

Issues, Challenges, and Prospects of the Introduction of the Practice of Paralegals: The Role of NBA Vis-À-Vis Access to Justice in Nigeria

Dr. Macaulay J. D. Akpan, Esq

Head, Department of Paralegal Studies, Directorate of Enterprise Programmes, Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic, Ikot Osurua, Nigeria, W/A

Emails: maculayakpan17@gmail.com, mackinsav@yahoo.com

Abstract

Purpose: This paper examined the uptightness of the legal practice in Nigeria as evident in extant provisions of the legal practitioners' rules of professional conduct which prohibit non-lawyers from the practice of law in Nigeria. It is however, posited that it would be rather reasonable, beneficial and dignifying to borrow a leaf from other climes where the practice of paralegals-persons trained in law and law practices and/or under the guidelines provided by relevant bodies of Bar Associations in these different jurisdictions, is in vogue.

Methodology: This work adopts doctrinal, descriptive, prescriptive and analytical research methods.

Findings: This work found that most lawyers in their write-ups expressed general apprehensions that the introduction of the practice of paralegals would open the floodgate of competition and more sharp practices in the legal profession.

Conclusion: Most lawyers suggest that the practice of paralegals should not be encouraged in Nigeria. However, some others welcome the concept provided that the practice of paralegals is well regulated and streamlined.

Recommendations: Nevertheless, this paper recommends, among other things, that while the envisaged regulations for the practice of paralegals is welcomed, there is a need to consider the entire concept dispassionately. This should be with a view to assessing its potentials in terms of its capacity to ameliorate the inherent occupational stress arising from the ever-increasing workload usually rummaged through, distilled and discerned by lawyers, in the performance of professional duties to their clients. This, therefore, will elongate the lifespan of legal practitioners vis-a-vis appropriate individual and corporate life insurance policies in place, with attendant improved productivity and financial freedom both to the paralegals and qualified lawyers in view.

Keywords: *Paralegal, legal practitioners, workload, regulations and lifespan.*

INTRODUCTION

Unarguably, law practice is a very tasking work and this connotes that such tasking work involves a combination of mental and vocational activities, which largely come with inherent occupational stress. The law profession essentially revolves round standing up and/or standing in the gap for other people's transgressions, persecutions or deprivation. In the main, the role of lawyers can be likened to that where Jesus the Christ carried out for man in order to atone for the sins of man - even when Christ Himself was not a sinner. Oftentimes, lawyers are moved, ethically and by compassion, to take up cases or stand up for others on the basis of payment of fee. Sometimes such fee charged by lawyers is relatively low due to empathy attributable to economic downturn in Nigeria. In other instances, lawyers carry out such cases on pro-bono basis depicting of incidents touching on or arising from poor economic environment - which as shown by the recent report of the National Bureau of Statistics, 133 million Nigerians are considered extremely poor as at 2022 (<https://punchng.com>just-133>, 2022).

The legal practice like other professions is equally impacted and overstretched mostly during and after COVID-19 pandemic, the current global economic meltdown, Russia-Ukraine war, and pangs of deep-seated corruption in the Nigerian economic and its effect on the citizenry. This situation in the country has led to loss of jobs, insecurity, hydra-headed inflation, religious bigotry and general loss of confidence in the institutions of government at all levels, by the people. These incidents have given rise to increased criminality with attendant high number of arrests, detention, prosecutions, and convictions. The correctional facilities and police cells are already overstretched with suspects and inmates. Such cases and others have constantly engaged the services of the very low population of existing and experienced lawyers in Nigeria.

This comes with occupational stress which has undoubtedly exacerbated the lifespan of countless legal practitioners in the country. Part of the reason for this incident is that most lawyers in private practice operate a one-man law firm and do tend to subscribe to the model of associate-ship in law practice with its attendant benefits. The simple and underlying reason is the fact that most senior lawyers do not pay living wages to junior lawyers engaged in their law firms. This situation has aided or encouraged many junior lawyers to choose to run a one-man law firm. The inherent danger however, to run a one-man law firm is that most young lawyers do not have the requisite experience on the job and/or specialty. They do not also have the needed facilities, equipment as well as the relevant supporting personnel and of course finance with which to render effective, efficient and competitive legal services both to indigent or intelligent and high profile clients with deep pockets.

Consequently, the health of the lawyer is further impacted negatively as a result of operating a one-man law firm only by himself. The corollary here is that the lawyer takes all the briefs from the clients by himself, sometimes does the typing of the processes alone, carries out research alone, does enquiries and investigations of titles and filing of processes all by himself. Paradoxically, even in an associate-ship, some senior lawyers tendentiously overload their experienced and supporting staff with work beyond their schedules. Such supporting staff are often time do not have basic training in law except from on the job training. Such staff no matter how experienced and dexterous they might become they still lack self-esteem and recognition because they are not certificated.

Currently, the National Executive Committee (NEC) of the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) has considered a number of steps to be taken to include the review of the curriculum of law training from the universities through the Nigerian Law Schools (NLS). The NLS is run by the Council of Legal Education-where vocational skills in law practice are imparted on the would-

be lawyers. The persons admitted in the NLS from the various accredited Faculties of Law of the various Universities in Nigeria undergo a one-year vocational training programme, leading to the award of Barrister at Law (BL) Degree and a Call to Bar Certificate upon successful completion of the requisite examination and other sundry and ethical requirements. Besides, issues bordering on proper remuneration and mentorship of young lawyers are also being looked into with a view to enhancing the financial rewards and capacity of the lawyers. Nevertheless, this work seeks to examine the excess work content of the legal practitioners from the perspectives of both the traditional and modern law practices with a view to highlighting the desirability or otherwise of reviewing the Nigerian legal system, the relevant law and its regulations so as to admit of the practice of paralegals, as it is the case in other climes.

Paralegal Career in Nigeria

This work seeks to examine and interrogate the concept of paralegal. It is also intended that this write-up seeks to expose would-be paralegals to the requisite information about the paralegal's career and employment opportunities therein *vis-à-vis* in the broad spectrum of legal profession in Nigeria. At this juncture, it is pertinent to consider the acute need to make the right choice of a career and to arrive at such a choice from an informed position. The said informed position hinges on certain development indices or factors, such as science and technology and research findings. *Afortiori*, a combination of such development indices or factors could, unarguably, propel and accentuate sustainable development goals in modern societies.

It is in realization of the foregoing career choice approach *vis-à-vis* the available development indices or factors and indeed employment opportunities possible that, there is a compelling need for Nigerian school system to utilize services of the professional and experienced career coaches and career counselors so as to instill and impart strategic and informed career choice in the life of the primary and secondary schools' pupils, students and persons generally. It is often difficult to choose a profession in the midst of series of professions and to make a career out of a particular profession. Career choice is not the art of choosing a profession but the art of making a career out of a particular profession and deepening one's life and interest in such chosen career.

The choice of a career is not made in isolation of changes in the economy, science, technology and/or in line with evolution in society. For example, the 21st century world is knowledge driven and is inching progressively towards robot driven in several fronts. Evidently, both man and his environment benefit hugely from the evolution and revolution in due processes of production, manufacturing, medicine, agriculture, artificial intelligence, engineering and automobile etc. in response to development in science and technology. With the development in such sectors and others, the society now experiences unparalleled offshoots in efficiency, productive and competitive edge with attendant better real time services to meet food security and general societal needs.

In the legal profession, concerted efforts have been made to integrate technology in the legal practice-from the level of law training in the various law faculties in the universities to the Nigerian law school campuses and law firms. The Courts though still grappling with dearth of key infrastructural faculties to aid in the dispensation of justice, efficiently and effectively, have started recording court proceedings electronically. Equally, processes of court are filed electronically unlike the hitherto in-person method. Currently, there is an array of electronic law reports produced and used to impart training to law students and the general public.

Electronic evidence is now incorporated in the Nigerian Law of Evidence and is admissible in evidence, though based on specific conditions in Nigeria.¹

Global integration of technology in legal practice like in other professions is embraced in Nigeria. Some legal practitioners in Nigeria now conduct their meetings and elicit facts from clients without only doing so in-person. Virtual courts sessions now take place on minimal occasions. Notably, the adoption of the electronic devices in Nigerian environment was particularly due to the advent of COVID-19 pandemic in Nigeria, in 2020. The adoption of electronic devices in the country has brought about the much needed panacea in terms of cost saving, efficiency and effectiveness in legal and business operations of business in Nigeria.

Ironically, there is still acute knowledge gap regarding low adaptation and adoption of many techno-legal innovations in line with international best practices among many Nigerian lawyers especially those who qualified in the 80s. Indeed many of these lawyers have issues and challenges in the effective use and deployment of modern techno-legal tools and devices in legal practice and research and thereby losing the benefits of speed and reduced work-load which are inherent in the traditional law practice.

The aforementioned reason and others have regrettably given rise to the employment of office secretaries with requisite computer literacy to assist the lawyers not only in typing and production of court processes and filing such processes but also to electronically conduct legal researches. Some newly employed office secretaries in law firms barely possess the required technical know-how especially in the areas of legal research and preparation of processes. The practical result of this, therefore, is that the lawyer sinks and swims alone from taking of briefs through legal research and conduct of cases in court. This and other associated occupational and work environment under which lawyers operate have continuously impacted negatively on their physical and mental health with attendant effect on their longevity. Curiously, many lawyers unlike other professionals, do not prioritize life assurance or insurance policy for themselves and their employees. The consequences of which cannot be overstressed. Incidentally, the health insurance scheme that has been initiated by the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), for qualified lawyers, is still largely inchoate. While the scheme is welcomed, it is doubtful if the scheme can achieve its set goal. Nigeria is a country where statistics of both the death and the living are not comprehensively recorded and the statistic of actual number of lawyer's death and alive are not available.

In order to lesson work-load on lawyers, an organization called the "Lithis Legal Consult", recently presented to the community of lawyers an APP called "HMB" to wit: "Hold My Brief". This App, according to the initiators, seeks to help lawyers who have cases in court but do not have ample time to attend to such cases, because the matter is outside of their jurisdictions and/or that the cases are still at the preliminary stage, then the lawyer in a given jurisdiction could call another lawyer in that jurisdiction, to hold a brief on his behalf for an agreed fee.

¹ Brickmans Law (2021) Nigeria: Electronic and Digital Evidence Admissibility of E-signatures in Nigeria: Limits, Burdens and Opportunity www.monday.com
Retrieved on 11 Sept. 2022: See also, Anyebe, P. A. (2019) Appraisal of Admissibility of Electronic Evidence in Legal Proceedings in Nigeria in Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization Vol. 92; Kubor V. Dickson (2013) 4 NWLR (Pt. 1345), Esso W. A. V. Oyegbola (1969) N. MLR 194, and Evidence Act 2011 SS 34(1)(b), 84 and 258, Ibidapo, W. H (2018) "The Nigerian Legal Profession in the 21st Contrary (Under the theme: The Legal Profession and Technological Advancement)". (Being a paper presented at the National Association of Muslim Law Students Annual Public Lecture in honour of Hon. Justice T. A. Okunsokan, Hon. Justice Durojaiye Rafiu and Hon. Justice Hassan Oyajimi held at the Faculty of Law, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ado-Iwoye, Ogun State on 31st July 2019. <https://www.academic.edu> Retrieved on 9th Sept. 2022.

The App is capable of being downloaded from Google play store. The initiators of the HMB App posit that young lawyers stand to benefit more as the scheme will enable them to make money for themselves and learn how to handle briefs at the preliminary stage. Much as the HMB App is a welcome development in the legal practice, efforts should be made to reform and/or liberalize the legal profession with the incorporation of the practice of paralegals without impairing the interests of both the legal experts and the consumers of legal services.

Similarly, the NBA under the 2022 leadership has renewed the Law Pavilion Primsol Computer Software for law practice, which had long expired. This software will assist both the new wigs and the senior lawyers to carry out their law practice, effortlessly, for the benefit of their teeming legal services consumers in Nigeria. The scheme ultimately is poised to promote efficiency and effectiveness with real time legal services.

Paralegal Career in Law

A paralegal is a person who has been trained in a programme of instructions relating to the legal practice with a view to such a person rendering assistance to the qualified legal practitioners both at the bench and bar. The trained paralegals can major in multiple of different aspects of the legal practice, such as law of estate, family law, criminal law, civil law, corporate law, alternative disputes resolution, and church administration etc. The paralegals can also give advice and opinions in cases of human rights violation² and direct affected persons to the qualified legal experts for further necessary legal services.

The concept of paralegal, though still alien, unregulated and/or approved in Nigeria, has been in existence in other developed climes, such as America and Britain. Also, in the developing countries, such as South Africa, the practice of paralegal has long been statutorily recognized because of the campaigns and efforts of the National Alliance for the Development of Community Advice Offices (NADCAO) in South Africa. The parliament, in South Africa (SA) subsequently enacted an Act taking into account international best practices, public interest, and the interest of the legal profession with a view to improving access to justice, especially, as it affected the indigent and vulnerable people in SA.

In America, for example, the concept of paralegal started in about 1967 and got a major push in 1968 as a result of the outcry of the average American consumers against high cost of litigation or dearth of access to justice as perceived by the low and middle income earners in America.³ That outcry dovetailed to massive protests and led to the American Bar Assassination (ABA) endorsing the concept of paralegal. In 1968 precisely, the first Standing Committee on Legal Assistants was set up to handle certain legal matters involving the indigent and vulnerable groups in America. And in 1970, the first formal training programme for the would-be paralegals was created. Following and flowing from that development, the ABA, in 1974, adopted guidelines so as to regulate the practice of the paralegals in America.⁴

The said guidelines were approved in 1975 for used and general application. Also, in 2003, the status of the legal assistants was changed to paralegals, with greater areas of coverage. The development gave rise to the formation of the National Federation of Paralegals Association (NFPA) National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA), and the American Association of

² Black's Law Dictionary 2009 P.1220

³ A Brief History of the Paralegal Profession – State Bar of Nigeria – <https://www.michbar.org> Retrieved on 9/8/2022

⁴ Ibid

Paralegal Educators (AAPE) etc. Indeed, the consequential impact of the creation of paralegal practice on the consuming public of legal practice, the legal experts themselves and the resultant ample access to justice in America knew no bounds.

In sum, the advent of paralegal in America broadened and liberalized the American legal space and is bringing justice closer to the grassroots without necessarily impairing the established legal profession. Unarguably, the lifespan of American legal practitioners *vis-a-vis* the backdrop of inherent workload in legal practice and the associated occupational stress on lawyers has reduced remarkably. In spite of the numerous benefits occasioned by the introduction and implementation of paralegal in other climes, Nigeria, to a greater extent, is yet to statutorily adapt and adopt the practice of paralegals in her legal system. For Example, the Nigerian legal system, which can be mirrored through the Legal Practitioners Act⁵ and its Rules⁶ thereto, state that a legal practitioner shall not:

(a) Aid a non-lawyer in the unauthorized practice of the law

(b) permit his professional services or his name to be used in aid of or to make possible, the unauthorized practice of law by any person not qualified to practice or disqualified from practice; or

(c) share legal fees with non-lawyers except based on express agreement between a lawyer and his partner or associate to the effect that upon his demise certain monetary payment can be made to the deceased estate on a given period of time after the deceased lawyer partner's death; or where a lawyer accepts to hold unfinished brief of a deceased lawyer then the lawyer holding such unfinished brief is entitled to a proportion of the total compensation⁷ based on the principle of quantum merit, a lawyer should not allow his name to be written or signed on a document prepared by a non-lawyer if prepared by him for a fee.

The above extant provisions of the rules of conduct of the legal practitioners that prohibit non-lawyers from engaging in the law practice, directly, or indirectly, have regrettably been obeyed in breach by unscrupulous lawyers. For example, cases abound where some legal practitioners, especially those employed in the judiciary departments and others lawyers have flagrantly abused the provisions of the Rules which obviously seek to protect the dignity and integrity of the legal profession in the comity of other professions.

In Nigeria, today, a few Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have taken the lead, though informally, in promoting the practice of paralegals in certain areas of legal practice for the benefits of indigent and vulnerable groups, such as widows; victims of rape, child trafficking, and domestic violence in Nigeria. For example, the Civil Resource Development and Documenting Centre (CIRDDOC)⁸ established in 1996 with the object or business of protecting and promoting of human rights, generally, and strengthening of good societal ideals; championing the recruitment; training and deployment of persons in the acquisition of legal knowledge; skills and practice; to become paralegals. Such trained paralegals are made to educate the indigent and vulnerable group in the various communities in dire need of legal

⁵ (AP.20 LFN 1990 and Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners

⁶ 3(1) a-c & (2)

⁷ S.53 (a-b)

⁸ CIRDDOC – Promoting Paralegalism in Nigeria. [https://cirddoc.org/promoting Para](https://cirddoc.org/promoting%20Para). Retrieved on 10 Sept. 2022.

services but for their low income status. They also assist the qualified lawyers in the discharge of their herculean daily law practice.⁹

In Nigeria, the legal profession, has embraced various new scientific and technological innovations, such as the use of inter disciplinary research methods and referencing styles like the American Professionals Association (APA) in conjunction with its traditional doctrinal research method which heavily relies on case law and statutory law. The essence of the adoption of cross pollination in referencing style in law is to forge, encourage or promote mutual understanding and reliability of data and research findings between law and other disciplines.

More-so, modern law practice seeks to demystify certain forms and substances associated with the history of the legal profession by jettisoning inherent archaic words and terminologies and lengthy writing style wherein the founding fathers of the legal profession whose background in Shakespearean or Elizabethan English held swear in law and its practices. In this wise, modern thinking is that everyone who picks up a piece of legal write-up or legal instrument prepared by a lawyer should be able to read the material with infrequent recourse to look up high flowing and archaic words in the dictionary. This and other related innovations *vis-a-vis* interdisciplinary relations, unarguably, have necessitated the need for the practitioners of law to desire and be receptive to the global effort at liberalizing of the law profession, knowing full well that only lawyers will still and continue to have right of advocacy in courts.

Indeed, the time has come for the Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) like its counterpart in America to come up with guidelines for possible adoption and approval for the regulation of the practice of paralegal formally and lawfully. By this, the extant provisions of the legal practitioners Act and its Rules will have to be amended by the National Assembly. The benefits inherent in establishing a set of guidelines and specific amendments in the legal framework concerned will be feasible for the good of various legal services consumers within the low and middle income earners in Nigeria.

Job Hunting Tips for Paralegals

The job hunting experience of the paralegals is obviously like the experiences of other professionals. Nonetheless, the paralegal being a child of necessity is brought to fore in order to mitigate the associated cost of litigation, which is usually faced by the low-middle income consumers of legal deliverables in Nigeria and other climes. Sadly, the paralegals are erroneously viewed or perceived by qualified lawyers as persons needlessly coming to struggle the legal space and law practice with them, with the likelihood and suspicion of creating cut-throat competition between the paralegals and legal practitioners. This and many other obstacles stare in the face of the paralegals.

Concerned about the need to promote and protect the interests and societal obligations of the law profession and its professionals the Nigerian Bar Association's (NBS's) National Executive Council (NEC)¹⁰ headed by Olumide Akpata (NBA President 2020-2022) and Yakubu C. Maikyau (SAN) (NBA President from August 2022 for a term of two years only) have initiated and adopted some novel reforms in the legal profession. The objects of the said reforms are for the promotion and protection of the legal profession and also enhance the

⁹ Edokwe, B (2022) NBA Announces constitution of Committee- Barristerng.com/full-list-nba-ar. Retrieved on 17th Sept. 2022

¹⁰ Ukiri, C. E. (2022) NBA Remuneration Committee Report and Recommendations for improvement of the poor remuneration of legal practitioners in Nigeria, the barandbenchnews.com.ng. Retrieved on 17 Sept. 2022.

welfare and wellbeing of legal practitioners. Also, the envisaged reforms are meant to enthrone better and efficient legal deliverables to clients of legal practitioners as follows;

i. *Reform on Law Firm and Institutional Mentorship.*

This reform seeks to create and institutionalize mentorship programme for NBA members of 1-7 years post call. The mentorship programmes for this class of lawyers are, expectedly, aimed at correcting certain observable ethical and/or professional shortcomings, with a view to preserving the long cherished good ethical standard and service-oriented Nigerian legal practice. According to the NBA's National Executive Committee (NEC), the mentorship programmes would use selected law firms as mentors for a given period. The interns would be exposed to practical and vocational legal trainings. The interns would also be paid sum remuneration during the period of their internship. It is in this direction that this particular reform is timely and inevitable.

ii. *The Reform on Employment Creation for Lawyers.*

Again worried about the relatively increasing number of lawyers in the country in the face of high rate of quackery in the law profession and the increasing loss of confidence in the justice system as well as the palpable fallen standard in legal practice, the NEC of NBA observed with dismay the abysmal decline in briefs and general law clientele with the consequence that the existing law firms in Nigeria constantly face drastic reduction in their earnings. To reverse the ugly trend, the NEC of NBA embarked on creation of Employment Bureau with a view to interfacing with government and private organizations so as to secure job placements for lawyers. This reform is coming on the heels of the existing policy and regulations, whereby only lawyers are to be employed to serve as customary court or district court chairmen in Lagos and Akwa Ibom States respectively. Other members of such courts who are made up of laymen should be replaced with the paralegals for quick dispensation of justice. The benefits derivable from the inclusion of paralegals in any of these two courts, as the case may be, cannot be overstressed.

iii. *Reform of Remuneration for Legal Practitioners.*

The NBA's NEC observes further that the remuneration payable to the legal practitioners for the services they usually render to their clients lacks clear and a measurable template. This implies that every legal practitioner is at liberty to fix and accept any fee(s) subject to such fee(s) being "reasonable" and payable by the clients. Lawyers, both new wigs and senior lawyers in no particular order, are known to charge any fee, that is, professional fee and/or other charges. The amount is based on what is determined by the lawyers to mean reasonable fee(s) as contemplated by the Rules of Professional Conduct for Legal Practitioners. Unlike other professionals who have fixed and clear templates for the fees chargeable for the services such professionals render to their clients, the lawyers on the contrary do not have a straight line and unambiguous template for charging of fee(s). This uncharitable situation in law practice, arguably, tends to bring the standing of the legal profession, the fees and the envisioned good financial freedom for the legal practitioners to rock bottom level.

For clarity and completeness, a cursory look at the extant provision of the NBA's rules of professional conduct for legal practitioners¹¹ are hereby summarized as follows;

The professional fee charged by a lawyer for his services shall be reasonable and commensurate with the service rendered. Accordingly, the lawyer shall not charge fees which are excessive

¹¹ Supra Note 5

or so low as to amount to understanding, provided that a reduced fee or no fee at all may be charged on the ground of the special relationship or indigence of a client. In determining the amount of the fee, a lawyer may take into account all or any of the following considerations in ascertaining the value of the service rendered -

- (a) *The time and labour required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved and the skill required to conduct the cause properly;*
- (b) *Whether the acceptance of employment in the particular case will preclude the lawyer's appearance for others in cases likely to arise out of the transaction and in which there is a reasonable expectation that otherwise he would be employed;*
- (c) *Whether the acceptance of the employment will involve the loss of other employment while employed in the particular case of antagonism, with other clients;*
- (d) *The customary charges of the Bar for similar services provided that in determining the customary charges of the Bar, the lawyer may consider a schedule of minimum fees, if any, adopted by the Bar Association but he is not bound to follow it strictly or alone,*
- (e) *The amount involved in controversy and the benefits resulting client from the services*
- (f) *The contingency or the certainty of the compensation and*
- (g) *The character of the employment, whether casual or for an established or constant client.*

From a community reading and consideration of the above cited provisions, it is unarguable and discernible that any lawyer is entitled to charge any fees based strictly on the concept of free market economy, with or without a clear command or NBA's intervention. For all intents and purposes, the NBA cannot but intervene so as to fix the amount of professional fees to be charged by lawyers which may be reflective of the template of fees of other professionals. However, the adoption of such fee templates like other professions, efforts should be made to balance the interests between the lawyers and their clients, without impairing the cardinal need of promoting access to justice. Indeed, this can only be achieved through the amendment of the extant provisions of the Rules and Act of legal practitioners. In doing so, there is a need to look up the templates of other professions in fees determination in Nigeria. In addition, the NBA branches across the states should have a role to play in the enforcement of the professional fees' regulations. The courts and other relevant bodies, such as the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), must be carried along to further give impetus to the reform and its enforcement. As a corollary, the employment and deployment of paralegals at the levels of the law firms and courts, would go a long way to make for ease of enforcement of the fees as such paralegals would assist the lawyers in the ascertainment of the fees and the filling of documents with other regulatory bodies.

Job Tips for Paralegals in Nigeria

The legal profession in Nigeria has begun introspection and self-reflection in several ways that the legal professionals are now perceived rightly as "learned". For example, in modern legal education and/or law practice; persons who seek to undergo a programme of studies in law or who engage in legal research are required to adopt other referencing styles in other disciplines in the threshold of interdisciplinary relationship. Hitherto, legal research was traditionally dependent on the use of doctrinal research method, which hinges on reference drawn heavily from case law and statutory law-as primary source of data collection only. The doctrinal research method and its usual legal extrapolation and findings, have been subject of series of doubts and critiques by members of other professions. In recent times, this has led some

universities to have approved mandatory application of both doctrinal and social sciences referencing styles in legal writings and in academic research in Nigeria.

Moreover, concerned that the legal system in Nigeria has gradually opened up its traditional monarchical legal space, it is believed that the time has come for the legal practice to holistically subject itself to liberalization, so as to adapt and adopt the prevailing international best practices occasioned by the introduction of the concept of paralegal in Nigeria. As a consequence, it is hoped that the would-be paralegal, and/or qualified paralegal who seek to make a career out of law profession in terms of securing employment as a paralegal, has to understand or go through the rubrics of job hunting. Job hunting, therefore, is defined as the activity of trying to find a job.¹² This implies or devolves round the things that a person or paralegal is required to do as he qualifies as a paralegal, in order to enable him to secure a job. The things or activities a paralegal is expected to do during job hunt are based on his personal and interpersonal perspectives. The starting point for job hunt for the paralegals is premised on his self-development *vis-a-vis* the underlined checklist of skills:

- i. I.T Skill
- ii. Research skill
- iii. Communication skill
- iv. Neatness
- v. Community and versatility skill etc.

With the above listed skills, the paralegals, assuredly can embark on various activities in preparation for job hunting. The actual job hunting tips for the paralegals, who possess the foregoing personal skills include the under-listed items:

- a. Having well prepared CV which should reflect the above enumerated skills acquired before, during and after qualifying as a paralegal.
- b. Evidence of having cognate experience as paralegal either on a temporary or permanent engagement or in non-governmental organization's services in relation to the functions of the paralegals.
- c. Use of online Apps, such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and WhatsApp etc., for job search
- d. Form or join the paralegals Associations, where there can be exchange of information and links for job search.
- e. Collaborate with relevant national and international bodies
- f. Take up temporary job in non-governmental organizations either as paralegals or office secretaries or clerks.
- g. Contact close friends and old school mates both in public and private organizations, for job clue.
- h. Attend conferences, seminars or workshops with a view to enhancing skills and identifying job openings.

¹² 10 Things (Activities) You Can Do Today for Your Job Search – Lovecareer. <https://www.iwecareer.com/jobs>. Retrieved on 18th Sept. 2022.

- i. Attend programmes organized by churches and give talks or pieces of advice to churches, with a view to educating them about the human rights and enforcement of their members.
- j. Visits police stations and correctional centres with regard to assisting suspects in police cells and on awaiting trials in order to reach out to their relatives with a view to securing legal aid to the persons concerned. The paralegals can earn some income for rendering such services.
- k. Identify and synergies with gender based groups, the vulnerable, such as the indigent and victims of rape, child abuse, trafficking and domestic violence, with a view to rendering legal advice and opinions to such groups and persons. The paralegals can eke out a living from rendering such services.

Assertiveness Training for Paralegals

The concept of assertiveness revolves round an organized training scheme. The concept prepares persons to act boldly and exhibit self-confident. By extension, assertiveness connotes the expression of one's rights and opinions in a direct and honest manner without infringing on the rights and dignity of other members of society or a third party. Generally, assertiveness can be acquired through training. It can also, in few instances, be in-born but such natural attribute will still need to be nurtured and channeled properly within acceptable inter-personal norms.

Training in assertiveness requires practical demonstration exercise and exposure of the trainees to the rudiments of effective communication and simulation in the classroom. For the paralegals, like the lawyers, assertiveness training is key and *sine qua non* in the discharge of their interventionist education, mediation and advisory roles to the indigent, venerable group and women. For instance, the paralegals are trained on how to act in specific situations and challenges that may confront them. In such situations, the paralegals are enjoined as well as expected to demonstrate clear assertive responses and in decent ways and manners, so that they can decompose dangers and achieve their goals— without offending the dignity and rights of other persons generally. The exhibition of such attribute does not imply that the paralegals are to be seen or perceived as timid or being afraid to exercise their human rights.

The importance of assertiveness to the paralegals or anyone else cannot be overstated. For instance, it has been stated that the correct use of the tool of assertiveness by the paralegals could aid the functions of the paralegals in ways not limited to the under-listed:

- i. Can help the paralegals deal with any type and level of stress and anger.
- ii. Can assist the paralegals to update and enhance their skills tremendously.
- iii. Can enhance the capacity and equip the paralegals to become fearless and audacious in asserting their beliefs, opinions and rights.
- iv. Can assist the paralegals to speak up for the needs and wants of themselves and of others whenever such needs and wants become expedient though tendentiously and obviously undermined or shortchanged by any establishment or individual.
- v. Assertiveness deals with emotions and behaviours, hence the training in assertiveness seeks to enhance and influence positively the ability of the paralegals to control their emotions in the face of challenging and damning situations of human rights abuse or other related infringements.

The paralegals need to prepare themselves prior to their engagements and discharge of their functions especially in an interpersonal responsibilities and relationships. In this wise, the

paralegals must at all times plan ahead what their responses will be like in the light of their proposed interactions and/or interventions. Also, the paralegals should be able to rehearse how to carry out any interaction and intervention with their intended organizations or persons. For instance, if the proposed organization that the paralegals intend to interact with or intervene on behalf of their clients, then paralegals should prepare the facts sheet and the manner with which to make their presentation with a view to persuasively achieving their set objectives. The particular template to be used should be rehearsed with other paralegals or when under the supervision of qualified lawyers, such template should be discussed formally with the lawyers, in the organizations or chambers concerned.

Assertiveness May Be Divided Into certain Classes, to wit:

- a. Passive Assertion.
- b. Aggressive Assertion.
- c. Basic Assertion.
- d. Emphatic Assertion.
- e. Escalating Assertion.
- f. I-Language Assertion.

The parts of assertive statement include: to listen, to express; to specify and, the outcome. Also, an assertive sentence usually states the fact. Such a sentence should be a simple statement. Equally, such sentence should state or declare something conceptually. Assertive behavior, for example, deals with communication with others in a direct and honest manner without intentionally hurting any other person's feelings. The paralegals, therefore, can exhibit assertiveness by demonstrating capacity to voice out their opinions without remaining silent. The paralegals must learn, in this wise, not to say no in the sense that the no should be taken for an answer simply because of any apprehension or fear to hurt or to step on the toes of others.

Equally, the paralegals must ensure that they do not only rehearse what they would say well in advance, but also they should put their emotions at all times under control during their interaction or intervention activities. In all of such engagements, the paralegals should moderate their body language in order not to convey negative impressions or feelings or opinion toward others¹³.

Employment Opportunities for Paralegals in Nigeria

The Nigerian economy has continuously experienced declining and disturbing fortunes in many sectors shortly before, during and after the advent of COVID-19 Pandemic, in the year 2020. The strident reasons usually advanced by pundits for the retrogression of the Nigerian economy vary and are numerous. For example, some of the reasons usually offered for such economic doldrums include bad leadership and bad followership, hydra-headed corruption, insecurity, over-dependent on imported goods, over-dependent on crude oil sector/receipts over and above the non-oil sector, and dearth of political will with which to adapt and adopt new technologies at the required speed. The cumulative impact of the depressed Nigerian economy include abysmal loss of jobs and/or low production capacity by the existing micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMS) and indeed, the big size industries in the county. The quest for creation of new jobs is characteristic the dictum of hope against hope in this case, between the government

¹³ Assertiveness – Ole Miss Counseling Centre- <https://counseling.olemiss.edu/asse...> Retrieved on 25th Sept. 2022

and the governed. Yet, in every state in Nigeria, natural resources abound in great quantum but these resources still remain beneath the soil and/or on the surface of the land untapped by the various state governments in Nigeria. Sadly, the successive national governments in Nigeria that enjoy greater chunk of the federation allocation have failed to diversify the Nigerian economy from consumption economy to productive economy.

For instance, in the education sector in Nigeria, has not fared well as a result of a suffocated and depressed economy. The perennial declining budgetary investment in infrastructural renaissance in the public tertiary institutions, for decades, has constantly pitched the various unions in the public tertiary institutions against both the federal and state governments in wanton strike actions. The strikes usually and undoubtedly disrupt academic calendars in these various public tertiary institutions, to the extent that innocent students, mostly of the indigent parents, stay in school way beyond the approved duration of their chosen programmes of studies. As a consequence, by the time such students are turned out, they barely can use their minds and hands to become self-employed.

Again, strike action have left the public tertiary institutions continuously closed. Under this situation, the lecturers in public tertiary institutions usually find it difficult to carry-out any meaningful institutional research work as they have no access to the laboratories, which facilities are already in serious state of the decay. In the face of wanton strike actions, the public school system routinely turns out half-baked graduates that do not meet the requirements of the 21st century knowledge driven economy and indeed, the needs of the various industries players. The financial cost associated with efforts at retooling such half-baked graduates, would add up to cost of production and ultimately increase the prices of goods and services in Nigeria.

Paradoxically, the education sector takes undue blame which blame is supposed to be shared between the owners of such public tertiary institutions and the leaderships in such institutions. This is so because while the owners of the public institutions concerned pay the salaries of lecturers and should routinely provide infrastructure in these public universities, polytechnic and colleges of education, the leaderships in these institutions are expected to prudently utilize their internally generated revenues sourced from tuition fees and other sundry income heads available to these institutions. To this end, the partnership path and pack between the owners of public tertiary institutions and the leaderships of such institutions could bring about mutuality and trust towards identifying the needs of these public tertiary institutions and correspondently, efforts should be made to galvanize funds with which to address the needs assessment of these public institutions. That said, the option by academics to often seek to or leave the country for abroad in search of greener pasture would be reversed in exchange of the academics abroad applying to take up lecturing jobs in Nigeria - as it was the case in the 80s.

The legal profession and the professionals too are not isolated from the pangs vagaries and shocks arising from the depressed Nigerian economy and by extension the education system. While a legal system or law is said to be an instrument of social engineering, law cannot, however, achieve this laudable goal, if law graduates turned out year in and year out from the public universities are manifestly half-baked¹⁴. Evidently, a good number of the law graduates from some of the faculties of law upon their admission into the law school campuses usually fail their bar final examinations and/or have repeat courses to take in subsequent examination year(s). Indeed, while the Nigerian law school provides vocational training for would-be lawyers, the period of one year is arguably not adequate to retool the alleged half-baked law

¹⁴ Edokwe, B. (2022) Law Lecturers should have their Professorial Rank, Not Senior Advocates –Okutepe SAN backs Adegboruwa SAN. BarristerNG News4. Retrieved on 11th October, 2022.

graduates. Nevertheless, the NBA's NEC policy on mentorship of its members of 1-7 years post call in the legal profession would go a long way toward retooling these law graduates for optimum use.

Furthermore, law being a potent tool which is more than other tools usually deployed in policy formulation, interpretation and implementation. However, is not only to be seen or perceived as a tool in the form of case law and statutes but also the number of qualified law experts available must be in the right quantum and capacity to drive policy processes at the intergovernmental and ministerial levels. Incidentally, the number of lawyers required for quick dispensation and administration of justice is relatively below average, in Nigeria. Beside the paucity in the population of lawyers in the country high rate of quackery also bedevils the profession as well as other factors which have the combined effect of limiting access to justice and with capacity to demean the legal profession in Nigeria.

The time has come, therefore, for the uptight nature of statutory provisions in the Rules of Conduct for Legal Practitioners, to be reviewed, so as to incorporate, formally, the practice of the paralegals in the Nigerian legal space. Undoubtedly, the role of the paralegals is mainly to render assistance to qualified lawyers at the bar and bench as well as assist the indigent and vulnerable group or persons to receive legal aid either under the supervision of the legal practitioners or by themselves based on approved guidelines, as provided by the NBA. The overall essence of the introduction of the practice of paralegals is to underscore the cardinal importance of enhancing and depending access to justice.

The Federal Government of Nigeria desirous of optimizing the level of acquisition of technical and vocational training based on the demands of modern knowledge driven economy, introduced entrepreneurship scheme in the curriculum of tertiary education in Nigeria. Over the decades, the scheme has not produced the desired result to wit: to enable the students to use their minds and hands besides the theoretical trainings. The reasons for the failure of the entrepreneurship scheme are not unconnected with the inability of the owners and visitors of the public tertiary institutions to provide the needed infrastructure and consumables for ease of vocational and technical learning. Besides, the scheme is typically institutional based and not tailored toward meeting or promoting the practical content of each programme of studies in such institutions.

In recognition of those factors that militate against the entrepreneurship scheme, the National Board for Technical Education (NBTE) in conjunction with the Federal Ministry of Trade and Industries, introduced under its Technical and Vocational Education (TVE) scheme, the National Innovation Diploma (NID) which is equivalent to the traditional National Diploma (ND) in the Polytechnics and Mono-technic education across the states in Nigeria. The NID scheme is designed to provide vocation and technical training to the students on each of the TVE programmes of studies. For example, students who are admitted in Business Informatics is required to undergo actual vocational training in business and modern devices in business operations which is quite different from the traditional programme of studies in Business Administration. At the end of the training the NID graduates in Business Informatics can use their minds and hands from the day such students completed their studies in school. These students, assuredly will undoubtedly become self-employed and/or employer of labour.

It is instructive to note that NID certificates holders are entitled and qualified to proceed for further studies at the Higher National Diploma (HND) level or apply for direct entry admission into the universities. In terms of employment opportunities, the NID graduates are the right human capital for the 21st century knowledge driven economy and for today's industry players.

Employment Opportunities for Paralegals

There are different and varied writers who postulate about the employment opportunities available for the paralegals as it affects legal pluralism and its deliverables *vis-a-vis* the modern policy of liberalization of the hitherto somewhat uptight legal profession which abhors unauthorized practice of law by laymen. The majority of such writers make generalization about the job prospects of the practice of paralegals as though these professionals are created to be jack of all trades. This is a misconception or that such postulations or the averments of these writers obviously have the potentials to negate the quest to professionalize the practice of paralegals, globally.

Evidently, the concept of paralegals came into existence in several parts of the world because of the dearth of access to timely legal services for indigent, women and human rights abuse victims. Therefore, the introduction of the practice of paralegals is to deliver legal services to the unreached in the various communities more efficiently, effectively and at rock bottom costs. This write-up, however, intends to present a somewhat different and/or additional contribution to the existing body of knowledge or numerous works put out there in the Nigerian reading space on the practices of paralegals, particularly referencing employment opportunities in Nigeria.

Paralegals Law Specialties in Nigeria

A paralegal, contextually and conceptually, is trained in law and created to assist lawyers in their practice of law as well as other persons' rights, welfare and wellbeing and nothing more pretentious. It is of note that paralegals are trained primarily to assist the qualified lawyers in the discharge of legal services to their clients with a view to achieving effective and efficient legal deliverables. The assistance under consideration can be carried out in the law firms and in the court. Particularly, paralegals can be useful in the court to the extent that they not only serve as court clerks and court registrars but also can serve as research assistants to either the magistrates or judges in their chambers. Also, the services of the paralegals are tailored towards the enforcement of human rights of the diligent, gender related issues, victims of rape, child abuse, child-trafficking and rendering of general counseling to diverse associations, trusteeships as well as individuals who are in need of legal opinions on matters related to law, whether specific or general in nature. The paralegals may render their functions under the supervision of qualified legal experts for salaries or may do so on their own but within the approved guidelines enunciated by the NBA. It is worthy to stress that a paralegal who wishes to make a career out of his practice should endeavour to specialize in multiple aspects of law, so as to enable him to easily fit into any existing job opportunities.

It is crystal clear that jobs are generally scarce and within the existing job openings, such openings are usually grabbed by the political elite as political patronage¹⁵ meant for their cronies and relatives or children. This explains why the paralegals need to acquire the requisite legal training, education, knowledge and skill toward getting employment. Also, the paralegals should seek to make a career in more than one areas of law and its practices. By so doing, the paralegals would not have themselves limited in scope during job hunting.

Some law specialties are but not limited to the following:

1. Corporate law matters

¹⁵ Channels Television (20022) Nepotism Political Patronage have worsened corruption in civil service- Buhari channelstv.com. Retrieved on 21st October, 2022.

2. Family law matters
3. Estate/Land law matters
4. Probate matters
5. Immigration matters
6. Intellectual property law matters
7. Criminal law matters
8. Civil law matters
9. Arbitration, mediation and conciliation matters
10. Tax law matters
11. Human Right enforcement matters
12. Church Administration law matters
13. Conflict resolution matters
14. Secretarial duties in law offices
15. Maritime law matters

The paralegals can acquire and deepen their career in multiple of the above listed law specialties through continuous legal education, attendance at workshops, and seminars. For example, the acquisition of the National Innovation Diploma (NID)¹⁶ from a recognized institutions such as the Akwa Ibom State Polytechnic - which runs NID approved programme of studies in paralegal studies (and other approved NID programmes), by the NBTE or holders of NID certificates from other recognized institutions is a prerequisite for the practice of paralegals. Additionally, attendance at the various seminars and workshops organized by reputable non-governmental organizations will further equip the paralegals to handle matters, for instance, for suspects and persons awaiting trial both at the police stations and correctional centres. The aim or objective of such role of the paralegal practice is to identify persons who are unjustly held in the police cells and on awaiting trials, with a view to assisting them toward the enforcement of their human rights. Equally, the paralegals can form and join paralegal association which can regularly organize trainings for members with experts drawn from different areas of law and other related fields to present academic papers which will further help the paralegals to update their knowledge. To be able to achieve some of these laudable goals the paralegals can liaise with donor agencies, relevant national and international organizations, for funding

On the Job Realities for the Paralegals

Every employee desires and deserves better and good treatment. Also, a conducive place of work will engender better services and productivity. Again, there are three conditions at work environment that usually result in positive or negative realities. Job or on the job realities connote the good and the bad experiences that both the employee and the employer often time encounter or go through in the course of the employment, contrary to the three conditions which serve as the fulcrum for which on the job realities revolve are the conducive work environment, behavioral trails of the employer and employee toward the job and the remuneration being the

¹⁶ The National Innovation Diploma Programme – SQI – Real Learning Regins. <http://www.edu.sqi.ng> Retrieved on 29th Sept. 2022.

basis of a fair day's job for a fair day's pay. The interplay of those three conditions determines job satisfaction and/or labour turn-over in any organization. Therefore, a paralegal who is sufficiently trained and possesses the right qualification, experience and measurable practical skills in multiple areas of law is an asset rather than a liability to his employer, whether in a law firm or in court or other law related duty posts. In an interpersonal relationship, it is inevitable to have or experience conflict of interest or differences in character and behavioural traits, which could sooner or later snowball into countless emotional, or ethical challenges, to both the employee and employer.

If the aforesaid challenges are not identified early enough and discussed at the instance of either the paralegal or his boss, may lead to frustration on the job and possible exit of the paralegal from his present employment. The cost of replacement of such paralegal will usually impact, negatively, the efficient and effective service delivery of any organization. More-so, lack of conducive work environment usually inhibits the capacity of the paralegal to carry out his functions. For instance, dearth of adequate law materials, IT facilities, and office vehicle(s), with which to aid the performance the paralegals at work usually impair the capacity of the paralegal to put in his best in his job.

Also, the behavioral trait of the boss is key towards effective job performance by the paralegal. For instance, the willingness of the boss to take his employees like the paralegal, into confidence, entrusting him with responsibility based on defined timeline rather than tendentiously seek to overcrowd oneself with all the responsibilities and thereby makes avoidable blunders. It has been noted that sometimes such behavioral trait stems from low self-esteem on the part of the employer. It may also arise from mere doubt and suspicion of lack of experience and dexterity on the part of the employee or the paralegal as the case may be. The result of such frosty relationship at work may constitute a challenge to the paralegal and impact on his performance towards achieving the corporate interest of his organization. Curiously, knowledge or learning is said to be a two-way traffic whereby in an organization the employer could learn from his employee *vis-a-vis*. However, sometimes, in the majority of organizations, the reverse is usually the case. This regrettably could ultimately lead to frustration on the job by the employee or the paralegal.

This situation was aptly revealed in the assertion of retired Honorable Justice Olusola A. Williams, that there exists in the legal system in Nigeria observable knowledge gap between lawyers and their clients which could be filled by the practice of the paralegals. Mrs. Williams further stated that there also exists a gap between the bench, lawyers, and the public which the practice of the paralegals could bridge. She further pointed out that lack of proper professional training of the existing laymen as employees in the law firms and the courts has denied such workers of dignity on the job which the practice of the paralegals could stamp out such perception - because the paralegals are well trained in law and practice with certificate thereto.¹⁷

Another on the job reality for the paralegals is a poor and ridiculous remuneration. A good salary should be one which is paid as and when due. When salaries are not regularly paid, such salaries are deemed to be poor and ridiculous salaries. To a large extent, many organizations even when they are well in their overall operations still find it difficult to pay their employees living wages or salaries. Ironically, a dissatisfied employee usually puts up extreme nonchalant attitude towards his duties generally. For example, an experienced but dissatisfied paralegal

¹⁷ Ramon, O. (2022) Training of Paralegals' II enhance justice administration – Williams <https://punchng.com-training-of-p....> retrieved on 23rd October, 2022.

may divert, clandestinely, briefs and other instruments preparation to offshore firms for secret payments. In other situations, a displeased paralegal may choose to leave the job for another employment or may proceed on further studies, in order to ultimately qualify as a legal practitioner. The situation if not checked may lead to constant or possible disdain inimical the smooth functioning of any organization.

The totality of the conditions discussed in the foregoing paragraphs on the job realities which apply to employees generally equally apply to the paralegals. In order to reverse or ameliorate such perceptions and negative interpersonal job frictions effort should be initiated to discuss identified areas of skewed interpersonal, or financial and/or occupational challenges, with a view to resolving them for the mutual benefits of the parties concerned. In this way, for example, can grow to become and be capable of truly rendering assistance to lawyers. The lawyers too will have their hitherto excess workload lessened with attendant to reduction in occupational stress and to elongate their life spans. By extension, the lawyers can within available resources and based on mutual understanding, sponsor the paralegals in their firms to attend seminars and workshops for their career improvement and capacity development on the job. This gesture can be beneficial to lawyers in the various firms and other related organizations.

Administrative Advocacy and the Paralegals

As the name implies, administrative advocacy resolves round protestation and lobbying by a group of persons or an individual for the sole purpose of influencing policy making or against inimical or antithesis policy making and/or enforcement.¹⁸ The administrative bodies are usually the Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs) and other public and private institutions or establishments of government at the Federal, state and Local levels. Equally, the citizens and the residents may protest and or lobby the law makers to make or not to make certain Act, Law or Bye-Law and or regulations. Also, the NGOs may protest or lobby policy or law making processes which they consider to be useful or inimical to the people. The power to do so is constitutionally guaranteed. Under the social contract theory, the elected or appointed persons remain in office to service the interest of the citizens and the people's rights to protest or lobby for better policies or law making is not circumscribed.

However, often-time than not, the leaders and indeed, the MDAs of government usually take certain actions which derogate from the rights of the governed. In the majority of such situations, illiteracy and lack of awareness on the part of the people of their rights, the violation thrives and remain unchallenged. Again, some leaders and those who head the MDAs often-time than not, do violate the rights of their employees, knowing full well that the employees do not possess the financial capacity to seek redress through the courts such as the National Industrial Court of Nigeria (NICN) or utilize the services of ombudsman through the instrumentality of the Public Complaints Commission pursuant to Public Complaints Act, which states in its long title as follows: *An Act to establish the Public Complaints Commission with wide powers to inquire into complaints by members of the public concerning the administrative action of any authority and companies or their officials and other matters ancillary thereto.*

The above provision of the said Act is clear and unambiguous and same is not self-invoking. This means that the provision of the Act can only be enforced whenever the people's rights are infringed upon. The ombudsman in the public complaints commission is usually not trained in

¹⁸ <http://www/maychclinic.org>>assertive Retrieved on 24 Sept. 2022

law and law enforcement. In some instances, serving or retired law enforcement officials are usually employed to serve as ombudsman. However, the paralegals who is employed as ombudsman, could do well in investigating complaints made and laying his findings before the law enforcement agencies or any law firm or relevant human rights bodies or the public complaints commission or any administrative agency at the instance of a worker or employee in public or private organization.

The paralegals, therefore, are to brace up and speak up for the indigent workers and persons in the society against any administrative action that is inimical to such persons' rights. The training of the paralegals in assertiveness, concept and principles places or equips the paralegals with requisite capacity to carry out investigation into any breach of human rights by any person or authority, without fear or favour, and without intent to infringe upon the rights of others to exercise their own inalienable rights. In modern society, the role of the paralegals in the control of negative administrative actions is further strengthened by the very low population of qualified legal experts, when compared to the present population of Nigerian citizens in need of legal services *vis-à-vis* citizens of other climes who usually have the benefit of the services of both qualified lawyers and the paralegals.

CONCLUSION

The question of law, its practice and historical foundation is founded in selfless service, assertiveness, sacrifice, dexterity and mental alertness. Lawyers by training like medical doctors, ethically elect to shoulder other persons' legal challenges either for payment of professional fee (adequate or inadequate) or do so on pro-bono basis. In this case, champerty becomes unethical in all material particulars.

The law practice comes with a lot of hazards, spiritual and physical. The spiritual side of it is, arguably, more pronounced in Africa. And the physical hazards in terms of high rate of occupational stress is experienced across all jurisdictions but with declining level in developed countries as well as some other developing countries in Africa whereby such countries have liberalized their legal framework so as to admit of the practice of paralegals. The benefits derivable from such innovation has not only lessened the mental and physical hazards associated with law practice on the qualified lawyers with optimum performance and better service delivery to their clients but the introduction of the practice of paralegals in the legal system has also created ease of doing and rendering real time legal services with attendant ample access to justice for the indigent and the vulnerable groups such as rape, domestic violence against women and child rights abuse victims etc., respectively.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. The NEC of NBA should immediately initiate a bill to amend the extant provisions of the Legal Practitioners Rules of Professional Conducts and its regulations, to admit of the practice of paralegals.
- ii. The various state governments in Nigeria should make it possible in law that only the paralegals are appointed into the various customary and area courts as members while qualified lawyers are made Chairmen of such courts.
- iii. The practice of paralegals should be recognized and certificated under the relevant law and regulations in Nigeria.

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