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Lord Woolf says that complexity of civil court rules still too high

Lord Woolf, writing in the latest edition of Sweet & Maxwell's "Litigation Practice", says that the complexity of court rules has still not been reduced to the level that he would have liked.

As the architect of the most sweeping reforms of the UK's civil court procedures in a generation, Lord Woolf's comments may add fuel to the debate as to whether further cost and time savings for the users of the UK's civil courts need to be wrung out of the system.

Recent marathon and costly civil cases such as *Equitable Life v Ernst & Young* and *BCCI v Bank of England* have led some legal commentators to claim that the progress in slashing the costs of litigation has stalled.

Lord Woolf points out that: "There has been a change of focus and a change of culture as I hoped. Now judges focus upon resolving disputes; rather than merely producing judgments which were appropriate conclusions to the trials which they had heard."

However, he adds: "The Civil Procedure Rules which accompanied the reforms for which I have to take responsibility, were intended not only to achieve the earlier resolution of disputes, they were also intended to make the rules and the conduct of litigation simpler and litigation less complex."

Statistics from the Department for Constitutional Affairs (DCA) show that the number of High Court civil proceedings have more than halved from their 1999 levels of over 100,000, when the Woolf Reforms came into force. They are now constant at around 50,000 per year.

The new edition of *Litigation Practice* published by Sweet & Maxwell, a Thomson business (NYSE: TOC; TSX: TOC), is the first major rewrite of the guide since 2000. *Litigation Practice* is a 2 volume looseleaf work aimed at practising litigators. The guide focuses on strategy, tactics and practical guidance. It includes a step-by-step examination and explanation of the processes involved in modern litigation and is designed as the definitive guide to modern dispute resolution.

The General Editors of *Litigation Practice* are David Salter, Partner, of Addleshaw Goddard and His Honour Judge Phillip Sycamore.

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