For me, one of the benefits of our new online world has been an increase in opportunities to get to work with people over distances without having to leave that distance. When law school physically started on an area with a range of some 66.6 kilometres since early 2020, I knew very well the area and I never thought that I would find myself working remotely with clients, friends, and family from all over the world. This has been possible due to the incredible technology and tools available to us in the digital age. I am grateful for these opportunities, as they have allowed me to continue my work as a legal advocate and mediator, while maintaining a strong personal life and mental health.

The Moot Court Bench: Mediation in Sri Lanka

For this blogpost, I asked several participants and organizers about mediation in Sri Lanka and the MCB’s work.

Ashani Perera, the MCB’s Head of Mediation, said that “commercial mediation is still picking up in Sri Lanka compared to other regions. Community mediation has been the trend so far in most parts of the island, with proper legislation in place, such as the Mediation Boards Act of 1988. However, it is time to raise more awareness of commercial mediation and its benefits.”

The MCB held a successful student training programme in 2020, training 548 students and conducting a national competition where winners participated in the Willem C. Vis Moot in March and April of this year. Following this, MCB initiated free mediation training with international commercial mediation and arbitration competitions. A total of 180 students took part in the first student training program and eight teams from seven different universities had the opportunity to participate in the first competition. International mediators Tamey Mummery and Pascal Comvalius provided the training.

This competition was a remarkable achievement and a great success. The MCB aims to “provide local students with in-depth knowledge in international commercial mediation, and the opportunity to learn, network, and represent Sri Lanka at international competitions, and to give back to the local mediation community.” Tom Valenti said: “I was especially pleased to be involved with MCB as they took great steps forward to bring dispute resolution to teachers across all levels of background and opportunity. This MCB’s commitment is building awareness of and a structure for commercial dispute resolution in a highly commendable.”

Sadiyah Reyal, a member of the winning team from the Asia Pacific Institute of Information Technology (APIIT) said: “Going into this competition, I knew next to nothing about mediation. Although our initial training lasted a mere couple of hours, the training itself unfolded over the course of three days. I was overwhelmed with what I knew of mediation and how well it can be used as a tool for conflict resolution. I was amazed by the different processes used in mediation and how it can be applied to different situations.

I have emerged with what feels like years of indispensable knowledge as well as a deep appreciation for being a part of this international competition. The MCB’s commitment to building awareness of mediation and its benefits to the student community is commendable. I am grateful for the opportunity to learn and grow as a mediator, and I have developed new relationships and friendships with students from around the world. This has been a life-changing experience for me, and I am grateful for this opportunity. I am sure that many other participating students would express similar sentiments.

The MCB has plans to expand its activities, with an initiative to introduce peer mediation to high school students. This would align with the MCB’s mission of being a legal advocacy training platform dedicated to delivering education of global standards to Sri Lankan law students in the fields of alternative dispute resolution, mediation, negotiation, and international trade law. The MCB’s vision is to become a “legal advocacy training platform dedicated to delivering education of global standards to Sri Lankan law students.”

Tom Valenti, an international mediator who has been involved with MCB since its inception, said: “I was pleased to see the MCB take giant steps forward to bring dispute resolution skills to students across all levels of background and opportunity. This MCB’s commitment is building awareness of and a structure for commercial dispute resolution in a highly commendable.”

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