

Survey of public legal education programmes – a report

December 2008

1. Introduction

The Public Legal Education Network (**Plenet**) is actively engaged in the promotion and support of public legal education (PLE) in the UK. Part of its work is the identification of existing PLE programmes including any evaluative evidence that may exist as to their effectiveness.

I have been asked by Plenet to carry out a survey into the form and content of public legal education in an international context and this report contains a summary of the survey findings together with examples of PLE in other jurisdictions and recommendations for further enquiry.

2. Context

The Global Alliance for Justice Education (GAJE) is an international non-governmental organisation (NGO) with a membership of academics, law practitioners, community-based activists and students. Their common interest is the development of a justice component to legal education in its widest sense, including PLE.

GAJE¹ was formed in 1996 and has held regular conferences since, throughout the world. Its 5th international meeting was in The Philippines in December 2008. I was aware that there would be many at the conference who had direct experience of PLE projects and who would know of many other initiatives. Part of the conference was specifically devoted to PLE work. I suggested to *plenet* that it might be helpful to conduct a survey of PLE projects at the conference and that I would produce a report of the survey findings and contribute to discussions at the planet conference due to be held on 23 February 2009 in London.

The Manila conference was attended by over 200 delegates from 42 countries. The majority of delegates were linked to law schools, either as law teachers, adjunct staff (mainly legal practitioners) or students. As a consequence of this it is perhaps unsurprising a large number of the survey responses can be classified as 'Street Law' initiatives. This term is explained in **footnote 5**.

3. Methodology

A survey was prepared in advance of the conference. It was sent to the conference organisers and circulated by them with the conference papers. I also produced hard copy for conference delegates and a copy was placed on the *plenet* website.

The key questions covered in the survey were:

- was the respondent personally involved in a PLE programme?

¹ For more information on the work of GAJE see www.gaje.org

- if so, what was the name, purpose, location, funding and contact details of, or for, the programme?
- did the respondent know of any other PLE programme(s) in his or her own jurisdiction?
- if so, what was the name, purpose, location, funding and contact details of, or for, the programme(s)?
- did the respondent know of any evaluation of the effectiveness or otherwise of the programme(s) cited and if so, what were the details?

A copy of the survey questionnaire is appended to this report.

Thirty six responses were received in the form of completed surveys. Six others reported to me orally.

I maintained detailed notes of the PLE workshops I attended to identify PLE programmes that were described or referred to, but were not included in a formal survey response.

The survey responses were then analysed by country. The bare statistics are set out under **Findings** below including number of jurisdictions, number and nature of projects in which respondent participated or knew of, costs, evaluation (if any) and contact details. Common denominators and significant differences in and between different responses are highlighted.

The following section (**Examples**) describes some of projects in more detail.

4. Findings

Twelve countries² were represented in the responses and 101 individual projects were reported. Delegates from 7 countries³ were present at the conference who described PLE programmes but who did not complete a questionnaire either orally or in written form. In total therefore 19 out of 42 countries represented at the conference reported having PLE programmes and there were 108 separate PLE initiatives recorded.⁴

Of the 36 survey respondents, one half (18) described PLE provision as 'Street Law'.⁵ These returns detailed 79 separate programmes. Just over half of these (41) came

² The countries covered by the responses (with number of individual PLE initiatives indicated in brackets) were: Australia (11), Cambodia (2), Croatia (2), India (2), Indonesia (1), Malaysia (4), Nigeria (5), Philippines (2), Russia (8), South Africa (3), UK (41) and USA (20)

³ Delegates from countries reporting on PLE projects at the conference but who did not complete the survey questionnaire were: China, Iran, Laos, Poland, Thailand, Ukraine and Vietnam

⁴ To complete the international picture countries known to the author that run PLE programmes also include: Afghanistan, Angola, Argentina, Austria, Bangladesh, Canada, Czech Republic, Colombia, Italy, Kazakhstan, Malawi, Mongolia, New Zealand, Slovakia, Uzbekistan and Zambia

⁵ Street Law is a generic name for a type of PLE that relies on workshops aimed at raising awareness of rights and responsibilities amongst selected members of the community. Called variously *street law*, *living Law*, *community engagement*, *your day in court*, or *law and the citizen*, the basic approach is to identify a group wanting to develop their understanding, for a law school, other educational provider or NGO to work with that group on their particular area of interest and for an interactive presentation or series of presentations, often backed up with resource materials, to be made to and with the group in question. The term 'Street Law' was

from the UK. The reason why such a detailed response was possible in this respect was that a survey of Street Law programmes in UK law schools had just been conducted by the UK NGO LawWorks.⁶

Common themes – from the survey responses and oral submissions the following emerged:

- there was no national co-ordination of PLE reported. In Australia PLE (or community legal education as it is termed there) exists in all states and territories and is delivered variously by community legal centres and the Legal Aid authorities. In Indonesia a UNDP funded paralegal training programme operates in 16 of the country's provinces focusing on access to justice issues for marginalised groups. In no country however was there systematic organisation of PLE nor any clear or uniform evaluative system reportedly in place.
- half of the responses (18) mentioned evaluation but the bulk of these (14) consisted either of quantitative data – for example recording how many PLE sessions might be held or how many attendees participated – or participant feedback. There were just 4 references to more detailed qualitative research and these are detailed below under **Examples** and **Recommendations**.
- all programmes reported included face-to-face workshops, either based on the 'Street Law' model or 'training of trainer' approach. Support materials were made available in some instances (5) and reference was made to the use of websites, video/DVD and hard copy. However in most cases electronic contact details were provided suggesting that there may be greater use of e-technology than was reported. The contact details are provided in the **Examples** below
- three quarters of the survey responses (27) linked PLE activity to local law schools⁷. Some provided services by themselves but the majority worked in conjunction with other agencies in the statutory and not for profit sectors
- survey responses reported a wide variety of target audiences including in prisons, schools and community centres and with the young, the elderly, the unemployed, those with disabilities, agricultural workers, minority ethnic groups and the otherwise marginalised
- basic principles of human rights were the most common theme of the PLE work and specifically subjects covered included access to justice, the law dealing with the consumer, employment law, family problems, discrimination, women and children's rights, indigenous issues and good governance
- a variety of PLE delivery formats were used including face-to-face, video and other forms of recording, web sites and hard copy (books, guides, pamphlets, posters and handouts).
- the 'training of trainers' approach was used in a third of survey responses (12) and these programmes were particularly prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia
- where funding details were disclosed (21 responses) just over half of these PLE initiatives (11) relied on law school commitment (especially human resources, buildings and office equipment) and the remainder (10) were grant aided by foundations (notably Open Society Initiative (part of the George

first coined by staff at Georgetown University School of Law, Washington DC who pioneering PLE work dates back to 1972.

⁶ For further details contact Martin Curtis: mc@lawworks.org.uk

⁷ The responses from the UK are a good example where all 41 projects mentioned relate to law school involvement in Street Law initiatives

- interestingly there was no reported evidence of national government input in countries with PLE programmes

5. Examples

I have selected a set of projects from a range of countries covered by the survey responses to illustrate the variety of approaches to PLE and the subjects covered. Contact details are provided in case follow-up is required.

5.1. Australia – a range of community legal education services including: pamphlets, video, workshops and web site provision. PLE is delivered by community law centres and Legal Aid agencies across Australia. One service provides PLE on family law by tele-conference facility broadcast from studios in central Brisbane, Queensland to outlying communities. Some evaluation has been carried out by Victoria Legal Aid.

Contact: www.legalaid.vic.gov.au

5.2. Croatia – Street Law and linked advice services on consumer and labour law issues. Contact: www.pravos.hr

5.3. India – a series of public lectures aimed at improving human rights awareness and principles of local governance. Contact: www.igls.org

5.4 Indonesia – paralegal training in 16 of the country's provinces. UNDP and SIDA funded. Contact: samuel@tifafoundation.org.

5.5. Nigeria – Street Law programme in prisons, in schools and with community groups across the country. Contact: amariomaka@gmail.com

5.6. Russia – Street Law with focus on problem-solving skills. Contact: agutnikov@gmail.com

5.7. South Africa – 2 projects involving training of health and social workers in a range of legal issue in order that they can better advise patients in a hospice. The work focuses on legal issues affecting the terminally ill. There have been attempts to evaluate this programme. Contact: www.hospicepalliativecaresa.co.za. Another survey response listed a comprehensive Street Law programme delivered at a range of universities across the country. Impact assessment was reported to be carried out by external experts. Contact: www.streetlaw.org.za

5.8. South East Asia – a comprehensive community legal education programme co-ordinated and in part provided by the NGO Bridges Across Borders. The programme is currently being delivered in Cambodia, Laos, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam. This initiative operates in a prison, a drug rehabilitation centre and with residents in rural areas, using the Street Law approach to raise general awareness and provide paralegal training. One example of this work is a workshop to prepare people, through the use of mock trials, to participate in the investigations of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal. Contact: www.babsea.org

5.9. The Philippines – a local NGO provided PLE sessions which led to creation of a credit union by local residents who live and work on a municipal rubbish tip ('Smokey Mountain') in Manila. Over 20,000 of the 50,000 residents now contribute to the scheme. Funds are used to buy land to resettle residents away from the dangers of the tip. Loans are also given for small businesses, to break people's dependency on scavenging on the tip. See - Homeless People's Federation DVD: 'Homeless no more'. The NGO is led by a local Catholic priest. Contact: www.secretariadojmv.org

5.10. UK – Doncaster –under the New Deal regeneration initiative. The College of Law provides staff and students to make interactive Street Law style presentations with follow-up work as requested by local residents. One example concerned dilapidated housing in the area. Presentations were made on the powers of the local Council to intervene where housing was in a poor state of repair. Residents then

asked the students to help them meet and negotiate with the local Council with a view to re-considering Council policy on renovation and where necessary compulsory purchase of poor quality housing. Contact: sara.chandler@lawcol.co.uk

5.11. USA – family court self-help clinic. Following a successful pilot this is now funded by the court itself that pays for lawyers and admin staff. Basic advice is given on to individuals on a range of family law matters together with guidance on form-filling. A web site supports this and anti-domestic violence services in the area. Contact: barry@law.cua.edu. At the Georgia State University a partnership between the law school and health service delivers PLE sessions to sick, disabled and low income families. Contact: www.healthlawpartnership.org

Information in some examples is necessarily scant due to lack of detail in the relevant survey response. There are however contact details in each instance and further information may be obtained from the e-mail or website addresses provided.

6. Recommendations

Further information is needed on evaluation. There are four possible leads:

- Australia – evaluation of community legal education by Victoria Legal Aid, contact: Virginia Noonan at www.legalaid.vic.gov.au.
- South Africa – evaluation of preventive legal education in hospice and training programme with social workers, contacts: Nicola Gunn Clark at nicola@hpca.co.za and Desia Colgan at: colgandd@wits.ac.za.
- South Africa - there has been evaluation of the Street Law initiative here. The contact person for the South African Street Law programme is: lindicoetzee@mweb.co.za
- USA – at the Health Law Partnership at Georgia State University the Institutional Review Board carries out independent evaluation of PLE programmes. Contact: sbcaley@gsu.edu
- research on self-help by Jeff Giddings of Griffith University, Queensland, Australia may also be useful – see Giddings J and Robertson M, *Large scale map or the A-Z*, 2003, 30 (1) British Journal of Law and Society, 102

8. Conclusions

The survey was a small-scale study of international PLE programmes. It is not suggested that the findings are in any way statistically significant. Rather, it was an opportunity to discover, first hand, what was happening in across a range of different countries in both the ‘developed’ and ‘developing world’.

The results do indicate a world-wide commitment to improving levels of legal literacy and the use in many countries of partnerships between legal educators, government, the legal profession, not for profit groups and the wider community.

The respondent audience was comprised predominantly of lawyers. The bulk were law teachers but researchers, law school managers, students and legal practitioners were also represented. The responses therefore were understandably law school focused.

A significant number of responses described a particular methodology for PLE – Street Law. There was however a wide variety of PLE schemes described ranging

from face to face tuition through to the use of resource materials in hard copy and in electronic format. Most of the programmes were focused on marginalised communities and on those who might be expected to struggle to access legal services.

Whilst qualitative research on effectiveness of PLE programmes was generally missing in the survey responses, there was an abundance of anecdotal comment suggesting that the programmes described were generally well received by participants and were often in heavy demand.

With the exception of a small number of projects that received donor aid the majority of programmes were either funded directly by the law schools concerned and/or through human and other resources raised locally. In environments where finances are often severely limited the ability of PLE providers to forge meaningful partnerships with other stakeholders is clearly central to the sustainability of PLE work.

Appendix

Copy of survey questionnaire

Survey of public legal education programmes – GAJE conference, Manila 2008

Preface

Effective access to justice is a pre-requisite for and evidence of a democratic and accountable society. 'Access' is used here in its broadest sense – covering a range of issues from awareness of rights and responsibilities to the use, where necessary, of legal services and the machinery of justice.

This, in turn, calls for a legally literate society. It does not mean that each and every person has to have the detailed knowledge of a professional practitioner but rather should be able to identify basic entitlements and obligations affecting everyday life and be able to seek assistance where necessary. This can be termed *public legal education* (PLE). As well as being individually empowering legal literacy can build capacity amongst the population as a whole promoting active citizenship and inclusion in consequence.

In the UK in 2005 a government sponsored Task Force was set up to look at the 'why' and 'how' of PLE. Its report, in July 2007 (Developing capable citizens – the role of public legal education), highlighted the importance of PLE and the need for identification and evaluation of existing PLE programmes. This initiative continues through a government supported, not for profit, organisation called *plenet*.

The purpose of this survey is to build on this work and to discover what PLE programmes exist worldwide.

For the purpose of this survey PLE means any initiative aimed at improving the public's understanding of law. It may be a programme run by a non-governmental organisation, for example a legal aid centre trying to raise awareness of remedies for victims of domestic violence. It may be a law school project such as *Street Law* where students help community groups to better understand employment of housing

rights. It may be a government scheme, for example leaflets informing the public about entitlement to social welfare benefits. It may be delivered through formal education classes, by 'training of trainer' sessions, in hard copy or made available though the internet.

Instructions

Could you please answer the following questions? I will compile the results and make them available to *plenet* and to GAJE for publication. A hard copy of this questionnaire will be distributed at the GAJE conference and will be published on the *plenet* website – www.plenet.org.uk. Please return the completed questionnaires either to me in person at the GAJE conference or scanned and sent as an attachment by e-mail to: richard@talkinglaw.org.uk. Completing the questionnaire should only take a few moments of your time but it will provide invaluable information. In this way we can learn from each other and avoid the need to re-invent the wheel!

Questions

1. Are you personally involved in a PLE programme?

1.1 If so, please describe it here (give brief details of the name, purpose, location and funding of and contact details for the programme):

Name:

Purpose:

Location:

Funding:

Contact details:

2. Do you know of any (other) PLE programmes in your home country?

2.1 If so please describe it/them here (give brief details of the name, purpose, location and funding of and contact details for the programme):

Name:

Purpose:

Location:

Funding:

Contact details:

3. Are you aware of any attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the programmes mentioned in 1 and 2 above?

3.1 If so. please give details here:

4. Your details:

4.1 Name:

4.2 Organisation:

4.3 E-mail address

4.4 Postal address:

4.5 Telephone number:

Thank you very much for completing the questionnaire.

Richard Grimes

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**Richard Grimes,
Consultant
Talkinglaw
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