

# Foreword

## **Report back from the July 2007 IJCLE conference in Johannesburg:**

Report-backs from conferences can be exasperating to read. If you were there, you can sometimes wonder if you were attending the same conference as the author – and if you weren't there, you often regret the omission. Certainly the latter is likely to be true in this case, as there seemed to be agreement among all the delegates that this summer's IJCLE conference in South Africa was hugely successful – and equally valuable.

It was a superbly organised conference – and I can say that because so much of the credit for that organisation lay with our partners in the South African clinical movement, and with the support of AULAI, in making all the conference arrangements in the splendid facilities at Witwatersrand. Running a conference long-distance is always a daunting task – and the 2005 IJCLE conference at Monash set very high standards; but the work put in by all the team in South Africa ensured that the Johannesburg conference was a very special experience. I have to pass on my particular thanks to Shaheeda Mahomed and Danny Wimpy Alex for their enormous hard work and support.

What was it – apart from the organisation – that made the conference so successful? First, it was a conference where there was a good balance between representation of the host country, and input from a huge range of clinical jurisdictions. We not only had a series of papers that illustrated the particular challenges and developments within the South African context – but also a considerable variety of papers from the United States, the UK, China, India, Australia, Uzbekistan and a host of other jurisdictions. There was a huge benefit in being able to move from narrowly focussed papers about particular aspects of clinical teaching, to more wide-ranging questions about shared clinical values and approaches. As ever the conference was characterised by the enormous generosity of the delegates in sharing experiences and providing support for one another's programmes.

I am not surprised at the enormously positive feedback I have received in the months following the conference – and it sets a challengingly high standard for future conferences.

*Speaking of which ...*

## **The 2008 International Journal of Clinical Legal Education conference**

This will take place on Monday 14th and Tuesday 15th July 2008 in at University College, Cork in the Republic of Ireland.

Initial details are up on the Journal website – [www.ijcle.com](http://www.ijcle.com) – and the conference organiser, Maureen Cooke, can be contacted at: [maureen.cooke@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:maureen.cooke@northumbria.ac.uk)

The theme of the conference is “Lighting the Fire”, drawing on the quotation from W B Yeats that “*Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.*” Papers are welcome on all aspects of clinical legal education – and a call for papers has gone out.

**In this edition**

This edition of the Journal brings together four articles, which address different aspects of clinical practice.

In the first of the articles, Kevin Kerrigan, a Reader at Northumbria University in the UK, and founder of the Criminal Appeal clinic within Northumbria's Student Law Office programme, looks at the issue of the teaching of ethics within clinical programmes. Anyone who follows clinical scholarship will be aware of the continuing focus on the role of clinic in inculcating ethical awareness and values in clinical students. Kerrigan's article makes reference to much of that scholarship, but has at its heart a fascinating survey of UK clinicians, asking them to comment on different aspects of the mode and the function of ethical teaching in clinics. Kerrigan places this within the context of fast-changing structures for the vocational stage of English legal education, while identifying different typologies for ethics dialogues that may be being utilised by clinicians.

Margaret Barry's article looks at the way in which clinical practices are developing within the Indian law schools. India represents such a distinctive legal jurisdiction that it is unsurprising that clinical learning has developed in a similarly distinctive fashion. In her article, however, Barry identifies the way in which, although clinic has had high level endorsements, and clearly has a huge potential for helping to meet unmet needs for justice, there has been at best "modest" progress. Valuably Barry draws on the recent assessments of the need for educational reform within the U.S. contained in both the Carnegie Foundation report and in the Best Practices project published by CLEA, and edited by Roy Stuckey. The paper is thus able not only to assess the Indian experience in its own terms, but to bring to bear a wider evaluation of the current achievements and the future challenges.

In a very different context, Anna Cody and Sue Green look at two different aspects of clinical legal education in relation to education for Indigenous students in Australia. Although the particular context is clearly unique to Australia, readers will no doubt recognise many of the issues that arose for the authors. Students who found themselves initially isolated, disorientated, and in danger of dropping out, who then find through clinical learning the really valuable education which they were looking for. It is interesting to see clinic used as part of a deliberate policy of "enrichment" of the curriculum in even the earliest stages of the courses, in order to help support student learning by engaging students with the curriculum. The paper continues by looking at the way in which non-Indigenous students in the later stages of the curriculum can be given an understanding of the reality of the Indigenous experience, and the implications for their own future work as practitioners.

Finally, I am delighted to include in the Clinical Practice section an article from Ada Ordor which looks at the whole experience of the Nigerian law school, and the particular implications for the development of clinical programmes which fit with the needs of the Nigerian teaching system. The article outlines the range of different teaching activities that are brought to bear within the Nigerian law school, but also at the way in which clinical activities could be used to add greater value – and the ways in which this can be achieved.

*Philip Plowden*

Editor