

## **EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLICATIONS FOR LEGAL PRACTICE**

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### **Abstract**

*Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) has significant implications for legal practice. It requires a shift in legal education to integrate sustainability principles and address related societal challenges. This includes incorporating environmental, social, and economic dimensions into legal curricula to prepare future lawyers for a sustainable future. One of the pressing challenges of legal education is the inability to integrate sustainable development principles into the curriculum. This work aimed at exploring the extent to which sustainability is incorporated into legal education. This study further aimed at examining the challenges and opportunities faced by Nigerian universities in fostering sustainability awareness among future legal professionals. The methodology adopted in this work is doctrinal, wherein primary and secondary sources were utilized. Upon findings, this paper revealed resistance to curriculum change and difficulties in interdisciplinary integration. This paper advocated that the climate change law should be introduced as a mandatory course in law faculties so as to prepare law students ahead*

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*of the future, since the world is revolving, while practicing lawyers should be taught the same through continuous legal education. This paper recommended that by adopting sustainable development into legal education, the law graduates and lawyers could handle issues that are beyond legal studies.*

**Keywords:** Legal Practice, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Recently, there has been a relationship between education, law, and sustainable development. This has gained clear and direct attention, especially in the United Nations Agenda 2030 for sustainable development context. This Agenda 2030 emphasized the role of education in achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It includes quality education, gender equality, and climate action.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of legal education in examining SDGs is to empower lawyers to have knowledge and skills to address multifarious environmental and social challenges. Sustainability in legal education extends beyond environmental issues to embrace social and economic dimensions. For example, legal education can promote social justice by addressing poverty, inequality, and human rights violations<sup>2</sup>. Incorporating these issues into the curriculum of legal education can help

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations 2015

<sup>2</sup> C Rojas , 'Filosofía de la educación, de los griegos a la tardomodernidad' (2010) Editorial Universidad de Antioquia: Zohaib Hassan Sain , Hasan Baharun2 et al,' Sustainable Legal Education: Aligning Curricula with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development' (2025) Volume- 02 | Issue- 01 | GAS Journal of Law and Society <https://gaspublishers.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Sustainable-Legal-Education-Aligning-Curricula-with-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf>>accessed on 25th July, 2025

future lawyers develop a more holistic understanding of sustainability and its societal implications.

Despite the headway towards integrating sustainability in legal education, the challenges persist. One of which is the need for interconnection between legal educators, policy makers, and practitioners to ensure that legal education is relevant and responsive to the needs of society<sup>3</sup>. Another problem and challenge identified is the dependence of law schools and law institutions on continuous primitive or conventional methods of teaching. This stressed routine learning and fails to address the interdisciplinary nature of sustainability issues.<sup>4</sup>

ESD is defined as a ‘process of acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to build local and global societies that are just, equitable and living within the environmental limits of our planet, both now and in the future’<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> [1] M Delgado, ‘Enfoque para la gestión de la I+D+i en la Industria Biofarmacéutica cubana. Revista Cubana de Información en Ciencias de la Salud’ (2017) 3(28), 1–16 retrieved from Zohaib Hassan Sain, Hasan Baharun2 et al, ‘Sustainable Legal Education: Aligning Curricula with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’ (2025) Volume-02 | Issue- 01 | GAS Journal of Law and Society <https://gaspublishers.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Sustainable-Legal-Education-Aligning-Curricula-with-the-2030-Agenda-for-Sustainable-Development.pdf>>accessed on 25th July, 2025.

<sup>4</sup>A Barreto & E Lozano, ‘Metodologías de investigación jurídica. Experiencias y desafíos del oficio de investigar en derecho’ (2021)Universidad de los Andes

<sup>5</sup> UK Government, ‘Learning and Skills Council, Embedding Sustainable Development in the Curriculum’ [https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/embedding\\_sustainability\\_in\\_the\\_curriculum\\_guide.pdf](https://www.sustainabilityexchange.ac.uk/files/embedding_sustainability_in_the_curriculum_guide.pdf): JAP Chandler, ‘How are Australian Universities and Law Schools approaching sustainability in their curricula and what are the implications for Legal Education’ (2024) Volume 34(1) Bond University Legal Education Review

As a way forward, new technology methods and materials that replicate the recent developments in sustainability law and policy are needed, as this will create opportunities for students to engage in real-world projects that eliminate sustainability challenges. Addressing these issues will require collaborative efforts from all stakeholders involved in legal education, including universities, governments, and professional organizations. For instance, in Nigeria, the stakeholders for law and related fields are the Nigerian Universities Council (NUC), Nigerian Bar Association (NBA), and Nigerian Universities. The NUC via the Core Curriculum and Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS) framework embeds the SDGs into the Nigerian university curriculum. In an effort to bring change and innovation, recently NUC revitalized the educational system of Environmental Science by transitioning the curriculum from the Benchmark Minimum Academic Standards (BMAS), which contained 14 disciplines, to the Curriculum to Minimum Academic Standards (CCMAS), which now contains 17 disciplines. It was through the review of the previous that it added three new disciplines to make it the aforesaid 17.<sup>6</sup> This is as a result of the need for improvement in research, teaching, and learning facilities, deepening ICT penetration, and provision of constant power supply to enhance a conducive environment for learning. The new curriculum was made to meet international standards and for the purpose of training 21st-century graduates.<sup>7</sup> This kind of innovation in curriculum is needed to be extended in law because some of the courses being offered are

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<sup>6</sup> Scribd, 'Environmental Sciences CCMAS 2023 FINAL'  
[https://www.scribd.com/document/825755007/Environmental-Sciences-CCMAS-2023-FINAL#:~:text=CCMAS%202023%20FINAL-.The%20document%20outlines%20the%20Core%20Curriculum%20and%20Minimum%20Academic%20Standards,between%20core%20and%20innovative%20courses>dated 27th August 2024](https://www.scribd.com/document/825755007/Environmental-Sciences-CCMAS-2023-FINAL#:~:text=CCMAS%202023%20FINAL-.The%20document%20outlines%20the%20Core%20Curriculum%20and%20Minimum%20Academic%20Standards,between%20core%20and%20innovative%20courses>dated%2027th%20August%202024)>accessed on 27th November, 2025.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

obsolete. Imagine still using Sale of Goods Act of 1893 to teach law student in the current society where the world has revolved and most transactions, teachings and learning are now digital. The danger of this exposes law graduate to being confined to archaic practice and which cannot be able to stand the taste of time. This is discouraging and as such subject most law students and even lawyers to resort to other source of livelihood. Curriculum needs to be changed.<sup>8</sup> This is due to the fact that existing curriculum has been unable to come up with or introduced new courses which will aid in generating remuneration during and after graduation which flows from the experience garnered in the course of study. NBA, during her conference in 2024 at break out session discussed ‘Challenges to Legal Education: Where Are We At?’<sup>9</sup>. Similar discussion was also discussed in Enugu during NBA Annual conference in August 2025 at one of the break-out sessions. It was due to this fallout that the current NBA President Afam Osigwe mandated every lawyer in Nigeria to engage in CPD workshops for continuous legal education. The Nigerian Bar Association (NBA) called for urgent and increased investment in legal education across Nigeria’s institutions at workshop held at Imo State University (IMSU)<sup>10</sup>. The advocacy is ongoing but the challenge is inputting same in action.

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<sup>8</sup> Okechukwu Oko, ‘Legal Education Reform in Africa: Time to Revisit the Two-tier Legal Education System’(12-16-2021) University of Miami International and Comparative Law review <https://repository.law.miami.edu/umicl/>> accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2025

<sup>9</sup> NBA Blog, ‘Transforming Legal Education: NBA Breakout Session IV Tackles Challenges and Opportunities for Nigeria’s Future Lawyers’ <https://blog.nigerianbar.org.ng/2024/08/27/transforming-legal-education-nba-breakout-session-iv-tackles-challenges-and-opportunities-for-nigerias-future-lawyers/>>accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2025

<sup>10</sup> Patience Adie, ‘NBA Advocates More Investment In Legal Education At Regional Workshop’ <https://themetrolawyers.com/nba-advocates-more-investment-in-legal->

## 2.0 SDGS AND LAW<sup>11</sup>

Akinsemolu & Arijeniwa in their work advocate that ‘Goal 4 of the UN SDGs encourages all states to ensure equitable and inclusive education and enhance lifelong learning opportunities by 2030. Target 4 of this goal seeks to ensure that all students acquire the skills and knowledge required for promoting sustainable development through sustainable lifestyles and education for sustainable development by 2030’.<sup>12</sup> They were of the view that Nigeria will achieve sustainable development, environmental and developmental issues, if it is integrated into educational activities to create environmentally responsible citizens. They recommended a system that promotes environmental education programs and courses aimed at acquiring skills and knowledge on topics such as waste management, water management, responsible consumption, climate change, and recycling and composting. It is not in doubt that in Law there is a course known as environmental law, but there is a pressing need to modify the syllabus to capture the present reality and ways in which lawyers will benefit from the study and make earnings. Ekhatior et al., in their book, stated that despite the massive oil wealth and revenues, Nigerian citizens still wallow in poverty due to corruption, misadministration, and the inability of the government to distribute the enormous wealth of the nation to the citizens. They added that though the SDGs are not legally binding, governments

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[education-at-regional-workshop/>dated](#) November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025 >accessed on 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2025.

<sup>11</sup> M.D Saiful karim, Felicity Deane, Abdullah-AL ARI et al, ‘Integrating sustainable development goals in the law curriculum: legal Education for people, planet and prosperity’ (2024)[Vol. 12: 196 Belmont Law Review <https://download.ssrn.com/2025/1/17/5101163.pdf?response-content-disposition=inline&X-Amz-Security-Token>>accessed on 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2025.

<sup>12</sup> A A Akinsemolu, & FV Arijeniwa.,’ Current Trends in Sustainability Education and the Future of Sustainability Education in Nigeria’ (2021) *Journal of Sustainable Development Law and Policy (The)*, 12(2), 421-441.

should be the engine or take over the framework. They were of the view that governments should set up national frameworks that would aid in actualizing these goals to eradicate poverty.<sup>13</sup> Oniemola & Tasié while analyzing Nigeria's constitutional framework for sustainable development, it was found that existing laws are insufficient for effective implementation. They recommended that, to ensure that sustainable development is a priority for the government and citizens, more pragmatic and legislative measures should be put in place<sup>14</sup>.

The need to have a general understanding of the focus of various SDGs will be helpful for law educators in incorporating the SDGs into their learning and teaching practice. According to Professors James May and Erin Daly, the SDGs “are the culmination of four decades of multidisciplinary and legal thinking about what sustainable development means . . .” and “the embodiment of sustainability in the international legal order is designed to advance human dignity, something reflected in the very text of the SDGs.”<sup>15</sup>

Sustainable development, and the methods intended to realize it, have been considered as one of the most important areas of focus in contemporary society.<sup>16</sup> ‘This implies that understanding the SDGs and their application to a particular area of law is necessary for tertiary education; hence,

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<sup>13</sup> E.O Ekhaton, S, Miller, S., & E. Igbinsosa, *Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: Barriers, Prospects, and Strategies. Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in Nigeria: Barriers, Prospects and Strategies* (Routledge 2021)

<sup>14</sup>P Oniemola & O Tasié ‘Engendering Constitutional Realization of Sustainable Development in Nigeria’ (2020) *13*(1) *Law and Development Review*159-191.

<sup>15</sup> MD Saiful karim (n13)

<sup>16</sup> Clara Vasconcelos et al., ‘Teaching Sustainable Development Goals to University Students: A Cross-Country Case-Based Study’ (2022) *14*(3) *Sustainability* 1593, 1594.

university educators should incorporate this understanding in their teaching practice'<sup>17</sup>. However, teaching students about sustainable behaviors extends beyond environmental considerations. The SDGs incorporate economic and social concerns that inevitably touch on almost all subject matters of law. At the same time, it is vital to recognize that the relationship between the SDGs and the law can be both direct and indirect. For instance, without a robust legal framework for anti-discrimination and human rights achieving gender equality and labor rights will be challenging. Many of the SDGs will not be achievable without the rule of law and a supportive legal framework.

Similarly, the inequality between states with different levels of economic development will not be reduced without international legal and institutional reform to promote access and equity in international relations. On the other hand, to foster pro-people lawyering and to keep law and legal institutions relevant for economic, social, and environmental issues, lawyers must be aware of these most significant global goals, the needs of humankind (both present and future), and of nature itself, upon which humankind's existence is dependent.

### **3.0 INTEGRATION OF SDGS IN LAW CURRICULUM**

The major body(s) or institutions that play critical role in teaching students about the SDGs are universities. This is particularly the case for educating law students because many of the world's legislators are lawyers or law graduates. <sup>18</sup>Even though this may not be the case in Nigeria, this means

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup> Devin K. Joshi, 'Lawyers and Law Graduates in Parliaments as a Consequence of SMD Electoral Systems: A Comparison of Japan, South Korea, and Germany'(2020) 21(1) Japan. J. of Pol. Sci. 19, 19.

legal educators are tasked with imparting more than just the description of the law as it exists. Instead, legal educators must embrace and teach the principles that underpin good law (including the SDGs) and be well-versed in the means to achieve desired outcomes through law and policy. According to Bouwer et al, UK authors, stated that in the future, law graduates will center their practices in a web of climate law. He added that in the UK, there is a national climate change law and policy, but most lawyers are unaware of it. The UK Climate Change Act 2008 has a constitutional status. It is not sufficient to understand the implications of climate change for legal study and practice; rather, there is a need for consideration of how law will influence and, in turn, be shaped by society's response to climate change. It has been revealed that UK law schools have failed to incorporate or include climate law or consider climate-conscious reasoning as part of their core degree.<sup>19</sup>

Recently, there has been a shift in thinking from 'green approaches' to 'climate change' being a natural part of legal education; as such, climate change law becomes important to be incorporated into the curriculum. They argued that environmental and sustainability issues should be incorporated in the core law curriculum and not be subsumed in environmental law courses. In some universities, climate change law is introduced as an elective, but it shouldn't be so. It is suggested that it should be made a mandatory course because the world is revolving, such law students should have deep knowledge of climate-conscious reasoning or how to work with climate change issues in the context of a conventional practice.<sup>20</sup> More so, lawyers cannot provide the service that clients need if they are not

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<sup>19</sup> Bouwer, K., John, E., Luke, O., & Rozhan, A., 'Climate Change isn't Optional: Climate Change in the Core Law Curriculum' (2023) 43(2) *Legal Studies*, 240-258

<sup>20</sup> Bouwer, K., et al., (n21)

knowledgeable in it. The International Bar Association (IBA) has declared 'a climate crisis' and recognizes the need for climate consciousness to be integrated in practice. The IBA also sees the need for climate change to be taught to lawyers, recommending ongoing engagement between the profession and law schools, and establishing a framework curriculum to provide continuing professional education to its members'.<sup>21</sup>

In most common law countries, core subjects usually include constitutional law, administrative law, criminal law, tort law, contract law, property law, equity and trusts law, corporate law, civil procedure, criminal procedure, and the law on evidence. Some optional subjects supplement these core areas of law, for example, jurisprudence and legal theory, taxation and fiscal law, international law, environmental and planning law, and human rights law. However, some optional subjects, such as international law and jurisprudence, may be compulsory in some universities and countries. In some countries and/or universities, most subjects may be included as compulsory with little or no optional choice. Law degrees may occasionally include non-law subjects or the option to take a few non-law subjects<sup>22</sup>. However, in UK, administrative law is not a core law course.

The SDGs can be embedded in different areas of the law curriculum in the specialized and core subjects. The following sections present examples or

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<sup>21</sup> BA 'International Bar Association Climate Crisis Statement'

(2020), <https://www.ibanet.org/LPRU/Climate-Crisis> accessed on 28th Nov., 2025

<sup>22</sup>Karim, Md Saiful, et al., 'Integrating Sustainable Development Goals in the Law Curriculum: Legal Education for People, Planet and Prosperity'. (2024) 12 Belmont L. Rev. 196: SLS-Approved Non-Law Courses, STANFORD L. SCH., [https://law.stanford.edu/nlcourse/?tax\\_and\\_terms=9304&page=4](https://law.stanford.edu/nlcourse/?tax_and_terms=9304&page=4) [<https://perma.cc/8G4Z-NPM9>] (last visited Aug. 4, 2024); J.D. Curriculum, VAND. L. SCH., <https://law.vanderbilt.edu/jd-program/curriculum/> [

case studies in selected core and optional subjects. Inclusion or non-inclusion in this section does not necessarily mean that one law subject is more relevant for the achievement of the SDGs than others. For example, we did not include the law of evidence and civil procedure as case studies. However, these procedural law courses are relevant for the SDGs, particularly SDG 16, which emphasize the need of “the rule of law at the national and international levels and ensure equal access to justice for all.” Similarly, administrative law is directly relevant to the achievement of goals 1 to 5, 10, and 16 because of the need for rule of law in the context of the SDGs and national development. Moreover, most law schools in the common law world include one or more environmental, planning, and climate law subjects in the LLB and JD curricula. These areas are also profoundly emphasized in existing legal education literature for integrating sustainability literacy for law students. The sections below cover one concise case study on these subjects, but the coverage of the integration of environmental sustainability in the existing legal education literature demonstrates a clear recognition of the need for this type of work. The case studies presented take various approaches to describing how one or more SDGs can be integrated or highlighted in the curriculum of the related law subjects. Integration of the SDGs may look different across subjects, guided by its primary learning outcomes and subject matter limitations. In other words, this work does not suggest a one-size-fits-all approach. Rather, it fully embraces a spectrum of learning and teaching approaches.

#### **A. Introduction to Law**

The curricula of the first year in law school in most common law countries has an introductory subject that takes names such as “Introduction to

Law”<sup>23</sup> or “Foundations of Law.”<sup>24</sup> The subject aims to provide preliminary knowledge of different kinds of law, for example, administrative, civil, criminal, and constitutional, as well as various legal systems, civil law, common law, religious law, and mixed or hybrid systems. In addition, it offers a brief discussion of the country’s judicial system, including essential features of the courts and their hierarchy. An introductory class may, in some cases, also briefly introduce global legal order, international law, and the UN system.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, the subject informs students why they should study law and how to develop a legal mind.<sup>26</sup> Integrating knowledge of the SDGs with the introductory law subject will make students aware of sustainable development and the SDGs. The first step in that direction can be explaining the relationship between the SDGs and the legal system. The three dimensions of sustainable development—economic, social, and environmental—may also be incorporated to help students realize the rationale and importance of the SDGs. As the students being introduced to the subject are often first-year law students, their knowledge of the global legal and political order may be minimal. Providing information on the world’s most critical challenges and the international communities’ efforts to address those challenges can engage students in these issues. With basic knowledge of the SDGs, students will understand the inequality and

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<sup>23</sup> ‘LLB101: Introduction to Law’ Queensl. Univ. of Tech., <https://www.qut.edu.au/study/unit?unitCode=LLB101> [<https://perma.cc/Q3HJ-3KR6>]

<sup>24</sup> ‘LAWS1006: Foundations of Law’ Univ. of Sydney <https://www.sydney.edu.au/units/LAWS1006> [<https://perma.cc/3DCC-RQ2C>]

<sup>25</sup> Introduction to Law, Governance, and Development, AUSTRAL. NAT’L UNIV., <https://programsandcourses.anu.edu.au/2022/course/LAWS8001/Summer%20Session/1564> [<https://perma.cc/3X26-2GT3>] (last visited Aug. 3, 2024); Principles of Public Law (LAWS50024), UNIV. OF MELB. (Feb. 8, 2024) <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au/subjects/laws50024> [<https://perma.cc/Z5PT-GBNX>].

<sup>26</sup> Michelle Sanson & Thalia Anthony, *Connecting With Law 10–12* (Oxford University Press, 5th ed. 2014)



of social and inclusive justice to be achieved, it is imperative that they experience the practical aspect of the theoretical knowledge they received from law schools.

Currently, Nigerian law schools and Nigerian law faculties have clinical education due to the benefits associated with their adoption in the contemporary era. Continuous Legal education is now being graded, and scores are used as continuous assessment in some universities where it is done. The CLE Program was introduced to Nigeria through the efforts of NULAI (Network of University of Legal Aid Institutions), but NUC has not yet integrated it as a compulsory course.<sup>29</sup> Adedokun-Odeyale and Olanike stated that clinical legal education (CLE) is necessary for promoting social justice in Nigeria. This is achieved by making provisions for students to acquire practical skills and instilling a commitment to public interest law. He stated that CLE enables students to gain hands-on experience with live-client cases, which would aid in improving their legal skills, professional ethics, and confidence. They recommended integrating live-client law clinics into the mainstream legal education system to produce more effective and socially conscious lawyers ready for practice.<sup>30</sup> Beyond Nigeria, using India as a case study, research revealed that clinical education is adopted and has been incorporated into their curriculum, but the implementation varies, just like in Nigeria. ‘Report has revealed that there has been collaboration between the Citizen Participation Clinic at Jindal Global Law School and the Cornell International Human Rights Clinic at Cornell Law School. Students based in the Jindal Global Law

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<sup>29</sup> Bamgbose, Oludayo (n 30)

<sup>30</sup> Adedokun-Odeyale and S. Olanike , ‘Role of clinical legal education in social justice in Nigeria’ (2018) 5.1 Asian Journal of Legal Education 88-98

School (Sonipat, India) and Cornell Law School (Ithaca, N.Y).<sup>31</sup> BCI incorporated practical papers for clinical legal education into the curriculum in 1997. The National Knowledge Commission working group on Legal Education, in their Report, emphasized the importance of exposing students to social issues like poverty, social discrimination, and societal changes towards the underprivileged community through clinical legal education. This integration aims at producing socially responsible legal professionals for addressing social justice. Clinical legal education promotes social justice in significant ways, as one of the major issues faced by the underprivileged people is a lack of proper representation in the forums of justice for availing the privileges they have under the law.<sup>32</sup> Clinical legal education can ensure that these people are properly represented in various forums through legal aid mechanisms like providing legal advice through para legal volunteers and getting professional assistance from legal services authorities so that they will be represented through the lawyers registered with legal service authority. Through these ways of clinical education, a law student would gather the experience which complements their understanding of law and its procedure.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Sital Kalantry, Elizabeth Burundigie, et al., 'Promoting Clinical Legal Education in India: A Case Study of the Citizen Participation Clinic' SSRN [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2112429#>dated](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2112429#>dated) 19th July 2012>accessed on 30th Nov., 2025.

<sup>32</sup> Kripa Prasad,' Role of Legal Education in advancing Sustainable Development Goals' (February, 2025) Volume 12, Issue 2 Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR) <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2502664.pdf>>accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2025

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*

## **5.0 REASONS TO CONSIDER SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LEGAL EDUCATION**

According Jason Lowther and Joanne Sellick,<sup>34</sup> the brief overview of the relationship between law and SD reveals implicit themes which are of definite interest for legal educators, as well as those within other disciplines. In addressing the question as to why it is important to engage in the first place, then certain policy drivers need to be understood.

It was noted in Principle 21 of the Rio Declaration: at a more local level in the UK the Department of the Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has stated that:

...we need to improve the knowledge and skills base of everyone including professionals and everyone in the workplace...we need to make sustainability literacy a core competency for professional graduates” (emphasis added).<sup>35</sup>

The view that sustainability literacy is something that those training for professional roles should aspire to, provides something of a conceptual antidote to the compelling, albeit depressing comment by David Orr that ‘the destruction of the planet ‘is not the work of ignorant people. Rather it is largely the result of work by people with BAs, BSCs, LLBs, MBAs and

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<sup>34</sup>Jason Lowther and Joanne Sellick, ‘Embedding Sustainable Development into Legal Education’ (2009) Volume 7 ISSN 1447-9508 The international Journal of the Humanities  
[file:///C:/Users/TOSHIBA/Downloads/H09\\_19479\\_EmbeddingSustainableDevelopmentintoLegalEducation\\_final%20\(1\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/TOSHIBA/Downloads/H09_19479_EmbeddingSustainableDevelopmentintoLegalEducation_final%20(1).pdf)>accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> July, 2025.

<sup>35</sup> DEFRA, ‘securing the future: delivering the UK sustainability strategy’, (2005) CM 6467 London available at <http://www.defra.gov.uk/sustainable/government/documents/SDFramework.pdf>

PhDs<sup>36</sup>. This raises the question as to what a ‘sustainability literate’ graduate actually is. In a legal–educational context this has been explained by Hugh Brayne and Tracey Varnava as a person that has the ‘knowledge, ability to act and ability to influence the behaviour of others.’<sup>37</sup>

Beyond (straight) government policy, in the UK the key Higher Education bodies have also taken the SD concept to heart. In its 2009 update on the issue, the Higher Education Funding Council for England notes in its forward that, in relation to climate change: ‘To meet this challenge, the world needs minds capable of creating new possibilities for meeting our basic needs...; minds that can transform our daily experiences into ones that allow a sustainable development, safeguarding our opportunities and the environment for future generations. The higher education sector is where these minds are trained and developed. Therefore, it is crucial that the sector contributes strongly to sustainable development. It can do so by training and expanding these young minds; researching answers to challenges and informing public policy; The higher education sector offers a vital platform for undertaking this transition and can contribute to the global shift that is necessary to safeguard a secure future’<sup>38</sup>.

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<sup>36</sup>D. Orr, *Earth in Mind, On Education, Environment, and the Human Prospect* (1994 Island Press, Washington DC)

<sup>37</sup>H. Brayne and T. Varnava, ‘A new sense of purpose: education for sustainability in law’ (2007) UKCLE, available at <http://www.ukcle.ac.uk/research/projects/esd3.html>: Jason lowther and Joanne Sillick *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> HEFCE ‘Sustainable development in higher education 2008 update to strategic statement and action plan’ February 2009/03 available via [http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09\\_03/09\\_03.pdf](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2009/09_03/09_03.pdf)

HEFCE demonstrates the importance of sustainability in all activities related to Higher Education (HE). This includes policies on procurement, campus initiatives and so on. Arguably, the most significant aspect is the design and delivery of the curriculum. HEFCE observes that the greatest contribution universities can make to sustainable development is to equip students with skills and knowledge necessary to effect change. In other words, what students learn and what they are taught are crucial. Responsibility for curriculum development lies on individual institutions and HEFCE made it clear that there is no desire to influence curriculum content directly. Such interference could be deduced to imply passing trend at best or an infringement on academic freedom at worst.<sup>39</sup> Law has a 'special relationship' with sustainable development, as it is through the process of law that the broad concept finds its practical definition, application and ability to create predictable obligations. The context within which laws are made and the wider implications of those laws represents familiar territory for the academic study of law, and as above there are opportunities to build sustainability literacy within existing frameworks and curriculum areas. Law graduates are, obviously, represented within the legal profession; and also prominent in the business world and all levels of government.

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<sup>39</sup> Higher Education Academy, 'Sustainable development in higher education: current practice and future developments'(2006), [http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/resourcedatabase/id587\\_sustainable\\_development\\_managers\\_report.pdf](http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/York/documents/resources/resourcedatabase/id587_sustainable_development_managers_report.pdf)

## **5.1 EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LAW CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT**

Integrating ESD into law education would require a fundamental transformation of the law curriculum. This can be achieved in several ways<sup>40</sup>:

### **A) Integrating Sustainability into Existing Law Courses**

One approach is to integrate sustainability into existing law courses. For example, a course on environmental law could be revised to include a module on climate change and its implications for environmental law. Similarly, a course on corporate law could include a module on corporate social responsibility and sustainability.

### **B) Developing New Courses Focused on Sustainability and Law**

There will be need to develop new courses that centers on sustainability and law. For example, a course on sustainable development law could explore the legal frameworks and mechanisms that support sustainable development. A course on climate change law could examine the legal responses to climate change at the national and international levels.

### **C) Encouraging Experiential Learning and Community Engagement**

ESD also demonstrated the need for experiential learning and community engagement. Law students should be urged to participate in real-world projects and to engage with local communities to develop their understanding of sustainability issues and their ability to apply their knowledge in a practical context.

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<sup>40</sup> Number Analytic, ' **Education for Sustainable Law: Transforming Law Education for a Sustainable Future through ESD Principles**' <https://www.numberanalytics.com/blog/education-for-sustainable-law#:~:text=In%20conclusion%2C%20ESD%20has%20the,more%20sustainable%20and%20equitable%20world.>

## **6.0 CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN ESD IMPLEMENTATION**

The implementation of ESD in law education is not without its challenges. However, it also presents several opportunities for innovation and growth.

i) Lack of understanding of the concept of sustainability:

Lack of knowledge of the concept of sustainability by people particularly educators has posed as a strong challenge as it made it difficult to incorporate it into educational system.<sup>41</sup>

ii) Methods of teaching

Teachers are still hold onto traditional teaching methods. They held onto monologue –teaching style instead of having an interactive session wherein insights would be gathered and students are given opportunity to contribute from what they were taught. Most teachers’ inability to adapt to change has posed as a challenge.<sup>42</sup>

iii) Addressing Resistance to Change in Law Education

Amongst the challenges, the fundamental one is refusal to bring in change in law education. Some law schools may be reluctant towards improving their curricula to incorporate ESD, especially if they are concerned about the potential impact on their accreditation or reputation. However, it is through creating of awareness about the importance of ESD that it can be resolved or addressed so as to benefit both the law students and the profession as a whole.

iv) Leveraging Technology to Support ESD in Law

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<sup>41</sup>Jon-Erik Dahlin, '7 challenges in education for sustainable development – and how you can address those' (January 28, 2023) [http://www.jonerikdahlin.com/uncategorized/7-challenges-in-education-for-sustainable-development-and-how-you-can-address-those/#:~:text=Education%20for%20sustainable%20development%20\(ESD,lack%20of%20collaboration%20and%20partnerships.>](http://www.jonerikdahlin.com/uncategorized/7-challenges-in-education-for-sustainable-development-and-how-you-can-address-those/#:~:text=Education%20for%20sustainable%20development%20(ESD,lack%20of%20collaboration%20and%20partnerships.>) accessed on 28<sup>th</sup> Nov., 2025

<sup>42</sup> Kripa Prasad (n 34)

Technology has a role to play in supporting ESD in law education. For example, through online platforms students can access a wide range of sustainability-related materials and it could aid in facilitating collaboration and knowledge-sharing between students and practitioners<sup>43</sup>.

v) Collaborating with Stakeholders to Advance ESD in Law Education

This is another very important way of advancing ESD in law education. For instance, engaging students to attach or work with law firms, government agencies, and community organizations would provide them with opportunities for experiential learning.

## **7.0 NEED FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN LEGAL PRACTICE**

The world today is being digitally transformed and digitalized as such there became need for lawyers to be involved in building sustainable society. Lawyers have important role to play to protect our environment and climate change. Achieving this would entail acquiring new skills, knowledge and project management. Thus, the legal profession is at the threshold of fundamental change. Today's innovation has disrupted and overturned the archaic ways of organizing and working, thereby presenting new challenges and opportunities. The future of our planet is in danger, demanding immediate action. Social inequality and widespread poverty press for new solutions to build a better world. <sup>44</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic that has

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<sup>43</sup> Number Analytic (n43)

<sup>44</sup> AIJA, 'Sustainability is the future of law: paving the way for positive change' (2020) The AIJA journal  
[https://www.aija.org/images/uploads/newfiles/AIJA\\_Sustainability%20report\\_June2020.pdf](https://www.aija.org/images/uploads/newfiles/AIJA_Sustainability%20report_June2020.pdf)  
<https://www.aija.org/sustainability-is-the-future-of-law.html#:~:text=Lawyers%20must%20support%20change%2C%20and%20also%20be>.

shaken our world has put this inequality into stark relief, hitting the world's vulnerable the hardest. The aftermath of the crisis gave rise to digitalization and the transition to a more sustainable way of living. Lawyers are urged not to only adapt to a changing economy and society, but to lead positive change on a grand scale. Sustainability has many different definitions, but its essence was articulated by the Brundtland Commission, tasked by the UN in 1987 to formulate a global agenda for change.

This guiding principle was adopted by all nations when the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were adopted in 2015, creating a framework to eliminate poverty, protect the planet and ensure peace and prosperity for all by 2030. To add to the goals achieved, there is a need for a sustainability-minded legal profession that is aware of the most urgent needs of our digitalized and globalized world. Lawyers must support change, and also be the change. Lawyers must develop new or additional skills and become more conscious of their own ecological impact and that of their clients. Lawyers must use their knowledge for the greater good, providing solutions to environmental and social challenges. Lawyers must stand up for human rights, help break down the barriers to justice, and resist threats to the independence of the profession<sup>45</sup>.

## 8.0 CONCLUSION

Considering how the world is going, traditional teaching methods could be said to be obsolete as they will not be impactful in the student's life. The

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providing%20solutions%20to%20environmental%20and%20social%20challenges.:>accessed on 29<sup>th</sup> July, 2025.

<sup>45</sup> AIJA, (n 47)

world is also going digital; as such, there is an urgent need to expand our curriculum to include those areas that involve sustainable development to make law students, law graduates, and prospective lawyers more productive. This will aid in diversification, particularly in Nigeria, where most lawyers are clamouring for poor remuneration, which discourages them from engaging in legal practice. By integrating ESD into law curriculum development and addressing the challenges and opportunities associated with its implementation, law schools can play a crucial role in shaping the future of the legal profession and promoting a more sustainable and equitable world.

As the world continues to grapple with the challenges of climate change, environmental degradation, and social inequality, the need for sustainable law practices will only continue to grow. By adopting ESD, law schools can help to ensure that the next generation of lawyers is equipped to meet these challenges and to create a more sustainable future for all. This paper strongly advocates the incorporation of climate change law into the curriculum of law schools and law faculties. It is therefore crucial that continuous legal education in this area of law be made a mandatory requirement for all practicing lawyers. It is therefore recommended that the NBA should introduce courses that involve sustainable development, and or integrate sustainable development into its continuous legal learning for lawyers in practice already. Acquiring new or additional skills and knowledge that lies in sustainable development will aid lawyers to navigate in area that is not core law. It is further recommended that there will be a need to promote interdisciplinary collaboration and integrate sustainability, which focuses on experimental learning.