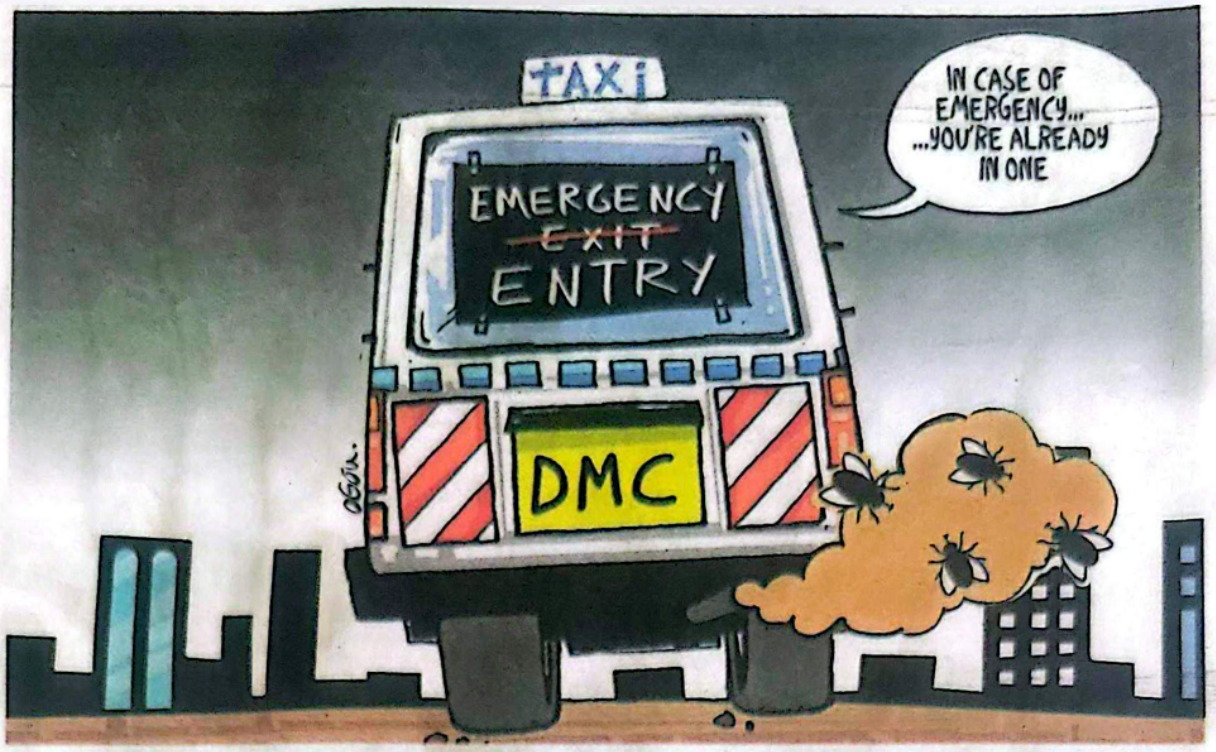


Want to abolish LDC? O foolish Ugandans, who hath bewitched you?

Three little vignettes... from my 30s, when I had just three kids. Nice little symmetry about my dim, distant past. One day, I looked at my watch and realised it was coming to six o'clock. Horrified, I threw my books and files aside and sprang into the car.

I tore off at a tangent, shooting through the gates of a hotel near the Law Development Centre (LDC), careened around the corner on two wheels, flew through Wandegeya, dodging traffic, and brought the car to a screeching halt at Lohana Academy, Kololo, in Kampala, which my little ones, Rocky and Rhema, attended.

It was deserted. Not a soul. Alarmed, I called home. Had anyone, by any chance, picked the kids? Mama Watoto told me it was Idd Day. Public holiday. I shook my head and went back to my room. Two weeks later, a concert was held at Lohana. I attended, this time with Rudi in tow – he was just three. When the concert ended, I looked everywhere, all over the school, for Rudi, but couldn't find him. Terrified, I scolded Rocky and Rhema for not looking out for their little brother.

Rhema, surprised, told me, "Daddy, you're holding him!" I checked my arms... and there was Rudi, safe and sound. That's what LDC did to some of us. Buried in books and files, we lost touch with the real world. Ah, LDC! Tense. Intense. Consuming. A burning fiery furnace that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would certainly have found much tougher than Nebuchadnezzar's version! But you see, anything that passes through fire and survives emerges strong, firm, and unbreakable.

Today, when a client comes to your law firm, they never ask for your CV to check which university you attended. The fact that you went through LDC gives the public confidence that you're fit for purpose. A centralised system like LDC ensures uniform national standards, a shared legal culture, and predictable competence across all advocates.

> Already, we're a nation without systems that ensure and protect high standards.
>
> Gawaya Tegulle Objection



It's alarming, therefore, that the government wants to scrap LDC, leaving Bar Course training to universities. That brings me to the third vignette. I once sat in the office of an acclaimed law don – holder of a doctorate – at a leading law school in Uganda. An office assistant brought in more than 100 coursework scripts. Heaven is my witness that he took no more than 20 minutes to mark the scripts, awarding generous marks. Top law school! These are the hands that will take away from LDC the responsibility of training advocates. Remember the cockroach theory: If you see one cockroach, there are certainly many more hiding.

LDC has never been perfect; it never will be, and it was never meant to be. But it has long stood as a citadel of rigour, with a track record of extremely tough love through which worthy advocates are forged. High failure rates don't mean LDC is bad; on the contrary, it's an endorsement of extremely high standards.

LDC is the final gate of professional integrity. It's not merely a school; it is a crucible in which academic knowledge is tried by fire, elevated, and crystallised into practical competence. It ensures that those who enter courtrooms can carry out an accurate legal diagnosis, make an appropriate legal prescription, draft pleadings properly, understand procedure, ethics, and consequences, and address the Bench competently.

Without such a gatekeeper, the profession risks becoming a marketplace of degrees rather than a brotherhood of disciplined advocates. In the name of increased access, we are in danger of dismantling the very architecture that gives the legal profession its integrity.

To abolish or dilute LDC is not reform—it is desecration, diluting, and dismantling. SERIOUSLY, WHAT KIND OF COUNTRY DO WE WANT TO BECOME? For when a country begins to treat its standards as inconveniences, and its institutions as obstacles to be negotiated rather than pillars to be preserved, it quietly unravels the very fabric that sustains it.

Already, we're a nation without systems and structures that ensure, enhance, and protect high standards. LDC is one of the few remaining places one can look to and think there's hope for the country. Take it away, and Uganda's future is left to the whims of chance—capricious, precarious, and unguarded. Let me ask, like the Apostle Paul: O foolish Ugandans, who hath bewitched you?

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