

Review

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The Clinical Legal Education Handbook, edited by Linden Thomas and Nick Johnson, London, University of London Press, 2020, xiii + 465 pp., £35.00 (paperback) ISBN 978-1-911507-16-1, Free Open Access PDF (online), ISBN 978-1-911507-17-8, doi 10.14296/520.9781911507178

Recent years have seen a significant growth in clinical legal education being adopted by law schools, particularly across Europe. However, for those who wish to establish a clinical programme or further develop a clinical programme, there are a multitude of issues to consider. This can be a daunting prospect, but there is so much literature to guide clinicians through the process. This Handbook is therefore a timely publication, bringing together many of the issues in establishing and sustaining a clinical legal education programme. Thomas states:

‘The Handbook is intended to be a practical guide that will be of use to clinicians, whether they are new to [clinical legal education] and trying to work out where and how to begin, or have been working in the field for some time and wish to develop a new project or else find themselves encountering a new challenge in an established clinic and in need of a steer as to how to respond.’²

The Handbook is divided into seven parts: Part 1 – Law Clinics: What, why and how?; Part 2 – Regulatory Framework; Part 3 – Assessment in Clinics: Principles, practice and progress; Part 4 – Research on clinical legal education; Part 5 – Precedent documents and resources; Part 6 – Glossary of clinical legal education networks; and Part 7 – Things I wished I’d known before I started doing clinical legal education.

The contributors to this Handbook are based in England and Wales and it therefore important to note a caveat at the outset; namely that the Handbook considers clinical legal education from the perspective of England and Wales. As such, some of the material will be less relevant to an international audience.

Part 1 of the Handbook addresses the basics; what is a clinical programme and how is it established? The authors adopt a broad definition of clinical legal education and rightly so. The joy of clinical legal education is the innovative ways in which it can be delivered, and this should not be restricted by a narrow definition. The authors highlight the different factors that should be considered in the development of a clinical programme such as seeking institutional support as well as support from external stakeholders. The authors further highlight the resources that may be required in running a clinical programme, including staff and physical space. These are important considerations not only in establishing a clinical programme but also ensuring it is sustainable. Whilst the predominant focus of this part concerns live client clinics, other models are also outlined indicating what can be achieved depending upon the resources available.

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² Linden Thomas, ‘Introduction’ in Linden Thomas and Nick Johnson (eds), *The Clinical Legal Education Handbook* (University of London Press, 2020) 4

The regulatory framework of clinical programmes is considered in Part 2 of the Handbook. As noted above, the authors are based in England and Wales and therefore the specific regulatory regime considered is that applying to England and Wales. As such, sections of this Part will be less relevant to an international audience. Despite this, I would still urge anyone wishing to establish a clinical programme, or indeed just be involved in a clinical programme to read this Part as the themes will provide a useful checklist of regulatory matters to consider. For example, it is crucial to know to what extent lawyers, academics and students can engage in clinical activities before establishing a programme. The Handbook also highlights a number of universal issues such as client care, insurance and data protection, all of which are important considerations in a clinical programme.

Part 3 of the Handbook relates to the assessment of clinical activity. Co-authored by Richard Grimes bringing a vast amount of experience from working with clinical programmes around the world, this Part of the Handbook summarises key considerations for the assessment of clinical programmes to maximise student learning and engagement. The authors provide examples of various assessment methods offering their views on the appropriateness of each method within a clinical setting. The authors also illustrate the importance of formative feedback in student learning and development thus, even in a 'non-assessed' clinic demonstrate the importance of good assessment practice.

In Part 4 of the Handbook, consideration is given to the development of research within the field of clinical legal education. Mkwebu draws upon his own research and experience of clinical practice to identify key themes associated with research in the field: emotional well-being; reflection and assessment; skills development and employability; social justice; and the regulatory framework. Mkwebu summarises the research within each of these areas and identifies gaps and areas for future development. There is a tension within academia as to the status of clinical legal education, viewed by many as a vocational activity. This Part illustrates that clinical legal education is rich in opportunities to develop outstanding research into socio-economic issues as well as pedagogy. Perhaps what is missing is the research opportunities associated with the law. Clinical legal education provides academics with the opportunity to witness the law in practice, and what issues there are with it, thus inspiring research opportunities which would not be so apparent from traditional doctrinal research.

Part 5 of the Handbook provides a resource for those involved in clinical legal education. A daunting aspect of establishing a clinical programme is preparing all the material to ensure the efficient operation of the programme. The handbooks, policies, procedures and forms available in Part 5 have been developed by various clinical programmes within England and Wales to address regulatory obligations as well as enhancing the educational experience for the students. Those seeking to establish or develop a clinical programme can use these resources as a starting point, amending as appropriate, but making the task far less daunting than it may initially seem.

One of the greatest aspects of clinical legal education is the community involved in this field. There is a willingness to support one another, share ideas and assist with any issues that may arise. This Handbook is testament to the clinical community sharing their knowledge and experience. Part 6 of the Handbook provides a glossary of various networks that can support clinical programmes and those involved in clinical work. It should be noted that the glossary is not exhaustive and therefore those involved in clinical work should make enquiries whether there are any other networks, particularly national networks available.

Finally, Part 7 provides some insights from experienced clinicians regarding their work. Whilst not all have rigidly addressed the theme of ‘things I wished I’d known’, all the contributors exude their passion for clinical legal education. Their insights are valuable for anyone engaged in, or thinking about engaging in, clinical legal education.

Overall, The Clinical Legal Education Handbook is a valuable text for anyone participating in clinical legal education or interested in establishing a clinical programme. Each clinical programme is unique, and whilst many programmes will share common features, they must adapt to the environment in which they are situated. The Handbook should therefore not be treated as an instruction manual but as a reference note for guidance highlighting issues that should be considered in establishing or running a clinical programme. Dare I say it but even the most experienced clinicians may pause for thought after reading this Handbook. As an Open Access resource, the Handbook will no doubt assist in addressing many of the problems faced by clinicians, highlighting that they are not alone and whatever issue may arise, someone will have dealt with it before (and survived!).