



LEGAL EDUCATION AND ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN THE 21ST CENTURY: LESSONS FOR NIGERIA

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In the 21st century, legal education is undergoing transformative shifts propelled by globalization, technological advancements and evolving societal expectations. These changes call for a reassessment of academic integrity as the foundation of legal training and the bedrock for producing competently skilled professionals. Employing a multidisciplinary approach, this paper which adopts the empirical research methodology combines a comparative analytical style and case study analysis in examining the intersection between legal education and academic integrity in Nigeria. While drawing lessons from best practices, the paper explores some of the systemic challenges undermining academic integrity (like academic dishonesty, including plagiarism, unethical assessment practices, and institutional lapses) against the backdrop of global legal education standards. Drawing on comparative approaches, a few lessons was recommended from practices from South Africa. The study argues that without ethics-oriented curricula, and transparent institutional governance, legal education in Nigeria risks undermining the credibility of its graduates and the legal education system at large. The study recommends systemic reforms in the areas of curriculum development, staff accountability, technology usage, and external accreditation. It concludes that safeguarding academic integrity is not only important for academic excellence but also essential in restoring public confidence in a sustainable legal education.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Legal education upholds the theoretical foundations and practical abilities necessary for a strong and enduring legal practice and ultimately supports a formidable legal profession. Globalization, digital technology, curriculum modification or review, and changing societal expectations have all contributed to the major transformation of legal education in the 21st century. In response to the changing times, the conventional method of *la cram la pour* (rote learning) and doctrinal system of instruction are gradually giving way for digital literacy anchored on empirical learning and interdisciplinary approaches to teaching and learning. The integration of ethical standards like academic integrity and honesty are now viewed as core components of the legal training.

In a country like Nigeria, academic integrity has become a crucial concern especially with the changing dynamics of legal education. The ethical norms and guidelines (like honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility) that govern scholarly conducts are essential for legal education and consequently, for producing morally upright legal practitioners.¹ The ethical values and ethos as well as legal training inculcated into prospective legal practitioners serve as the foundation stone on which other attributes are built.

The Nigerian legal education is battling with several systemic challenges. The problem of underfunding,² inadequate infrastructure,³ inconsistent admission and low accreditation standards,⁴ theoretical and rigid pedagogy have significant impact on academic integrity. The rippling

¹Tracey Bretag, 'Defining Academic Integrity: The Importance of Transparency and Trust' (2016) 38 (5) Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management 395–406.

² Afe Babalola, 'Remarks made at the Commencement of the 48th Conference of the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers Conference (NALT)' (Afe Babalola University, Ado Ekiti, 2016) www.abuad.edu.ng/babalola-advocate-council-of-legal-education-to-be-examining-Body-only accessed 21 December 2025,

³ Idem Udosen Jacob and Halimat Adeniran, 'Challenges of Legal Education in Nigeria and the Effects on National Development' (2019) 6 ((10) International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development 92-99

⁴Emmanuel Ibiam Amah, 'Towards a Holistic Reform of Legal Education in Nigeria' (2020) 2 (2) International Review of Law and Jurisprudence 102-111.

effect of these systemic challenges have translated into issues of poor regulatory oversight, plagiarism, exam malpractice and cheating,⁵ grade manipulation, and data fabrication all of which have detrimental effects on the core goals of education.⁶ Given its essential role in producing advocates, judges, legislators, and public administrators, among others, legal education cannot afford to compromise on ethical norms.⁷

The challenges bedevilling legal education is not peculiar to Nigeria alone. Most jurisdictions in the world have responded to similar challenges through deliberate educational reforms. For example, South Africa has developed comprehensive academic integrity frameworks to tackle issues of academic misconduct and to emphasize integrity as core professional value.⁸ Functioning system of regulatory oversights coupled with robust enforcement mechanisms are in place in such jurisdictions to manage these issues. The global experiences from these jurisdictions offer valuable insights for Nigeria especially in advocating for a sustainable legal education. The choice of South Africa in this wise for comparative analysis is because both countries are of the same commonwealth jurisdiction with similar legal system. It is hoped that learning points from the rules and practices of South Africa would be of immense benefit to Nigeria on how to strengthen her legal education.

This paper while using Nigeria as case study, examines the intersection between legal education and academic integrity in the 21st century. The paper is divided into seven parts. Section one is the introductory part while section two is the conceptual and theoretical framework on which the research is grounded. The discussion in section three centres on the current and emerging trends in legal education while the focus in section

⁵ Rebecca Chikendu, 'Reviews of Causes and Effect of Examination Malpractice in Nigerian Secondary Schools' (2022) 13 (1) *Unizik Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies* 42–58.

⁶ Emmanuel Ibiam Amah, 'Towards a Holistic Reform of Legal Education in Nigeria' (2020) 2 (2) *International Review of Law and Jurisprudence* 102–111.

⁷ Bitrus Joseph Bulama, 'Legal Profession and Crisis of Ethics in Africa: The Way Forward' (2026) 9(1) *African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education* 100–137.

⁸ Ingrid Marais, 'Institutionalisation of Academic Integrity: Experiences at a Distance Education University in South Africa during COVID-19' (2022) 10 (2) *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning* 58–79.

four is on the challenges and realities of the Nigerian legal education. Section five explores practices in South Africa while the results of the empirical research carried out is analysed in section six. Section seven which is the conclusion and recommendation, suggest pathways for the effective safeguard of academic integrity and legal education in general.

2. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Conceptual Clarification

Education is the process of acquiring knowledge or skill. It can take the form of learning, observing, teaching or instruction. The transformative power of education cannot be overemphasized. In the words of Nelson Mandela, education is the most powerful weapon one can use to change the world.⁹ The reach of education transcends classrooms as it shapes lives, impacts societies and strengthens communities.

Legal education is a broad and comprehensive concept. It can be defined as the academic and/or professional training received by individuals pursuing a career in law. It encompasses being exposed to the principles of law both in practice and in theory.¹⁰ Legal education includes not merely the profession which is practiced in courts, but also covers law teaching, law research, administration of different branches where law plays a role and, in fact commercial and industrial employments and all other activities which postulate and require the use of legal knowledge and skill.¹¹ Legal education encourages professionals to develop essential skills needed to be outstanding in whatever field or area of practice they find themselves.

Academic integrity on the other hand is the display of honesty and moral soundness in an academic environment. It is the commitment to uphold

⁹ Nelson Mandela: The Official Exhibition https://mandelaexhibition.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Mandela_EDU_Introducing-Mandela_power_point_FINAL.pdf accessed 11 July 2025.

¹⁰ Matthew Todd Kiefer, *Legal Education Reform: An Analysis of the Current State of the American Legal Education, System Post MacCrate* (A Thesis Submitted in the University of Mississippi in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement of the Sally Mc Donnett Barksdale Honors College, 2014). https://egrove.olemiss.edu/hon_thesis/672/

¹¹ Upendra Majha, 'An Overview On: Teaching Methods in Legal Education System in India' (2022) 7 (5) International Journal for Research Trends and Innovation 133-138.

ethical values and demonstrate behaviours that promotes honesty, trust, fairness, or responsibility in academic scholarship.¹² The University policy of La Trobe University defines academic integrity as a ‘fundamental principle in teaching, learning, research and scholarship.’¹³ It is expected that students, their teachers and support staff display high level of academic integrity at all times. Where this is lacking, educational goals deteriorates and the intellectual drive of students are negatively impacted.¹⁴ Academic integrity and legal education therefore should be considered as Siamese twins. The intersection of both concepts contributes to the development of competent legal professionals.

Legal education is not merely an academic pursuit, it is a preparatory process for professional practice in a field that demands the highest standards of honesty, diligence, and ethical conduct. At its core, academic integrity in legal education serves as a foundational pillar for developing responsible legal professionals who will uphold justice, interpret the law faithfully, and maintain public trust in the legal system. Predominantly, the legal profession has an obligation in ensuring that applicants or bar aspirants do not have histories of unquestionable character that may portray tendencies of unwelcomed and unprofessional conducts. To justify the above, Justice Pagone in *Frugnet v Board of Examiners*¹⁵ stated that the level and extent of trust placed in what legal practitioners say or do is necessarily high and the need for integrity is self-evident and essential.

2.1 Theoretical Framework in Legal Education

The theoretical conceptualization of legal education and academic integrity can be understood from the lens of the social learning theory. The

¹² MD. Sozon, *et al.* ‘Cheating and Plagiarism in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs): A Literature Review’ (2024) (13) *F1000Research*, 3.

¹³ La Trobe University, ‘Academic Integrity Procedure’ (2012) <<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/policy/documents/academic-integrity-procedure.pdf>> accessed 15 July 2025.

¹⁴ Laura Sbaffi and Xin Zhao, ‘Evaluating a Pedagogical Approach to Promoting Academic Integrity in Higher Education: An Online Induction Program’ (2022) *Frontiers in Psychology* 2.

¹⁵ (2002) VSC 140 per Pagone, J.

perspective of this theory views learning as a social process that takes place in a social context.¹⁶ According to this theory, human behaviour is learnt by observing, modelling or imitating the behaviours or emotional reaction of others.¹⁷ To the theorists, human behaviours are not inherent or inborn rather, these behaviours are reflective in language development, expression and moral decision making.¹⁸ Social learning theory has a wide application and is a helpful resource for legal education. Allowing students to observe professional legal practices would enable them to acquire the professional role, which is one of the crucial aspects of law that a new student should acquire. Thus, the theory is more of a relationship between individuals and their environment.¹⁹

In linking this theory to academic integrity, it is posited that students learn or observe academic forthrightness from role models around them including their teachers. A lecturer is a role model to students because of the teacher-student relationship that exist between both.²⁰ The social learning theory suggests that children who are exposed to some level of integrity grow up exhibiting the same attributes in adulthood. Where on the other hand they are used to dishonest or unscrupulous behaviour being modelled for them, they are likely to grow up maladjusted and exhibit the same attributes in adulthood. Arguably, in an academic environment where instructors or teachers do not exhibit exemplary behaviours, their learners or students are likely to imitate such lifestyle.

Similarly, the effect of observational learning is that when dishonest occurrences are not sanctioned, they are perceived by the students as acceptable.²¹ For example, where students cheat during examinations and

¹⁶ Esther Kisuby and Hiriye Godfrey, 'Learning Theories and Pedagogical Approaches in Legal Education in Uganda' (2022) 6 (9) International Journal of Academic Pedagogical Research 11-23.

¹⁷ Albert Bandura, *Social Learning Theory* (General Learning Press, New York, 1977) 22.

¹⁸ *ibid.*

¹⁹ Denise Kay *et al.*, 'Learning Theories 101: Application to Everyday Teaching and Scholarship' (2016) 40 Advances in Physiology Education 17

²⁰ Omoniyi Akinola, 'Practical Perspectives towards the Right of Law Teachers to Private Practice in Nigeria' (2018) 23 (11) IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science 32.

²¹ Zaiton Osman, *et al.* 'Moral Compass or Peer Influence? Examining the Drivers of Academic Honesty in Higher Education' (2025) 4 (1) Global Advances in Business Studies 29.

enjoy the benefits accruing to such practice like high grades, promotions, awards or recognitions, they are motivated to replicate such practices in the future but where academic integrity policies are consistently enforced, it serves as a deterrent to would-be policy breakers.

The theoretical conceptualization of academic integrity from the viewpoint of social learning theory reveals significant concerns about academic abilities and ethical learning strategies. Social learning theory suggests that legal education and academic integrity are shaped not only by formal rules but also by the ethical behaviours modelled by lecturers, institutions, and peers, which students observe, internalize, and replicate. It underscores the fact that in environments where ethical conduct is modelled, enforced and socially supported, corrupt and dishonest practices are curtailed and gradually eliminated over time.

3. CURRENT AND EMERGING TRENDS IN LEGAL EDUCATION

Legal education (although perceived as a lifelong learning) involves training law students to become lawyers. Legal education begins from the university down to the law school, there are also programmes for continuing legal education even after being called to the Bar.²² It is important to note that at the university level (in several countries), students are mainly exposed to substantive law which are basic principles of law while at law school they are exposed to the practical application of what was learnt at the university. While the education of lawyers clearly falls into distinct phases, it is perhaps preferable to regard legal education as the acquisition of legal skills and knowledge as part of ongoing processes that are continually refined throughout a legal career and also involves the passage of certain legal rights and traditions to aspiring lawyers.²³ Legal education therefore, is the process that equips a student

²² Sylvia Ihedoro, Chinente Elendu and Abdulrahman Jumah, 'Contemporary Issues on Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education and Research in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects' (2024) 7 (2) *African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education* 103.

²³ Kim Economides. 'Legal Education' in James Wright (ed), *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* (2nd ed, Oxford: Elsevier, 2015) 736.

with the knowledge of the law so that he/she can become a legal practitioner.²⁴

Significant changes have been made to legal education because of worldwide developments, particularly in industrialized nations. Interdisciplinary approaches, clinical legal education, digital technologies, and ethical training have all been included into legal citadels of learning as essential and required elements of law curriculum.²⁵ In meeting the demands of contemporary practice, legal education in the 21st century is witnessing transformative shift from doctrinal rigidity and rote learning to more innovative and skill-oriented pedagogies. Some of the current/and emerging trends are discussed hereunder:

3.1 Emergence of AI and other Technological Tools

Uunona and Goosen emphasize that the advancement of technology, especially in the field of artificial intelligence (AI), has revolutionized numerous sectors, including education.²⁶ The integration of AI in legal education has transformed the landscape of legal learning,²⁷ providing numerous benefits to teaching and practice,²⁸ whilst offering unparalleled opportunities for innovation and improvement of academic performance.

²⁴ Afolasade Adewumi, 'Revolutionizing Legal Education as a Response to Globalization and ICT in Nigeria' (2020), 2. <https://law-school.open.ac.uk/sites/law-school.open.ac.uk/files/files/JCLLE/spring-2020/revolutionising-legal-education.pdf> accessed 5 July 2025.

²⁵ Jacob Mangena, and Mafanywa Mangambi, 'The Integration of Technology into the Legal Curriculum: Issues and Way Forward' in Charles Maimela (ed) *Legal Pedagogy, Practice and Curriculum Transformation: What does the Future Hold and Look Like?* (Pretoria University Law Press, 2025) 48. https://www.pulp.up.ac.za/images/edocman/edited-collections/legal_pedagogy/Chapter%203.pdf accessed 3 January, 2026.

²⁶ Gabriel Uunona, and Leila Goosen, "Leveraging Ethical Standards in Artificial Intelligence Technologies: A Guideline for Responsible Teaching and Learning Applications" in *Handbook of Research on Instructional Technologies in Health Education and Allied Disciplines* (IGI Global, 2023) 310–330.

²⁷ Michael Legg and Felicity Bell, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Legal Profession: Becoming the AI-Enhanced Lawyer' (2019) 38 (2) *University of Tasmania Law Review* 34.

²⁸ Sodiq Onaolapo and Temitope Onifade, *Teaching and Learning in the Cloud: Prospects and Challenges of Artificial Intelligence for Education in Africa* (Conference Proceedings of International Conference on Sustainable Development 2020) 3 <https://ic-sd.org/2020/11/21/proceedings-from-icsd-2029> accessed 26 June 2025.

AI is gradually transforming the learning system with the potential of revolutionizing legal education by replacing the traditional methods of teaching through enhancing students' performance and supporting teachers and offering more personalized learning opportunities for increased efficiency.²⁹

The integration of technology into both teaching and research is now the new normal. After the world came out of the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been increased usage of technology and digital platforms to facilitate learning. With learning now interactive, more engaging, immersive, accessible and inclusive. There are functionalities for language translation, text-to-speech, speech-to-text among others.³⁰ While some institutions encourage hybrid learning, others offer fully online courses and degrees. These modes of learning ensure wider reach that is neither limited by space nor geographical location.

Despite the widespread positive impact of technological integration in legal education, there are significant challenges. Upholding academic integrity is one of the most important aspects.³¹ Sok and Heng³² argue that although AI offers a plethora of advantages such as personalized learning, automated grading, and content recommendation, one of the significant challenges it poses, is in areas of preserving academic integrity. Epileptic power supply, poor internet connectivity, the problem of digital illiteracy and several other challenges can hinder the full integration of technology in legal education. Even though AI can enhance research, it is nonetheless not infallible. Placing heavy reliance on fabricated case citations generated by AI Chatbot, ChatGPT without verification may lead to reputational

²⁹George Ashley 'The Importance of Artificial Intelligence in Education for All Students' (2023) <https://www.languagemagazine.com/2023/05/31/the-importance-of-artificial-intelligence-in-education-for-all-students/> accessed 29 June 2025.

³⁰ Anita Nwotite, 'Harnessing the Potential of Artificial Intelligence in Nigerian Legal Education: The Imperative of a Regulatory Framework' (2025) (21) (2) UNIZIK Law Journal 17-24, 22.

³¹ Mike Perkins, and Jasper Roe, 'Decoding Academic Integrity Policies: A Corpus Linguistics Investigation of AI and other Technological Threats' (2024) (37) Higher Education Policy, 633.

³²Sarin Sok, and Kimjong Heng, 'ChatGPT for Education and Research: A Review of Benefits and Risks' (2023) 3 Cambodian J. Educ. Res 110-121.

damage, malpractice liability, sanctions or other forms of disciplinary actions.³³ It is important therefore that users wisely make use of AI to augment their capabilities and not to replace it.

3.2 The Adoption of Clinical Legal Education (CLE)

The theoretical method of teaching has been criticized for using pedagogies that do not produce law graduates with the legal skills, knowledge and values required to solve problems.³⁴ In response to some of these criticisms, clinical legal education has emerged as a practice-based education initiative which has been integrated into the legal curriculum in different parts of the world.³⁵ Even though the concept has not been precisely defined, it is understood to mean the adoption of formal and non-formal teaching methods. For effective legal education, law colleges and law schools need to introduce dynamic clinical training program to be modelled towards enhancing students' ability in handling practical problems.³⁶ CLE has been an evolving initiative in Africa, since 1970s.³⁷ This innovation was spearheaded by the need to adopt the European and American frameworks for teaching in Africa. CLE is a significant part of education because of its shift in law students from theoretical to the practical understanding of law and its implication in any given society.³⁸ Its goal is to expose law students to be ethically conscious and socially responsible individuals who are able to practicalize what they have learnt

³³ See the cases of *Northbound Processing (PTY) Ltd v. the South African Diamond and Precious Metals Regulator and 4 ors* case No 2025-072038 [2025] ZAGPJHC 661; *Mavundla v. MEC: Department of Cooperative Government and Traditional Affairs KwaZulu-Natal and others* (2025) ZAKZPHC 2.

³⁴ Hugh McFaul, 'Does Clinical Legal Education Need Theory?' (2020) 7(2) Asian Journal of Legal Education 152-163.

³⁵ Margaret Barry, 'Clinical Legal Education in the Law University: Goals and Challenges' (2007) 11 International Journal of Legal Education 27, 27-50.

³⁶ Samuel Obeng Manteaw, 'Legal Education in Africa: What Type of Lawyer Does Africa Need?' (2008) 39 McGeorge Law Rev. 903-976.

³⁷ Clinical Legal Education began in Africa, with South Africa in the 1970s. University of Cape Town opened one of the earliest clinics in 1972. See: 'Clinical Legal Education A Report on the Concept of Law Clinics' https://law.handels.gu.se/digitalAssets/1500/1500268_law-clinic-rapport.pdf accessed 18 July 2025.

³⁸ Catherine Martin Christopher, 'Assessing Experiential Education in Law Schools: Toward a Modern Diploma Privilege' (2024) 93 Mississippi. Law Journal 1137.

while the learning process is ongoing.³⁹ CLE uses clients and live disputes as its material.⁴⁰ It is akin to a skills-based training where the students stimulate scenarios to try out what they learn. This training or mode of learning is not theoretical but practical as skills like client interview, advocacy, legal drafting amongst others are learnt and internalized by the students.

Despite the significant impact and progress CLE has made, it is still fraught with numerous challenges. The problem of funding and limited resources in setting up standards clinics, staffing, as well as the demands in the integration of CLE into the university curriculum are militating forces against CLE in most jurisdictions.⁴¹ For students to meet the demand for practice in a globalized and ICT-oriented environment, there is need for curriculum review as CLE cannot assist because the current traditional teaching methods are heavily impacted by course material.⁴² Until these challenges are addressed, CLE may remain unproductive.

3.3 Pedagogical Approaches prioritizing Diversity and Inclusivity in Legal Education

The introduction of pedagogical methodology in legal education is paramount for teaching law students in the 21st century. In most climes, diversity and inclusivity in legal education is beginning to gain more priority. Particularly, as the traditional teaching method seem to be

³⁹ Nasiru Mukhtar, and Emerenini Emmanuel Chinonso ‘Clinical Legal Education and Public Interest Lawyering in Nigeria: The Law Teachers’ Roles in Perspective’ (2024) 7 (II) African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education 64-81, 66, 76.

⁴⁰ Riette Du Plessis ‘The Role of Clinical Legal Education in Developing Ethical Legal Professionals’ (2021) 54 (1) De Jure Law Journal. See also Legal Education in a Changing World, Report of the Committee on Legal Education in the Developing Countries (International Legal Center, New York) 65.

⁴¹ Oludayo John Bamgbose ‘Clinical Legal Education in Nigeria: Envisioning the Future’ (2021) 10 (1) Australian Journal of Clinical Education 5; Dubravka Aksamovic and Philip Genty ‘An Examination of the Challenges, Successes and Setbacks for Clinical Legal Education in Eastern Europe’ (2014) 20 International Journal of Clinical Legal Education 427. See also ‘The Nation, Fifty Years of Legal Education in Nigeria: A Critique’ <http://thenationonline.net/50-years-of-legal-education-in-nigeria-a-critique> accessed 15 July 2025.

⁴² Adewumi (n 24).

inadequate to prepare students for the challenges of legal practice.⁴³ In teaching law, it is pertinent that law teachers have the ability of applying pedagogical approaches in teaching different subject areas of law.⁴⁴ In applying inclusivity, legal education must incorporate inclusive pedagogy, prioritize diversity of learners and ensure that teaching materials and methods become more holistic and culturally sensitive.⁴⁵ It is important that individuals suffering various forms of disabilities are not excluded because of their situation. The court in *Western Cape Forum for Intellectual Disability v. Government of the Republic of South Africa and another*⁴⁶ found the state had unfairly discriminated against children with severe intellectual disabilities by excluding them from admission into schools. The state was ordered to remedy the right violations by taking steps in providing adequate facilities and ensuring that these categories of children have access to affordable and quality basic education. With institutional commitment to improved physical infrastructure that enables accessibility to students use, assistive technologies to support academic inclusion will ensure no one is left out.

In *Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Limited v. KwaZulu-Natal Law Society and Others*,⁴⁷ the court affirmed that limitation of eligibility for legal practice to LLB degree holders from a ‘university’ under the Legal Practice Act was unconstitutional as it excluded graduates of accredited private higher education institutions.⁴⁸ The court struck down such exclusion and upheld the right to equality of ‘all’ law graduates of accredited private institutions irrespective of the degree awarding institution.

⁴³ Jaleelah Idris and Lateef Adeleke, ‘Repositioning Legal Education in Nigeria towards Students’ Centered Learning’ <https://cuab.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Repositioning-Legal-Education-in-Nigeria-Towards-Students-Centered-Learning.pdf> accessed 15 July 2025.

⁴⁴ Kris Franklin, ‘Do We Need Subject Matter-Specific Pedagogies?’ (2016) 65(4) *Journal of Legal Education*.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*

⁴⁶ [2010] ZAWCHC 544.

⁴⁷ 2020 (4) BCLR 495 (CC).

⁴⁸ Legal Practice Act No 28 of 2014, s.26(1)(a).

From the cases reviewed above, it is abundantly clear that South Africa is a good example of a jurisdiction that has embraced inclusivity in teaching and learning. Several faculties of law in South Africa have piloted and incorporated multilingual approaches in learning law by translating module contents into indigenous languages, offering dual-medium tutorials, providing online glossaries translating key legal terms, or generally providing bilingual support in academic modules.⁴⁹ There are pedagogical shifts in curriculum which has seen the inclusion of courses on African jurisprudence and socio-legal perspectives that challenges the dominance of western legal thought. These are innovations worthy of emulating as they underscore meaningful participation and access to individuals who would have suffered marginalization because of exclusion.

3.4 Curricular Expansion

The cornerstone of legal education is the law curriculum. A strong curriculum emphasizes the importance of high-quality. The major issue with the law curriculum is the absence of courses that teach students practical skills.⁵⁰ The integration of law with relatable contemporary issues will greatly enhance the value of a law degree.⁵¹

It is pertinent that the curriculum of Law colleges should also be expanded to include courses on emerging fields of law such as Immigration Law, Cyber Law, Sports law and even Entertainment law. This will help

⁴⁹ Linda Manashe *et al*, ‘An Impact Study with Reference to IsiXhosa and AFRIKAANS Multilingual Glossaries for First-Year Law of Contracts Students at Cape Peninsula University of Technology’ in Russel Kaschula and Ekkehard Wolff (eds), *The Transformative Power of Language: From Postcolonial to Knowledge Societies in Africa*, (Cambridge University Press, 2020) 153; See also Janine Greenleaf Walker, ‘Universities’ On-going Commitment to Multilingualism’ (2025) <https://usaf.ac.za/universities-on-going-commitment-to-multilingualism/?> accessed 20 July 2025. See also Lesley Greenbaum, *Legal Education in South Africa: Harmonizing the Aspirations of Transformative Constitutionalism with our Educational Legacy* (2016) (60) (2) New York Law School Law Review 470–471

⁵⁰ Afolasade Adewumi (n24) 6.

⁵¹ Sumit Kumar, ‘Impact of Globalization on Legal Education in India’ <http://www.legalservicesindia.com/article/311/Impact-Of-Globalization-On-Legal-Education-In-India.html> accessed 20 July 2025.

the students to have a wide array of courses from which to delve into and handle unforeseen professional or career twists.

3.5 Virtual/Hybrid Approach to Learning

The need to decongest over-populated classrooms in law schools across the country by adopting a virtual or hybrid approach to education, through the extensive use of technology for teaching cannot be over emphasized. One of the significant contributions of technology to legal education is the creation of virtual classrooms. The Covid-19 Pandemic is a testament to the fact that learning, teaching and related activities can indeed be borderless.⁵² The habit of holding lectures inside classrooms is progressively phasing out while introducing an emerging concept of learning the law without walls. The adoption of online and hybrid approaches to legal education brings about more flexible and accessible education.⁵³ Encouraging participation in virtual moot court trials, the immersive simulations of courtroom proceedings for students to learn and provision of modernized digital learning tools for students will aid their understanding of complex legal matters

To further support the virtual learning space is the conversion of books, journals and law reports into electronic formats to create accessibility and availability. For instance, the advent of electronic library and legal data bases like SAFLII, Juta Law, NWLR online, HeinOnline, Westlaw and LexisNexis have made it simpler for students and instructors to report cases for research.⁵⁴ These e-resources and databases are invaluable assets

⁵² Desan Iyer, 'Online Learning: Shaping the Future of Law Schools' (2022) (43) (1) *Obiter*

⁵³ Godwin Emmanuel Oyedokun, and Kabiru Aderemi Adeyemo. 'Innovation in Legal Education: The Role of Technology in Kabiru Adeyemo, *et al* (eds) Nigerian Law Faculties' in Pursuit of Legal Education (Lead City Ibadan, 2025) 99.

⁵⁴ These legal databases are e-platforms providing legal practitioners and law students with access to relevant legal materials. See Maropene Ramabina, *et al.*, 'Exploring the use of Legal Databases among Law Students at North-West University, South Africa' (2025) (43) (1) Mousaion: South African Journal of Information Studies

while conducting legal researches because they have greatly enhanced the quality of learning and teaching law.⁵⁵

4. ACADEMIC INTEGRITY IN NIGERIAN LEGAL EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND REALITIES

Academic integrity is the foundation upon which educational institutions are built.⁵⁶ It indicates a commitment to and the demonstration of honest scholarly work. The rising increase in academic integrity violations can be attributed to a combination of personal, institutional and systemic factors. These factors have had a major impact on the decline in the quality of graduate output and the way legal education is delivered. These factors and their impact on academic integrity are examined below.

Systemic Corruption: Corruption is perhaps the most ignoble social vice ravaging the Nigerian society.⁵⁷ It has eaten deep into national fabric permeating all spheres and facets of the country including the education sector. Corruption is an impairment of integrity. It involves the ingestion of additional but improper transactions aimed at changing the normal cause of events and altering judgement and position of trust. When there is endemic corruption in the society, the academic environment within the society is not spared the rot and the tripling effect. It is hard to instil moral principles or ethical conduct among students and other stakeholders within the academic community. Corruption births all other challenges militating against academic integrity within the Nigerian legal education ecosystem. This development in the education sector has not only become endemic but it is regrettably disturbing.

⁵⁵Abayomi Alayoku, and Faith Akinola., ‘Technology and Legal Education in Nigeria: Marital Bliss or Blow?’ (2023) 5 (II) Kampala International University Law Journal 269-271; See also Olayinka Tuyo, ‘Use of Databases by Academic Staff and Students of the Nigerian Law School’ (2009) (3) Journal of Applied Information Science and Technology 83.

⁵⁶ Yvonne Poitras Pratt and Keeta Gladue. Re-defining Academic Integrity: Embracing Indigenous Truths’ in Sarah Eaton and Julia Hughes (eds) *Academic Integrity in Canada: An Enduring and Essential Challenge* (Springer International Publishing, 2022), 103–123.

⁵⁷ The Corruption Perceptions Index of Nigeria is 26 out of 100 and ranking 140 out of 180 countries. See Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index. <https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/nigeria> accessed 2 July 2025.

Institutions of higher learning and in particular, faculties of law in Nigeria are largely supervised by the National Universities Commission (NUC) and the Council of Legal Education (CLE).⁵⁸ They accredit law faculties, give approvals for take-off, ensure standards in (legal) education are maintained and that universities and the programmes they offer meet quality benchmarks.⁵⁹ The CLE and the Nigerian Law School play oversight roles, ensuring that aspirants to the Bar are diligent, honest, possess integrity, fit and proper individuals.⁶⁰ However despite the commendable efforts of these regulatory bodies, moral decadence and erosion of ethical values cannot be ruled out from the sector.⁶¹ More often, these supervisory bodies engage with numerous institutions for resource verification of new academic programs and accreditation of old programs. In order to scale through resource visitation and accreditation of academic programs, accreditors are typically compensated or coerced to overlook the deficiencies or inadequacies of educational institutions in the areas of staffing, carrying capacity, equipment, infrastructure, and other amenities.⁶² Although these regulating bodies have denied these

⁵⁸ See Council of Legal Education (Nigeria), *Regulations and Guidelines for Legal Education and Conduct* 2020; the National Universities Commission Act Cap N81 LFN 2004; Legal Education (Consolidation) Act Cap L10 LFN 2004 and Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act Cap E 3, LFN 2004.

⁵⁹ See Section 21 (4) of Education (National Minimum Standards and Establishment of Institutions) Act which provides that: “Notwithstanding anything to the contrary but subject to the provisions of the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1999, it shall be unlawful for any person or group of persons (whether corporate or unincorporated) in any part of Nigeria to establish or run a university or any form of degree-awarding institution either independently or in conjunction with any university or institution within or outside Nigeria for purposes of awarding degrees without the approval of the National Universities first sought and obtained.”

⁶⁰ Omoniyi Akinola, ‘Sustaining Sustainable Reforms for Vocational Legal Education in Nigeria: The Way Forward’ (2019) (92) *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization* 201.

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 202. See Ilawagbon Osas-Osayomwanbor, ‘The Role of Regulatory Bodies in Sustaining Educational Development in Nigeria: An Assessment of the National Universities Commission’ (2025) <https://rsisinternational.org/journals/ijriss/articles/the-role-of-regulatory-bodies-in-sustaining-educational-development-in-nigeria-an-assessment-of-the-national-universities-commission/> accessed 2 January, 2026.

⁶² Iyabo Lawal, ‘Flawed Process, False Disclosure rock Courses, Varsities’ Accreditations’ *The Guardian* (24 June, 2025) <https://guardian.ng/news/flawed-process-false-disclosure-rock-courses-varsities-accreditations> accessed 2 January, 2026; see also Accreditation by

allegations,⁶³ if they were indeed true, the alleged acts can lead to poor oversight functions, lax admissions standards, and proliferation of non-standardized colleges of law.

Another challenge facing legal education is the absence of trained teachers who are familiar with pedagogical styles. The unfamiliarity by law teachers is a factor that constrains them to the traditional teaching styles.⁶⁴ Most law teachers do not receive any formal training for their role; they solely rely on the professional training in universities and law schools. Qualification is typically rooted in professional experience and published articles.⁶⁵ In Nigeria, even though formal pedagogical certification is not a requirement for teaching employment, it is important law teachers are conversant with different teaching approaches and constantly upgrade their knowledge.

Lack of political will to prioritize education is another challenge that hinders efforts to globalize legal education.⁶⁶ For instance, UNESCO's benchmark recommendation of national budgets for education is placed between 15-20% which Nigeria has never met. In 2025, just 7% of the national budget was allocated to education, far below the recommended benchmark.⁶⁷ Furthermore, in Nigeria, incessant strikes by university

Extortion? *The Nation* (9 March, 2016). <https://thenationonline.ng/accreditation-by-extortion/#> accessed 2 January, 2026;

⁶³ National Universities Commission Website. 'Only Professors Evaluate in Accreditation-Pof. Rasheed' <https://www.nuc.edu.ng/only-professors-evaluate-in-accreditation-prof-rasheed/> accessed 2 January, 2026.

⁶⁴ Amari Omaka *et al*, 'Legal Education in Nigeria: The Prospects and Challenges' *Law in Nigeria at 100: Reviewing the Past, Projecting the Future* (Paper presented at the 47th Annual Conference of the Nigerian Association of Law Teachers (NALT), at Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki, Nigeria 2-6 June 2014)149.

⁶⁵ Abdulsalam Ajetunmobi., 'Legal Education in Nigeria: An Evaluation of the Recruitment Practice for the Teaching of Law as a Career' (2013) 39 (2) Commonwealth Law Bulletin 283.

⁶⁶ Adewumi (n 24) 13.

⁶⁷ Emmanuel Ohaegbulem, and Samuel Chijioke., 'On Nigeria's Budgetary Allocations to the Education Sector (1960-2023) in view of UNESCO's Benchmarks' (2023) 11 (4) International Journal of Mathematics and Statistics Studies 37.

academic and non-academic staff union,⁶⁸ university underfunding,⁶⁹ salary nonpayment and infrastructural deterioration which can be addressed by the government are treated with less attention, value and implementation. Between 1999 to date, the Academic Staff Union of Universities (ASUU) have embarked on 18 strikes with devastating effects including delayed graduation, loss of scholarship or internship opportunities among others.⁷⁰ A vivid illustration of the catastrophic effect of strike activity was the 2022 strike action which affected Nigerian Universities that resulted into over eight months of academic halt.⁷¹ Such frequent strikes adversely affect and disrupt the academic calendar at Nigerian Law School which invariably promotes crash programmes and backlogs within affected universities.

Plagiarism is a problem militating against legal education in Nigeria. It is academic dishonesty that entails taking credit for work that is owned by someone else.⁷² It is considered to be fraudulent as it undermines the intellectual property rights of the author whose work is stolen.⁷³ Plagiarism cases in the academic environment have been said to stem from ignorance, lack of skills and academic pressure of publish or perish

⁶⁸ There have been series of strike actions in the nation's educational sector. The Academic Staff Union of Universities have embarked on strike in between 2013 to 2022, and such actions have led to school disruption and stress among all concerned stakeholders. This often cause a big setback in educational industry in Nigeria and calls worries that necessitate drastic action by the nation. See Alexander Yohanna and Audu Diggah, 'Effect of Incessant Strike on Nigeria: Implications for University Education in Nigeria' (2022) 24(8) African Scholars Journal of Education Research and Library Practice 217-226.

⁶⁹ Olusola Adegbite, 'An Appraisal of the Standard of Nigerian Legal Education' <https://share.google/FHiczT1yKVeciZjID> accessed 1 January 2026.

⁷⁰ Musa Adekunle, 'ASUU's 18th Strike in 26 Years: What you Need to Know.' *The Guardian* (14 October, 2025) <https://guardian.ng/news/asuus-18th-strike-in-26-years-what-you-need-to-know/> 4 January, 2026.

⁷¹ Emeka Ngige and Sylvester Udemezue, 'Navigating the Future of Legal Education in Contemporary Nigeria: Effective Strategies for Addressing Current Challenges and Proposals for Reforms' (2025) 2 (4) International Journal for Public Policy, Law and Development 23.

⁷² Anna Sutton, David Taylor and Carol Johnston, 'A Model for Exploring Student Understandings of Plagiarism' (2012) 38(1) Journal of Further and High Education 129-146.

⁷³ Taseef Farook, *et al*, 'Plagiarism in Dentistry- A Systematic Review' (2020) British. Dental. Journal 5.

syndrome.⁷⁴ The publish or perish syndrome is capable of sacrificing quality of research work on the altar of quantity.⁷⁵ The exponential growth in information communication technology (ICT) is also touted as contributory to student behaviours ranging from cutting or copying and pasting materials from the internet to sharing online materials without properly referencing the original source.⁷⁶ The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on education has made matters more complex.⁷⁷ Digital tools have made learning resources more accessible, but they have also created new opportunities for unethical behaviour, like plagiarism or the use of unapproved online academic resources and negatively impacted on the critical thinking and analytical skills of students.⁷⁸ In most Nigerian universities, there are still inconsistent disciplinary procedures, and outdated codes of conduct that are inefficient for the complexities of

⁷⁴ Jerome Idiegbeyan-Ose, Christopher Nkiko and Ifeakachuku Osinulu, 'Awareness and Perception of Plagiarism of Postgraduate Students in Selected Universities in Ogun State, Nigeria' (2016) *Library Philosophy and Practice Journal* 4-5; see also Stella-Maris Orim, Erik Borg and Isabella Awala-Ale, *Students' Experience of Institutional Interventions on Plagiarism: Nigerian Case* (Plagiarism across Europe and Beyond—2013 Conference Proceedings) 54. https://academicintegrity.eu/conference/proceedings/2013/Orim_students.pdf accessed 30 December, 2025.

⁷⁵ Itunu Kolade-Faseyi, 'Research and the Legal Profession' (2018) (5) (1) *UNIMAID Journal of Public Law* 190.

⁷⁶ Tsenongu Terwuese, Emmanuel Okwu, and Bonnie Obande, 'Fighting the Monster Plagiarism among Postgraduate Students in Higher Educational Institutions in Nigeria' (2024) 1 (1) *OMANARP International Journal of Library and Information Science*, 2-3. See also Oke Ajogbeje, *et al.*, 'Academic Dishonesty in Nigerian Higher Institutions of Learning' (2023) (74) *Innovations* 1124. <https://journal-innovations.com/assets/uploads/doc/5bbe6-1124-1140.11026.pdf> accessed 15 June 2025.

⁷⁷ Chi Okongwu, Simeon Imoisi and Eziwanne Nwaobi, 'The Impact of COVID-19 on the Legal Profession in Nigeria' (2023) 14 (1) *Nnamdi Azikiwe University Journal of International Law and Jurisprudence* 63

⁷⁸ Muhammad Abubakar, 'Adoption of AI Tools in Legal Academia: Analysis of Usage Patterns, Benefits and Ethical Concerns in Nigeria' (2025) 6 (3) *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation* 699.; see also Ngozichukwu Ihedoro, Rachel Elendu, and Abdulrahman Jumah, 'Contemporary Issues on Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education and Research in Nigeria: Challenges and Prospects' (2024) (7) (II) *African Journal of Law, Ethics and Education* 119.

contemporary education.⁷⁹ The lack of a clear and enforceable academic integrity framework weakens the authority of legal education institutions and casts doubt on the legitimacy of legal qualifications.

The Nigerian legal education sector continues to face fundamental and emerging issues like outdated curricula, packed classrooms, subpar facilities, inadequate funding, poor oversight, loose admissions standards, low teacher-to-student ratios, and lax enforcement of academic standards.⁸⁰ The core objectives of legal education are undermined by these systemic problems, which foster an atmosphere that encourages academic dishonesty.

5. PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICA

In South Africa, the process to become an advocate involves three phases which includes:

- i.) LL. B degree
- ii.) Completing of one year pupillage; and
- iii.) Passing the National Bar Examination.⁸¹

The distinct phases in South African legal education prioritizes theoretical learning and vocational learning.⁸² Also, in addition to the above, the National Bar exam consists of six parts which comprises of an open exam and closed book examination.⁸³ Usually, the written examination grading is done internally and thereafter moderated by judges. In cases of failure,

⁷⁹ Lami Sunday, *et al.*, 'Malpractice Styles of Students during Examination: Implications for School Social Work Counseling in Non-Asian Cultures' (2025) 5 (4) European Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences 15.

⁸⁰ Joy Ogunsina, 'An Assessment of Examination Malpractice Policies of a Public University in Southwestern Nigeria' (2024) International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Growth Evaluation 356.

⁸¹ General Council of the Bar of South African Legal System, 'South African Legal System' <https://www.sabar.co.za/legal-system.html> accessed 15 July 2025.

⁸² Jonathan Campbell, 'The Role of Law Faculties and Law Academics: Academic Education or Qualification for Practice' (2014) 15 Stellenbosch Law Review 16-18.

⁸³ Chris Marnewick, 'Improving our Pupilage System Step by Step' (2006) 19(3) Advocates 42-46

such applicants are required to take oral examinations wherein they are given the opportunity to show that they have the capacity to pass the bar examination.⁸⁴ During the period between the written and bar exam, remedial teaching is to be conducted.⁸⁵

Furthermore, when a student fails a course at the bar exam, but has passed some courses with a 65% grade, unlike Nigeria, wherein the applicant is expected to re-sit all the courses, in South Africa, such applicant is exempted from retaking of the exams passed.⁸⁶ The high importance placed on pupillage in South Africa accounts for the retaking of pupillage when an applicant fails the bar examination. Presently, in Nigeria a Bill is before the National Assembly prescribing a mandatory pupillage of two years for any person called to the Nigerian Bar.⁸⁷ It appears this will be in addition to the law office internship and court attachment during law school training and the mandatory one year of national service. Criticisms have been levelled against the length of time of the proposal describing it as potentially exploitative without sustainable structures.⁸⁸

The South African Legal Practice Act provides that legal practice council must promote high standards of legal education and compulsory post qualification professional development for law students.⁸⁹ Regarding academic integrity, most universities in South Africa have plagiarism policies.⁹⁰ Moser⁹¹ in his study confirms that University of Cape, Rhodes,

⁸⁴ *ibid.*

⁸⁵ A J Dickson, 'One Year Pupilage: A Review' (2006) 19(3) *Advocates* 35.

⁸⁶ Peggy Maisel, 'The Education and Licensing of Attorneys and Advocates in South Africa' (2010) 15(15) *The Bar Examiner*, 19. https://scholarship.law.bu.edu/faculty_scholarship/572 accessed 15 July 2025.

⁸⁷ See section 25 (1) (a) *Legal Practitioners Bill* 2025.

⁸⁸ Chioma Unini, '15-Year SAN Rule, Two Year Pupillage, and Other Issues-Observations on the Legal Practitioners' Bill, 2025' *The Nigerian Lawyer Website* (11 December, 2025) <https://thenigerianlawyer.com/15-year-san-rule-two-year-pupillage-and-other-issues-observations-on-the-legal-practitioners-bill-2025/#> accessed 5 January, 2026.

⁸⁹ *Legal Practice Act* 28 of 2014, section.5(j).

⁹⁰ Kudzayi Tarisayi, 'Lustre and Shadows: Unveiling the Gaps in South African University Plagiarism Policies amidst the Emergence of AI-generated Content' (2023) 5(5) *AI and Ethics*, 247-248.

⁹¹ Albine Moser and Irene Korstjens, 'Series: Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research' (2018) 24 (10) *European. Journal of General Practice* 9.

Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa, Johannesburg, Stellenbosch among others have developed plagiarism policies.

6. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized doctrinal and non-doctrinal research methodology. The doctrinal methodology employed primary and secondary sources of law such as statutes, textbooks, journals while the non-doctrinal adopted a quantitative cross-sectional survey design involving 147 respondents comprising law students, law teachers, legal practitioners, and law administrators, drawn mainly from Nigeria with limited representation from South Africa. Data was collected through a structured questionnaire measuring perceptions of academic integrity, institutional challenges, safeguards, digital tools, and pupillage practices. Analysis was conducted using SPSS Version 27, employing descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and one-way ANOVA. Cronbach's alpha confirmed acceptable internal consistency of the scales, while Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation was used to examine the underlying factor structure. Ethical principles of voluntary participation, anonymity, and confidentiality were strictly observed.

6.1 Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Respondents (n = 147)

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Current Status	Law Student	104	70.7
	Law Teacher	32	21.8
	Legal Practitioner	8	5.4
	Law Administrator	3	2.0
	Total	147	100.0
Country of Residence	Nigeria	118	80.3
	South Africa	29	19.7
	Total	147	100.0
Years of Experience / Level	Undergraduate / Law School	94	63.9
	Postgraduate	13	8.8
	1–5 years post-call	8	5.4

	6–10 years post-call	11	7.5
	Above 10 years post-call	21	14.3
	Total	147	100.0
Gender	Male	37	25.2
	Female	110	74.8
	Total	147	100.0

Source: SPSS Version 27. Values are expressed as frequency (count) and percentage (%).

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the study respondents (n = 147), providing a detailed overview of their professional status, country of residence, years of experience, and gender distribution.

Most participants were law students, accounting for 70.7% (n = 104) of the sample, followed by law teachers at 21.8% (n = 32). Legal practitioners and law administrators were minimally represented, comprising 5.4% (n = 8) and 2.0% (n = 3), respectively. Regarding country of residence, most participants were based in Nigeria (80.3%, n = 118) compared to South Africa (19.7%, n = 29).

With respect to experience and level of involvement in law, 63.9% of participants were undergraduates currently studying law, while 14.3% had experience exceeding 10 years post-call. Those with 1–5 years and 6–10 years of experience after being called, along with postgraduate participants, accounted for 5.4%, 7.5%, and 8.8%, respectively.

Finally, the gender distribution in the sample was heavily skewed, with females dominating at 74.8% (n = 110), while males made up only 25.2% of the group (n = 37).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Academic Integrity and Legal Education Perceptions

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
How familiar are you with the concept of academic integrity?	146	3.59	1.23

Ethics and professional responsibility are sufficiently taught within the law curriculum	144	3.93	1.16
Academic staff model ethical behaviour in teaching and research	144	3.89	0.95
Legal education in your country meets international standards on academic integrity	145	3.45	1.12
Academic integrity is essential for restoring confidence in legal education	147	3.67	0.43

Source: SPSS Version 27

The level of familiarity with academic integrity was relatively high, with a mean score of 3.59 (SD = 1.23). The perceived level of teaching on ethics and professional responsibility within the law curriculum was also high (M = 3.93, SD = 1.16), as was the perception that academic staff model ethical behaviour in teaching and research (M = 3.89, SD = 0.95).

However, respondents showed moderate confidence regarding the alignment of legal education in their countries with international standards on academic integrity (M = 3.45, SD = 1.12). Importantly, there was strong agreement that academic integrity is essential for restoring confidence in legal education (M = 3.67, SD = 0.43), with the low standard deviation indicating a high level of consensus among respondents.

These results suggest that while respondents generally recognize the importance of ethical teaching and the role of academic staff as ethical role models, there remain concerns about the adequacy and global alignment of legal education in upholding academic integrity.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Institutional Responses and Challenges to Academic Integrity

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students and staff who violate academic integrity rules are adequately sanctioned	147	3.50	1.14

The institution handles cases of academic misconduct seriously	146	3.95	1.11
Transparency in the investigation and punishment of academic misconduct	146	3.58	1.14
Fear of retaliation discourages reporting academic misconduct	147	3.50	1.20
Technology has made cheating easier to carry out	143	3.78	1.18

Source: SPSS Version 27

Enforcement of academic integrity policies within institutions was perceived as moderate to high. Respondents indicated that students and staff who violate academic integrity rules are adequately sanctioned ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.14$), while institutions handle cases of academic misconduct seriously ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.11$). The transparency in investigation and punishment of misconduct was viewed as moderate to high ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.14$), whereas fear of retaliation discouraging reporting was slightly elevated ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.20$).

Furthermore, technology emerged as a relevant factor influencing academic integrity, with participants agreeing that technological tools have made cheating easier to carry out ($M = 3.78$, $SD = 1.18$). These findings suggest that, while institutions generally enforce academic integrity policies, challenges remain in ensuring transparency, addressing fear of reprisal, and mitigating technological vulnerabilities.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics of Digital Tools, Pupillage, and Institutional Practices

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
The institution handles cases of academic misconduct seriously	146	3.95	1.11
Transparency in the investigation and punishment of misconduct	146	3.58	1.14
Use of digital tools has improved compliance with academic standards	144	3.69	1.05

The pupillage phase is critical in preparing advocates for real-world practice	146	3.60	1.30
The pupillage period should be mandatory for all aspiring lawyers	145	3.05	1.50

Source: SPSS Version 27

The use of digital tools to improve compliance with academic standards was generally well-received ($M = 3.69$, $SD = 1.05$). The pupillage (practical apprenticeship) phase was recognized as critical in preparing advocates for real-world practice ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.30$), although making it mandatory for all aspiring lawyers received relatively lower support ($M = 3.05$, $SD = 1.50$) indicating some reservations about its universal applicability.

Consistent with earlier findings, respondents rated institutional management of academic misconduct as high ($M = 3.95$, $SD = 1.11$), alongside moderate to high transparency in the investigation and punishment of misconduct ($M = 3.58$, $SD = 1.14$).

Table 5. Reliability Analysis of Study Constructs

Construct / Scale	Items	N	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Academic Integrity & Legal Education Perceptions	5	141	0.71
Institutional Responses & Challenges to Academic Integrity	5	142	0.76
Digital Tools, Pupillage & Institutional Practices	5	141	0.83

Source: SPSS Version 27

The internal consistency of the study constructs was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (α), with results indicating acceptable to good reliability:

- i.) Academic Integrity & Legal Education Perceptions (5 items) – $\alpha = 0.71$
- ii.) Institutional Responses & Challenges to Academic Integrity (5 items) – $\alpha = 0.76$
- iii.) Digital Tools, Pupillage & Institutional Practices (5 items) – $\alpha = 0.83$

All constructs exceed the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70, suggesting that the items within each scale reliably measure their respective underlying constructs. In particular, the α value of 0.83 for the “Digital Tools, Pupillage & Institutional Practices” construct indicates strong internal consistency, reflecting that respondents’ answers on this scale are highly coherent.

Table 6. Frequency Distribution of Academic Integrity Awareness and Practices (n = 147)

Variable	Response Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Definition of Academic Integrity	Honesty in examinations and assessments	24	16.4
	Avoidance of plagiarism	11	7.5
	Ethical conduct in research and teaching	9	6.2
	All of the above	102	69.9
Institution has formal academic integrity rules	Yes	106	72.1
	No	19	12.9
	Not sure	22	15.0
Received formal training on academic integrity	Yes	95	64.6
	No	52	35.4
Encountered academic dishonesty in institution	Yes	108	73.5
	No	39	26.5
Forms of academic dishonesty observed	Plagiarism	9	6.1
	Examination malpractice	36	24.5
	Impersonation	2	1.4
	Contract cheating	1	0.7
	Lecturer misconduct/unethical grading	4	2.7

	Manipulation of attendance/grades	3	2.0
	Two forms	35	23.8
	Three forms and above	57	38.8
Perceived frequency of academic dishonesty	Not frequent	4	2.7
	Rarely frequent	8	5.4
	Occasionally frequent	25	17.0
	Frequent	61	41.5
	Very frequent	49	33.3
Use of plagiarism detection software	Yes	68	46.6
	No	27	18.5
	Not sure	51	34.9
Technological tools contributing to misconduct	AI writing tools	78	53.4
	Smartphones	45	30.8
	Unauthorised online materials	6	4.1
	Social media	8	5.5
	Essay mills/research vendors	9	6.2
Reforms to enhance academic integrity	Stronger sanctions	85	58.6
	Staff accountability	30	20.7
	Ethics-focused curriculum	17	11.7
	Technology monitoring tools	6	4.1
	Independent accreditation	2	1.4
	Anonymous reporting systems	3	2.1
	Student orientation programmes	2	1.4
Stronger role of external oversight bodies	Yes	120	81.6

	No	5	3.4
	Not sure	22	15.0

Source: SPSS Version 27. Percentages are based on valid responses.

The overwhelming majority of participants showed an understanding of what academic integrity entails, with 69.9% (n = 102) identifying it with honesty during examinations, plagiarism avoidance, and scholarly and teaching integrity. A good proportion affirmed that academic integrity policies exist in their institutions (72.1%, n = 106), while 64.6% (n = 95) affirmed that they had formal training on it.

Concerning personal observations, 73.5% (n = 108) observed instances of academic dishonesty in their institutions. The highest rates observed were for examination malpractice cases (24.5%), two forms (23.8%), and more than three forms (38.8%) of academic dishonesty. The respondents also considered academic dishonesty a rather frequent (41.5%) or very frequent (33.3%) behaviour in the institution.

In terms of safeguarding institutions, less than half of the respondents said that plagiarism detection software was being used (46.6%), whereas 53.4% of them indicated AI writing tools, and 30.8% for smartphones as technology contributing to plagiarism. The proposed solutions centred on stringent punishment for offenders (58.6%), institutional staff responsibility (20.7%), and moral-driven learning materials and programs (11.7%), in addition to full support for better oversight from outside regulatory agencies (81.6%).

Table 7. Correlations among Academic Integrity, Institutional Challenges, and Safeguards (n = 147)

Variable	Academic Integrity & Legal Education	Institutional Challenges	Safeguards
Academic Integrity & Legal Education	—		
Institutional Challenges	.49**	—	
Safeguards	.39**	.50**	—

*Values are Pearson's correlation coefficients. ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).*

Correlation analysis revealed moderate to strong positive relationships among the study variables:

- i.) Academic Integrity & Legal Education was positively correlated with Institutional Challenges ($r = 0.49$, $p < .01$) and Safeguards ($r = 0.39$, $p < .01$).
- ii.) Institutional Challenges and Safeguards were also significantly correlated ($r = 0.50$, $p < .01$).

These results suggest that heightened awareness of academic integrity is associated with recognition of both institutional challenges and the effectiveness of safeguards. In other words, respondents who are more conscious of academic integrity issues also perceive institutional mechanisms and protective measures as more prominent or necessary.

Table 8. Regression Analysis of Institutional Challenges on Academic Integrity and Legal Education (n = 147)

Predictors	β (SE)
Constant	1.685 (0.253)**
Institutional Challenges	0.434 (0.069)**
F (Sig.)	39.554**
R ²	0.256
Adjusted R ²	0.249

*Dependent Variable: Academic Integrity & Legal Education, significance: . ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed).*

A simple linear regression analysis was employed to examine the predictive power of Institutional Challenges on Academic Integrity and Legal Education. This analysis provided evidence that institutional challenges predict academic integrity ($\beta = 0.434$, $SE = 0.069$, $p < 0.01$). In this regard, the model was statistically significant, $F(1, 115) = 39.55$, $p < 0.01$, and explained approximately 25.6% of the variance in academic integrity perceptions ($R^2 = 0.256$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.249$).

This result implies that the more respondents perceived institutional challenges, in terms of lack of enforcement, transparency, or improper behaviour, exist, the greater their awareness levels regarding Academic Integrity. When considered in the context of legal education, it seems that perceived weaknesses in institutions have increased sensitivity to ethics.

Table 9. Regression Analysis of Institutional Challenges and Safeguards & Academic Integrity and Legal Education (n = 147)

Predictors	β (SE)
Constant	1.412 (0.274)**
Institutional Challenges	0.345 (0.077)**
Safeguards	0.170 (0.073)*
F (Sig.)	23.285**
R ²	0.290
Adjusted R ²	0.278

*Dependent Variable: Academic Integrity & Legal Education, significance: ** $p < .01$ (two-tailed). Source: SPSS Version 27*

The data was analysed using multiple regression to determine the simultaneous influence of both Institutional Challenges and Safeguards on Academic Integrity Perceptions. Both variables were significant:

i.) Institutional Challenges: $\beta = 0.345$, SE = 0.077, $p < .01$

ii.) Safeguards: $\beta = 0.170$, SE = 0.073, $p < .05$

The model was statistically significant, $F(2, 114) = 23.29$, $p < .01$. It accounted for 29.0% of the variance in academic integrity perceptions ($R^2 = 0.290$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.278$).

These findings confirm that not only institutional challenges but also the presence of safeguards significantly impact the perceptions that respondents have regarding academic integrity. From a legal education point of view, the significance that legal education places on policies and procedures that work to provide an effective and ethical environment in academia cannot be ignored.

Table 10. ANOVA Comparing Academic Integrity and Legal Education across Professional Status (n = 147)

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Between Groups	1.802	3	0.601	1.770	.156
Within Groups	48.527	143	0.339		
Total	50.329	146			

Dependent Variable: *Academic Integrity & Legal Education*, **Source:** SPSS Version 27

One-Way ANOVA. Academic Integrity by Group

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether mean scores on academic integrity and legal education differed across four groups: Law Students, Law Teachers, Legal Practitioners, and Law Administrators.

Table 11. Descriptive Statistics

Group	N	Mean	SD	95% CI Lower	95% CI Upper	Min	Max
Law Student	104	3.29	0.55	3.18	3.39	1.40	4.20
Law Teacher	32	3.22	0.67	2.98	3.46	1.80	4.50
Legal Practitioner	8	2.83	0.53	2.38	3.27	2.00	3.40
Law Administrator	3	3.00	1.04	0.42	5.58	1.80	3.60
Total	147	3.24	0.59	3.15	3.34	1.40	4.50
<i>Levene's test: $F(3, 143) = 1.378, p = .252$.</i>							

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine whether there were any differences in Academic Integrity & Legal Education among professional categories, including Law Students, Law Teachers, Legal Practitioners, and Law Administrators.

Descriptive statistics (Table 11) reveal that the mean score of 104 Law Students was 3.29 (SD = 0.55), 32 Law Teachers had a mean score of 3.22 (SD = 0.67), 8 Legal Practitioners had a mean score of 2.83 (SD = 0.53), while 3 Law Administrators had a mean score of 3.00 (SD = 1.04). The overall mean score of all participants was 3.24 (SD = 0.59).

The results of Levene's test confirmed the equality of variances, $F(3, 143) = 1.378, p = .252$. The analysis of the results of the ANOVA test showed no statistically significant differences between the groups, $F(3, 143) = 1.770, p = .156$.

These results indicate that attitudes about issues of academic integrity are quite similar across occupational groups. While there is a slight tendency for Legal Practitioners to rate issues lower and for Law Administrators to rate issues higher on these scales than the other groups, this is not statistically significant.

Table 12. Factor Analysis of Academic Integrity Items (Principal Component Analysis with Varimax Rotation)

Item	Communalities	Ethics & Professional Responsibility	Pupillage & Practical Training	Institutional Compliance & Reporting	Transparency & Sanctions
How familiar are you with the concept of academic integrity?	0.648	0.070	0.126	-0.137	0.780
Ethics and professional responsibility are sufficiently taught within law curriculum	0.627	0.554	0.157	0.518	0.164
Academic staff model ethical behaviour in teaching and research	0.660	0.651	0.004	0.484	0.046
Legal education meets international standards on academic integrity	0.540	0.442	0.552	-0.132	0.148
Academic integrity is essential for restoring	0.427	0.129	0.163	-0.607	-0.125

confidence in legal education					
Students and staff who violate rules are adequately sanctioned	0.574	0.727	-0.170	0.081	0.097
My institution handles cases of academic misconduct seriously	0.583	0.634	0.096	0.037	0.413
Transparency in investigation and punishment of misconduct	0.669	0.763	0.069	-0.284	0.030
Fear of retaliation discourages reporting misconduct	0.498	0.102	-0.203	0.323	0.585
Technology has made cheating easier	0.387	0.096	0.275	0.545	-0.066
Use of digital tools has improved compliance	0.423	0.387	0.138	0.153	0.480
The pupillage phase is critical in preparing advocates	0.727	-0.075	0.828	0.191	0.010
Pupillage should be mandatory for all aspiring lawyers	0.765	-0.034	0.873	-0.045	0.017

Table 13. Variance Explained by Components

Component	Eigenvalue	% Variance	Cumulative %
Ethics & Professional Responsibility	3.321	25.55	25.55
Pupillage & Practical Training	1.997	15.36	40.12
Institutional Compliance & Reporting	1.459	11.22	51.34
Transparency & Sanctions	1.433	11.03	62.37

Note: Components extracted via Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation. Eigenvalues >1 retained.

A principal component analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted to explore the underlying structure of respondents' perceptions of academic integrity in legal education. The analysis yielded four components with eigenvalues greater than 1, collectively accounting for 57.74% of the total variance (Table 13).

7. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The resultant effect of the challenge affecting legal education in both developed and developing countries is the breach of academic integrity, particularly in Nigeria, where the problem is experiencing an unprecedented rise. Having observed that the current framework is largely inadequate to address the complexities of legal education, there is the need for a revolution of the Nigerian legal education system. To restore public confidence in a sustainable legal education these recommendations are proffered:

7.1 Pupillage Training: it is important that Nigeria adopt a pragmatic approach to legal education and vocational training. In doing that, it is suggested that the mandatory one year dedicated for national service be converted strictly to pupillage period. Remuneration in accordance with the Minimum living wage should be set for pupils and the parameter for execution should be entrenched in law.

7.2 Training, Retraining and Reorientation: it is important that students, teachers and other stakeholders are trained on the ethical usage of AI and ICT tools. When these individuals are exposed to the rudiments of AI usage and deployment, the challenges associated with it will be managed. Beyond teaching, ethical and regulatory framework need to be introduced for more effective and systematic use of AI. In addition, most Nigerian students and teachers are used to rote learning and note taking approach within classrooms. There is the urgent need for a revolution of the teaching methods. Pedagogical approaches like constructivism, inquiry-based, Socratic, integrative, problem based, and reflective pedagogy need be adopted in teaching of law. In addition to these, practical training which involves clinical programs, internships, mooted competitions among several others should be encouraged. Adopting this system of mixed methodology no doubt will be rewarding.

7.3 Curriculum Reform: The need for update of courses frequently to align with global legal trends and interdisciplinary needs should be encouraged. It is recommended that courses on ethics, leadership be integrated into curriculum. Curriculum reform will be superficial if not accompanied by a shift in institutional culture.

7.4 Faculty and Funding Support: Law faculties should prioritise continuous training of educators in modern, technology-enabled and interdisciplinary pedagogy. Sustainable funding should be strengthened through public-private partnerships with legal, technological and development actors, subject to safeguards that protect academic independence and public interest.

7.5 Policy and Ethical Guidelines on AI and Plagiarism: Faculties of Law should adopt clear policies regulating the ethical use of AI and plagiarism-detection tools, including disclosure requirements and defined limits of acceptable use. These tools should function as educational and integrity-enhancing mechanisms, supported by

regular training and periodic policy review to keep pace with technological developments.

7.6 Complete Overhaul: The legal education sector needs to be overhauled with special emphasis placed on academic integrity. The admission requirements, the recruitment procedure, the disciplinary policies and mechanism need to be reworked and re-evaluated. Also having a Hall of Fame or Roll of persons who have distinguished themselves within the academic environment would encourage others to emulate good behaviour of those found to be worthy ambassadors of the institution. It is believed that a value-based education system where academic mentors are assigned for the students amongst academic members of staff whose integrity are untainted will be pivotal to maintaining academic integrity thereby leading to the realization of international best practices on legal education.