

CLINICAL LEGAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INTEREST LAWYERING IN NIGERIA: THE LAW TEACHERS' ROLES IN PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Public Interest Lawyering simply refers to using the instrumentality of the law to effect social change for the interest and benefit of the general public. In Nigeria, the first generation of public interest activists and human rights advocates were mainly lawyers who had the courage to say no to the injustices and right abuses of the then military governments. Although, the lawyers presented a formidable force against the military and effectively used the instrumentality of the law to obtain justice, they were not particularly trained as public interest lawyers and that component was missing in our legal education curriculum. The objective of this paper therefore is to examine the evolution of the concept and practice of Public Interest Lawyering (PIL) and the role of law teachers in influencing and shaping young law students to imbibe the culture and practice of public interest lawyering. Doctrinal method was employed to analyze the available literature on the subject while analytical method was employed to particularly highlight the role of both teachers and

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students and how student-teacher interaction culminates to the forming of an ideal public interest lawyer. The major finding of the paper was that teachers have a unique role in shaping student's perception of the obligation of providing pro bono services to indigent inmates among others.

Keywords: Public, Lawyering, Pro bono, Clinical, Justice, Legal, Education, Nigeria

1.0 Introduction

In Nigeria, the quest to become a lawyer is most often predicated on economic considerations by the prospective student and sometimes by his family. It is commonly considered a strategic protective move to have at least one member of a family to become a lawyer. The general perception is that having a lawyer in a family makes the family strong and safe from being intimidated by others. Public interest lawyering is a concept that promotes access to justice. It has evolved over the years and since the last century, lawyers have sought to deploy their legal skills to advance the interest of certain types of individual clients or groups. It utilizes both legal representation and other non-legal activities to bring about social change in the society. Public interest lawyering has become an integral part of Nigeria's legal system and its development and institutionalization has continued to thrive. One of the notable milestones in this regard was the introduction of Clinical Legal Education (CLE) and the promotion of new curriculum that emphasizes practical learning as opposed to theoretical lecture method.¹ In the new curriculum, students are expected to handle cases and imbibe the *pro bono* culture that is expected of a

¹Ernest Ojukwu et al 'Clinical Legal Education, Curriculum, Lessons and Materials' See https://www.academia.edu/40131601/CLINICAL_LEGAL_EDUCATION_CURRICULUM_LESSONS_AND_MATERIALS accessed on the 20th September, 2023

public interest lawyer. The goal of CLE is to expose the students to become ethically conscious and socially responsible.

This paper will therefore examine the concept of Public Interest Lawyering and how the CLE pedagogy can be used to advance the PIL practice in Nigeria focusing particularly on the role of teachers.

2.0 The Concept Public Interest Lawyering

Public interest lawyering is a process of legal empowerment aimed at building the capacity of people towards using the law and institutions to bring about social change². The community (or client) takes the lead in an active process, while working hand in hand with lawyers. Public interest lawyering bridges the paternalistic gap that exists between the lawyer and the end users of laws within our communities, whereby the communities are disregarded in the articulation of legal issues surrounding them³, and lopsided disposition where law seems to favour only those who have economic power to activate it.

Public interest lawyering cuts across all aspects of human endeavor. It is concerned with the preservation of human rights, social justice and advocacy for social change, and legal aid for indigent citizens and the under represented, including pretrial detainees⁴. It has a role in making good on the legal profession's promise of equal justice for all under the law⁵.

Public interest lawyering entails service to the society. It is to lawyers what social responsibility is to corporate organizations, as both concepts emphasizes on giving back to the society at little or no cost. Public

² Public Interest Lawyering and Clinical Legal Education. <https://pcdnetwork.org/blogs/public-interest-lawyering-and-clinical-legal-education>. last visited on September 25, 2019.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Sam Erugo, Public Interest Lawyering: Theory and Practice. Lexskill Ltd. (2014). p 3

⁵ Ibid

interest law encompasses a broad range of advocacy techniques across various practice sites, undertaken by different types of lawyers with distinct goals⁶. It aims to achieve social justice for public good, however, determining what amounts to public good is rational⁷. More so, the strategies and methods utilized in pursuing public interest issues are still contentious, nonetheless, any method or strategy which involves advocacy, pro bono litigations, street lawyering, legal aid, etc, will pass as public interest lawyering.

Public interest lawyers are not meddlesome interlopers or 'busy bodies' as they had been tagged by some judges. Ultimately, in contrast with economic gains for the lawyers, public interest lawyering is more concerned in championing and achieving social justice, equity and fairness. Thus, it is a concept being driven only by passion.

It has been established that public interest law organizations further democratic values, as public interest litigation is a form of political participation for marginalized groups. Public interest organizations provide a check on government excesses, capture, and overreaching⁸. In addition, public interest law organizations use legal strategies to put important but neglected issues on the public agenda⁹. They also help prevent majority oppression of disfavored and disadvantaged groups, such as welfare recipients, people living with disability, and religious and ethnic minorities¹⁰.

⁶ Allan K. Chen, Scott L. Cummings. *Defining Public Interest Lawyering*. 2012. P 2-3.

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Deborah L. Rhode, *Public Interest Law: The Movement at Midlife*, 60 *STAN. L. REV.* 2027, 2046-48 (2008). P11

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Scott L. Cunnings. *The Future of Public Interest Law*. University of California, Los Angeles. 2011. Accessed at: <<http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228190070>,> Accessed September 26, 2019.

Public interest lawyering is characterized by certain unique features that distinguishes it from conventional lawyering methods. It is *pro bono publico*, that is, it advances the public's interest, as well as (or perhaps instead of) the client's private interests. It is also primarily concerned with providing access to justice to mostly indigent, vulnerable and underrepresented citizens of the society. One way of distinguishing public interest lawyers from the rest of the bar is by the factors they consider in selecting clients and cases. The lawyer who selects clients principally on the basis of whether representation would involve working on socially desirable cases is no doubt a public interest lawyer. Public interest lawyering is generally not for personal economic gains. It entails service to the society and therefore does not aim to be economically rewarding. Public interest lawyering generally adopts a win-win approach in most of its activities. Thus, it utilizes both litigation, alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, advocacy, awareness creation, social actions, etc, to achieve its aims.

3.0 Historical Evolution Public Interest Lawyering

Public interest lawyering is a legal concept that is believed to have developed in the United States of America. It may be difficult to date its origin, as it first started with series of social activities aimed at providing inclusion for the poor and vulnerable members of the society. For instance, after the American Civil War, the government funded the Freedman's Bureau to represent indigent blacks in litigation¹¹. The first organized legal aid movement did not develop until about 1876, when New York formed an assistance programme for German immigrants¹². It is also on record that as at early 1960s, Ford Foundation provided grants

¹¹ Kimberly McKelvey. Public Interest Lawyering in the United States and Montana: Past, Present and Future, 67 Montana law Rev. (2006). Pg.4

¹² Ibid

for support for law-based programmes in the United States, with a primary focus on legal services for the poor and under represented¹³.

However, public interest lawyering as it is known today, developed out of the lawyering styles of activists and lawyers who were influenced by the works of Loius Brandeis. Brandeis is an American lawyer who devoted most of his time and skills in pursuit of public good. He eventually rose through the ranks to become a Justice of the Supreme Court in the United States. He and other progressive era lawyers had encouraged other lawyers to think of themselves as advocates for the public good and advocates for their clients¹⁴.

Brandeis' preferred the use of advocacy, even though he was not against the adversarial system¹⁵. His defense for the advocacy system were that advocacy ensures that all sides are equally represented which informed his pro bono inclination; and that through advocacy, powerful clients may be counseled to act justly, as he believed that it was possible to counsel the more powerful parties in legal matters to take the interest of other parties into consideration as they make decisions about representation¹⁶. It was based on this principle that he refused to take up briefs on moral grounds¹⁷. Also, he believed that advocacy provides an easy platform to seek a fair solution for all problems¹⁸. Brandeis applied the virtue of practical wisdom, seeking a fair solution to all problems. He ensured that all the people who might be affected in a case are fairly considered with

¹³ Helen Hershkoff and David Hollander, *Rights into Action: Public Interest Litigation in the United States*. Published in *Many Roads to Justice: The Law-Related Work of Ford Grantees Around the World*. (2000).

¹⁴ Tolulope Anthony Adekola, *Public Interest Litigation In Nigeria - A Veritable Tool For Good Governance*. Landmark University, Omu-Arankwara State. (2010).

¹⁵ Sam Erugo, *Op cit*. Page 3

¹⁶ Sam Erugo, *Op cit*

¹⁷ *Ibid*

¹⁸ *Ibid*

his attention to details and creativity. These factors enabled him come up with a solution that worked to the benefit of all concerned¹⁹.

Brandeis volunteered most of his time as a lawyer for groups that were unable to afford legal representation, thus, earning him the title, “the peoples’ lawyer”. He testified before legislative committees, gave speeches to public interest organizations, wrote briefs on behalf of the public interest, etc²⁰.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, many of the newly graduates of American Law School began to seek relevance in their work, with a desire to affect the social issues visible and keenly debated within the American society at that period²¹. They defined themselves as public interest lawyers in order to clearly distinguish themselves from the other conventional lawyers²².

Presently, public interest lawyering has developed into an institution of its own in the United States²³. It is important to note that many factors contributed to its growth and development up to its present status in the United States. Some of these factors include the strength of the American legal system and institutions based on the constitution – the rule of law, the independence and courageousness of the judiciary, the doctrine of judicial precedent and stare decisis, the international movement towards democracy,²⁴ etc.

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Allan K. Chen, Scott L. Cummings. *Defining Public Interest Lawyering*. 2012. P 4.

²² Allan and Scott, Op cit

²³ Scott L. Cunnings. *The Future of Public Interest Law*. University of California, Los Angeles. 2011. Accessed at: <http://www.reseachgate.net/publication/228190070>, on September 26, 2023.

²⁴ Ibid

In India, public interest lawyering was championed by the judges. This was unlike what was obtained in America, where lawyers like Brandeis were the brain behind the success of public interest lawyering. The former Chief Justice of India, P.N. Bhagwati once stated that *“public interest law in India is primarily judge-led and even to some extent, judge-induced, the product of juristic and judicial activism on our Supreme Court”*²⁵.

The reason behind this is not far-fetched. Upon independence in 1947 from British rule, India adopted a constitution that aimed to secure to all its citizens justice, liberty and equality²⁶. These aims were not merely aspirational as their founding fathers wanted to achieve a social revolution through the constitution²⁷. The main tools employed to achieve such social change were the provisions on fundamental rights and the directive principles of state policy, which has been described as the conscience of the constitution²⁸. In order to achieve this aim, various provisions were made in the constitution to establish and guarantee the independence of the judiciary. Thus, it can conveniently be said that the provisions of the constitution relating to fundamental rights and directive principles as well as an independent judiciary together provided a firm foundation to the evolution of public interest lawyering in India²⁹.

With this foundation in place, two judges of the Indian Supreme Court (Bhagwati and Iyer J.J.)³⁰ prepared the groundwork for the birth of public

²⁵ “Judicial Activism and Public Interest Litigation”, 23 Column J.Trans Nat’l L. 561 (1984-1985). Being an address he delivered on 3rd October 1984 at the Columbia University School of Law.

²⁶ Constitution of India 1950 Preamble

²⁷ Granville Austin, *The Indian Constitution: Cornerstone of a Nation* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1966). p 27.

²⁸ Surya Deva, *Public Interest Litigation in India: A Critical Review*. Reprinted from *Civil Justice Quarterly* Issue 1, 2009.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ These two judges headed various committees on legal aid and access of justice during 1970s, which provided a backdrop to their involvement in the PIL project. See Jeremy

interest lawyering in India, from mid 1970s to early 1980s. Part of their actions included modifying the traditional requirements of locus standi, liberalizing the procedure to file writ petitions, creating or expanding fundamental rights, overcoming evidentiary problems, and evolving innovative remedies³¹.

The review of the requirement of locus standi was sine qua non for the take-off of public interest lawyering. The Supreme Court of India³² held that:

*Where a legal wrong or a legal injury is caused to a person or to a determinate class of persons by reason of violation of any constitutional or legal right..., and such person or determinate class of persons is by reasons of poverty, helplessness, or disability or socially or economically disadvantaged position, unable to approach the court for any relief, any member of the public can maintain an application for an appropriate direction, order or writ.*³³

Cooper, "Poverty and Constitutional Justice: The Indian Experience" (1993) 44 *Mercer Law Review* 611, 614-615.

³¹ See Cooper, "Poverty and Constitutional Justice" (1993) 44 *Mercer Law Review* 611, 616-632; See Shah, "Illuminating the Possible in the Developing World" (1999) 32 *Vanderbilt Journal of Transnational Law* 435, 467-473; Vijayashri Sripathi, "Human Rights in India Fifty Years after Independence" (1997) *Denver Journal of International Law and Policy* 93, 118-125.

³² *Gupta v Union of India* (1981) Supp S.C.C. 87, 210. See also *PUDR v Union of India* AIR 1982 SC

1473; *Bandhua Mukti Morcha v Union of India* (1984) 3 S.C.C. 161.

³³ *Gupta v Union of India* (1981) Supra

The justification of such extension of standing was in order to enforce rule of law and provide justice to disadvantaged sections of the society³⁴.

Public interest lawyering in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia and other advanced countries has sufficiently developed, but not quite as impressive and incisive as those of the United States and India.

4.0 Public Interest Lawyering in Nigeria

The concept of public interest lawyering can be said to have been birthed in Nigeria as far back as 1960s, although there were no formal documentations then on the activities of public interest lawyering as it is today. This is evidenced by the assertion of the then Chief Justice of Nigeria, Sir Adetokunbo Ademola, in 1961, during the African Conference on the Rule of Law held in Lagos, where he pointed out the hollowness of a constitutional right to a fair hearing, if the financial aspect of access was ignored. That statement was the first official public acknowledgement of the need and desirability for legal aid in Nigeria³⁵, because providing legal aid to the poor and indigent citizens is a form of public interest lawyering.

This led to a Bill prepared by the then Attorney-General, Dr Teslim O. Elias, entitled Legal Aid and Advice Act 1961 for Parliament, in order to formally establish legal aid in Nigeria. The Bill sought to make provision for the establishment and operation of a scheme for the granting in proper cases, legal aid and legal advice, to people with low income, who could not otherwise afford to procure them for the enforcement or vindication of a legitimate right or for obtaining a just relief. Unfortunately, due to the Nigerian Civil War, the Bill did not see the light of day.

Desirous to providing legal aid for the poor, some Nigerian lawyers came together to form the Nigerian Legal Aid Association. These legal

³⁴ Surya Deva, Public Interest Litigation in India: A Critical Review. Reprinted from Civil Justice Quarterly Issue 1, 2009. P.24

³⁵ Chimezie Ikeazor, Legal Aid For the Poor in Nigeria, 2003, p 85

luminaries took it upon themselves to champion the cause of providing legal aid for poor Nigerians. The Association was inaugurated in February, 1974, and one week after the inauguration, a branch was launched in States like Lagos, Enugu, Plateau, Oyo and Cross River States³⁶. The efforts of the association later culminated in the promulgation of the Legal Aid Decree or Legal Aid Act No. 56 of 1976. This Act formally introduced the legal aid scheme into law and it eventually was incorporated into the 1979 Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The Legal Aid Act was promulgated by the then Head of the Federal Military Government, General Olusegun Obasanjo on 10th November 1976.

Public interest lawyering, however, gained momentum in the 1980s, when Nigeria was under the siege of military dictatorship which was characterized by abuse of power and disregard for the constitution and rule of law. Human rights abuses were high at this period, prompting human rights activists and public interest spirited individuals to unite and devise various means to fight the identified common enemy of the people – the military. This, they achieved through the formation of civil society groups, and they engaged in collective and individual public interest litigations, street protests, media campaigns, etc. During this period, the activities of organizations like Civil Liberties Organization (CLO), Constitutional Rights' Project (CRP), and Committee for the Defence of Human Rights (CDHR) among others were felt³⁷.

Also, the actions of individual activists like Gani Fawehinmi, Olisa Agbakoba, Clement Nwankwo, Femi Falana and several others, against the social and political order of the time, became noticeable. As a reaction from the powers that be, most of these lawyers were incarcerated in various detention facilities at that time. However, the indispensable

³⁶ Ikeazor, Op. cit. at p49

³⁷ Sam Erugo, Op cit. P.10

contributions of Chief Gani Fawehinmi remains a reference point as far as public interest law development in Nigeria is discussed.

Today, having practiced democracy for twenty (20) years, the longest since independence, public interest lawyering cannot only be said to have come to stay in Nigeria, but has led a good foundation to flourish. This is because public interest lawyering thrives more under constitutional democracy and the rule of law.

5.0 Institutionalization of Public Interest Lawyering through the Clinical Legal Education

The introduction of clinical legal education by Network of Universities Legal Aid Institutions³⁸ in the teaching of Law in Nigeria and the establishment of Law Clinics in Law Faculties is no doubt a major boost in the development of public interest lawyering in Nigeria.

Clinical Legal Education (CLE) encompasses all forms of learning which are focused on getting students to understand how the law works in real world. It is an experiential problem-solving-based model, in which students actively involve themselves in either real client/personal interaction or simulation lessons set up to mirror real client/personal scenarios. Clinical legal education is:

“a multi-disciplined, multipurpose education which can develop the human resources and idealism needed to strengthen the legal system..., a lawyer, a product of such education would be able to contribute to national development and social change in a much more constructive manner”³⁹.

³⁸ Network of Universities Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI), is a non governmental, non political organization championing the development of Clinical Legal Education in Nigeria.

³⁹ Kuljit Kaur, “Legal Education and Social Transformation” [available at: <http://alsonline.amity.edu/Docs/alwjlegkk.pdf>] [viewed on: 25/09/2019].

Furthermore, CLE is

*“a learning environment where students identify, research and apply knowledge in a setting which replicates, at least in part, the world where it is practiced. It almost inevitably means that the student takes on some aspect of a case and conducts this as it would be conducted in the real world”*⁴⁰.
*A law clinic is a ‘...combination of practical legal education and legal aid’*⁴¹.

CLE can thus be seen as the bridge between theoretical study of law and actual professional legal practice providing law students with an opportunity to put into active use what they have learnt whilst the learning process was going on. By so doing, the learning process is enhanced and enriched by practical experience and students also come to appreciate the deeper value of social justice.

Clinical Legal Education affords students the opportunity to gain an intensive legal education by providing free access to justice for the poor, the vulnerable and the underrepresented people in the society, thus, providing the student a platform for skills-based, hands-on legal training, and exposing the students to practicing in the interest of the public.

Prior to the advent of Clinical Legal Education in Nigeria, legal education was primarily based on mere legal theories and principles. The pedagogy of legal education then was rigid and confined students to theoretical perspectives without any form of exposure to develop their skills such as

⁴⁰ Richard Lewis, “Clinical Legal Education Revisited” Professor of Law, Cardiff University, Wales, United Kingdom, Pg. 5, [available at: <http://www.law.cf.ac.uk/research/pubs/repository/21>] [viewed on: 29/09/2019].

⁴¹ Emil Winkler, *Clinical Legal Education: A Report on the Concept of Law Clinics*, 2013, http://law.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1500/1500268_law-clinic-rapport.pdf (last visited 30/09/19).

research skills, communication skills, advocacy skills, writing skills and several other skills that could prepare the student for actual legal practice⁴². Law schools traditionally taught the theory of law, leaving the job of legal training and practice to the bar in the form of apprenticeships. The inception of clinical legal training into the Nigeria legal education system dates back to the participation of some scholars at the first All-Africa Clinical Legal Education Colloquium in Durban, South Africa, in June 2003. By October of that same year, NULAI was established and four pilot law clinics were subsequently established in Nigeria⁴³.

While the conventional method of teaching in Nigerian universities reflects the lecturer as the umpire, the approach in clinical legal education is a complete departure from this approach. Methods of instruction and guidance to students in clinics differ across the world, but there is a common approach which is the collaboration between the staff clinician (lecturer), and the student clinicians. Which ever method is adopted, the stages of learning from experience must be followed: experience, reflection, theory and application⁴⁴.

Some law clinics are established as specialized mini law offices with all the attributes of a law office and specific areas of expertise such that there is a clear indication on the area of law that such clinics will provide services on. These clinics have professionals (lecturers) who oversee the services provided by students and ensure adherence to ethical codes and standards. The use of guest lecturers is also another means of enhancing

⁴² Nulai Nigeria, *The Development of Clinical Legal Education*, Nulai Nigeria, 2015, <http://www.nulai.org/index.php/blog/83-cle> Accessed 11 October 2023.

⁴³ Olanike S. Adelokun-Odewale, Role of Clinical Legal Education in Social Justice in Nigeria. *Asian Journal of Legal Education* 5(1) 88–98. 2017 The West Bengal National University of Juridical Sciences. SAGE Publications

⁴⁴ Roy Stuckey, Can We Assess What We Purport to Teach in Clinical Law Courses? 9 *Int. J. Clin. Legal Educ.* 14, (2006)

students' learning, because it offers opportunities to hear directly from key players on the field of practice. They students ask relevant questions and get clarifications on grey areas of legal practice.

The objectives of clinical legal education, therefore, are to ensure that students get experiential exposure to diverse situations, to ensure that the objectives of social justice are met by aiding those who faced real legal problems in diverse fields, and to imbibe the culture of public interest lawyering. Clinical Legal Education as introduced in some Law Faculties has set the pace for the institutionalization of public interest lawyering, such that law students who are trained through this process, will no doubt become public interest lawyers when they are called to the Nigerian bar.

6.0 The Role of Law Teachers in Producing New Generation of Public Interest Lawyers.

Pedagogy in its simplest meaning is the method and practice of teaching and learning, especially as an academic subject or theoretical concept. It broadly refers to the theory and practice of learning, and how this process influences, and is influenced by the social, political and psychological development of learners. The Clinical Legal Education pedagogy is developed by NULAI for University Law Clinics in Nigeria. This is imperative because the Clinical Legal Education is a hands-on, skills-based form of learning, which is in contrast with the conventional theoretical method of teaching law.

The first curriculum for Clinical Legal Education in Nigeria was developed by NULAI in 2006. At a curriculum development workshop, it organized, about ten Law Faculties approved a clinical legal curriculum for Nigerian Universities' Law Faculties and Law Clinics⁴⁵. The universities adopted the curriculum and mainstreamed it into their law

⁴⁵ *Clinical Legal Education Curriculum for Nigerian Universities' Law Faculties/Clinics*, NULAI Nigeria, October 2006; See www.Nulai.org

programmes. Presently, about 25 Law Faculties and Nigeria Law Schools have adopted the Clinical Legal Education curriculum.

Clinical Legal Education curriculum's primary aim is to train and produce public interest lawyers for the society. Thus, Ojukwu et al observed that

*“the reason for introducing clinical legal education is to train law students to become competent, community service conscious and ethical lawyers”*⁴⁶. Law clinics have been recognized as *“a veritable tool for providing legal aid to the indigent and under represented members of the society”*⁴⁷.

As noted by Erugo:

“the social justice environment exposes the students to the real fact of deprivations and limitations in the distributions of resources and the impact of such situation. During the process, students are confronted with real life situations and play the role of lawyers to solve legal problems. They do this by interacting with clients or each other to identify and resolve legal issues and are subjected to critical review by their teachers or peers”.⁴⁸

The critical role of the law teacher is supervising the students' practical work including the various access to justice cases they are handling.

⁴⁶ Ernest Ojukwu, Sam Erugo and Charles Adekoya. Clinical Legal Education: Curriculum Lessons and Materials. Network of University Legal Aid Institutions (NULAI, Nigeria) 2013. p.3

⁴⁷ Erugo, S. (2014), Public Interest Lawyering: Theory and Practice, Lagos, Lexskill Ltd, Pg 65

⁴⁸ Ibid, p 67.

Student-clinicians play important roles in the administration of justice.⁴⁹ They engage in pretrial detention projects to assist pretrial detainees who have been detained without trial, their rights being denied or trampled upon despite being recognized by extant laws. The pretrial detainee law clinics project and effect way of many the students to appreciate the social value of helping indigent inmates regain freedom and access to justice as envisaged by the proponents of the CLE movement.⁵⁰ Under the said projects, law clinicians visited correctional facilities and interviewed and counseled pretrial detainees, facilitated application and perfection of their bail, paid advocacy visits to the Chief Judge and DPP, engaged in jail delivery exercise with Chief Judges, and even re-established contact between detainees and their family members.⁵¹ Further, in 2014 alone, law clinics were able to facilitate access to justice for 1,043 pretrial detainees from 19 correctional facilities across the country.⁵²

7.0 Recommendations

While projects of this nature are very useful in helping the students learn the practical nuances of legal practice, law teachers must ensure that the students work schedule in the service component of the CLE is flowing directly from curriculum in the teaching component. In other words, teachers must have taught students the theory in class before engaging in the practical component. Teachers must therefore integrate the learning outcomes to reflect on the components of knowledge, skills and values and to enable the students to appreciate how these components resonates in what they are doing during case review, case conference, client interview, client counselling and of course, the entire gamut of client's engagement. To achieve that, teachers are encouraged to use reflective story model to harvest students' reflections after every activity. That way,

⁴⁹ Ojukwu et al, (2012), Handbook in Prison Pretrial Detainee Law Clinic, MacArthur Foundation/OSJI-NULAI Nigeria, Abuja

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

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the teacher develops first-hand information about what changed in the student's knowledge of the law as well as his perception of his role as a public interest advocate. It is further recommended that law faculties should engage in access to justice projects that will help provide students with the opportunity to enhance their skills in criminal defense and ingrain the value and importance of public interest lawyering in Nigeria.

8.0 Conclusion

Public interest lawyering is an authentic tool for a progressive change in enhancing access to justice in Nigeria. It works as an important instrument of social change and also for the welfare of every section of the society. It is a relevant concept in the legal system of Nigeria and it plays pivotal roles in ensuring an improved system of criminal and social justice in Nigeria.

Public interest lawyers are also alive to the plight of the indigent, unrepresented and underrepresented members of the Nigeria populace, and it is important for relevant stakeholders in the justice sector to support the activities of public interest lawyering for the overall benefit of the society. Furthermore, public interest lawyering also has a major role to play in the development of both the economy and the justice system of Nigeria. Students of Law stand at an advantaged end of early exposure to law in practice and they end up becoming better public interest lawyers, ever ready to give back to the society. The development and institutionalization of public interest lawyering in Nigeria, therefore, will no doubt aid in the realization of the objectives of public interest lawyering, among which is to promote access to justice and social development using the legal profession.