

Chapter 16

LEGAL EDUCATION: RESHAPING VALUES FOR A BETTER SOCIETY

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Abstract

The level of sophistication achieved and demonstrated by any society is often reflected directly by the legal system that governs the relationship between various entities that live and operate within it. This legal system is nourished by those who are educated in both its practice and its philosophy. Legal education in Sri Lanka has had a long and eventful journey from humble beginnings as a sub-discipline in the field of arts, to a stand-alone subject constantly evolving in its quest to search for truth and justice for the society it serves. The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. Firstly, the chapter aims to trace the history of the development of the law as well as the law-teaching institutions of this country. This is done by reference to various archival material that outline the rationale for institutionalizing law as an academic discipline as well as the means by which this was done, along with some description of the architects of these very first steps. Secondly, the chapter presents the teaching of law as it is done in the present context, analysing its diversification in location as well as by subject content. It also examines the clinical and practical components of legal education through the many initiatives that have been taken to promote these in providing the law undergraduate with a well-rounded educational experience. In addition, the chapter gives the reader interesting information regarding the outstanding legal personalities produced by the law-teaching institutions of our country, the capacity, and options for postgraduate research in this country, and projections for the future.

Keywords: *legal education, legal system, academic, justice*

Introduction

It is an accepted fact that a society, in order for it to be civilized and function effectively, must be governed by a coherent set of rules, known as laws. Through law, society pronounces what it deems to be just and moral, right, and proper. Every human activity, interaction, and relationship, from marriage to murder, is today governed by law. The formulation and administration of laws is then the most powerful expression

of the values of a society, and it is imperative that those tasked with this vital duty are capable of fulfilling their responsibility. To this end, lawyers and legal practitioners are required to not only possess the knowledge of the law in all its varied complexity, but must also display those skills required to articulate the law meaningfully, and ensure that it retains those core values and principles that make it just and moral.