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Citation: Murray, Victoria (2016) Clinical Legal Education in Asia - Accessing Justice for the Underprivileged [Book review]. *The Law Teacher*, 50 (3). pp. 396-398. ISSN 0306-9400

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2016.1185265>
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/03069400.2016.1185265>>

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Clinical Legal Education in Asia - Accessing Justice for the Underprivileged, edited by Shurvo Sarker (Palgrave Macmillan), 2015, 272pp, £65 (hardback), ISBN 978-1-137-51752-4

Currently there are a smattering of articles about clinical legal education (CLE) in Asian countries scattered across various journals. This text is therefore a welcome addition, bringing together a range of diverse clinical writings in one place, which collectively provide an insightful overview of the clinical environment within Asia. The book sets out to provide “the history, present status, and possible future models of clinical legal education” which it achieves to good effect, and in doing so this collection of essays about CLE paints a picture of an exciting emerging pedagogy in its Asian context. The book attempts to capture what characterises the clinical movement in Asia, concluding that it embodies empowerment, justice and skills. Each chapter then adds a local nuance to these overarching goals.

Over its 13 chapters the book charts the development CLE and the range of clinical activity from Turkey heading eastwards to Japan, covering Israel, Palestine, India, Sri Lanka, China, Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, South Korea and Taiwan. I was particularly excited to see a chapter addressing the Maldives, only to discover that CLE has not yet taken any sort of foothold there. Therefore, I was at first rather perplexed at its inclusion. However, on reflection, it is often just as helpful to know why CLE has faced such barriers, which the chapter evaluates adeptly. It is exactly for this reason that the chapter merits inclusion, even though it is somewhat at odds with the rest of the book. It is interesting to note that Taiwan has faced similar difficulties in establishing law clinics, but has proved more successful in establishing more general CLE initiatives.

At approximately 20 pages long, each section provides a reasonable overview of how CLE operates in a particular geographic jurisdiction. Some chapters take a wide angle approach, setting out the national state of play and others helpfully refer to specific law clinics, adopting a case study approach to illustrate clinical models and projects. Whilst the chapters provide a good synopsis of CLE in a particular location (as much as one can in such a limited number of pages), the helpful endnotes provide keen readers with further references to follow up on should they wish to explore the regional position further.

Despite being in its formative stages in many of the included countries, this book makes clear that CLE in Asia is innovative and has overcome a range of barriers, not least political, to establish a promising future. Whilst CLE in Asia is in its infancy, with youth comes innovation and enthusiasm. The accounts of how CLE has developed across the continent, often in challenging circumstances, will very likely inspire readers who work in more established clinics. As a clinician who practises in a well-resourced and award winning law clinic, I found the reports of clinical development and activities found on these pages both stimulating and reinvigorating. Despite the obstacles detailed in the text, clinicians have been able to establish a range of innovative clinical projects addressing issues such as farmer’s justice (China), people living with HIV (Vietnam) and transgender rights (Thailand). Furthermore, I was interested to observe that in certain respects Asian CLE is more advanced than its Western counterparts with, for example, several Taiwanese universities imposing mandatory pro bono work.

One of the criticisms often levied at clinical writing is that it lacks evidence to substantiate its claims. This book provides a range of case studies and data to inform our understanding of CLE. The chapter on Singapore is particularly notable for its use of statistics.

The text reminds us of the value of collaboration, with external partnerships key to the success of initiatives including the Hebron Law Clinic in Palestine. It was also interesting to observe how clinics, such as those in China, have made effective use of funding from organisations including the Ford Foundation.

The content is very accessible with freestanding chapters allowing readers to dip in and out, choosing the geographic area which most piques their interest. As the pedagogy is largely in its infancy within Asia,

readers can perhaps overlook some of the overly descriptive parts of the book. The text will appeal to academics, particularly clinicians, and practitioners who are interested in emerging forms of CLE. Indeed it will be invaluable to any Asian based academic seeking to engage with CLE or establish a clinic in the area.

Sarker is well versed in this field, having previously edited *Legal Education in Asia*, which will make an ideal companion text. This book also complements the publisher's existing clinical offering *A Student Guide to Clinical Legal Education and Pro Bono*, in which this reviewer has an interest. The price of the hardback is perhaps slightly prohibitive for individual buyers but an e-book is available. As pressures continue to make the curriculum more international, and as the global clinical network continues to expand, this text would be a useful purchase for university libraries.

As stated above, there are very few texts in the CLE field, so this book is pioneering and I look forward to watching with interest how this market continues to develop. Based on progress to date, this looks to be a very exciting time for our clinical cousins.

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