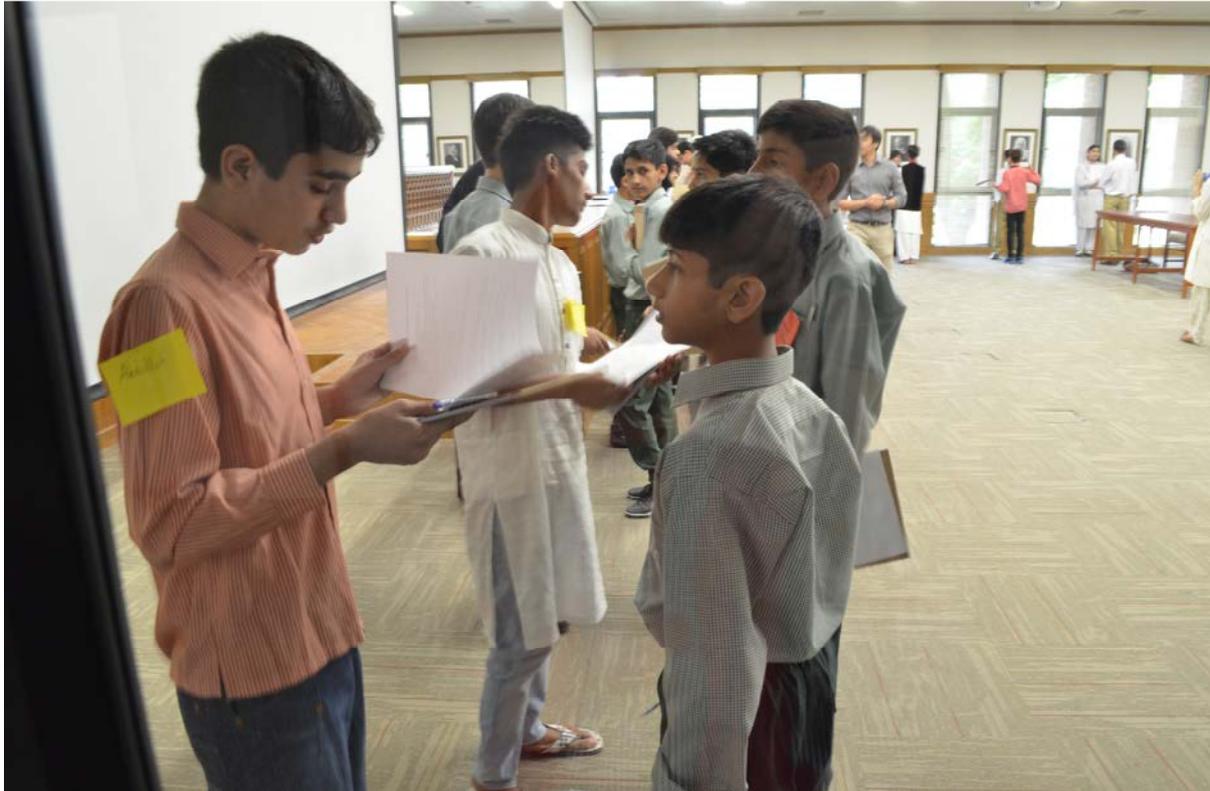


A STREET LAW VENTURE IN LAHORE, PAKISTAN

Clinical Legal Education is now widely hailed as an important component of a well rounded legal education. Being a service profession, it is important for law students to be exposed to the 'real' world outside their classrooms before they graduate. This helps ease the transition from the world of legal theory to the world of practice. Other service professions, such as the medical profession, have relied on clinical education as part of their curriculum for decades, but the legal profession, at least in Pakistan, is only just catching on.



Street law is a form of clinic legal education (CLE). It emerged in various parts of the world as part of social movements for change. It was first used by the civil rights movements in the United States in the 70s, and then in South Africa towards the end of the apartheid. The idea was to engage lawyers and law students to help translate practical law and make it accessible to people 'on the street'. It came with the realization that in order to obtain your rights as citizens, you first had to know what those rights were.¹ Street law eventually became an integral part of many law school curricula across the world. In Pakistan, however, the prescribed law school curriculum contains no mandatory or recommended requirement for any form of CLE.

In the absence of any formal mandate for CLE in Pakistan, the prerogative to introduce such education experiences lies entirely with the law school. The Hamdard School of Law in Karachi first introduced a street law programme with its law students by sending them to the juvenile detention facility in Karachi. Operating from 2012 till 2015, the programme helped inmates follow their own trial in a more informed fashion. Through interactive sessions, the inmates were made aware of the legal process of a criminal trial, and the rights they are

¹ Richard Grimes, David McQuoid Mason, Ed o Brien and Judy Zimmer 'Street Law and Social Justice Education' in the GLOBAL CLINICAL MOVEMENT (2011).

guaranteed under the law. The lawyers supervising the programme found its benefits to be two-fold: it inspired the law students to embrace the social responsibility that is part of the legal profession; it also achieved higher legal literacy for the participating inmates of the juvenile facility insofar as they were able to draft and present basic documents such as complaints regarding the detention facility, and their own bail applications. They were better able to understand and navigate the criminal trial process and instruct their lawyers.²

The Shaikh Ahmad Hassan School of Law (SAHSOL) in Lahore commenced its street law programme as a voluntary activity in the academic year of 2017 – 2018 in collaboration with a student society. Building on its earlier relations with local high schools enrolling lower to middle income students, a curriculum was developed targeting adolescent students. The target audience was selected premised upon the realization that a large majority of Pakistan’s population is under the age of 15.³ The street law programme was launched with the twin goals of exposing law students to a real audience with real questions about how the law works, while empowering high school students with basic knowledge about how a constitutional democracy functions, and the role they play as informed citizens of society.



Street law, is in essence, a form of social lawyering. It seeks to create, through interaction between the student and the ‘street’ audience, a connection between the law student and her surrounding community. It helps create legal awareness in the area of law that is being discussed by the law student. And as mentioned above, it helps strengthen the rule of law by encouraging effective citizen participation in various fields.

² Interview with Omar Maniar, Instructor at Hamdard School of Law, November 2017.

³ According to the UNDP, 29% of Pakistan’s population is between the ages of 15 and 29, while 64% of the total population is under the age of 30: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1405197>.

Pakistan is a country with many problems. It is a fledgling democracy fraught with issues of accountability, army interference in the running of the state⁴, terrorism⁵, inter-religious discord and violence⁶, and a deeply entrenched gender bias⁷. Set against this backdrop, the deeper purpose of our street law programme was to begin a movement for social change. There are many ways that societies bring about social change, and many of them are in vogue in Pakistan as well, including domestic and international lobbying for human rights friendly laws and their implementation, public interest litigation for enforcement of rights and guarantees provided in the Constitution and other laws, and social movements aimed at creating awareness and informing mindsets. Although the primary purpose of Street Law is to benefit law students, we believe that Street Law, as a movement and especially when targeting the youth of the nation, fits in well with social movements for change.

The year long programme run in Lahore by the law students of SAHSOL began with an introduction to the concept of state and its component parts: the legislature, executive and judiciary. Through participatory and interactive exercises, the high school students were able to exhibit an understanding of how our state is meant to function. This was followed by a module on criminal law, the process followed in a trial and the concept of sentencing. The final module covered fundamental rights, including the right to education, freedom of religion, right to equality and non-discrimination and some others. In future years, we hope to expand our curriculum to include a module on employment laws and family law, since we believe that these are important aspects of every person's life.

Upon completion of the sessions, feedback from the high school students indicated a high level of satisfaction and interest in the subject matter. Many students were keen to see our law students return in the next academic year. The law students found Street Law to be an effective addition to their legal training. Some feedback received was:

"Street Law was a very interactive experience in which the students and I learnt a lot from each other. The skills I've developed as a tutor for Street Law have helped me improve myself not just as a future lawyer/teacher but also as a person..."

Being in the role of a teacher and having to conduct a session with 27 children (who were often rowdy and mischievous) was a task in itself and ended up being a great learning experience for me. Towards the end of the academic year, this experience was more than worth every morning spent waking up early to go teach these kids and the change that it represented in our lives was very meaningful."

(Mahum Shahzad Laun. B.A., LL.B Class of 2019)

"The response I got from the students was very positive. The classes were very fun and interactive as the students actively participated in the activities, role playing exercises and the discussions. The response from my students motivated me to go back to the school every week.

Students were particularly interested in the content of the course. I had to make sure that I was very well prepared for each session as the students asked very insightful questions."

(Haris Irfan, B.A., LL.B Class of 2019)

⁴ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1097757>; https://www.huffingtonpost.com/raza-habib-raja/why-is-military-so-powerful_b_13269780.html; <https://nation.com.pk/31-Jan-2016/5-ways-pakistan-army-tames-civilian-governments>.

⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1657057/9-pakistan-resolve-issues-related-terrorism-says-hillary-clinton/>.

⁶ <http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/shrinking-minorities-pakistan/>;

⁷ <https://dailytimes.com.pk/59128/gender-discrimination-in-pakistan/>.

The law students are keen to return to the programme in the coming academic year. This is despite the fact that despite the commitment and preparation required, they receive *no* formal credit for this activity. In addition to improving the completeness of our curriculum, we hope to begin to expand to networks of schools across the country and sow our small share of seeds in the movement for social change.