

BUILDING AN INNOVATIVE CLINICAL CURRICULUM FOR ENABLING NIGERIAN LAW GRADUATES TO BECOME PRACTICE READY.

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Abstract

The evolution of legal education in Nigeria has taken a transformative turn with the adoption of Clinical Legal Education (CLE), a pedagogical approach rooted in experiential learning. Originating in the United States and introduced in South Africa in 1970, CLE emphasizes performance-based learning through interactive, practical, and scenario-driven instruction. This method is steadily replacing traditional lecture-based models, offering law students hands-on experience via simulations and supervised client interactions in law clinics. CLE has significantly reshaped teaching methodologies across Nigerian law faculties, fostering more practice-ready graduates. This study employs a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative interviews with legal educators and students, quantitative surveys across multiple law faculties, and document analysis of CLE curricula and policy frameworks. Through this approach, the research captures diverse perspectives on the effectiveness, challenges, and future of CLE in Nigeria. Findings reveal that while CLE enhances student engagement and professional readiness, its implementation is hindered by inadequate infrastructure, limited faculty training, and resistance to pedagogical change. To address these challenges, the study recommends reforms including: integration of digital legal tools into CLE modules, mandatory clinical components in core law courses, capacity-building programs for clinical faculty, and institutional support for sustainable law clinic operations. These reforms aim to align legal education with contemporary practice demands and ensure the long-term viability of experiential learning in Nigeria's legal training landscape.

Key words: Clinical Legal Education; Experiential Learning; Curriculum Reform; Practice-Ready Graduates and Law Clinics and Technology

1.1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Historical Background of Clinical Legal Education

The emergence of clinical legal education began in the United States¹, tightly followed by Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom (UK). A historical examination of the evolution of clinical legal education reveals two principal driving forces: the growing demand for accessible legal aid and the imperative to reform legal education by integrating a more practice-oriented approach to the training of lawyers.²

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¹ Haydock, Roger S, 'Clinical Legal Education: The History and Development of a Law Clinic,' (1983) 9(1)William Mitchell Law Review <<https://open.mitchellhamline.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2620&context=wmlr>>accessed 30/7/2023.

² J. Giddings, R. Burridge, S.A.M Gaviganand C.F Klein, The first wave of modern clinical legal education, The United States, Britain, Canada and Australia, p5.

done on save time, completely isolated from the school condition, to a characteristic piece of a clinical college program. There are additionally instances of facilities driven by rehearsing legal counselors that are pretty much isolated from graduate schools yet with law understudies taking an interest as an externship⁹. A law clinic may be described as a platform within a law school that facilitates supervised legal practice, offering students the opportunity to engage in real-world legal work that mirrors and reinforces the theoretical instruction received in the classroom.¹⁰

Clinical legal education is a dynamic instructive philosophy and teaching method that is frequently actualized through clinic programs¹¹. Students become intelligent, hands-on and advance their learning by doing the clinic work¹². Clinical legal education programs offer class re-enactment exercises dependent on genuine cases or potentially center experience including cooperation with genuine clients. Clinical legal education offers students the chance to learn in a scholastic situation where the students recognize, explore and apply information in a setting which imitates, in any event to a limited extent, the existence where it is drilled¹³. Students are allowed the chance to practice what is found out in the classroom which is also known as experiential learning. Clinical legal education has been contended as important to plan law understudies for the legitimate condition that anticipates them after graduation. Clinical legal education as a course combines classroom experience with live-clients' representation under the supervision of a supervisor with extensive law practice background and with a social justice dimension.¹⁴ This is said to go beyond why is learnt in the four walls of the classroom, it has to do with the process of seeing, hearing, saying and doing whether consciously or unconsciously by actions for multi-disciplinary, multi-purpose education which can develop the human resources and idealism needed to strengthen the legal system of any country.

The concept also ushered in an instructional approach that enables students to translate theoretical legal knowledge into practical experience by engaging in regular clinic-based work and projects, now formally embedded within the academic curriculum.¹⁵ These activities are

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰Stephen Wizner, The Law School Clinic: Legal Education in the Interests of Justice ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3813&context=flr accessed 23 August, 2025

¹¹Leah Wortham, Catherine F. Klein, Beryl Blaustone, 'Autonomy-Mastery-Purpose; Structuring Clinical Courses to Enhance These Critical Educational Goals' *International journal of Clinical Legal Education* ISSN 1467-1069, p. 100.

¹² By Staff, William & Mary Law School, Clinics: Learning to Practice Skillfully and with Integrity with its nine clinics enrolling 150 students each year, the Law School offers students a variety of opportunities to become practice-ready before they graduate. <https://law.wm.edu/practice-ready/clinics-prepare-students-to-practice-skillfully-and-with-integrity.php>.

¹³ M. Berbeck-Rostas, A. Gutnikov, B. Namyslowska-Gabrysiak, Clinical Legal Education in Central and Eastern Europe: Selected Case studies, The Global Clinical Movement p.64

¹⁴Olanike S. Adelakun-Odewale, 'Role of Clinical Legal Education in Social Justice in Nigeria' available at <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/2322005817730148> accesses 03/03/2020

¹⁵ Interactive Pedagogy And Clinical Legal Education (Cle) In The Teaching Of Reproductive And Sexual Health Law To 2ndyear Law Students [https://journals.ui.edu.ng/index.php/ajem/article/view/694/619#:~:text=Clinical%20Legal%20Education%20\(CLE\)Many%20attempts%20have%20been,and%20student%20input%20results%20in%20knowledge%20as.](https://journals.ui.edu.ng/index.php/ajem/article/view/694/619#:~:text=Clinical%20Legal%20Education%20(CLE)Many%20attempts%20have%20been,and%20student%20input%20results%20in%20knowledge%20as.) Accessed 15th August, 2025.

carried out through the establishment of law clinics under existing clinical education programs in a bid to use the channel to expose law students to their role in promoting social justice, societal responsibilities and professional duties.

The Law clinics under the clinical legal education programs, provide experiential learning and training of law students in the spirit of social justice and public service, and provide desperately-needed legal services to poor communities and underprivileged persons. This serves as a platform to fill the gaps not adequately addressed by governmental legal aid programs, poverty and other factors created by issues of governance that deprive ordinary persons of legal protection.¹⁶

1.2 CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION IN NIGERIA

Access to justice is a universal entitlement and a cornerstone of human rights, yet its effective realization remains elusive for many, especially among indigent and vulnerable populations across Africa.¹⁷ Despite its foundational importance, access to justice continues to be more aspirational than actual, hindered by systemic barriers and institutional shortcomings.¹⁸ The current legal aid framework, though well-intentioned, is grossly inadequate both in capacity and coverage leaving countless individuals without meaningful recourse to legal remedies. Law clinics at law faculties across Nigeria serve to fill the gap not adequately addressed by governmental legal aid programs. There are about 18 established law clinics in Nigeria.¹⁹

The Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI) Nigeria is a non-profit, non-governmental organization at the forefront of legal education reform, access to justice, and human rights advocacy.²⁰ With a mission to transform legal education through experiential learning, NULAI has pioneered the development and expansion of clinical legal education across Nigeria. Its sustained advocacy and technical support have led to a significant rise in participation, with over 100 individual members and 50 institutional law clinics registered as of 2021.²¹ According to information on the NULAI website as at 2025, we currently have about 50 law clinics in Nigeria.

Law clinic in Nigeria engages in programs which facilitate the development of lawyering skills, social justice consciousness in students and ensure access to justice especially for the poor and

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Access to justice is widely recognized as a foundational principle in international human rights law. See: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Access to Justice: Practice Note*, 2004; and African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, *Principles and Guidelines on the Right to a Fair Trial and Legal Assistance in Africa*, 2003.

¹⁸ J Beqiraj and L McNamara, 'International Access to Justice: Barriers and Solutions' (Bingham Centre for the Rule of Law Report 02/2014), International Bar Association, October 2014 https://www.biicl.org/documents/485_iba_report_060215.pdf access 20 August, 2025.

¹⁹ Emil Winkler, "A Report On The Concept of Law Clinics" <https://law.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1500/1500268-law-clinic-rapport.pdf>>accessed 28 June, 2020.

²⁰ www.nulai.org.

²¹ NULAI Nigeria 2022 Annual Report <https://nulai.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/NULAI-NIGERIA-2022-ANNUAL-REPORT.pdf> accessed 20 August, 2025.

indigent people within the communities²². Law clinics in Nigeria serve as a powerful bridge between legal education and social justice, offering free legal services to disadvantaged individuals while educating the public about their rights and how to assert them.²³ These clinics not only meet critical community needs but also provide law students with hands-on experience, reinforcing the ethical principles and responsibilities that underpin the legal profession

Through the Clinical legal education, the law faculty has not only created a lawyer(s) by the books but also developed human resources and idealist needed to strengthen the legal system. This has made it possible for law students to contribute to national development and social change in a constructive manner²⁴.

The law clinic has challenged the traditional pedagogical style based on formality, theory and lecturing methods which was the dominant teaching method in most law faculties of African universities for many years. This did not allow law students to interact with live clients or to acquire practical legal skills but this has changed since the advent of law clinic.²⁵

While law clinics in Nigeria have made commendable strides in advancing legal awareness and providing pro bono services, they continue to face notable challenges that hinder their full potential. These include limitations in legal expertise, inadequate understanding of complex legal frameworks, and financial constraints issues often rooted in broader systemic shortcomings within the country's educational infrastructure. This work will further explore these obstacles and their implications for the effectiveness of clinical legal education in Nigeria. The result is a sense of injustice throughout societies in which a growing rift divides those with financial and legal means, and those without.²⁶ In order to meet the purpose of the law clinic, it is important that the law clinic engages in programs which will facilitate the development of lawyering skills in students and which ensure access to justice especially for the poor people within the communities.

1.3 RELEVANCE OF THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the clinical legal education in Nigeria is serving its purpose though cannot be compared with other schools owing to the advancement in technology. Though it is preparing law students for the legal environment that awaits them after graduation but it has failed to upgrade in line with recent technological realities. Clinical Legal Education has helped students engage in a variety of community outreach programs including women's groups, pre-trial detention, access to justice, juvenile detention centers, community centers and other institutions, same has fostered the relationship between security agencies and the citizen. The students are

²² Ibid.

²³ NULAI Nigeria 2020–2021 Activities Report, NULAI Nigeria, 2021 <https://nulai.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NULAI-NIGERIA-2020-2021-ACTIVITIES-REPORT.pdf> accessed 14 July, 2025.

²⁴ R. Grimes, "The Theory and Practice of Clinical Legal Education" in J. Webb and C. Maugham (eds.) *Teaching Lawyers' Skills* (1996) at p 138.

²⁵ Mentoring students to develop professional ethics and practical skills for tomorrow that help marginalized communities today." <https://www.babseacle.org/clinical-legal-education/>

²⁶ Robert MacCrate, *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: Building the Continuum of Legal Education and Professional Development*, 10 Clin. Law Rev. 805, 824 (2003–04).

learning at the same time impacting their immediate society with the skills acquired through the law clinic²⁷.

Clinical legal education has given students the opportunity to apply the theoretical aspect of law training to real-life situations. Law students undergoing clinical legal education are taught the 'how to' of the law in order to address injustices in society.²⁸ Through the establishment of law clinics under clinical education programs, law students are exposed to societal responsibilities in addition to professional duties, and also to the fact that they meet the legal needs of the poor and underrepresented in the society.²⁹

Despite the notable achievements of legal clinics in Nigeria, it is evident that while the current curriculum has made meaningful strides, much more needs to be done to fully transition from traditional, theory-based teaching to a dynamic model rooted in experiential learning. Embedding practical, hands-on legal education remains essential to equipping students with the skills and ethical grounding required for real-world legal practice.

The methodologies of legal education have not changed in any fundamental way, some methods dating back hundreds of years. Law schools have relied, for too long, on passive learning methods such as lectures or cases. Clinical legal education provides an alternative that is more than just another pedagogical method.³⁰ It provides a way for students to experience their emerging professional selves, while providing services or projects with poor and underrepresented clients.

The idea of bringing in professionals in the acts of legal practice to train the students met a resistance basically because of lack of direction, there is no agreement as to what to reach or do with the clinic.³¹

1.4 CHALLENGES OF LAW CLINIC IN NIGERIA

Law clinics, by design, rely heavily on the mentorship and oversight of seasoned legal practitioners and academics to ensure that students not only gain practical legal skills but also internalize ethical standards and professional responsibility.

²⁷ Stephen Wizner, *The Law School Clinic: Legal Education in the Interests of Justice*, 70 *Fordham L. Rev.* 1929 (2002), <http://ir.lawnet.fordham.edu/flr/vol70/iss5/29> (last visited Jan. 31, 2017).

²⁸ Folakem Ajaguna, Ibijoke Byron, *Clinical Legal Education and Social Justice: Assessing the Impact on Law Students in a Law Clinic in Nigeria* *International Journal of Clinical Legal Education* 31(1):44-79 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/380157727_Clinical_Legal_Education_and_Social_Justice_Assessing_the_Impact_on_Law_Students_in_a_Law_Clinic_in_Nigeria accessed 24th August, 2025

²⁹ Mohammed M. Meghdadi & Ahmad E. Nasab, *The Role of Legal Clinics in Human Rights Education*; Mofid University Legal Clinic Experience, 15 *Procedia Soc. Behav. Sci.* 3014, 3015 (2011).

³⁰ Richard J. Wilson, *The Global Evolution of Clinical Legal Education: More than a Method* (Cambridge University Press, 2018) https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=3424111 accessed 12th June, 2025

³¹ AHM Kamal & S Talukder 'Diversification of legal education: Understanding the dichotomy of practical and theoretical knowledge' (2010) 4 *ASA University Review* 117.

The major challenges of the law clinic are; funding, attitude of traditional teachers and the institutions who have remain adamant or put differently, unwilling to allow the full implementation of law clinics and its curriculum. There are funds limits and this affects the outcome. The clinics are restricted they therefore set priorities; clinics are restricted to a special aspect of law or group of people to provide legal services in compliance with the funding terms. Quite a number of law clinics in Nigeria receive very limited funding from their institutions and in most cases, this funding is normally attached to the budget of the law faculties. This has hindered the faculties from getting all the necessary facilities³². The activities of the law clinics in Nigeria are mostly sponsored by International Non-Governmental Organizations and Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI), Public and Private Development Center (PPDC)³³. It will suffice to say that the development and recognition gotten so far from the various law clinics in Nigeria has been as a result of the immense support of the above organizations.

Another major setback that law clinics face in Nigeria is lack of experienced supervisors and lecturers appointed to manage the law clinics. The shortage of experienced supervisors and lecturers appointed to manage and guide clinical legal education to provide experiential learning and mentorship for the students. This deficiency undermines the goals of experiential learning which emphasizes learning through doing. Without competent supervision, students are often left to navigate complex legal issues with minimal guidance, resulting in suboptimal learning outcomes and, in some cases, ethical missteps. Managing a law clinic and supervising student's activities of students in the clinic coupled with their other modules is challenging and tasking. Most of the supervisors appointed in some schools are based on favoritism and not experience in the operation and supervision of students in the law clinics which is totally different from the traditional method of supervision/teaching of students.

The lack of institutional support for training clinical supervisors further compounds the problem, as many lecturers are appointed without formal preparation in clinical pedagogy or case management. The absence of trained clinicians and the lack of a structured framework for clinical legal education in Nigeria have stunted the growth and impact of law clinics across the country.³⁴ This gap not only affects the quality of legal education but also limits the ability of clinics to serve marginalized communities effectively, which is a core mission of clinical legal practice.

It is important to state that the assignment of a clinic supervisor or coordinator is tasking and cannot be compared to regular traditional classroom teachers. This is because it requires experiential learning which is usually done by illustrations, student center learning, demonstrations and close supervision of the activities of the students.

However, since clinical legal education is not about the regular teaching but rather an interactive session, the students can also add to the knowledge of the clinician. Faculties of law across the

³² F.S. Bloch, *The Global Clinical Movement*, p.xxii 5 A.a

³³ PPDC is a non-governmental organization and social enterprise driven by the desire to have a more transparent and accountable government <https://www.ppdc.org/>.

³⁴ Nadia Rusi1, Ilda Kovaçi Melo Clinical Legal Education: The Role and Challenges in Enhancing Access to Justice Journal of Educational and Social Research Vol 15 No 1 January 2025
file:///C:/Users/USER/Downloads/jesr-2025-0016-1.pdf accessed 30th March, 2025.

country should have a policy, encouraging personnel who participate in any form of training to further train other personnel on clinical legal education. Additionally, students should be actively involved in the training process and should be encouraged to participate in clinical trainings outside their universities³⁵.

1.5 THE CURRENT STATE OF COUNCIL OF LEGAL EDUCATION

Without doubt there has been an advocacy for clinical legal education in Nigeria and while the Council of Legal Education had mandated the establishment of law clinics and moot courts in all law faculties across the country, the resistance to change by some stakeholders still affects the acceptance of clinical legal education. Consequently, the situation is such that most law faculties actually established law clinics and moot courts by way of compliance with the requirements of the regulatory body but are largely yet to fully integrate law clinics and legal skills into the legal education system.

The Council of Legal Education, in collaboration with the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers (NALT), has a critical responsibility to institutionalize the training of law teachers in Clinical Legal Education (CLE). This can be achieved by ensuring that each annual NALT conference includes, at a minimum, a dedicated plenary session or workshop focused on the principles, operations, and pedagogical value of law clinics.³⁶ Furthermore, it should be made compulsory that teaching methodologies adopted by legal educators align with CLE standards, thereby fostering experiential learning and practical skill development across Nigerian law faculties.

While the core objective of clinical legal education lies in fostering experiential learning through the provision of pro bono legal services to underserved members of society an approach that may not always yield immediate efficiency the true value of the process rests in its capacity to cultivate a reflective, socially conscious, and ethically grounded legal profession for the future.³⁷

1.6 PURPOSE OF CLINICAL CONTENT

The development of robust clinical content within law faculties is not only essential but foundational to the advancement of legal education. Its benefits ranging from enhanced student engagement to the cultivation of socially responsive lawyers are profound and cannot be overstated.³⁸ However, to truly harness the potential of clinical legal education, it is imperative to first clarify both the pedagogical objectives and the methodologies through which they will be delivered. A deep appreciation of the purpose and structure of clinical content is critical, as it serves as the blueprint for designing innovative and impactful clinical programs.³⁹

This paper centers on three foundational pillars of clinical legal education: first, the enhancement of core interpersonal competencies, including interviewing, counselling, and negotiation; second,

³⁵Babseacle, 'Mentoring Students to Develop Professional Ethics and Practical Skills for Tomorrow that Help Marginalized Communities Today.' <https://www.babseacle.org/clinical-legal-education/> accessed 20 June,2020>.

³⁶ F.S. Bloch and M. A. Noone, 'Legal Aid Origins of Clinical Legal Education, The Global Clinical Movement', p. 155.

³⁷ Ibid

³⁸ A.A. Adekunle, 'Clinical Legal Education and the Future of Legal Training in Nigeria', *Nigerian Journal of Legal Education*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (2023), pp. 45–62

³⁹Clinical Legal Education: Concept and Concern, https://sg.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/148922/6/06_chapter%204.pdf p. 1 assessed on 24/08/2020.

the instillation of professional ethics and a deep sense of legal accountability; and third, the nurturing of a service-oriented ethos that inspires law students to commit to justice and contribute meaningfully to the advancement of society throughout their careers.

1.7 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT-INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

A clinical content should be aimed at developing interpersonal skills such as interviewing, counselling, negotiation, Advocacy and client management.⁴⁰ This is predicated on the fact that our law clinicians perform various tasks just as an attorney would do in the same job position, such as doing legal research, drafting briefs, counselling and other legal documents, and interviewing clients. As a result of the task carried out at the law clinics, the students pick up certain skills and develop new skills over time at the law clinic.⁴¹ The skills picked up by the student's aids them to become better attorneys and legal practitioners. Participating in a legal clinic greatly enables students to gain hands-on experience before heading off into the job market. In fact, participating in law clinics gives an edge when it comes to employability and rendering of adequate legal service.

1.8 PROFESSIONAL ETHICS AND RESPONSIBILITY

Law Students who are involved in law clinic activities acquire first-hand experience of the ethics and responsibility that comes with being an attorney or a legal practitioner. The first-hand experience gained by these clinicians affords them a better chance of being more professional and responsible when dealing with clients in their professional dealings compared to law students who did not pass through the law clinic.

For instance, Baze University in Nigeria now offers a clinical course titled Ethics and Professional Responsibilities, which provides students with their first substantive exposure to the practical dimensions of legal ethics. Through this course, students gain a foundational understanding of the complexities and real-world implications of ethical conduct in legal practice.

This skill is very vital in the face of reports about the unprofessionalism and unethical behaviour exhibited by some legal practitioners which has led to the suspension, disbarment and even prosecution in criminal cases. The above can be greatly avoided or brought to the barest minimum once these skills are taught through clinical legal education.

1.9 BUILDING A CULTURE OF SERVICE TO HUMANITY AMONGST LAW STUDENTS

Generally, law clinics are run on pro bono services.⁴² The law clinic train lawyers and law students in the spirit of social justice and public service, and provide desperately

⁴⁰ Ernest Ojukwu et al., *Clinical Legal Education: Curriculum, Lessons and Materials*, Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI Nigeria), 2013.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Pro bono publico", meaning "for the public good". These cases can involve full representation, one-off advice, document preparation, research, or international work, and they are crucial for ensuring that individuals and groups who lack financial resources still have access to justice and legal help. [https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/08/pro-bono.asp#:~:text=Investopedia%20/%20Julie%20Bang,and%20killing%20of%20five%20Americans](https://www.investopedia.com/ask/answers/08/pro-bono.asp#:~:text=Investopedia%20/%20Julie%20Bang,and%20killing%20of%20five%20Americans.). Access 20th August, 2025.

needed legal services in underserved communities and indigent members of the society. Law clinics transcend the traditional fusion of theory and practice by drawing meaningful insights from real-life cases.⁴³ They instill in students a deep sense of civic responsibility, nurturing a culture of service through the provision of free legal assistance particularly to individuals and communities who lack the means to access justice.⁴⁴ This experiential model not only sharpens legal skills but also reinforces the ethical imperative of using the law as a tool for social good.

1.10 INNOVATION IN TEACHING CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION

The use of technology and other platforms is now a necessity and to a large extent will help to get adequate knowledge of the law students despite the eminent challenges on its practicability. Below is some key innovations utilized in Nigerian legal education.

- a. **Technology:** Technology is the catalyst by which the world turns. Over the past several years, technology has had a significant impact on the practice of law. With the rise of the internet, average Nigerians have a much larger access to legal information than they have over the past several decades. The practice of law for lawyers is changing as well. Lawyers once did all of their legal research using books. However, now most of that research is done electronically with legal research databases such as law pavilion and law yard. Several technologies have come out recently that are changing the legal profession on the significant basis, hence the use of technology in the education of upcoming lawyers cannot be over emphasized, this is because technology as we know has changed the way traditional legal education is being administered.

Traditional legal education merely develops potential lawyer's skills of analysis of legal problems in the authoritarian settings of the classroom and may instill in student's authoritarian values. On the other hand, the relative student autonomy clinical programs can develop both a sense of responsibility and more cooperative and democratic ways of learning. Technology has made it easy for students and lecturers to have access to study materials and research materials. In 2021, law clinics participating in the Reforming Pre-trial Detention Project, coordinated by NULAI Nigeria, adapted to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic by conducting a virtual exchange programme.⁴⁵ Despite the constraints of remote engagement, the initiative proved highly successful, underscoring the vital role of technology in enhancing legal education and sustaining experiential learning in times of disruption. Technology has even made it easy for lectures to take place online without the student and the lecturer even necessarily being in the same environment. The integration of Artificial Intelligence lessons into Clinical Legal Education (CLE) is revolutionizing how law students learn and practice, offering tools like virtual client simulations, automated legal research, and predictive analytics to enhance experiential learning.⁴⁶ AI supports remote legal clinics and expands access to

⁴³ <https://nigeria.action4justice.org/resource-bank/list-of-law-clinics-in-nigeria/> accessed 24th July, 2024

⁴⁴ Ibid (n. 6).

⁴⁵ Reforming Pretrial Detention In Nigeria Project Overview September 2023 <https://www.partnersglobal.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Reforming-Pretrial-Detention-in-Nigeria-Project-Overview-FINAL.pdf> accessed 20th August, 2025

⁴⁶ Salisu, A. S. & Garba, A. Integrating Artificial Intelligence Into Legal Education In Nigeria: Navigating The New Frontier For The Judicial System https://www.academia.edu/124021533/Integrating_Artificial_Intelligence_Into_Legal_Education_In_Nigeria_Navigating_The_New_Frontier_For_The_Judicial_System accessed 24th August, 2025.

justice by streamlining intake processes and identifying underserved communities. However, its adoption requires careful attention to ethical concerns, faculty training, and curriculum reform to ensure AI complements rather than replaces critical legal reasoning and human judgment. The coming of technology has even introduced new areas in the study of law, these areas include some of the following cyber security, artificial intelligence, communications law, electoral law to mention but few. The use of technology has not certainly been harnessed by law clinics and lawyers in Nigeria.

- b. **Internship:** Internship is a work experience offered by an organization for a limited period of time. According to Law Insider dictionary “internship means a formal academic course from a regionally accredited college or university in which supervised, practical experience is obtained in a clinical setting in the application of counselling principles, methods and techniques.”⁴⁷

Internships should form part of our lessons/curriculum because it offer law students a vital opportunity to apply the knowledge acquired within the four walls of the classroom to real-world legal practice. Through direct engagement with practicing lawyers, students gain first-hand insight into the workings of the legal profession and contribute meaningfully in their student capacity assisting with case preparation, conducting client interviews, and gathering relevant facts.⁴⁸ These responsibilities not only sharpen their practical skills but also reinforce the experiential nature of law clinics, which are fundamentally practice-oriented rather than theory-based. Internship is one of the means by which a law clinic student can gain hands on experience. This is because the law clinic student during internship has the opportunity to treat more practical matters than theoretical matters. The students inter faces with real clients and real legal problems. The student also learns from the wealth of knowledge of the practicing lawyers who have already gained experience over time due to their years of active practice. The internship program also exposes the student to the diversity of law and also imbibes in the student the responsibility and professionalism that comes with being a lawyer. The internship program gives the law clinic student first-hand experience what such student will face after the completion of the student’s studies. It is of great importance to impute that law clinics should adopt the use of the internship program to further equip the law clinic students with the necessary tools for the student to become practice ready.

- c. **Moot/Mock Trials:** Mock trials should also be reflected in our curriculum no matter the course because they are used throughout the legal world to provide an experiential learning opportunity for law students and professionals who want to gain insight and expertise in the courtroom.⁴⁹ Students who devote significant time as well as intellectual effort in preparing for moot/mock trials have benefited in many ways. Such students practice and improve their skills in the areas of oral advocacy, fact development, legal analysis, witness examination, and trial advocacy.⁵⁰ Preparing for the moot/mock trials in teams, enables these students to learn how to work collaboratively with their peers (it

⁴⁷ Legal Insider, ‘definition of legal intern’ legal insider dictionary, <https://www.lawinsider.com/dictionary/legal-intern>, accessed 4 February 2021.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ John Miller Todd Seidler, ‘Using a Mock Trial: An Experiential Learning Opportunity’, *Sport Management Education Journal*, 2020, 14, 58-60 <https://doi.org/10.1123/smej.2019-0020> accessed 24th August, 2025.

⁵⁰ Mock Trial Program <https://law.shu.edu/experiential/mock-trial.html> accessed 20th August, 2025.

teaches these students team work). Students gain the invaluable confidence that they can stand up and present a legal argument in a variety of forums. These moot/mock trials complement the students' work in doctrinal classes by requiring them⁵¹ to apply various areas of law to simulated practice. Participation in moot/mock trial enhances student learning in two primary areas: trial advocacy skills and evidence law. Moot/mock trial builds upon the skills and knowledge that students gain during their normal classes. Moot/mock trial also provide students with a unique opportunity to take ownership over a set of facts and a client advocacy position, fully analyze the factual and evidentiary issues that may arise, and prepare all of the elements of a full length trial. In the area of trial skills, students deepen their expertise in the areas of oral advocacy, fact development, witness examination, and legal analysis. Moot/mock trial also sharpens the students' drafting skills. Moot/mock trial is a necessary part of any curriculum for the law clinic.

- d. **Legal Aid Clinic:** Legal aid is an assistance provided for persons that cannot afford a legal representation and access the court system on their own because of the low incomes they earn. Legal aid in Nigeria was birthed in 1961 by Sir Adetokunbo Ademola who was a chief justice of Nigeria at that time the legal aid council works nationwide to provide free and quality legal service to alleged suspects who cannot afford legal services⁵². The Legal Aid Act 2011 section 10(1), states that "legal aid shall only be granted to a person whose income does not exceed the national minimum wage or person granted such treatment by the president."⁵³ The Legal Aid Act 2011 now formally recognizes law clinics as key stakeholders in the delivery of legal aid services in Nigeria. By acknowledging the role of non-state actors including law clinics, NGOs, and paralegals the Act affirms the importance of experiential legal education and community-based legal assistance. This recognition empowers law clinics to contribute meaningfully to access-to-justice initiatives, particularly for indigent and underserved populations.⁵⁴

One effective way to prepare law students for legal practice is by involving them in real-life cases through law clinics and internships. Such exposure offers first-hand experience in client interaction, case management, and ethical decision-making bridging the gap between academic learning and professional readiness. However, in Nigeria, the services rendered by law students are primarily paralegal in nature, limited to support roles such as legal research, client interviewing, and case preparation⁵⁵ unlike jurisdictions like the United States and Canada, where law students under supervised clinical programs are

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Lara Rogers, 'A Historical Profile of the Legal Aid Council in Nigeria', *Namati*, Abuja Nigeria , Legal Aid Council of Nigeria, <https://namati.org/network/organization/legal-aid-council-of-nigeria/>, (accessed 4 February 2021).

⁵³ S.10(1) Legal Aid Act 2011.

⁵⁴ [Ernest Ojukwu](#) and [Mahmud Yusuf](#) Mapping the Role of Law Clinics under the Legal Aid Act of Nigeria https://www.academia.edu/102768819/Mapping_the_Role_of_Law_Clinics_under_the_Legal_Aid_Act_of_Nigeria accessed 24th August, 2025.

⁵⁵ Nanribet Fawngvilfotshak Challenges and Prospects of Legal Education in Nigeria: An Overview https://www.africanscholarpublications.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/AJASR_Vol26_No6_Sept_2022-12.pdf accessed 20th March, 2024

permitted to represent clients in court and provide legal advice, thereby gaining deeper practical experience and professional responsibility.⁵⁶

- e. **Exchange Programme:** Exchange programs in law faculties are very vital in developing a good and innovative clinical content to ensure our students are practice ready. This basically includes exchange of learning/ ideas/ education between two or more jurisdictions with the sole aim of learning from different perspectives and environment. This helps to broaden the exposure of law students and will definitely help to influence the students practice of law. A notable example is the Reforming Kuje Programme, facilitated by NULAI, which has served as a valuable platform for students from the United States and Nigeria to exchange ideas, share experiences, and engage in collaborative learning.⁵⁷ The initiative has significantly contributed to fostering cross-cultural understanding and building a robust network among participants of the exchange programme.

1.10 CHANGING NATURE OF LEGAL SERVICES IN NIGERIA

Globally, legal services have undergone a dramatic transformation, evolving into a more sophisticated and expansive field than it was just a few years ago driven largely by globalization and rapid technological advancement.⁵⁸ Some of these changes—such as the use of artificial intelligence in legal practice, supercomputers for research and contract drafting, virtual offices, and mobile applications for resolving basic legal queries have collectively transformed the way legal services are delivered across jurisdictions worldwide.⁵⁹ It is only rational that legal practitioners and intending lawyers also change the way legal services are rendered in Nigeria so as to meet up with global trend. This transformation can only be realized through the instrumentality of law clinics and continuing legal education, as law clinics play a crucial role in preparing students for the evolving global landscape of legal service delivery by educating them on emerging trends and practices.

1.12 WHAT CAN BE DONE

- i. To strengthen the impact of clinical legal education in Nigeria, it is essential to embrace a performance-based learning model that prioritizes practice through law clinic platforms.
- ii. Dedicated financial resources to law clinics, recognizing them as vital components of legal education rather than peripheral initiatives.
- iii. Investments in Law clinic facilities. The law clinic requires proper structures to cater for client interview rooms, standard libraries, laptops, printers, office files for cases etc. in other to enhance the services rendered.

⁵⁶<https://iso.ca/becoming-licensed/lawyer-licensing-process/legislation,-by-laws-and-rules/rights-of-appearance-framework#:~:text=A%20law%20student%20who%20is%20enrolled%20in,or%20tribunal%20must%20identify%20their%20status%20accurately>. Accessed 24th August, 2025.

⁵⁷ Ibid NULAI Report 2021.

⁵⁸ Richard Susskind, *Tomorrow's Lawyers: An Introduction to Your Future* (2nd edn, Oxford University Press 2017); The Law Society, 'How AI is reshaping the future of legal practice' (The Law Society, 2023) <https://www.lawsociety.org.uk/topics/ai-and-lawtech/partner-content/how-ai-is-reshaping-the-future-of-legal-practice> accessed 24 August 2025

⁵⁹ Ibid

- iv. Student law practice should be considered in other to give the students live experiences.
- v. The integration of technology into teaching, lessons and learning processes must also be prioritized, as digital tools can enhance case management, research, and real life client engagement/simulations.
- vi. Law faculties should adopt student-centered curricula that reflect the aspirations of learners and the evolving needs of clients. This includes designing clinical programs that allow students to undertake practical casework as part of their final dissertations, moving away from purely theoretical assessments.
- vii. Private sector participation should be encouraged to bring innovation and investment into law schools, while institutions must also invest in purpose-built clinic facilities—such as interview rooms, libraries, and digital workstations—to support effective service delivery

1.13 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the transformation of clinical legal education in Nigeria demands a multifaceted and forward-thinking approach. By prioritizing experiential learning, investing in infrastructure, embracing technology, and reforming out-dated academic structures, law faculties can cultivate a generation of lawyers who are not only skilled but deeply committed to justice and public service. The inclusion of former student clinicians, private sector collaboration, and student-centered curricula will further strengthen the continuity and relevance of clinical programs. Ultimately, a well-resourced, thoughtfully designed, and liberally administered law clinic system holds the promise of reshaping legal education into a dynamic force for societal change one that empowers students to become ethical advocates and responsive professionals in an evolving legal landscape.