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About 40 of the 95 universities in Nigeria offer Law as part of their menu of academic programmes. In the broad discipline of Arts and Humanities, Law is rated as one of the programmes in high demand and the profession's association is considered to be the leading professional body in the country. Add to these, its unique responsibilities in providing judges and personnel for the Justice Sector at the domestic and international arena. These are services and responsibilities that are pervasive and cross-cutting unlike other professions which generally provide one line service structure to the society albeit, an important one.

The combination of this popularity and unique position of the legal profession place enormous burden on the providers of legal education, especially the faculty and the Dean.

### **The Faculty**

In Nigeria, a Law School or faculty of Law as it is generally known in the country is established first by obtaining approval from the National Universities Commission (NUC), the agency that gives initial approval for the establishment of a university and all degree programmes. In addition to the NUC, an institution desirous of starting a Law programme must also inform and be guided by the Council of Legal Education.

The two bodies undertake periodic validation or accreditation of the programme, usually every four years to ensure quality of legal education is sustained and enhanced.

Until 1989, faculties were free to determine the curricula that will meet the quality requirements of its programme. But following concerns that some universities were falling below standards in terms of programmes, the federal government through the National Universities Commission imposed Minimum Academic Standards for Law and in fact all disciplines, later reviewed and referred to as Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards.

The latter brought into the curricula other non Law Courses so that Law is taught and learned in the context of the circumstances of the society.

All these, are driven by the aspiration and requirements on the part of the government, the profession and the society as to certain minimum benchmark of competence and skills required of a Lawyer.

These concerns are constantly reiterated by Judges, the Lawyers professional body and members of the public who use the services of lawyers in all ramifications.

This is therefore seen as the core responsibility of the Law School.

### **Community Services**

In Nigeria, Professors and other senior members of the faculty are periodically appointed by the government, NGOs and the Lawyers' Society to serve as resources in diverse activities, such as Ministers (federal) or State Executive Councils, as Chairmen or members of ad-hoc Committees.

One cannot however state with certainty that in the course of training, some of these services are consciously borne in mind by Nigerian or any Law Schools as a Lawyer's role. It is only implied and infact expected that Lawyers have the unique training to provide such services. In the same way that Lawyers tend to be larger in number than other professional groups in legislative houses across the country. Another important component of training of students which directly, and consciously nurture community service orientation for Lawyers is the fast growing use of clinical legal education in the Law Schools. The Clinic is designed to provide students with hands-on lawyering skills as well as provide indigent citizens with basic legal advice..

Whether consciously or not, these wider social and communal responsibilities inevitably challenge Law Schools to be conscious of the technical competence benchmarks set for Law graduates, as well as develop an inter-disciplinary approach in curriculum design and teaching of Law.

As part of the preparation of Lawyers for the enlarged societal roles, Law Schools in Nigeria pay attention to the character and appearance of students. For instance, Law Schools widely impose dress code (black/white colors) on students while the Nigerian Law School expressly prescribes what is generally labeled as "fit and proper" as good character or behaviour requirements during their period of studies as pre-condition for Call to the Bar. Students' conduct are monitored for compliance.

### **Law School Administration**

In Nigeria, Law Schools have fairly uniform management structures. A typical Law School would comprise the Dean and three, more or less departments and all faculty members belonging to one or the other departments.

Deans are elected democratically by faculty members for a term of two years, renewable only once for a similar period.

Eligible candidates must be professors and where there is no professor, a person below may be elected for a similar term but as acting, and in both cases, an elected candidate is appointed by the Vice-Chancellor.

In many Law Schools, the process of such election and appointment can be extremely politicized with alignments which sometimes affect the ability of the Dean to have smooth administration. Unions of academic staff are known to play key roles in the election process which also bring in ideological considerations and at times primordial interests could be important like ethnic or regions of the country where the candidates come from.

Overall when elected, much of the energy of the Dean would be spent on organizing the resources necessary to manage the School. That is, ensuring that teachers teach, examinations are conducted, scripts marked and results processed for consideration and approval of the School's Board and Senate respectively, and that Students' academic needs are met, like provision of teaching materials, etc.

The Dean would also be responsible for the academic development of the Law School, subject to the formal approval of the Senate of the university.

The Dean may provide a university-wide service as a member of the Committee of Provost and Deans, Senate and many ad-hoc University Committees to which he may be appointed.

Overall, much of the academic growth of a Law School may depend on the influence and capabilities of the Dean arising from his scholarly accomplishment and the respect earned there from and his administrative acumen. An effective Dean usually is a person who commands the respect of his colleagues in the Law School as well as the senior managers of the university.

In some exceptional cases, the Law School and the university in general could benefit from external funding and support due to the external relationships and influence of the Dean. On the other hand, some Law Schools are known to have suffered set backs due to the poor standing of the Dean with the university administration and poor relationship with colleagues in the School.

In Nigeria, staff development is a critical factor in Law Schools through provision of opportunity for junior and middle level academic staff to acquire additional qualifications such as masters and or doctorate degrees, supervision

of research by staff for their own progress and also on matters regarding development of the Law for the benefit of knowledge and society.

In recent years, arising from dwindling financial resources to support external or foreign staff development, much of this responsibility is borne by local professors.

The current need for higher qualification is now reinforced by a specific directive from the National Universities Commission (NUC) which requires a doctorate as a pre-condition for any academic staff in all discipline to be promoted beyond senior lecturer level.

This has placed enormous pressure on faculties and the Dean to ensure there are enough senior staff to supervise the growing number of academic staff at the lower rung of the teachers.

From the foregoing, it would appear that subject to important variations in nuances on programme organization, cultural diversity, etc, a great deal of the roles, values and expectations of the Law -Schools across the world evince some universality.

This combination of diversity and commonness of certain core values generate exciting opportunities and challenges to the International Association of Law Schools (IALS) institution and collaborative frameworks for Law School administrators and teachers world-wide.