

Navigating the Future of Legal Education in Contemporary Nigeria: Effective Strategies for Addressing Current Challenges and Proposals for Reforms

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Abstract:

This paper is the second leg of an extensive two-part scholarly expedition into the legal education landscape in Nigeria. The first leg of the discussion, titled “Pedagogical Renaissance: A Disquisition on the Changing Face of Legal Education in Contemporary Nigeria,” discussed various aspects of legal education in Nigeria, touching on the meaning, nature, legal and institutional regulation, and objectives of legal education, while tracing its historical development, and outlining existing structure and organisational framework for legal education administration in Nigeria. In addition, part one highlighted major impacts of legal education on Nigeria and Nigeria’s legal system and offer some recommendations. In the present segment, the authors identify some of the major challenges facing legal education in present-day Nigeria and undertake a critical examination of the challenges, shedding light on a wide range of issues while juxtaposing these challenges with the potential opportunities for growth and improvement within the legal educational fabric, and then proposing practical strategies for addressing the identified challenges, and proffering recommendations for reforms aimed at enhancing the quality and effectiveness of legal education, strengthening the legal profession, promoting good governance and constitutional democracy and fostering socioeconomic development in Nigeria. Overall, and apart from highlighting pressing issues within the current system, this paper also offers innovative perspectives on how legal education in Nigeria can evolve to meet the demands of modern-day Nigeria and prevailing global benchmarks. The authors hope that implementing strategies and recommendations put forward in this paper could reposition the Nigerian legal education system to better serve present and future needs of relevant stakeholders and the wider community.

Keywords: Legal Education; Nigeria; Legal Profession; Nigerian Law School; Council of Legal Education; Body of Benchers; NUC; Nigerian Bar Association; Law Teacher; Students; Ngige; Udemezue.

1. Introduction

Legal education is the cornerstone of a functional legal system and a just society. It not only shapes the competence and character of future lawyers but also influences the quality of justice, governance, and national development. In Nigeria, the structure of legal education, anchored on the university law faculties, the Nigerian Law School and continuing professional development, has recorded notable achievements since independence. Yet, it continues to grapple with daunting challenges that threaten its effectiveness and global competitiveness. This discussion, the second of a two-part scholarly inquiry into the state of legal education in Nigeria, focuses on the contemporary problems besetting the system and proposes pragmatic strategies for effective

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reform. While Part One traced, among others, historical development, objectives, legal and institutional framework of legal education as well as the positive impacts of legal education in Nigeria, this segment interrogates the current issues facing militating against legal education in Nigeria, ranging from under-funding, infrastructural deficits and outdated curricula to weak regulation, poor staff welfare, and inadequate skills training, among others. By juxtaposing these challenges with emerging opportunities for reform and innovation, the paper seeks to chart a practical roadway for repositioning Nigerian Legal education to meet the demands of the 21st-century

2. Challenges Facing Legal Education in Nigeria

Although legal education in Nigeria has had tremendous impact on the legal profession in particular, and on Nigeria and the world in general, a number of challenges militate against legal education and hinder full realization of its objectives. In this regard, the following challenges have been identified:

2.1 Inadequate Teaching and Learning Facilities:

This is key among the challenges facing legal education at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, at the adjectival level administered by the Nigerian Law School, and at the various organizations administering continuing legal education in the country. This inadequacy has impacted negatively on the quality and effective discharge of the functions, and realisation of the objectives, of legal education in Nigeria. Many institutions and managers of legal education in Nigeria struggle with insufficient and obsolete library resources, outdated technology, limited access to legal databases, insufficient staffers, among other related challenges. As observed by authors of the Naija Scholar, inadequacy of teaching and learning facilities “hinder students’ ability to conduct research, explore case studies, and engage in experiential learning.”¹ Continuing, they state that “overcrowded classrooms and inadequate faculty-to-student ratios impact the quality of instruction and personalized mentor-ship...lack of adequate facilities also affects the overall learning environment, potentially compromising the educational experience and hindering academic excellence. Addressing these issues requires collaboration to invest in infrastructure, technology, and faculty development.”

2.2 Poor Funding:

Among the greatest problems facing legal education in Nigeria is poor funding. The main sources of funding for public education institutions in Nigeria are allocations from governments and tuition by students. Private education institutions are primarily funded from money from proprietors and tuition by students. However, in recent years government allocations to public institutions have been on steady decline, leading to increase in school fees by the various schools, which increase is usually resisted by the students. In some instances, increase in school fees leads to riots and violent demonstrations which themselves create tension and sometimes result in shutdown of affected institutions². At the Nigerian Law School for example, the tuition was recently reviewed upwards³ leading to complaints from a section of its prospective students as a result of which Nigeria’s House of Representatives⁴ intervened⁵. On the part of private universities, the school fees are seen as exorbitant. One thing appears clear: high rate of school fees hinders access to education because very many poor students are not able to afford such fees. There is hardly any loan scheme for students in Nigeria and where they are said to exist, implementation is poor and lopsided or ineffective. Although the Federal Government of Nigeria recently introduced a Student Loan Initiative known as the Nigerian Education Loan Fund “to break financial barriers in higher education through the provision of interest-free loans” to students in Nigeria,⁶ it is yet to be seen how that initiative will help to increase access to education by indigent Nigerian students. The truth remains that under-funding of the universities and legal education institutions hinder effective administration of legal education and realisation of much of its goals in Nigeria both at the university level and at the Nigerian Law School.

2.3 Proliferation of Faculties of Law:

Too many Law Faculties exist, leading to too many students being admitted without any corresponding increase in the number of teachers and teaching facilities to be able to meet the student-to-teacher ratio. These have contributed to reduction in the standard of legal education at the undergraduate level; increase in lecturers’ work load imposes too much burden on the lecturers leading to reduced efficiency and effectiveness. In many universities, too many courses are given to a lecturer to handle. It was the astronomical rise in the number of law graduates due to proliferation of Law faculties, that led to establishment of many more Campuses of the Nigerian Law School, a measure taken by stakeholders to cater for the growing number of persons seeking admission into the Law School.

2.4 Violation of Quota by Universities:

At the time of accreditation of each Law Faculty by the Council of Legal Education, some mandatory maximum limit, usually called admission quota, is placed on the number of students the affected university is allowed to admit into the Law Faculty in

each academic session. Oftentimes, many universities fail to adhere to this limitation, admit many more students beyond the maximum admission quota or limit. Over the years, this has created huge problems for the Nigerian Law School as the number of law graduates seeking admission to the Nigerian Law School keeps increasing especially beyond the capacity of the facilities and resources available in the Nigerian Law School. In recent times, the Nigerian Law School has had, in some cases, to run two academic sessions in one calendar year, the aim being to try to adsorb the growing backlog of graduates from the universities. Sometimes, too, this abuse of quota by the universities lead to a situation in which some graduates of some universities stay for several years after graduation from the university before being admitted to into the Law School. During the intervening years, many of them lose touch with prevailing issues in the legal profession or even drop their aspiration to join the legal profession. The truth is that effective management and resolution of the problem of backlog arising from both proliferation and over-admission by the various faculties has been a huge challenge for the Nigerian Law School.

2.5 Unauthorized Operation of Law Undergraduate Programs by Unaccredited Law Faculties:

In Nigeria, a university in Nigeria is not expected to operate an undergraduate law program unless and until its Law Faculty has applied for and is duly accredited by the Council of Legal Education (CLE), which is the apex regulator of legal education in Nigeria. Only students graduating from Law Faculties duly accredited by the CLE are eligible for an admission into the Nigerian Law School. Unfortunately, it happens that some universities in Nigeria proceed to establish Law Faculties and begin operating undergraduate law programs without prior approval by the CLE. In the end, CLE declines to admit into the Nigerian Law School, graduates of such offending universities.⁷ This usually leads to tensions⁸ and frictions between the Council of Legal Education and affected universities or their graduates or between the Council of Legal Education on the one part and affected universities and their graduates on the other hand. Graduates of some of such universities have in some cases resorted to dragging the Council of Legal Education to court over refusal of the Council to admit their law graduates into the Law School, on this ground. Lead City University in Ibadan⁹, Oyo State and National Open University of Nigeria¹⁰ are ready examples. Besides, it is found that oftentimes, graduates of such unaccredited Law Faculties are of poor quality due to the poor quality, unregulated and unsupervised legal education administered by such Law Faculties¹¹.

2.6 Conservative Curriculum:

The curricula of some legal education institutions, especially in some universities leave so much to be desired in terms of meeting up with prevailing standards and international benchmarks for the 21st century. Challenges created by lack of frequent and pragmatic review of teaching curriculum in many legal education institutions in Nigeria, especially at the undergraduate level, has led to "outdated curriculum and teaching methods" being listed as a challenge to legal education in Nigeria. Many Law Faculties do not teach many modern law courses or teach modern courses in outdated fashions. Besides, modern techniques are hardly deployed in many institutions. This adversely affects the quality of graduates and creates problems for both legal education and the legal profession in Nigeria. According to Okangla, the curriculum in most Law Faculties in Nigeria "has remained largely unchanged. And of no doubt, this is greatly hampering innovations that would have repositioned the study of law and the entire Profession".¹²

2.7 Poor Remuneration of Staff:

Poor remuneration is one of the most debilitating challenges facing legal education in Nigeria. Lack of competitive remuneration and adequate motivation lead to poor commitment and brain drain, which in turn adversely militate against legal education. Staff of legal education institutions in Nigeria are among the most poorly and shabbily remunerated staff of public institutions in Nigeria.

2.8 Poor Motivation and Inadequate Welfare for Staff:

Employee motivation culture is generally poor in Nigeria. Employee motivation is an intrinsic and internal drive to put forth the necessary effort and action towards work-related activities. Employee motivation has been broadly defined as comprised in the "psychological forces that determine the direction of a person's behavior in an organisation, a person's level of effort and a person's level of persistence".¹³ Also, "Motivation can be thought of as the willingness to expend energy to achieve a goal or a reward. Motivation at work has been defined as 'the sum of the processes that influence the arousal, direction, and maintenance of behaviours relevant to work settings'.¹⁴ Motivated employees are essential to the success of an organization; motivated employees are generally more productive at the workplace.

2.9 Insufficient Practical Skills Development:

This poses a great threat to legal education because law is a skill-based profession. Unmanageable number of students, insufficient, over-worked, poorly-remunerated, poorly-motivated and sometimes uncommitted teaching and non-teaching staff, inadequate facilities, outdated curriculum and teaching techniques may be among factors that lead to poor skills development in the legal profession.

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2.10 Limited Opportunities for Continuing Professional Development:

The Council of Legal Education which has the primary responsibility for Continuing Legal Education¹⁵ in the legal profession, already has so much on its hands that it has hardly ever devoted any time and attention to continuing legal education. The Nigerian Bar Association has been trying in the areas of continuing legal education and continuing professional development. However, a lot of efforts and attention need to be devoted to the area if we must achieve the objectives of instituting continuing professional development as an aspect of legal education in Nigeria. The Continuing Professional Development program of the NBA has not been fully implemented as it ought to; thus, it has not had its full impact on the profession and its members. Those appointed to manage or run the program are usually Bar politicians who see the assignment as an opportunity to promote their aspiration to elective positions during NBA's national or Branch elections. This causes distractions and deployment of ICLE activities to promotion of political objectives. Further, the short tenure of operators of the ICLE program does not allow enough time and attention to be given to this aspect of legal education.

2.11 Uncommitted, Incompetent Lecturers:

Lack of commitment and competence on the part of teaching and non-teaching staff may be as a result of poor training and ineffective recruitment processes that allow incompetent staff into the system; lack of motivation; poor remuneration, oppression and victimization by some managers of legal education institutions; among other factors. The fact remains that incompetence and lack of commitment and among staff are a huge challenge to legal education in Nigeria. Regarding the situation at the undergraduate level, Okangla observes:¹⁶

Lawyers without the interest of teaching flood our faculties thereby only filling the space and leaving the job substantially unattended to. Most of these Lecturers combine teaching and practice. They pay more attention to practice than teaching. As a result the entire teaching job is sparingly handled. These crop of un-passionate and uncommitted Lecturers are responsible for the weak and half-baked set of Lawyers and thereby forming part of the problem facing legal education in Nigeria.

2.12 Corruption:

Corruption is endemic in Nigeria generally. And the legal education sector is not left out. Reduction in access to education; erosion of public trust in legal education and the legal profession, especially when people perceive that certificates and qualification are obtained through corrupt and illicit means and not through merit; reduction in the quality of teaching and learning as a result of embezzlement of funds meant for management of legal education which leads to procurement of substandard facilities and to inadequacy. Corruption within the system undermines ethics and values, leading to productions of professionals lacking in these essentials. Ultimately, a corrupt legal education leads to a corrupt legal profession, a corrupt judiciary and a corrupt society.¹⁷ Corruption is a huge challenge in legal education administration in Nigeria.

2.13 Examination Malpractices and Sex-for-Marks Scandals

Exam malpractices lead to production of poor-quality graduates which are a menace to the profession and to society. Stories abound of the incidents of cheating and other forms of exam malpractices and fraud in legal education institutions in Nigeria. The Council of Legal Education has laid off some of its staff as a result of their involvement in exam malpractices. Some students have been suspended, expelled or banned from universities and from the Nigerian Law School on account of culpability on examination malpractices. Recently, a full-time Law lecturer was caught at the Nigerian Law School writing Bar Part II examinations for a Law School student.¹⁸ At the undergraduate level, stories of sex-for-marks, "sorting", and other ugly forms of malpractices abound. The recent scandal at the University of Calabar is another example.¹⁹ There is no gainsaying that examination malpractices are a huge problem to legal education in Nigeria and causes a lot of distraction to managers of such institutions.

2.14 Traditional Teaching Methods:

What Okangla describes as the "the traditional lecturing method" is a system in which the teacher is the boss, lording it over students, thereby creating fear and trepidation in the students leading to poor learning and teaching. This method relies heavily on dishing out of theories and principles with little or no efforts at practical training. It is punctuated, especially in the universities, by dictation of notes and dishing out of "hand-outs" which the students memorise for the purpose of regurgitating their contents during exams, instead of adopting a more practical approach to teaching and learning law, which is more beneficial to the students as future legal practitioners.

2.15 Poor Research:

The legal profession is a research-oriented profession. One of the best attributes of an effective lawyer is effective research skills. Effective research skill is key to success in the legal profession, whether as a student, lawyer, judge or lecturer.²⁰ Many law lecturers are very at research. This tells on the quality, effectiveness and impact of their scholarly research works and on their

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performance in class, their contribution to legal education and to advancement of the legal profession. As one student once asserted, "It is embarrassing for a Lecturer to misguide his student due to lack of research on his part. This clearly shows negligence on his part to duty".²¹ Recently, the Legal Practitioners Privileges Committee (LPPC) decided to limit to only one in a year, the number of law academics (law Lecturers) awarded the prestigious rank of Senior Advocate of Nigeria (SAN).²² A major reason given for this development is the declining impact of law teachers in the development of law practice especially courtroom advocacy, administration of justice and the legal profession in general.

2.16 Bifurcated Legal Education: ²³

Fawngvilfotshak²⁴ has suggested this as falling among the challenges of legal education in Nigeria. According to him, citing Mamman, "the division of legal education into two - Law Faculties and the Nigerian Law School - affects the quality of law graduates in Nigeria". He explains further:

The Law faculties teach Substantive law while the Law School teaches procedural law. Their teaching methods vary: while the Law faculties use the traditional lecture type of teaching method, the Nigerian law school reformed its curriculum to embrace clinical legal education and interactive approaches to teaching and learning. Clinical Legal education is good on paper and at Law teachers Conferences in Nigeria, but very difficult to implement effectively in the Universities. The Law faculties lack the structural support for clinical legal education. How do you teach University Law students courses such as Public Interest lawyering, Access to justice, Street Law advocacy etc. without teaching them Civil and Criminal procedure, ethics and professional responsibility which are taught at the Law school? Law faculties lack the technology in terms of multimedia, clinical rooms, clinical staff who understand the method, the virtual library and so on... some Law faculties assign Clinical legal education to inexperienced Lecturers or lecturers who are weak in classroom teaching.

However, with due respect, the present authors do not count this as falling among the challenges of legal education in Nigeria. In the authors' view, there is nothing wrong with the Gower Model recommended by the Unsworth Committee for Nigeria.

2.17 The Politics of University Administration/Management:

Jacob and Adeniran believe that this is also a challenge of legal education in Nigeria. According to the learned authors, there is the problem of "gross interference of the university administration with the admission process in Law Faculties" and of undue interference by some University Management in appointment and running of the Law Faculties within their domain. This sometimes leads to neglect or relegation of merit²⁵ and competence. Further, frequent wranglings within the university management is a form of threat to stability and effectiveness in operation of Law Faculties in Nigeria.

2.18 Incessant Industrial Actions in Nigerian Universities:

There is no doubt that the frequent industrial actions (strikes) being experienced in Nigerian Universities have adversely impacted on effectiveness of legal education administration in Nigeria. A cursory look at the history of strikes by the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) would reveal some appalling statistics. The first strike action by ASUU was in 1988 which led to the ban of ASUU activities. The strike was called off in 1990. The second was in 1992. Then, there were several ASUU strike actions between 1995 and 1997. In 1999, ASUU strike lasted five months; in 2000, two weeks; in 2003, five months; in 2005, three days; ²⁶ "in 2007 for three months, in 2009 for four months, in 2010 for over five months, in 2011 for three months and in 2019,"²⁷ and so on. Indeed in 2022, Nigerian Universities were closed for over eight months as a result of strike by ASUU members. Such frequent strikes adversely affect and disrupt the academic calendar at Nigerian Law School; leads to rushed academic activities, popularly known as "crash programs" which are usually resorted to by Law Faculties at the end/suspension of each strike action in their efforts to meet up with invitations to send a list of their eligible law graduates to the Nigerian Law School for the admission process. When academic activities are rushed, quality of delivery is impaired or sacrificed on the altar of exigency. A major cause of the menace of backlog in the Nigerian Law School admission process and academic program, is the rampancy of strike in Nigerian universities which more often than not makes it impracticable for some Law Faculties to meet up with timely submission of the names of their graduates to the Nigerian Law School for an admission. Strike is a major challenge to tertiary education generally in Nigeria, and to legal education in particular.

2.19 High School Fees:

This is obviously a challenge because high school fees are a threat to the dreams of many a Nigerian to acquire legal education in Nigeria. Many students and parents in Nigeria struggle to pay school fees in the public universities. The tuition schedule and rate in private universities is simply alarming. But then, is it possible to run a private university without high fees, since there is total absence of funding from governments? Yet, high rate of school fees scares away otherwise promising students from legal education especially in institutions of their own choice. Many have given up on pursuing legal education as a result of the high cost of legal education, although more often than not, it is poor funding that leads to increased school fees in universities without

which the universities may not be able to cope. Unfortunately, in some instances, even the little fund available is mismanaged by corrupt or inept education administrators.

2.20 Lack of Synergy with the Faculties of Law:

Disconnect between what the Law School wants, miscommunication and lack of synergy between the various Law Faculties and the Council of Legal Education (Nigerian Law School) create problem for effective administration of legal education. The present authors have already identified as major challenges, over-admission by some universities and operation of undergraduate law programs without prior approval of the Council of Legal Education. Another cause of tensions between the Council and universities is distortion of approved benchmarks for operation of law undergraduate programs by some Law Faculties. Example, the law program at the Baze University, Abuja was recently suspended by the Council of Legal Education on account of the University's distortion of approved standards;²⁸ Baze University operated what is known as the Fast Track Law program under which it ran a three-year LL.B Degree program in Law, against the approved duration of four years for the Direct Entry and Five years for the Regular Law Program. Regarding the prescription for minimum "Duration of the LL.B Degree Programme" in Nigeria, NUC BMAS 2011 provides for a "Standard 5-year programme for students with Senior Secondary School Certificate, General Certificate of Education "Ordinary" Level, or their equivalents. However, Direct Entry candidates will be permitted to join in year two of the programme but they must take any 100-level course [earlier] missed".²⁹

2.21 Gross Under-Utilization of Information and Communication Technology:

The role of ICT in effective legal education, research, and law practice cannot be overstated. Legal education administrators and stakeholders in Nigeria are still struggling to catch up with prevailing global trends in this wise. Most academic activities are still undertaken manually, in outdated modes. This is why the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions introduced by Governments in Nigeria to curtail spread of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria in 2020-2021 had grossly interrupted academic activities in most education institutions in Nigeria, including legal education institutions. Unfortunately, from the way most education institutions still operate, refusing to fully incorporate ICT into their policies, programs and activities, it appears only little lessons have been learned from the 2020-2021 ugly experience. In summary, we're yet to fully embrace the new normal, which requires dependence on ICT-driven techniques and methods.

3. Suggested Solutions and Prospects for Reforms

Having identified some of the major challenges facing legal education in Nigeria, this segment of this paper is now devoted to proffering solutions and recommending proposals for reforms. Suggestions in this wise would be based on identified problems:

3.1 Improvement in Funding and Infrastructure:

Legal education requires sustained investment. Lack of facilities in academic institutions in Nigeria, is a perennial problem, that could be solved only by the collaboration of all stakeholders. Increased funding for tertiary education is a first step, to installing modern facilities for conducive and effective teaching and learning. It is recommended that the leadership of the Council of Legal Education, of the Nigerian Law School, of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), the Body of Benchers (BoB), and the General Council of the Bar (GCB) should collaborate to push for increased funding of legal education in Nigeria, from both the public and the private sectors. Meanwhile, a moratorium should be placed on approval/accreditation of more Law Faculties until the existing Faculties have been fully upgraded with modern teaching and learning facilities in line with international standards. Another way to resolve the infrastructure challenge is to explore public-private partners in provision of some of the facilities, such as halls of residence, ICT centres, lecture halls, tutorial rooms, libraries, among others. Finally, stakeholders could reach out to well-meaning citizens of Nigerian and to governments or government agencies at all levels, to lend a helping hand. Example, through the efforts of the Council of Legal Education led by its Chairman Chief Emeka Ngige, SAN, and the Nigerian Law School led by its Director-General Professor Isa Hayatu Chiroma, SAN, the Government of Rivers State of Nigeria under the leadership of Governor Nyesome Wike built and donated a brand-new Law School Campus, located in Port Harcourt, to the Nigerian Law School. The same Government of Rivers State built two halls of residence with a combined capacity of 900 bed spaces and one modern 1,500-seater multipurpose hall in Yenagoa, Bayelsa State Campus of the Nigerian Law School. The Council of Legal Education, the Nigerian Law School (NLS), the NBA, the BOB and the GCB should liaise with the Body of Attorneys-General of the Federations, the Nigerian Governors' Forum and the Presidency to see how, more of such gestures could be dished out to the various Faculties of Law in Nigeria and to the Nigerian Law School. Also, the Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC), the Southeast Development Commission, the Northeast Development Commission and the Northwest Development Commission, the Southwest Development Commission and similar organisations from across Nigeria, should be contacted to see how stakeholders can collaborate with them for improvement of infrastructure and teaching and learning facilities in the various Law Faculties and in the Nigerian Law School. Finally, the Council of Legal Education (CLE) should insist on not granting accreditation to any new private or public Law Faculty that has not installed complete modern teaching and learning facilities. Regarding funding, stakeholders should escalate their push to the National Assembly to consider

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improved budget for both the Nigerian Law School and the education sector. Stakeholders should also look the way of international donor agencies such as USAID, DFID, among others.

3.2 Proliferation of Law Faculties, Unauthorized Law Programs, and Abuse of Admission Quota:

It is suggested that the CLE should immediately set up a taskforce to ensure that no new Law Faculty is established in any University in Nigeria until existing Law Faculties have been certified to meet international benchmarks for effective legal education administration. Besides, any university that undertakes any undergraduate law program without due accreditation, or having received accreditation, exceeds its maximum admission quota, should have its licence revoked or have its Law undergraduate program suspended for at least 5-10 years, to serve as a deterrent to others. The CLE and the NUC must enforce stricter compliance with accreditation standards, quotas, and quality benchmarks, while imposing deterrent sanctions against erring institutions. The current situation in which unapproved Law Faculties are allowed to undertake undergraduate law programs on the condition that graduates of such Law Faculties would not be qualified for an admission to the Nigerian Law School until accreditation is unacceptable and unhealthy for the sector, for two reasons: first, quality is seriously impaired since law undergraduate programs in such Law Faculties are unsupervised; second, by the time such Law Faculties have produced hundreds and thousands of law graduates, the graduates would start agitating to be enrolled in the NLS; such agitations oftentimes create unrest, tension and unnecessary distraction as witnessed in the case of NOUN and the Lead City University. The NUC and the CLE should collaborate to draft relevant guidelines that leave no room for exemptions in this wise, and to set up a Standing Committee to monitor and ensure strict compliance by the universities and other law training institutions.

3.3 Curricula Reform:

The CLE should work in partnership with the NUC, the management of the Nigerian Law School and the various Law Faculties in Nigeria, to institute mechanisms for a critical review of the quality and scope of extant academic curricula in Law Faculties across Nigeria and in the NLS, to ensure that university Law Faculties in Nigeria operate uniform curricula and that their curricula measure up to prevailing international benchmarks and global best practices since we are training lawyers to compete in a globalized economy. A periodic, holistic review of law curricula should be institutionalised to ensure alignment with contemporary global standards, with emphasis on practice-oriented, ICT-driven and skill-based training.

3.4 Staff Remuneration, Motivation and Welfare:

The problems of poor remuneration, poor motivation and poor welfare for staff of the Law Faculties and of the NLS are tied to the challenge of poor funding, corruption, incompetence of some managers of academic institutions. Improvement in funding will lead to improvement in welfare incentives for staff of affected institutions. It is recommended that a stakeholder summit be organised to fashion out impregnable measures to compel both the Council of Legal Education and the Management of the various Law Faculties to take more seriously the issue of staff welfare and employee motivation. Improved remuneration for public education institutions depends on the approved national salary structure. Although the Nigerian Federal Government recently signed into law the National Minimum Wage Act, 2023, to raise minimum wage from ₦30,000 to ₦70,000 per month, the level of inflation in Nigeria has gone so high that such a gesture would still not be sufficient to quench the agitation for a living wage for Nigerian workers. It is thus recommended that legal education institutions and stakeholders would need to step up efforts on staff welfare to augment the poor salaries and allowances currently being paid to them. Truth is, improved remuneration, better working conditions, and professional development opportunities for academic and non-academic staff are essential to attract and retain competent, dedicated educators

3.5 Skills Development:

Skills acquisition is essential for effective legal education. Bearing in the mind the various skills required to function effectively as a lawyer in the 21st century, legal education managers should institute immediate measures to install a system of legal education that prioritizes skills acquisition so as to prepare lawyers to function optimally and effectively in any chosen career in the legal profession. In a commentary titled *'Career Opportunities For Lawyers And Place Of Skills, Ethics And Values In Successful Law Practice'*, published on 12 December 2021, Udemezue identified about 25 basic skills required for a lawyer to function optimally in the 21st century. The world has since left such legal education teaching and learning techniques that emphasize theory over practice. Constant training and retraining of academic staff in modern legal skills and skill-development will help sharpen their own skills and keep them up to date; one cannot give out to one's students what one does not have.

3.6 Continuing Legal Education:

This is one area that the Nigerian Bar Association is already doing well and filling the gap left by the Law School. It is recommended that pursuant to its powers under Section 1(2) and 3 of the Legal Education (Consolidation, Etc) Act, the Council of Legal Education should as a matter of urgency establish a Continuing Legal Education Institute, to operate independent of the Nigerian Law School, and to be charged with discharging the functions of the CLE in this regard. The NBA-ICLE has been politicised, and is not stable considering the shortness of the tenure of NBA leaderships. The CLE Institute would have all the

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time to develop a robust curriculum and program and techniques for effective continuing professional legal development in Nigeria. The performance of many practicing lawyers leaves much to be desired. A specialised CLE Institute for this purpose would ensure that this aspect of legal training is given all the attention and expertise it deserves, instead of leaving that all-important business in the hands of Bar politicians who use it mostly to further their political objectives.

3.7 Commitment and Competence on the Part of Staff:

Enhanced remuneration, improved welfare and consistent motivation will go a long way towards ensuring commitment on the part of teaching and support staff in legal education institutions. To ensure competence, the process of recruitment of law teachers needs to be reviewed because being a lawyer does not necessarily make one an effective law teacher. What the Nigerian Law School and the various Law Faculties need are effective law teachers, and not just any law teacher nor just a lawyer. Having degrees or chains of degrees is not necessarily synonymous with being an effective law teacher; one can have all the law degrees in this world but still not be an effective law teacher. A law teacher who is not able or who struggles to fulfil his role as a law teacher is not an effective law teacher. Besides, installation of performance evaluation mechanisms to ensure constant monitoring and supervision will lead to increased commitment. Promotion should be conducted based partly on actual performance and effectiveness of teachers in the classroom rather than relying solely on publication of scholarly works. Sole reliance on scholarly publications for promotion of academic staff in the universities and in the Nigerian Law School is a major hindrance to effective realisation of core objectives of legal education in Nigeria.

3.8 Corruption:

Corruption is a canker-worm in the Nigerian society. Installation of measures to ensure that only men and women of integrity are recruited to manage legal education institutions will help reduce corruption and corrupt tendencies. Besides, there should be established by stakeholders, mechanisms for regular oversight on the managers and operators of legal education institutions in Nigeria.

3.9 Exam Malpractice and Sex-for-Marks Syndrome:

Reducing the menace of exam malpractice requires the collaboration of all stakeholders. The process of administration of examination needs to be overhauled to assure transparency and credibility. Modern examination techniques emphasize the use of ICT in organization and conduct of examinations and assessments. Massive digitization of the processes of examinations and assessment will reduce exam malpractices and increase transparency and credibility in line with the globalized economy.

3.10 Teaching Methods:

In view of the demands of globalization, it is time for managers of legal education in Nigeria to move away from the traditional teaching techniques that prioritize dictation of notes and issuance of handouts, to more practice-oriented methods and that which encourages deployment of the ICT. There is need to explore and import the techniques being applied in some of the best institutions in the world. Nigeria must move with the developed world in this wise; else, the world will leave us behind, and this will impact negatively on our products; they would be ill-equipped to compete in the global market.

3.11 Improved Research and Innovation:

One of the factors militating against legal education is poor research or dearth of diligent research. Inadequacy in the teaching of legal research methods and methodology in the various faculties of law of Nigerian universities, to a large extent, has negative impact on the aptitude and quality of legal writing by the country's legal academics, as well as judges, legal draftsmen and law advocates. It is recommended that a separate module to be known as Modern Legal Research Skills be introduced at the undergraduate level of legal education, and be made mandatory, to help instill research skills and capabilities in the aspirant to the Bar. Research is an essential skill for law teaching and law practice; thus research skills must be prioritised at all levels of legal education. It is further recommended that the Council of Legal Education in conjunction with relevant stakeholders should institute mechanisms for conducting occasional evaluation of the quality of scholarly works by law teachers at all levels in Nigeria. Finally, legal research grants should be encouraged as a motivation to effective legal research in Nigeria.

3.12 Improved Synergy and Engagement:

To enhance synergy between the CLE and the various Law Faculties in Nigeria, frequent communication is recommended. To this end, a structured communication platform should be created to foster constant engagement between the CLE, the NUC, the Deans of Law Faculties and other stakeholders for uniformity, cooperation and problem-solving. The CLE could set up a platform, a social media platform, where the Deans, Secretaries and Faculty Officers of all duly accredited Law Faculties in Nigeria are members together with relevant officials of the Council of Legal Education and the Nigerian Law School, for the purpose of interactions and correspondence on issues affecting legal education development, undergraduate and Law School admissions, accreditation sustenance issues, issues of maintenance of quota requirements and prescriptions, among others. Such

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a social media platform will bridge communication gap and encourage constant interactions as well as engender uniformity and synergy among stakeholders towards effective administration of legal education in Nigeria.

3.13 Bifurcated Legal Education:

The present authors do not see any problem with the existence of the Nigerian Law School as the sole trainer in adjectival legal education in Nigeria; arguments suggesting abolition or decentralization of the Nigerian Law School, are misplaced. The Unsworth Committee had recommended what is now known as Gower Model, a two-stage legal education system: the academic stage, administered in the university law faculties, and the professional/vocational/adjectival level undertaken by the Nigerian Law School where all graduates of Law from Nigerian and foreign universities are mandated to undergo a compulsory professional training before admission to the Nigerian Bar. Existence of the Nigerian Law School does not contribute to any of the problems of legal education or of the legal profession in Nigeria. On the contrary, efforts by the Nigerian Law School to improve standards, inculcate skills and ensure sustenance of ethics and values, have been a saving grace for legal education in Nigeria. Nigerian Law School, through constant upgrade in its teaching and learning mechanisms and techniques, has helped to inculcate the skills, ethics and values which are necessary for effective lawyering. It is recommended that rather than abolish the Nigerian Law School, stakeholders should continue to work to ensure constant efforts to reform, upgrade and improve the facilities, resources, systems, techniques and staffers at the Law School. The politics and the standard in most universities is so low that abolishing the NLS to allow the universities to solely handle adjectival legal education, will spell doom for legal education in Nigeria.

3.14 Politics:

There is always politics everywhere, even at the family level. So, it would be difficult to erase politics completely. Efforts should be made by stakeholders to (a) ensure constant reform of the process of recruiting law teachers at both the NLS and in the Universities; (b) divest the various Law Faculties from the undue interference by their respective University Managements; and (c) ensure regular supervision (internal and external) and oversight of the staff (teaching and non-teaching) at the various Law Faculties and in the NLS. The overall aim is to improve efficiency, effectiveness, professionalism and standard.

3.15 School Fees:

Education institutions cannot do without school fees. However, the rate should be kept reasonable to assure access to legal education by the less privileged, under-privileged. The recently introduced NELFUND is commendable. It is recommended that the Council of Legal Education should work in collaboration with the managers of the various Law Faculties to ensure that students of legal education institutions in Nigeria are not left out of the Fund.

3.16 Industrial Actions:

Frequent industrial actions adversely affect effective legal education. Unfortunately, legal education stakeholders have no control over ASUU and the various Governments in Nigeria. It is rifts between ASUU, NASU, SSANU, NLC, TUC, etc, on the one part and the Governments on the other hand, that usually lead to strikes. And since Law Faculties are a part and parcel of the public university system and the public service, Law Faculties cannot operate during strikes. It is hoped that the FG and the various Trade Unions would make deliberate, genuine and honest efforts to resolve all outstanding disputes to avert future strikes that would further draw education backwards in Nigeria.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations

The future of legal education in Nigeria rests on the capacity of stakeholders to move beyond rhetoric and embrace deliberate, practical, and collaborative reforms. This paper has shown that while legal education in Nigeria has made remarkable contributions to nation-building and professional development, it is also weighed down by a combination of structural, institutional and systemic challenges. Chief among these are poor funding, obsolete legislative framework, proliferation of law faculties without commensurate facilities, non-adherence by law faculties to prescribed regulatory standards, weak regulation of admission quotas, outdated curricula, inadequate facilities, poor remuneration and motivation of staff, weak research culture, persistence of corruption, poor staff welfare culture, unethical practices, among others identified in this paper. Unless these issues are urgently and effectively addressed, the vision of realising a world-class legal education system in Nigeria, capable of producing globally competitive lawyers, may remain elusive. It is therefore imperative that legal education stakeholders in Nigeria adopt a reformist agenda anchored on the principles of sustainability, accountability, and innovation. The Council of Legal Education, the Nigerian Law school, the Nigerian Bar Association, the National Universities Commission, and the Body of Benchers must act in synergy, supported by government and private sector partners, to reposition legal education in Nigeria. A number of reform proposals have been discussed and recommended in this paper. It is hoped that these would be adopted and pursued in the best interest of survival of legal education in Nigeria. Legal education stands at a critical juncture; hence the urgency of reform is clear. By implementing with sincerity of purpose, the strategies recommended in this paper, among others,

Nigeria can develop a resilient and forward-looking legal education system that not only equips lawyers with requisite knowledge, skills, and ethical grounding but also empowers them to be agents of justice, innovation and national development.

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