

REIMAGINING CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

edited by Linden Thomas, Steven Vaughan, Bharat Malkani and Theresa Lynch

Pavel Glos, Palacký University, Czech Republic¹

Prompted by a complex of changes in government, markets, and society which push and pull at the aims, organisation and delivery of legal education, Linden Thomas, the manager and in-house solicitor of Birmingham Law School's Centre for Professional Legal Education and Research (CEPLER), organised a workshop, held in March 2015, to discuss and explore the implications of such changes for clinical legal education. This edited collection comprises a selection of contributions presented at the workshop. I approached this book as a student who has a several years' experience with various forms of clinical legal education. The title *Reimagining clinical legal education* inspired my imagination and I did not dare to estimate what it would come after. After reading this book I am able to confirm that the organizers of the workshop, which preceded this book, chose the apposite title.

The aim of the workshop, and thus this collection, was to bring together different stakeholders, including leading scholars, senior figures from professional practice, students, and representatives of third-sector organisations who contribute to the delivery of clinical legal education in law schools in England and Wales, in order to reflect on the key issues arising from the changing legal services market and higher

¹ Pavel Glos is a postgraduate student at the Law Faculty of Palacký University in Olomouc, Czech Republic

education sector, and the opportunities and threats presented by those changes. Contributors were invited to explore the future of clinical legal education in this transformative period, and this collection comprises chapters based on, or inspired by, a selection of presentations given at the workshop. As such, this collection covers diverse ground and presents a range of perspectives. There are chapters which draw on theory, others which are empirically grounded, and a number that are reflective case studies. One is written by a student, and another by a practitioner with decades of experience of internal learning and development in a law firm. This breadth of insight and multiplicity of perspectives are supported by three post-scripts that offer short commentaries on these thoughts in a global context, based on clinical legal education practice in Australia, the United States of America, and Eastern Europe. However, this collection is not intended to be a roadmap to the future of clinical legal education. The authors make no claim that what they offer up is revolutionary. They are not trying to suggest new models of clinical legal education in the case studies discussed. Their intention is to consider instead the role that particular models are likely to have going forward, bearing in mind the current and likely future context in which clinics will operate. Their aim is to offer up thoughts, experiences and ideas that could form stepping-off points for conversations between academics (clinicians and others), students, employers, regulators, and third-sector organisations alike on the path to a future in which clinical legal education, and those who deliver it, are sufficiently robust and adequately prepared to rise to the challenges and opportunities that will continue to abound.

The main focus of this collection is to examine the extent to which clinical legal education has been (or should be) responding to the dynamic and developing context of the legal services market and higher education sector, whether cuts to legal aid following the introduction of the Legal Aid, Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act in 2012 prompted (or should prompt) a re-evaluation of the role and purpose of clinical legal education, specifically in regard to unmet legal need in England and Wales. Furthermore, the authors explore who engages in delivery of clinical legal education in England and Wales and how they carry out it; and whether, or to what extent, those involved in clinical legal education perceive it as preparing law students for the world of (legal) work. Finally, the authors come to clinical legal education as a distinct field of scholarship, they are interested in its relationships with other forms of teaching and student experience; and the approaches to, and quality of, clinical legal education scholarship.

There is no doubt that this collection provides an appropriate platform for reimagining clinical legal education. Distinct ways which shed light on how clinical legal education can be reimagined (supported by contributions of different stakeholders) enable to readers to reflect its own experience and imagining from multiple perspectives. Even if it is not possible in a collection such as this to fully capture the diverse and multifaceted clinical offering alluded to above, the main purpose and the intention of the authors remains preserved. The particular chapters encouraged by specific examples from practice underline the importance of clinical legal education as a meeting place where academia blends with practice. Although,

Book Review

the ideas raised in this collection are certainly not new, the overall context and different perspectives from which they are discussed demonstrates the potential for future development of clinical legal education. Undoubtedly, the book proposes incentive thoughts, experiences and ideas that will resonate for those involved in and interested in this field. It could be considered the cornerstone for conversations between scholars, legal practitioners, students, regulators, and third-sector organisations alike on the path to a future in which clinical legal education, and those who deliver it, are adequately prepared to rise to the challenges and opportunities that will continue to abound.

Pavel Glos,