

LEGAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

1960-1995

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Gloria whejiamamma Onwukwe Otoni

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ABSTRACT

Legal Education In Nigeria

1960-1995

Legal Education _____ Law , lawyers_____ Society

The aim of legal education in every society as I perceive it, is to reach society through the law and lawyers. Formalized legal education was introduced into Nigeria by Britain which at the time colonized Nigeria. In 1960, Nigeria gained independence from Britain..

Although no goals were set by the colonialists and the nationalists who worked with them in the setting up of Law faculties and the Law School in Nigeria, of great importance was the natural expectation that through legal education the principles of democracy and its ancillary; the rule of law would become the political practice of the nation. The assumption was that with the rule of law there is bound to be socio- economic growth ensured through the law. Thus the whole idea was to utilize the law, and lawyers to reach society. Today it is obvious that legal education (formalized) has expanded tremendously as demonstrated by the existence of twenty-three accredited law faculties. More lawyers have been trained. The principles of democracy and the rule of law have not successfully taken root in Nigeria nor has there been the expected economic growth.

My argument is that there are factors in the three entities : legal education, the law and lawyers on one hand and then the society, which by their nature and character makes it almost impossible that these results be produced. Legal education in Nigeria is too formalistic and practice-oriented. Its form and style, structure and cannon leave much to be desired. It leaves out policy- oriented, public interest tilted component out of legal education. The definition, role and functions of law are uncertain. Law is also conceptualized variegatedly. Lawyers on the other hand have certain outlook about the law which determines their attitude to the law. The Nigerian society is highly complex. Tribalism and ethnicity determines how most things are done. Its effects are all pervasive. Legal culture is also part of the problem. It will be interesting to find out what the people think of the law. Apart from this, the co-existence of customary and non-customary laws and institution - the relics of our colonial past- adds to the problem. The supposed union between legal education, law, lawyers and society is not harmonized. Yet legal education has survived over time. It could therefore be concluded that legal education in Nigeria has a social function- it fuels elitism. In this work, I attempt to find out what legal education is in Nigeria, and why it is so. Ultimately, I suggest what it should be and how it can be done. If legal education is to be meaningful it has to be contextualized.

I have adopted the use of segments for the ease and convenience which I think it provides for me and the reader. I have also set this work against the general background of the Nigerian society.

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