

Symposium, “Influence of American Legal Education in East Asia: Japan, China, and South Korea”

An introductory note by Shigeo Miyagawa*

American legal education has exerted continuing influence in East Asia particularly since the late 1990s. China started its juris master program in 1996. It is directly modeled after the American juris doctor program in the sense that the program is open to graduates of any undergraduate majors and designed for those students who intend to enter the field of law practice. Japan introduced its juris doctor program in 2004. The program is even more closely modeled on the American counterpart. It is a three-year graduate professional program with a designated goal of educating legal practitioners. The conferral of juris doctor is the eligibility to take the national bar examination. South Korea started its three-year juris doctor program in 2009. It went further than the Japanese reform to require universities to abolish the undergraduate faculty of law in order to set up the juris doctor program.

These three countries now face the second phase of the “law school” education reform influenced by American legal education. The following six articles examine the adaptability and transferability of the American version of legal education and its pedagogy in their own countries. The earlier version of each article was presented at a symposium with the theme above mentioned on April 4, 2019, at the University of California (UC), Berkeley School of Law. It was the fifth symposium on professional legal education jointly sponsored by the UC Berkeley’s Sho Sato Program and the Waseda University Institute of Clinical Legal Education. The author of this note expresses a great appreciation to Professor Charles D. Weisselberg, Director of the Sho Sato Program and the UC Berkeley Law’s Professor Catherine L. Fisk for their support and academic contribution.

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