

PROFESSOR PHILIP KENNY – A LEADER IN THE UK AND INTERNATIONAL CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION MOVEMENT – A PERSONAL TRIBUTE

I write to report the sad news of the death of Professor Philip Kenny (1948-2016). Phil was the Dean of the Law School at Northumbria University for 28 years. Phil's achievements during this period were considerable, taking a provincial polytechnic law school with a small staff to become a well-known innovator in legal education in the UK with over 100 academics, a unique (in the UK) integrated academic and vocational combined law qualification "exempting degree"; innovative distance learning Masters programmes in specialist areas such as mental health, medical law and information rights; a part time degree which gave access to the law profession for many from non-traditional backgrounds and one of the first barristers' programmes outside the traditional Inns of Court, London based programmes – breaking the oligopolistic and expensive old boys network to create a (slightly) more accessible profession.

As far as I am concerned however, his crowning achievement was Northumbria's Student Law Office. Phil recognised the power of clinical legal education at an early stage. Students at Northumbria University benefitted from working with real clients from the late 1980s onwards. At first this was through externship but by the early 1990s Northumbria was running an in-house clinic open to the public – the Student Law Office - as an integral part of its undergraduate degree programmes. The Office was run for credit and contributed to the award gained by students. By the time Phil and his colleagues had instigated the exempting degree (undergraduate LLB Hons plus one year vocational qualification) in 1992, the

Student Law Office was a capstone course which all final year exempting students had to take for credit.

Of course many other colleagues were instrumental in the early pedagogical and practice based foundations of the programme but Phil through his determination provided the resource and drive to make it a success. It is expensive to run a law clinic that is embedded in the curriculum with its own dedicated administrator, permanent qualified solicitor supervisors (alongside other lawyers from the School), dedicated office space with more than 70 computer workstations, six interview rooms and connected library. At a time in the UK when universities were publically funded at quite a low level for law students, Phil was prepared to fight for and provide the resources to fund such activities. I hope that my colleagues from Kent University, leading the movement by running clinics since the 1970s, won't mind me disclosing their astonishment at the level of resource provided when visiting our then office.

Phil himself was a Student Law Office supervisor to the end of his career, lending his expertise as a nationally regarded expert in the field of property law. How many law school deans can say that, alongside their other onerous duties, they continue to work on real client cases with their students? His successors followed his lead and we continue that tradition today with senior staff, including myself, working with students in the office.

In later years, Phil went on to support the instigation of this journal, its annual conference and the bespoke new facilities in which the clinic is housed. He could have opted for easier and cheaper "clinical" courses but he chose not to. I believe this was not simply because he rightly saw this making the Law School "distinctive" or providing a "USP." He did it because he believed in it educationally.

Readers of this journal will recognise the transformational experience that clinic can provide for our students, our clients and society. My guess is that because Phil did not publish widely or give papers on the subject – never indeed attending our conference – he is not well known in the clinical movement but his influence nevertheless exists. His legacy for us at Northumbria is the realisation of the need to prioritise and privilege clinical education. Now that we have become a faculty of business and law we are giving colleagues in the business school the same free rein to develop clinical business services with, again, the driving ambition to place real experiential education at heart of what we and our students do – not an extra-curricular voluntary activity but one which we develop the whole curriculum around.

This short note is not intended as a hagiography or to obscure the important efforts of others at Northumbria or elsewhere. One of the reasons why Phil was such a successful innovator was probably the fact that he was prepared to take decisions in the face of opposition – at times from his own colleagues as well as in the university more generally. An incident where he decided students would interview clients by themselves instead of in pairs despite my objections comes to mind (though he eventually relented). Despite this I would like to recognise his contribution as a strong and driven personality who believed in the fundamental concept of clinical legal education, made it happen in this North East corner of the UK, provided a platform for positive influence globally and transformed the lives of many students and others including my own as an educator. As I experience more of the middle management position in universities for myself I have come to realise this is no mean feat.

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