

## Street Law and Legal Clinics as Civic Projects: Situation in the Czech Republic

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### Abstract

There have been plenty of opportunities to learn law in the Czech Republic but unfortunately only a few of them are effective. Law has been established as compulsory subject at universities and it is taught at secondary schools as well. There are also other sources of legal education such as private courses. We want to show the impact of these methods on the legal literacy of the population. In our presentation we want also to illustrate other possible means the law is presented to non-lawyers. One of the great methods is using the concept of Street Law, which, in the Czech Republic, is based on university students of Law who teach at secondary or primary schools. There are also projects such as Be Aware of your Civil Rights. We are kind to present the achievements as well as the possible improvements in legal education in the Czech Republic such as using interdisciplinary learning or showing the importance of law in ordinary life.

### Key words

Legal education; Legal literacy; Street law

### Resumen

Ha habido muchas oportunidades para aprender Derecho en la República Checa, pero, por desgracia, sólo unas pocas son efectivas. El Derecho se ha convertido en asignatura obligatoria en las universidades, y también se enseña en centros de enseñanza secundaria. Hay, además, cursos privados. Nosotros pretendemos mostrar el impacto de estos métodos en la alfabetización jurídica de la población, así como proponer otras vías de presentar el Derecho a personas no versadas. Una de las metodologías más importantes es la denominada Ley en la Calle. En la República Checa, ésta consiste en que estudiantes de Derecho enseñan en institutos o en escuelas de enseñanza primaria. Por otro lado, hay proyectos como Conozca sus Derechos Civiles. Nos complace presentar los logros obtenidos, así

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como las mejoras que se pueden implementar en la educación jurídica de la República Checa, como, por ejemplo, usar el aprendizaje interdisciplinario o mostrar la importancia del Derecho en la vida cotidiana.

**Palabras clave**

Educación jurídica; alfabetización jurídica; la Ley en la Calle

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## 1. Introduction

It is difficult to conceive of a doctor qualifying without ever examining a living body, or of scientists completing their education without setting up practical tests - but this has been the norm in university legal education outside of North America.

Richard Lewis<sup>1</sup> (2000)

The purpose of this article is to present the current situation of the field of Legal Clinic education in the Czech Republic and, more importantly, to describe the concept of Street Law and to take a careful look on its pros and cons as a mean not only to educate legal students in an alternative way but to increase the common legal knowledge in the broader society as well. Apart from this, we will also investigate the possibilities for future development and the direction Street Law and Legal Clinics could (and should) go in the near future.

We understand the terms *Legal Clinics* and *Street Law* as two ways to describe an alternative approach to legal education which is focused on *law in action* rather than *law in books*. We understand the term *Legal Clinic* in more narrow sense meaning actual Legal Aid Clinic with students working on cases of clients outside school. We acknowledge the fact that *Legal Clinic* is sometimes used in broader sense meaning all types of clinical education and involving even Street Law. But it is useful to make the distinction at least in the situation we face in the Czech Republic where Street Law is far better accepted than actual clinics. In the article we will use the term *clinical legal education* when talking about both Legal Clinics and Street Law.<sup>2</sup>

In last 30 years, clinical legal education established itself very well in the United States and Western Europe (mostly in the UK) as an alternative method which can better connect students with the practice and give them skills which they will need extensively in their future career. In Central and Eastern Europe, the alternative methods of clinical legal education play an additional role besides teaching the students practical legal skills. As is thoroughly described in other parts of this publication legal education in Central and Eastern Europe is mostly book-centred, based on the memorizing of the *law in books* and standard lectures (usually for a huge number of students). Given the prevalence of this conservative approach to legal education in the region, clinical legal education can be considered as a movement which does not only help to improve student skills but also the conditions of legal education and legal profession as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

In general, the Legal Aid Clinic (or also called *life-client clinics*) is considered the core part of clinical legal education. There students provide pro bono legal aid to general public under the supervision of lecturers (typically practicing lawyers). Clients of these clinics are very often people who cannot otherwise afford professional legal aid. This way the clinic has another very important role which is not aimed at students but rather at the whole society, because Legal Aid Clinics help balance the natural inequalities within current justice system. Thanks to the Legal Aid Clinic the students get to know practical aspects of law and legal cases. They try to draft legal documents including formal letters, contracts and even lawsuits). In some countries there is even the possibility for students to go to the court and actually present their case as a part of Legal Aid Clinic. For the law schools this is a great example of the so called Third Stream activity – university projects aimed to the general society, which is one of typical benefits arising from clinical legal education.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Professor of Law, Cardiff University, Wales, United Kingdom.

<sup>2</sup> *Black's Law Dictionary* (1994): "A legal clinic (also law clinic or law school clinic) is a law school program providing hands-on-legal experience to law school students and services to various clients."

<sup>3</sup> Creating this paper we also used comparative literature, for example Tan *et al.* 2006.

<sup>4</sup> For more about the Third Streams activities see for example Molas-Gallart *et al.* 2002.

Apart from Legal Aid Clinic there are other activities which can be understood as parts of clinical legal education, namely simulations (mainly moot courts, but also negotiation exercises, legal drafting, presentation skills etc.) and externships (students are sent out to work in courts, legal offices, state departments etc. for some time to acquire practical skills and knowledge) [Molas-Gallart *et al.* 2002].

Street Law can be described as one of the methods of clinical legal education which is basically based on law students teaching people about law (Street Law n.d.). Students involved in the Street Law programme prepare seminars or lectures for non-lawyers from quite different areas. Some seminars are for prisoners, some for patients in hospitals etc. In the Czech Republic, Street Law is mostly concentrated on education of high school and elementary school students.<sup>5</sup>

As with Legal Aid Clinics, Street Law has two main directions of impact: the students and the society. Teaching requires the teacher to understand the subject matter she is supposed to teach. A student in the role of a teacher does not only need to memorize the subject on which she is going to have a seminar; she needs to understand it as well. And that is a big difference compared to what the students are required to do in law schools.

For the society there are two main benefits in the Street Law: improvement of the general legal knowledge and rebuilding the trust in law which was damaged by the communist regime as well as the reputation of legal professions (see more in Part 1.1.).

When law is taught by law students instead of high-school teachers, who apart from law teach economics, politics, sociology, philosophy and psychology, pupils get usually more relevant and close-to-the-practice information. It helps to improve the general legal knowledge and with the knowledge comes also the lost trust.

### 1.1. Clinical legal education in Central Europe<sup>6</sup>

Social sciences in general and legal sciences especially were radically influenced by the fifty years of communist regime in Central Europe. Marxist social theory expected law to gradually vanish and to be replaced by a new system of norms. This new normative system would express the interests of all members of communist society (Collins 1982).

Even though this new world has never happened, these theoretical approaches result in the serious consequences in the normal life. The law served to the regime which bended according to its wishes.<sup>7</sup> In the society the law was no longer understood as a protection of people against wrongdoing or as rules for the society but more as norms which are used against those who were inconvenient for the regime. How people in the communistic era thought about the law and its purpose could be seen from the saying which established itself well in the communistic era: *If you do not steal from the state, you are robbing your own family.* It is no surprise that with this shift of the perception of law the prestige of legal professions dropped down drastically and so did the social status of lawyers. This resulted in

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<sup>5</sup> However, since we have started writing this article almost two years ago at least some things have changed in the Czech Republic. The core of Street Law activities is still focused on high school and elementary school students but there were introduced pilot Street Law projects by students from the Charles University for children from Children's Home and for Roma children.

<sup>6</sup> This whole publication is devoted to clinical legal education in Central and Eastern Europe. For this reason as well as for the acknowledged lack of our knowledge about the situation and history in all countries in Central Europe this section of our article is not going into details about each individual country and it is intended only as general introduction which helps to grasp better the situation in the Czech Republic.

<sup>7</sup> The law was the most abused during the 1950s when we can find cases in which the regime directly intervened into the judicial proceedings or the court decided against the formal law based on purely ideological argument. Later, the interventions were mostly informal or according the law (e.g. through the official prosecutor who could intervene in some case). For exhaustive inquiry into the judicial ideology during the communist regime see Kühn 2005.

the legal profession's inability, lack of competence, and/or reluctance to engage in the rule of law, human rights, and public interest lawyering on behalf of the most vulnerable groups (Berbec-Rostas *et al.* 2011).

After the transition from a totalitarian regime to a democracy the requirements on legal professions are getting bigger together with the slow restitution of their social status and independence.<sup>8</sup> The modern liberal democratic society with its free market is also capable to give job to more lawyers and thus the demand for lawyers is bigger than in the past. But it is not only the bigger demand for lawyers but as a result of increase of studying possibilities there is also a bigger supply of lawyers. It comes as no surprise that together with necessary reforms in law there was also a need for reformation of the legal education with the emphasis on the education of future lawyers connected with the actual practise as much as possible. After the 25 years it seems that the first goal (e.g. the reform of statutes) came out far better than the latter.

One of the most symptomatic characteristics of legal education in Central Europe is the huge emphasis on theory without connection to legal practice or practical legal skills, let alone actual involvement of the students in the practice during their studies.<sup>9</sup> There is a more fundamental problem behind this: the universities do not seem themselves as places for preparing lawyers for practical work and life after graduation; they are focused on identifying and defining concepts of law rather than the capacity to analyse and solve legal problems (Berbec-Rostas *et al.* 2011). The universities see themselves mostly as cores of the legal doctrine and as the legal science centres where there is no place for any development of practical lawyering skills.

A great credit in the field of clinical legal education in Central Europe belongs to US based organisations and donors (for example Ford Foundation, Open Society Institute, American Bar Association's Central European, Eurasian Law Initiative and so on).<sup>10</sup> These initiatives laid down the foundations for clinical legal education in Central Europe. Given the fact that clinical legal education is still present in many Law Schools across Central Europe it is more than fair to say that their missions were successful. This success is not as complete as it might seem, since there are still lot of critics (authors of this article included) who consider the current status of clinical legal education insufficient. These critics argue that clinical legal education should have been given much more space in the curricula of Law Schools to have a significant impact on students as well as on society. Subjects of clinical legal education are still (apart from a relatively few exceptions) only optional (the idea behind is probably that there is no point in pushing students into clinics if they do not want). This means that the completion of subjects focused on practical legal skills is not yet compulsory for every student who graduated from Law School.<sup>11</sup>

## 2. Clinical legal education in the Czech Republic

There were three main agents in the history of clinical legal education in the Czech Republic: the Law School of Palacký University at Olomouc, Hofstra University (especially professor Stefan H. Krieger) and the Ford Foundation. The Law School in

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<sup>8</sup> One way to increase the public trust in legal institutions is self-disciplining of legal professions. For the analyses of disciplinary procedures of Czech judges between years 2008-2014, see Friedel and Urban 2016.

<sup>9</sup> There is an amusing story from the Charles University in Prague, Faculty of Law, which could be a great illustration of this fact. The story took place during the discussions over the introduction of practical training for students in courts (students were supposed to work together with a judge, draft decisions for him and see him during his work). One of the professors, an important expert in Civil Procedure, argued that judges often practice law in a wrong way and the students can get misleading information from them. According to this professor, students were supposed to sit in the school and just listen to the lectures of professors who are the only ones who know the law right.

<sup>10</sup> For the detailed description of the initiatives involved and the history of origins of the clinical legal education in the Central and East Europe see Berbec-Rostas *et al.* 2011.

<sup>11</sup> For more to didactics see Stice 1987.

Olomouc is still the most successful Law school in the Czech Republic regarding clinical legal education.

The Law School of Palacký University reopened two years after the Velvet Revolution in 1991. Josef Jařab, the rector of Palacký University, aimed for building a Law School that would be able to properly prepare young lawyers according to the needs of practice. Freshly established post-communist society was the ideal situation for his aim (university which did not carry the burden of past, full of new possibilities and ideas). Palacký University started to cooperate with Hofstra University and it asked the Ford Foundation for a grant on opening live-client Housing Rights Clinic which they successfully got in 1996. Therefore the University was able to establish the very first Legal Aid Clinic not only in the Czech Republic but in whole Central Europe, becoming the pioneer of clinical legal education in Central Europe (Tomoszek 2013). Today, the Law Faculty of Palacký University offers more than 15 subjects focused on *Law in Action*. Their educational plan has workshops for students involved in clinics where students deal with legal ethics issues, presentation skills etc.

The model of Legal Aid Clinics is not widespread among Law Schools in the Czech Republic. Masaryk University School of Law, in Brno, emphasizes the great number of options of legal externships (from government administration and judiciary to law offices) in clinical legal education and Street Law was there only for a short period but recently has been improved and started again (more at Masaryk University n.d.). School of Law at Charles University in Prague offers an increasingly widening range of externships and the possibility for students to join the Street Law program (officially called Legal Practice at High Schools) about which we will talk later on. In the School of Law at the University of West Bohemia clinical legal subjects are rather limited but besides Palacký University it is the only Law School which offers (though to a much smaller extent) students to join some form of the Legal Aid Clinic.

In all Law Schools in the Czech Republic the students have an opportunity to enrol themselves in a wide range of moot courts. The most types of moot courts are offered in Olomouc and Prague.

### 3. Street Law

Due to the persistent opposition of the Czech Bar Association and Law Schools against Legal Aid Clinics, it is the Street Law aspect of clinical legal education that has become dominant in the Czech Republic. The main problem of Law Schools is the liability of Legal Aid Clinics. This problem seems to be merely artificial because a similar type of liability is covered by insurance at medical schools where students learn to cure the patients at hospitals. The real reason might be the lobby of the Czech Bar Association who is afraid of the competition. This is also a wrong idea because the clinics' clients are mostly people who would be hardly able to afford any legal aid. Also, it is a common practice that students from legal clinics advise their clients to seek legal help from an attorney when the case is too difficult from the start or it gets difficult in the process. It therefore cannot be claimed that Legal Aid Clinics jeopardise the legal profession because they would cause a decline in the number of clients.

#### 3.1. Brief introduction of the Street Law in the Czech Republic

Students are not automatically admitted to the course according to the principle first-come first-served which is standard method for the majority of subjects. Some sort of selection process is always present (e.g. Charles University Law School selects students according to their motivation letter, in Palacký University Law School students are selected on the basis of an interview). Current proven policy is to accept almost everyone, apart from flagrant *troublemakers*. First seminar, during which are students introduced to their duties, obligations and the course schedule.

After first class (when students are informed that taking Street Law classes will not guarantee them easy access to credits, but will be demanding and very time-consuming) usually most students choose to stay and some opt out from the course.

The course is one semester long and it is introduced in both semesters. The course is divided into three main parts. In the first part (usually approximately five 90 minutes long lessons), students are provided with some basic teaching and presentation skills. Lessons are structured interactively using huge variety of teaching methods. This is very useful because students are not only passive recipients of basics of didactics but also participate a lot during the lesson and apart from learning the theoretical part they also see lot of examples of methods they can later use in their lectures. In this first part of the Street Law course students are being prepared for their own teaching. There are compulsory mini lessons which are based on students teaching in front of each other to have at least some teaching experience before the second part and also to receive feedbacks from their classmates as well as from the lecturer.

The second part of the course – basically the main part – is the students' teaching period. Students teach in groups of two or three usually ten lessons (one lesson is 45 minutes in the Czech school system). During the teaching period each group is visited by the high school or elementary school teacher to provide proper feedback. Once or twice the lecturer of the Street Law also comes to visit them. The students always teach law but the subject differs. Most of the students teach in the social science course in which the students have the law part of curriculum. Some students teach in special voluntary subjects which are focused mainly on legal topics.

After passing Street Law I,<sup>12</sup> students can continue with Street Law II which is no longer strictly divided between lessons at law school and teaching at high or elementary schools. Street Law II means that a student or usually two students teach on their own at least for three months, but typically the whole school year. A similar policy is in Olomouc where Street Law I is dedicated to elementary school teaching and Street Law II to high schools.

### 3.2. Benefits

Which abilities are improved by street law courses? We summarized the feedback of students to the course and added some of our own observations. We hope that Street law teaches the students:

**Self-respect.** Students are taught to keep the balance between being humble and respect themselves. Students are sometimes very nervous and afraid to start teaching. They are scared of the possible questions of elementary or high school students. After teaching some lessons they usually find that teaching is a very hard job and requires a lot of preparation. But after facing all the challenges, they realize they could make it.

**Improving knowledge of the process and function of the legal system.** While students mostly have theoretical knowledge of how the legal system works, they rarely ask themselves the most important question: "Why something should be like that?" But it is almost sure that their pupils at elementary or high schools will ask "why" a lot. To be able to provide a satisfactory answer students must go deeper and think about law differently.

**Argumentation, improvisation skills and other 'soft skills'.** This is perhaps nothing surprising. Teachers as well as lawyers must be able to react to unexpected

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<sup>12</sup> Students who successfully pass whole course are awarded with 4 credits (ECTS). This amount had been established after some debate and negotiation with the dean's board and is considered fair since major subjects exams are awarded with approximately 6 ECTS.



situations, under time pressure and constantly changing circumstances etc. They are both dealing with other human beings on a daily basis so every soft skill they learn is a positive.

**Creativity.** Being a lawyer is for many people synonym to be boring or tedious. Street law students try to persuade their high school / elementary school students that the assumption about law being dull is not true. They often teach by showing the students dozens of vivid examples, using active methods of teaching and illustrate law as a part of everyday life. This way they can show their students that law is not something abstract with which they will never have to meet. Law is almost everywhere and they just did not see it or understand it previously.<sup>13</sup>

As it was mentioned before we think that Street Law has benefits not only for law students as teachers but also for the pupils and regular teachers of the course where student teach. For the pupils, benefits are quite obvious. First, changing the teacher is something new for them and it makes lessons more interesting. The legal knowledge of law students is obviously broader than that of regular teachers and they are familiar with recent judgments or cases that can illustrate the subject matter they teach. It is also a quite well-known fact, confirmed by our experience, that teaching by examples is one of the most effective and most interesting teaching methods).<sup>14</sup> The benefit for teachers lies mainly in the possibility to see how law can be taught. This helps them to incorporate some of the methods to their future teaching. Very often the appearance of law students is also an opportunity for the teachers to actualize their legal knowledge. It is not rare that the teacher actually sits with the pupils in the class and makes notes.<sup>15</sup>

### 3.3. *The future plans*

The Czech Street Law programme only represents a small fragment of the full concept of Street Law. Our plans are to widen the scope of activities. We would like to be less Law school-centred and start to cooperate with more elementary and high school teachers across the Czech Republic. The plan is to create a portfolio of lessons that can be used for teaching law and to provide courses for elementary and high school teachers on didactics of law and the law itself. One of the main problems with teaching law outside universities is the lack of teachers' knowledge of actual law. This is mostly not the failure of teachers but rather of the education system – law at elementary and high school level is not a subject taught separately but it is part of a subject called 'Social Sciences'. This means that there is usually one teacher who has to cover the basics of all social sciences (psychology, sociology, economics, philosophy, political science, law etc.). The case is often that the law is left for the end of the year or even not covered at all. The teachers do not have the knowledge necessary to teach the law properly and to make the students interested in the subject. Sometimes teachers admit that they are afraid of law and the teaching of it. Therefore we would like to organize seminars, moot courts and debates with legal practitioners (judges, solicitors, prosecutors, etc.) for the teachers.<sup>16</sup> This is obviously a great challenge but we hope that our efforts will be successful.

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<sup>13</sup> More, for example, in Woodcock 1988 or Hattie 1999. For more information about Prague Street Law program at around the year 2011, see Urban 2011.

<sup>14</sup> Textbooks used in high schools and grammar schools are usually focused on theory, because it does not change overtime. Thus, it seems much easier to teach theory than practice (this is not in any case fault of the teachers). Examples of better books are for example Arbetman 2009 or, in Czech, Urban *et al.* 2014.

<sup>15</sup> For the discussion of the effectiveness of Street Law methods, see Urban 2012. The full report from the survey is however available only in Czech, in Urban 2013.

<sup>16</sup> When we wrote the first draft of the article in 2014 this was only an idea we had. Today, we can proudly say that at the Charles University we prepared and launched the first legal courses for the teachers and this has met with a positive feedback so far.

Another way of improvement should be extension of our focus to other fields besides elementary and high school education. We were able to prepare lectures for Roma children which we introduced on holiday summer camp for them with great acceptance from children. Also, we have launched first weekend course for children from Children's home and we plan to organise more of them. Moreover, we are discussing two more options for our growth: improving legal awareness among ex-convicts as part of their reintegration programme or hospital patients' rights awareness improvement. Especially in the case of ex-convicts, it seems appropriate to consider the possibility of a multi-discipline clinic involving other disciplines such as psychology or economics.<sup>17</sup>

#### 4. Small research dealing with the clinical legal education

We decided to verify some of our assumptions about clinical legal education by means of a survey involving law students. As mentioned above, legal clinics have been part of legal education in the Czech Republic. The main problem is that since law schools are quite huge, (with hundreds of students every year), it is almost impossible to provide every student with the possibility of taking part in clinical legal education. There is only limited space for clinicians but on the other hand the demand for being part of a legal clinic is surprisingly low as well. Therefore we decided to make a survey within the students where we would test their knowledge about clinical legal education and their approach to it.

We formulated three hypotheses about the students' approach to clinical legal education:

1. Students generally know what clinical legal education is.
2. Students are able to name a few types of legal clinics.
3. Students are generally keen to participate in clinics.

The research was made using Google drive questionnaire forms. Questions were chosen to be brief and the whole questionnaire should have taken no more than 5 minutes to complete. The research was taken within students of Charles University Law School in Prague so the results cannot be interpreted as universal to all law schools in the Czech Republic. However, we are convinced that it offers a quite good overview of the attitude of Czech students towards legal clinics. We asked more than 500 students and received 71 replies.

##### 4.1. Questions and Answers

Some of the questions were related to each other. We asked all of the students about their years of studies (first to fifth or postgraduate). The next question was crucial because it asked about the clinical legal education and stated: "Are you anyhow familiar with the term Clinical legal education?" The responses are quite surprising because only 20 out of 72 students answered yes to this question, which means that only 27.7% (less than one-third) of students are familiar with the term clinical legal education.

Responses are shown in Figure 1, where the horizontal axes represents the year of the study, the vertical axes show the number of respondents of each study year.

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<sup>17</sup> Another opportunity is to use Street Law methodology in work with socially challenged minorities in the Czech Republic, which are especially the Roma. For our experience, see Urban and Drašlarová 2016.

FIGURE 1

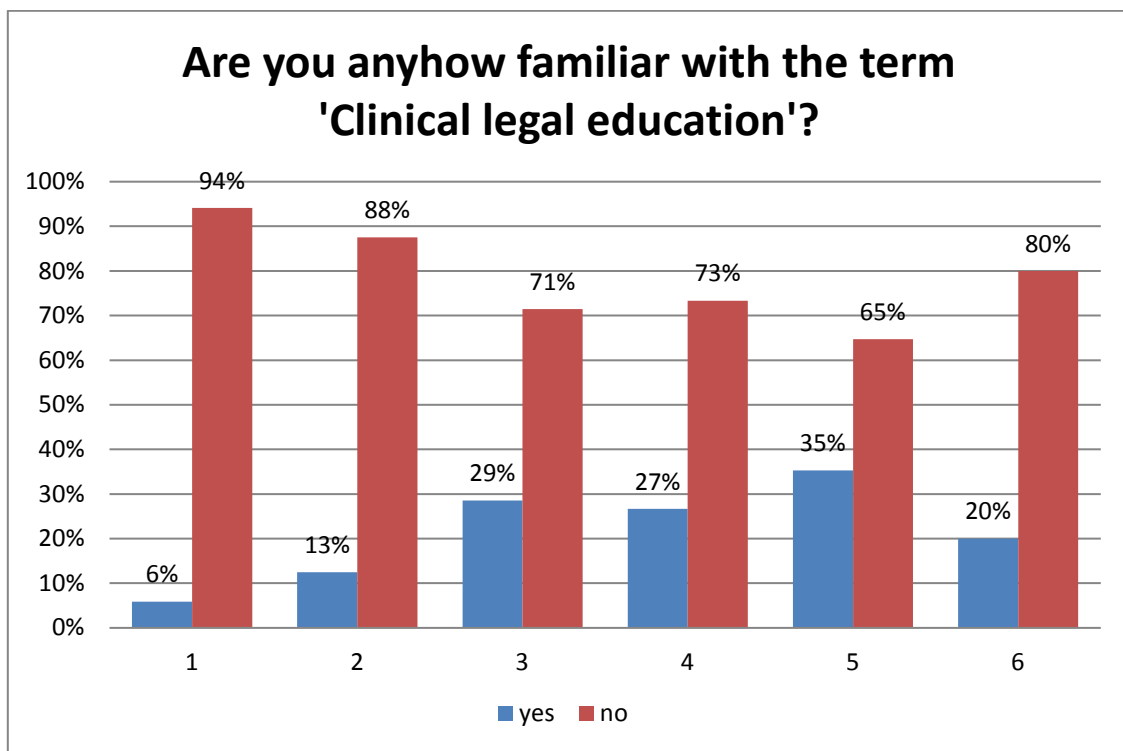


Figure 1. Familiarity with CLE.

If the student answered “no” to the initial question about being familiar with clinical legal education, the form was automatically submitted and the survey finished. For those who answered “yes” there was another question about which types of clinical legal education they knew or were somehow familiar with. The most common answer was that they knew Street Law, moot courts, externships at courts and legal advice clinics. This was not very surprising because all of these clinical forms run at the Law School of Charles University.

The following question dealt with student attitudes towards clinical legal education—we asked if students had already taken part in clinical legal education or was willing to do so in the future. As mentioned before, only students who were familiar with clinical legal education were asked this question, the others who did not know clinical legal education were not addressed. The results are shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

### Did you take part in any form of clinical education?

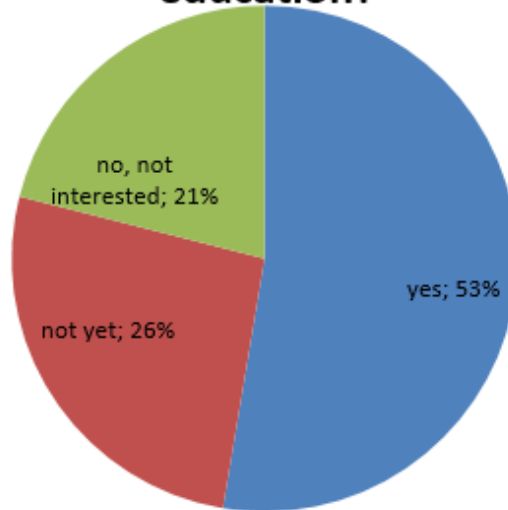


Figure 2. Taking part in CLE.

Students could choose among the answers “yes”, “not yet but I am willing to” and “no, I am not interested”. Depending on their answers, we asked further. If the respondent answered “yes” or “not yet but I am willing to”, we asked about the benefits he or she saw in CLE. If the answer was “no, I am not interested” we asked why he or she was not interested. To sum up the most common answers of those who did take part or plan to take part in CLE in the future, we mention the following:

- improving practical legal knowledge
- contribution to the practice
- a new experience and chance of having a better job
- the possibility to determine which area of law is best for the student

Some surprising answers were given to the question why a student was not interested in CLE, for example:

- students are not paid for being part of legal clinic
- high degree of impracticality of legal clinics due to the nature of cases that are dealt in clinics

#### 4.2. Research Summary

If we compare our previously stated hypotheses with the results of the survey, it is clear that not all of them were proven. This was a bit surprising and the results tell us that much more should be done to make clinical legal education better known among the students.

Let's focus on the hypotheses and the results a bit closer:

1. According to our first hypothesis, students know the term clinical legal education and they are aware of its meaning. This expectation was not confirmed because less than one third of students who answered the question knew something about legal clinics. However, it is possible that the small amount of positive answers have been caused by the wording of the question. Students may not know the expression ‘clinical legal education’, but

they can be aware of the fact that such program exists within their law school. This was, however, not tested.

2. Our second hypothesis claims that students possess some knowledge about the particular types of legal clinics. This hypothesis was proved. Students are able to name a few types and explain how they work, keeping in mind that this is true only for students who actually know what legal clinics are.
3. The most surprising was the result concerning the willingness of students to participate in legal clinics. The expected result was that students wanted to participate in legal clinics and that they planned to enrol in some type of clinical legal education. Contrary to this, the survey has shown that there is still a huge proportion of students who do not wish to take part in such activities (21%). There might be multiple reasons for this result. Probably the most important one is that many students work (usually part-time) during their studies. This is quite common within Czech students and it can be surprising from a Western European perspective. Law schools in the Czech Republic are very demanding but only during the exam period. The rest of the time it is not compulsory to attend the lectures in the rest of the time and it sometimes happens that students only show up at school for the exams. The students therefore either do not know about the existence of CLE or do not need them because they obtain legal experience at work. This fact should be taken into account when attempting to change legal education. It should be decided whether students are required to invest more time in their studies and if so, schools should provide them with effective ways of obtaining legal knowledge.

## 5. Conclusion

In the article we tried to present the past and the current situation of clinical legal education in the Czech Republic and its place within the educational system with the special focus on our alma mater, Charles University Law School. It is important to add that some of the Central European countries are miles ahead before the Czech Republic. For example, clinical legal education is very popular in Poland.<sup>18</sup> We believe (and hope) that legal clinics are about to find their steady place in legal education in the CEE region. As our small research has shown, the problem is not only the lack of interest among students but also the lack of information about the possibility to engage in clinical legal education. Therefore, a combined effort of all sides is needed. The students must be aware of the existence of legal clinics. Law schools should ensure that there are some possibilities of learning practical legal skills during the studies (otherwise the students would not come to the school and will spend their time at work because it teaches them more). Last but not least - perhaps the most important task is to find good teachers to run the clinics<sup>19</sup>. We are firmly convinced that legal clinics are important experience for young lawyers, who improve their social conscience and connect them better with the society they should serve.

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<sup>18</sup> For more information see Bloch 2011.

<sup>19</sup> For this topic, see Urban 2015.

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