

INTRODUCTION

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON LEGAL EDUCATION REFORM: REFLECTIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

CHANG-FA LO¹

Legal education is key to the success of every legal system, which, in turn, is the foundation of every society. Legal education should therefore be reviewed on a continuous basis so as to stay consistent with the development of society. However, the current legal education system in Taiwan has been in place for many decades without fundamental change, even though Taiwan has played an active part in globalization and faces keen competition from around the world.

Considering this background, my colleague, Professor Ming-jye Huang, and I initiated a legal education reform plan in 2004, and stepped up these efforts in 2005. The *International Conference on Legal Education Reform: Reflections and Perspectives*, held on September 16 and 17, 2005, was arranged as part of the reform project. Although there had already been many international conferences on legal education held in Taiwan, there had not been one arranged as part of the legal education reform plan, to closely examine the legal education reforms in other countries and evaluate the possible models to be taken into account when formulating Taiwan's own reform. We believed that the new law schools established in Japan in 2004 were an important development, one that we should carefully consider. We also noted Korea's proposed legal education reform, to be implemented in 2008, and the way in which the proposed reform included elements of American-style law schools. We were also interested in the details of legal education systems in other jurisdictions, including Singapore and Germany. We thought the need to properly evaluate the different systems in light of reforming Taiwan's system would best be met through an international conference arranged specifically for that purpose.

¹ Dean, National Taiwan University Law School, and Co-coordinator, International Conference on Legal Education Reform at National Taiwan University.

The University of Wisconsin Law School, Hokkaido University Faculty of Law, and the College of Law at National Taiwan University have an established history of cooperation and exchange. When I first discussed the idea of holding a conference of this kind as part of our legal education reform with Professor Charles Irish of the University of Wisconsin and Professor Ko Hasegawa of Hokkaido University, they both responded very positively. We subsequently developed the conference theme and agenda together, making this conference a true joint effort of our three law schools.

Every reform must have its root cause and some end goal to be achieved. We thus invited our participants to discuss the motivations and factors driving, or giving rise to, the reform in their respective jurisdictions. First, we thought discussions should include the advantages and disadvantages of placing legal education at the professional school level versus the undergraduate level, the ways to recruit quality law students, and the respective consequences of these chosen methods. At the conference, we therefore had a session on the structure and institutional arrangements of legal education. Second, knowing that teaching methods and materials are essential parts of the legal education in all jurisdictions, we invited our participants to discuss the teaching methods generally used in their jurisdictions, and those methods specially designed and used by professors for particular courses. Third, we already believed that clinical and practical training should be an important part of legal education. However, there were different approaches and components in each system that offered students such training courses. We invited speakers to focus on these specific differences. Finally, the examination system has an important influence on legal education. In some jurisdictions, bar preparation schools, or so-called cram schools, also play an important role in the examination system. We invited participants from those jurisdictions where preparatory schools had a strong impact on legal education to contribute on this topic.

The papers and the views presented at the conference have been especially useful and valuable to our project of legal education reform to be carried out in Taiwan. The discussions among the conference participants served to highlight ongoing issues in

legal education generally, and they provided a useful forum in which to debate solutions.

I am particularly thankful to Dean Kenneth Davis of the University of Wisconsin and Dean Takemichi Hatakeyama of Hokkaido University for their full support. Without their support, we certainly would not have had such a fruitful conference. In particular, Dean Davis and Professor Hasegawa accompanied their delegates all the way from their respective universities to Taipei to make their contributions. The College of Law of National Taiwan University and I are deeply indebted to them.

We feel that the papers presented at the conference will be very useful and important for those interested in knowing of and better understanding legal education and the reform efforts in the jurisdictions represented at the conference. In this regard, I am also thankful to the Wisconsin International Law Journal for agreeing to publish these papers, with special thanks to Ms. Leah Larson-Rabin, the editor-in-chief of the journal. She traveled to Taipei to participate in the conference and to engage in the discussions. The concern she paid to legal education is of particular importance to us.

Chang-fa Lo
Dean, College of Law
National Taiwan University

\\server05\productn\W\WIN\24-1\WIN101.txt unknown Seq: 4 25-JUL-06 15:39