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## **Social Justice and Legal Education**

**Edited by Chris Ashford and Paul McKeown (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2018, 1<sup>st</sup> ed.),  
vi. + 325 pp. £70.99 (hardcover), ISBN 978-1527506466**

This book, published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, is a collection of contemporary essays drawn mostly from the UK, but with contributions from Continental Europe, Africa, Australia and North America as well, all of which help to place social justice and legal education into context. The editors draw together a diverse collection of case studies, project overviews and conceptualisations, predominantly involving situated learning including clinical legal education, and which provide argument and justification for enabling law students to learn aspects of law through active learning by using the social justice mission. McKeown argues that social justice has a plurality of meaning and maintains that rather than teaching a set of values, law schools can provide the framework in which students can themselves (de)construct values. Taking a broad view of clinical legal education as a forum for teaching values of social justice as McKeown does, helps us understand how students can do so by constructing their own value systems.

Each of the book's 18 chapters conveys its own message. Victoria Murray for instance, laments the decline of the social justice mission and sends a clear message in times of global economic downturn, austerity and declining affordable legal services, that law schools should recognise a commitment to social justice and return to its origins founded in the spirit of moral philosophers such as Rawls. A similar theme is addressed by Lucy Yeatman in her chapter on Law in the Community and Access to Justice, although she argues that the provision of legal services to the most vulnerable does not necessarily provide students with an understanding of the origins of the social and political context of their problems or how students can understand issues of inequality. In their chapter, Cody and Gibson take the view that law schools can, through clinical components within law subjects, assist their students' skills acquisition whilst at the same time providing community support. It is sad to observe however the perception held by Holly Greenwood in her chapter that Innocence Projects, arguably perfectly situated learning vehicles for students to appreciate social justice in operation within the criminal justice setting, appear to be in decline (similar to Murray's view of the social justice mission).

Murray's view that law schools should uncompromisingly serve the social justice agenda gives Sue Prince the opportunity to "horizon-gaze". She does this against a background of legal services deregulation (the Legal Services Act 2007) and market liberalisation, which she argues presents an opportunity for law schools to create alternative business structures (ABSs). Whilst not specifically using the social justice theme (although mentioning the experiential benefits of student pro bono engagement), Prince makes a strong case for law schools' requirement to change their approach to legal education in order to accommodate (as she puts it) "the demands of ABS's technologically-driven legal provision". This chapter certainly provides food for thought for those law schools whose focus is to prepare a significant proportion of their students for legal practice.

There is useful commentary on the social justice narrative throughout the book. In some chapters this is articulated through the discussion of projects as explained for example by Jacqueline Kinghan, who makes a persuasive case for encouraging students to appreciate the link between theory and practice through involvement in UCL's Access to Justice Project. Evaluation of social justice clinical projects as displayed by the research undertaken at the University of Huddersfield into students' perceptions of its legal advice clinic, is of particular interest to those academic staff members tasked with establishing a pro bono legal advice clinic, and whose Deans are looking for project justification for doing so. This is consolidated by Malkani and Thomas's evaluation of

Birmingham Law School's Pro Bono Group, which introduces students to issues of social justice. From responses received to a survey of students immersed in the project based within their law school, the research from this study reveals further justification for experiential learning. These chapters, including the one written by Grimes, who acknowledges the associated challenges of "clinic", provide excellent contextual background for legal education's use of the social justice narrative as a pedagogical instrument.

Thus for the legal educator, a useful characteristic of this collection is found in many of the chapters which present ideas on how a conducive learning environment can be constructed using social justice as a theme. For example Jeff Giddings' chapter on the importance of effective supervision in achieving the rich learning potential of clinical experiences, provides some really excellent material for "clinic supervisors", a theme also addressed by Ruthann Robson in her chapter about educating LGBTQ law students in a North American law school. Robson has some useful things to say about teaching styles, including the use of role-play in the context of her topic. Some really interesting ideas are presented by Elaine Campbell in her outline of how the Business Law Clinic operates at Northumbria University, particularly the way in which this project assists the local community in a whole range of business related activities requiring legal advice and support. Campbell further makes a unique case for how business law clinics can fit within the social justice agenda and how social justice in a clinical legal education environment perhaps needs to be re-conceptualised.

The global reach of clinical legal education projects rooted in social justice is displayed within the chapters provided by Olusegun Michael Osinibi (Nigeria), Sue Farran and the World Bank (J4P) initiative in Vanuatu and Maxim Tomoszek (Czech Republic), who reports on the development of clinical legal education programmes in post-communist Central and Eastern European countries. Grimes also uses his chapter to highlight some case studies from across the globe including Afghanistan, Vietnam, India and Georgia and touches on the sustainability of legal clinic. This is a theme which Jessica Guth considers in greater depth, wrestling with the conceptual definitions of both social justice and sustainability, while engaging in a complex discussion about the potential for embedding social justice as part of sustainable legal education commitment.

This book will be useful to legal educators who have an interest in the social justice narrative and how law school projects embedded in such a mission can be a source of effective learning and teaching strategies. Its breadth and diversity of reportage are strengths and the book provides some empirical evidence reinforcing the view that law students respond well to experiential learning strategies, as well as confirming that projects providing such opportunities are also a valuable source of social benefit. Importantly, the collection helps to deconstruct the term "social justice", how this is interpreted by the legal academy and the diversity of locations within which it operates.

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