**Comenius University / International Journal of Clinical Legal Education Conference**

**ENCLE - IJCLE 2019 Improving the Future: Using Clinical Legal Education to Educate Lawyers for a Just Society**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Title | Mrs |
| Lead Presenter First Name | Laura |
| Lead Presenter Last Name | Hyde |
| Organisation of Lead Presenter | Aston University |
| Name/s and details of other presenters | Samantha Burns, Aston University, Teaching Fellow, United Kingdom |
| Title of Proposal | Can clinical legal education help increase diversity in the legal profession? |
| Summary of Proposal | Laura Hyde and Samantha Burns are investigating whether clinical legal education programmes can be tailored in order to encourage students from more diverse backgrounds to apply for roles within the legal profession. They have investigated the specific diversity issues which exist within the profession, and will be carrying out focus group research in order to establish the barriers to entry to the profession for these groups. |
| Abstract Proposal | Solicitors have a reputation as a profession that is ‘pale, male and stale’ In this article we will investigate the nature of the barriers for students from non-traditional backgrounds entering the profession. We will then consider whether clinical legal education can play a role in breaking down these barriers.  The first issue we investigated was whether the law does in fact have a diversity problem, or whether this is an out of date perception.  On a first review of the headline figures for practising certificate holders, it appears that progress has been made. More women than men now hold practising certificates (50.1%). The percentage of practising certificate holders (for whom race is known) from BAME groups is now 16.5% (against 13.1% of the population in the most recent census). Whilst there are significant regional anomalies (such as the City of London), the profession as a whole is broadly representative and there are signs that diversity is improving, at least within the junior ranks of the profession.  The figures on social mobility tell a different story. The most recent statistics from the Law Society indicate that 27.4% of practising certificate holders went to a fee paying school, against 7% of the population as a whole. This issue is particularly pronounced in the biggest law firms and there has not been a significant increase in the proportion of state-educated solicitors over time.  In order to decide whether clinical legal education can help, we will first establish the reason why people from a state school background are underrepresented amongst solicitors: 1) Are students from a state school background less likely to apply for a law degree in the first place? Can clinical legal education help with this, by incorporating sixth form students into its projects?  2) Is it an application problem? Do fewer state-educated students apply for training contracts on completion of their LLB? 3) Is it a recruitment problem? Are state-educated students applying for training contracts, but failing to get them?  We will carry out focus-group based research with students from state schools and investigate whether we can tailor our clinical legal education programmes in order to improve access to the profession. |