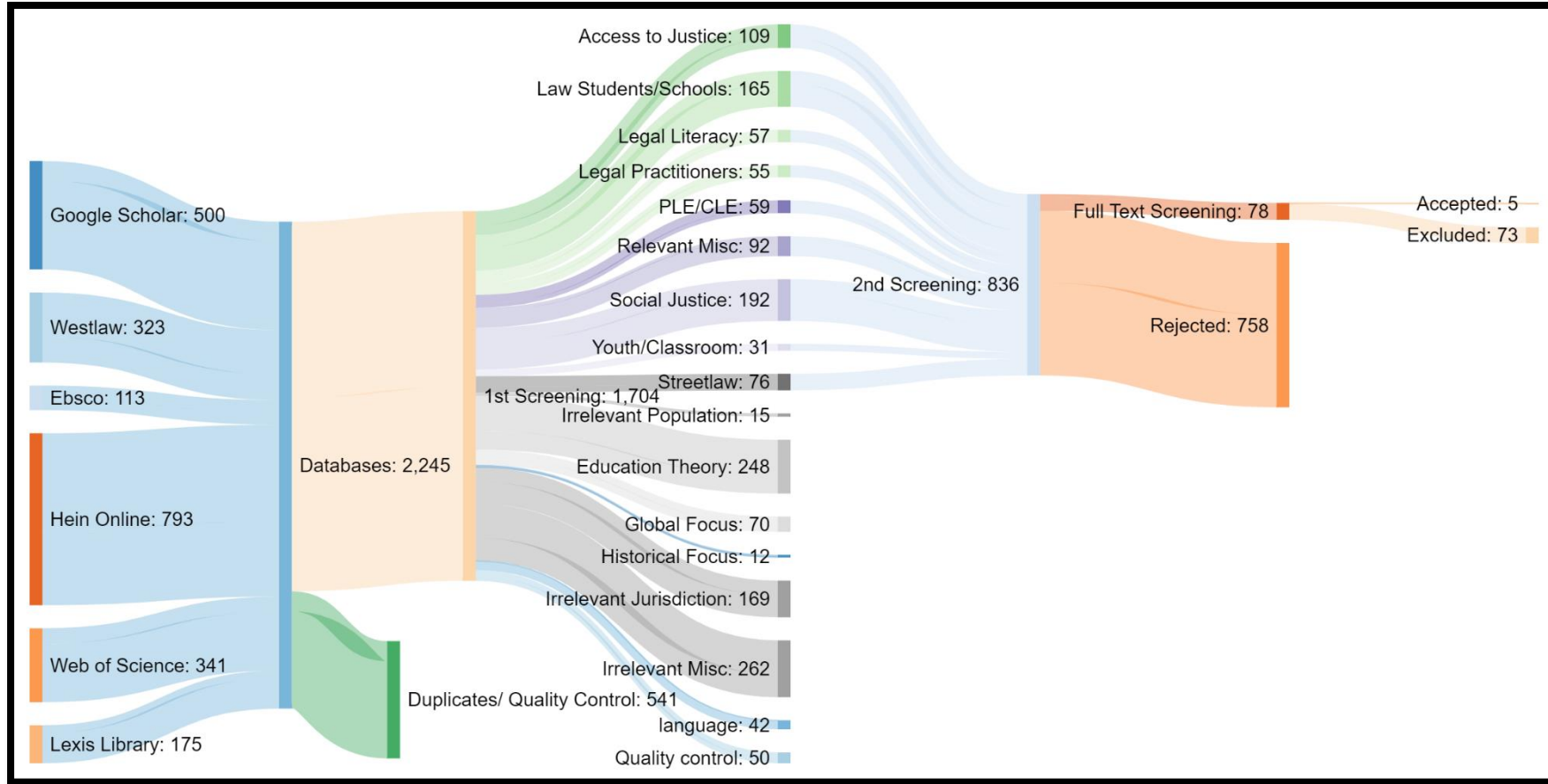


Figure 3 results (collated 2000-January/February 2020)

Methodology: Targeted search

Due to the nature of the field, it was anticipated that a relevant body of literature may exist outside of academic databases. In light of this a decision was taken to supplement the systematic search with a more targeted search of selected online resources in order to capture grey literature which, for example, might be published by specialist providers or accessible only through organisational websites. The vast number of organisations who provide or engage with PLE initiatives and the accessibility of publicly available information relating to these, together with practical considerations such as the time frame for this research, means that this targeted search could not be considered exhaustive and further investigation of grey literature in England and Wales and beyond is recommended. Notwithstanding this, this aspect of the search targeted key resources and revealed a valuable sample of literature.

Table 4 details the online resources which were selected. General searches of these websites were conducted to identify any literature, published since 2000, which sought to examine the effectiveness of PLE initiatives in a clear, transparent and complete way.

Name of website	URL
Advice UK	https://www.adviceuk.org.uk/
Age UK	https://www.ageuk.org.uk/
Association for Citizenship Teaching Quality Mark	https://www.teachingcitizenship.org.uk/resources?qt-resources=1#qt-resources
CLEO: Clinical Legal Education Organisation	http://www.cleo-uk.org/
Nuffield Foundation Research Projects	https://www.nuffieldfoundation.org/?s=&project_type=project
Shelter	http://england.shelter.org.uk/
The Legal Education Foundation	https://www.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/what-we-have-funded/funded-projects

Table 4: website selection

Results

Following completion of the targeted search 4 articles or reports were identified (detailed in table 5) and these are examined within the report.

1.	Eureka Evaluation of the RIPPLE project – a New Model of Public Legal Education (2018) https://www.centralenglandlc.org.uk/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=97ebe458-44eb-4251-825c-be326cda4369
2.	Mackie, L. Law for Life: Evaluation of Public Legal Education for Advice Champions in the Community Links Early Action Advice Project (2015) http://www.lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Law-for-Life-Community-Links-Evaluation-report.pdf
3.	Mackie, L. Law for Life, Legal Capability for Everyday Life Evaluation report (2013) https://lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Law-for-Everyday-Life-Evaluation-report.pdf
4.	Barlow, A. Burgoyne, C. and Smithson, J. (2007) The Living Together Campaign - An investigation of its impact on legally aware cohabitants- http://www.lawcom.gov.uk/app/uploads/2015/03/living-together-research-report.pdf

Table 5- targeted search final sample