

UPSA LAW SCHOOL

THE FUTURE OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN GHANA

Stakeholders' Reflections and Dialogues on the Past, Present and Future

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Legal education and access to the legal profession have been at the center of debate in Ghana in the past few years. A growing demand and larger student population have been putting pressure on a system ostensibly to cater for smaller numbers.

The debate on legal education has further broaden and further challenges in some circumstances the very foundation and values of the educational system established to deliver legal professional training in the country. Questions have been raised for example. about the liberalization of legal education, curricula content and structure of both the academic and professional programs, as well as the overall future of legal education in Ghana.

The debate is further complicated by the wide ranging and varying perspectives brought on by different stakeholders to the discussion. Whilst there is consensus on the need for reform and for changes to ensure a sustainable model of legal education in the country, divergent and often conflicting diagnoses, proposals, and solutions are offered by the various stakeholders in the debate. When mixed with the overly emotive atmosphere characterizing the discussion, the subject assumes a complicated dimension.

Thus, while those responsible for setting the rules on legal education have mainly focused on improvements in systems of assessments and other structural changes necessary to optimize quality legal education, students have continued to emphasize issues of "access" and fairness as their preeminent concerns and have challenged attempts at imposing reforms deemed restrictive of access to legal education and ultimately the legal profession.

The ensuing schism and controversies risk undermining policy coherence and stability of the ongoing reforms and ultimately threatens the very viability of legal education in Ghana and, ultimately, societal confidence in the legal profession and the rule of law.

The lack of spaces for a broad-based dialogue and open confrontation is arguably the most critical impediment to making progress towards agreed upon reforms for the benefit of all stakeholders and legal education. The current situation promises to result

in more agitations in the future in the absence of sustained and constructive efforts at opening and nurturing dialogue between the various stakeholders involved in the patronage and deployment of legal education.

The proposed conference on the Future of Legal Education aims to be a platform for the open and frank discussion of the key issues emerging from the controversies surrounding legal education and discuss options for reform. The conference itself is not intended to result in specific reforms options being adopted *per se*, but it will afford a forum for a sober itemization of the issues around which the agreed upon solutions might coalesce. By promoting discussions on the various stakeholders' positions and mapping out the way forward within the context of the existing reforms, the conference will hopefully contribute to moving the issues from the debate into reforms proposals to be adopted by the relevant bodies.

To achieve its objectives, panels within the conference will reflect the diversity of views, stakeholders, and issues in the ongoing debates on legal education in Ghana. Panels will, *inter alia*, address the content and quality of curricula and training modules prevalent in academic faculties and at the professional level in Ghana; ethical issues in legal education; structural questions on the role and organizational abilities to deliver first class legal education by the various faculties of law in the country (resources, personnel, student-faculty ration, information technology and overall standards); compare the state of legal education in Ghana with international trends; and broader questions on the fitness of Ghanaian legal education for the needs of the legal profession and Ghana, at the local, regional and global level in a rapidly evolving economic landscape, reshaped by the ongoing pandemic, technological and social changes.

The opening keynote address will be delivered by his Lordship the Chief Justice.