

# UK Perspective

How well is legal education serving law firms and their clients?

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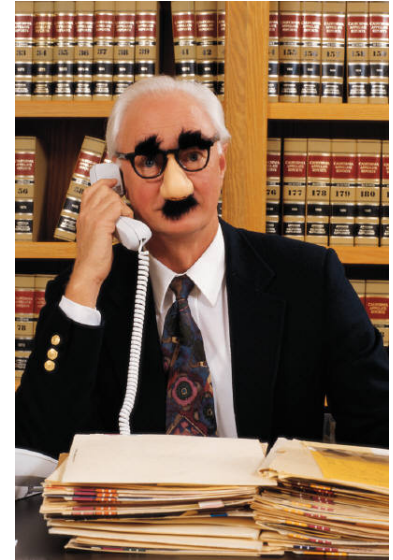
# Agenda

- Context
- Structure of the legal profession in the UK
- The Changing Legal Landscape
- Qualifying as a Legal Professional
- How well equipped are our new lawyers?
- Recent trends in educating the lawyers of tomorrow
- What does Mills & Reeve LLP do?

# Structure of the legal profession in the UK



- Judges
- Barristers/pupils
- Solicitors/trainees
- Legal executives
- Paralegals



# The Changing UK legal landscape (1)

| 2010/11   | 1987  |
|---|---|
| Around 120,000 practising solicitors  | Approximately 48,000 solicitors             |
| Over 10,000 firms   | Approximately 7,500 firms                   |
| Almost 60,000 female legal professionals  | Just over 10,000 female legal professionals |
| 13,500 law degree applications<br>24,000 LPC applications for 10,500 places<br>6,434 students enrol for the LPC | 2600 law graduates                          |
| 15,000 applications for 6,000 training contracts  | 2900 trainees commencing articles           |
| Approximately 1 solicitor/500 people  |   |

# The Changing UK legal landscape (2)

- Blurring the distinction between solicitors and barristers
  - Direct access to the Bar
  - Higher rights of audience
- Alternative business structures - Legal Services Act 2007
  - ‘Tesco law’
  - Barristers’ firms
  - Alliances/franchise legal providers – QualitySolicitors in WHSmith
  - Law firms providing non-legal advice
- Virtual law firms
- Jackson reforms - to increase the effectiveness of the legal & court system (controlling excesses of litigation & fees) & save money
- Training – Accutrainee, combined LPC and TC, apprenticeships
- Outsourcing and growth – paralegal support units

# Qualifying as a legal professional (1)

## o For solicitors

1. Qualifying law degree (3/4 years), or non-law degree & Graduate Diploma in Law (1 year)
2. Legal Practice Course (1 year)
3. Training Contract (2 years)
4. Qualification & entry on to the Roll of Solicitors (regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority)

## o For barristers

1. Qualifying law degree (3/4 years), or non-law degree & Graduate Diploma in Law (1 year)
2. Bar Professional Training Course ( 1 year) within which students attend 12 “dinners”
3. Pupillage (1 year)
4. Tenancy & admittance to the Bar (regulated by the Bar Standards Board)



# Qualifying as a legal professional (2)

## o Costs

- University – around £27,000 - £37,000
- Legal Practice Course/Bar Professional Training Course
  - between £9,000 - £17,000
- **Total: £50,000 to £70,000 (including maintenance)**

## o Firm's costs

- £100,000 - £120,000

## o Difficulties of obtaining a training contract

- 850 applications for 15 training contracts



# Then and Now

## o Me

- Law degree
  - o Academic
  - o ‘Not a practical course’
  - o Personal thoughts?
- Professional Qualification (6 months)
  - o Rote learning
  - o Exams at the end
- 2 years “articles”
  - o 6 letters & 5 offers
  - o Learning on the job
  - o “Coke is it?”

## o My trainee

- Law degree
  - o Still academic and theoretical
  - o Extra curricular activities
- Legal Practice Course (1 year)
  - o Practical application
- 2 years Training Contract
  - o 1 application to Mills & Reeve LLP
  - o typically 70 – 80 applications are the norm!
- o Much more practical!



# Recent trends in educating the lawyers of tomorrow (1)

- o Universities (law degree)
  - Commercial awareness workshops
  - Pro bono – FLAG (free legal advice group, citizens advice bureau)
  - ‘Law in Practice’ module
- o Law Schools (Legal Practice Course/Graduate Diploma in Law)
  - More distance/e-learning, shortened LPC courses (fast track) and combining study and the training contract
  - Interviewing, advocacy, legal research
  - Law firm tailored modules

# Recent trends in educating the lawyers of tomorrow (2)

- Firms (Training Contract)
  - Training courses
  - Professional Skills Course:
    - Writing & Drafting skills,
    - Advocacy & Communication Skills,
    - Client Care & Professional Standards,
    - Prioritisation & Workload management,
    - Participating in meetings,
    - Networking skills,
    - Persuasion & Influencing others
- Onus on students
  - Competition
  - Oversupply

# Our approach?

- How do you select the right recruits?
  - 850 applications for 15-20 places
  - Academic requirements
  - Acid test – “*can I leave this person with a client?*”
  - Commercial awareness
    - “can do” attitude
    - initiative
- Aptitude test – verbal, numeracy, logic
- “Bridge to Practice” Programme at Kaplan
- In house Training Programme – soft skills, commercial & technical
- Secondments
- Funding



# Conclusions

- Today's trainees have impressive legal training and some practical skills
- Rapid market changes – moving target
- Challenges for tomorrow's students & law schools
- Downward pressure on fees
- Fewer jobs/different jobs
- Increase in LPO/paralegals
- More competition
- Legal Education & Training Review



# thank you



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