

BOOK REVIEW

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Sherr, A., Moorhead, R. and Sommerlad, H. (eds) (2017) *Legal Education at the Crossroads*, London and New York, Routledge, ISBN 978-1-138-22037-9

Forces of change are bearing down on the legal profession in many jurisdictions, technology, globalisation and changes in legal markets are all contributing to feelings of de-stabilization and uncertainty. The impact felt by the profession naturally transfers into legal education, the introduction to this edited collection identifies the United Kingdom (UK) as illustrating how this is unfolding with the changes proposed by the Solicitors Regulation Authority (SRA) to the legal education and training of Solicitors. Unfortunately, this collection was published prior to the announcement by the SRA confirming the introduction of the Solicitors Qualification Exam (SQE) but a number of chapters highlight the tension between delivering a liberal law degree and the requirement of Universities to ensure students are practice ready.

This edited collection is an eclectic mix of articles considering the state of legal education, the role of the liberal law degree and highlighting how aspects of clinical legal education can impact on the curriculum. It draws on examples from different jurisdictions including the UK, US, Australia, Hong Kong and China and argues uncertainty and change is being felt across the globe. These articles were originally published in a special edition of the *International Journal of Legal education* in March 2015.

There are seven chapters to this book, each chapter does not obviously follow from the next but that does not in any way detract from the reader's enjoyment. It is a varied collection covering a range of issues. In chapter one, Richard Abel begins with a consideration of the 'crisis' within US legal education and then widens the scope of the discussion to the UK and Australia. This chapter illuminates a key theme of the book, which is the impact of market forces on legal education and the legal profession. It raises challenging questions such as how many lawyers should we have, how much should legal education cost (p.14) and ultimately that legal education and the profession must "anticipate change at a pace and in a direction previously unimaginable" (p.15).

Then in chapter 2, Maureen Spencer looks back at a specific time in higher education- 1963 to 1983 to broaden the scope of the discussion to consider the ideology that underpinned post- compulsory education in the UK. Importantly the book examines historical developments to contextualise the current debates.

Chapter 3 focuses on advocating the inclusion of access to justice within the law curriculum. Donald Nicolson argues that encouraging law students to be involved in law clinics gives them an opportunity to see first-hand the issues associated with unmet legal need. His hope is that this will inspire a commitment to addressing access to justice that will extend beyond their time at University. The theme of change is continued by Kathy Douglas in chapter 4 in her exploration of the role of ADR in legal education in Australia. She argues that the growth of ADR in many jurisdictions across the world merits its inclusion within legal education. She discusses some of the challenges that may arise when trying to

incorporate ADR into the curriculum. The chapter picks up one of the themes that underpin this book the dichotomy of being innovative in times of increasing pressure on higher education funding.

Chapter 5 is particularly interesting because it considers the historical perspective of the law degree, Patricia Leighton examines some of the historical data to discuss why legal education in the nineteenth century is impinging on our ability to liberalize the current law degree. Knowledge of the historical development of the law degree is critical to getting a proper understanding of the current debates in legal education. The final two chapters draw on the experiences of Hong Kong and China, chapter 6 examines how simulated clients can be used to assess interview skills and demonstrates the innovation that is taking place in law schools across the world. The final chapter discusses the establishment in 2012 of the National Lawyers College of the People's Republic of China and highlights the growth of legal education in China which is firmly controlled by the Chinese Communist Party.

Overall this book is an interesting read and gives a flavour of the developments within legal education, reflecting on the eternal nature of these issues and posing serious questions that need to be considered when responding to the rapidly changing environment. Perhaps one of the limitations of the book is a lack of exploration of legal education in civil law jurisdictions arguably because of globalization the impacts noted here apply in similar ways but it would be interesting for the reader to gain an insight into what is happening in both common and civil law jurisdictions.

The collection touches on a number of interesting themes that are impacting on legal education it is not a fully cohesive discussion but it will be of interest to academics, students and practitioners because it does provide an accessible insight into the current debates. Changes to training and education of law students is not just happening in the UK but the introduction of SQE is arguably going to be significant and legal education in the UK is certainly at a 'crossroads'.