

AN APPRAISAL OF THE OBJECTIVES OF LEGAL EDUCATION

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INTRODUCTION

This paper seeks to examine the basic objectives of legal education of any developed or developing country with, a view to discussing how legal education can be helpful to improve the legal profession generally. For there to be a notable improvement in the legal profession, those involved in the system must have a firm grasp of the main objectives of legal education. Additionally, law reform cannot be purposively and meaningfully carried out in the absence of a positive tuning and balancing of these basic objectives.

Lawyers should be at the forefront of those pushing for the reforms of the legal system, especially on issues affecting the dispensation of justice punishment and pardon. It has been opined and rightly in our view, that the essence of law reform can conveniently be deduced from the terms of reference of Law Reform Commissions in practically all commonwealth countries (including Nigeria) where such a commission has been established¹.

For proper reforms to be done therefore, the members of the Commissions must inter alia know the basic objectives of Legal Education.

BASIC OBJECTIVES OF LEGAL EDUCATION

Legal education, simply defined, is education that is legal. It must be noted that the main objective of education generally is to effect national development.

It needs to be stressed that it is through legal education that proper reforms could be done from time to time. The commissions that are established in commonwealth

¹ See I.O. Agbede; Dynamics of Law Reform Enterprise: Nigerian Experience, Published in the Guardian, Tuesday, February 3, 2004.

countries are required, among other things, “to take and keep under review the whole of the law with a view to its systematic development and reform including in particular, codification, the elimination of anomalies, the repeal of obsolete and unnecessary enactments, the reduction of a number of separate enactments and generally the simplification and modernization of the law”²

Furthermore, legal education helps to produce a competent lawyer. It has been noted that “A Competent Lawyer” in accordance with general education policy is presumably “someone who has acquired appropriate skills, abilities and competence, both physical and intellectual, as required for her to play her role as a useful member of the community”³.

The ultimate objective of legal education therefore is to produce Competent Lawyers whose aims in any given society include the defence of the fundamental rights of individuals as well as their welfare. In Nigeria, all Lawyers belong to an association known as the Nigerian Bar Association. The members are practicing Lawyers, that is, Lawyers that belong to the legal profession, which is generally regarded as conservative, noble and honorable. It is also of importance to state the fact that a true mastery and understanding of law must address the question of its origin, development and function in any society. This can best be done through legal education.

In Nigeria for example, a statutory body that is charged with the responsibility for the legal education of persons seeking to become members of the legal profession is the Council of Legal Education. This statutory body, because of the important roles that Lawyers play in the development, regulation and economic activities of any society, the body will always ensure that competent persons are trained as Lawyers and are consequently called to the Bar to practise Law.

One obvious fact is that different countries have different legal system with different legal rules. However, the concept of globalization now necessitates these different countries to interact. Consequently it is necessary to have laws regulating the various legal relations in this regard. This can only be achieved through legal education.

² I.O. Agbede, Dynamics of Law Reform Enterprise: Nigerian Experience Supra.

³ A.O. Ilumoka Beyond the Law School Attaining fully the Objectives of Legal Education in Nigeria Proceedings of the 24th Annual Conference of the Nigerian of Association of Law Teacher; held at the University of Benin, Between 28th –30th April, 1986 at 115.

Lawyers are concerned generally with law and the purpose of law according to Inhering is to further and protect the interest of society⁴.

CONCLUSION

As noted, the ultimate objective of legal education is to produce Competent Lawyers and Competent Lawyers can only be produced through proper and legal education.

It has been pointed out and rightly in our view that a good legal education among other things, should aim at providing:

- (1) A good understanding of the structure and goals of the society.
- (2) A good understanding of the nature of the Lawyer's specialty of the tasks he will be called upon to perform as a specialist, and the nature of skills he will be called upon to apply in performing them.
- (3) A good understanding of some of the general rules and principles of laws relating to important and frequently recurring transactions or activities in the society.
- (4) A good understanding of some rules relating to special transactions or activities in the society.
- (5) A good understanding of methods and techniques he will be called upon to apply in performing them⁵

⁴ Ihering, *Law as a means to an End*, pp. 63, 68 & 397.

⁵ A.O. Ilumoka, *Beyond the Law School: Attaining fully the Objectives of Legal Education in Nigeria* *Supra* at pp. 133-134.