

1.2 The Council of Legal Education Act, No. 1 of 1989:

The mandate to make provision for such professional training was entrusted to the new Council of Legal Education by Section 6 of the 1989 Act which set out the functions of the Council, the most important one being to establish and maintain a School of Law to be known as the Sierra Leone Law School which was to provide a course of study and professional training for graduates who wished to be admitted to practice Law in Sierra Leone.

Sections 11 and 12 of the 1989 Act, also provided for pupillage either with a pupil master for a period of twelve months or as a Law Officer for a period of eighteen months as a prerequisite for entry into the profession. Section 15 of the 1989 Act, empowered the Chief Justice to admit to practice as a Barrister and Solicitor any person who had the qualifications prescribed by the Act. Under the transitional provisions contained in section 20 of the 1989 Act, a person who gained his professional qualification after 31 December 1995 in any institution other than the Sierra Leone Law School could not be admitted to practice in Sierra Leone.

1.3 The Legal Practitioners Act, No. 15 of 2000: The next significant development was the enactment of the Legal Practitioners Act, (Act 2000, No. 15 of 2000) ,which transferred the power to admit and enroll persons wishing to practice law in Sierra Leone from the Chief Justice to a new General Legal Council established by the same Act. However the role of the Council of Legal Education and the Sierra Leone Law School in providing the course of study leading to the professional qualification for admission remained paramount.

Section 10 of the Legal Practitioners Act, expressly provides as follows:-

"A person qualifies for admission as a legal practitioner if—

(a) He is -

(i) the holder of a degree in law awarded by the University of Sierra Leone and of such level as the Council of Legal Education may prescribe;

or

(ii) the holder of any degree in law of a recognized University or other institution of higher learning of a Commonwealth Country approved by the Council of Legal Education;

or

(iii) the holder of any degree in law of a recognized University or other institution of higher learning of a country with a legal system analogous to that of Sierra Leone approved by the Council of Legal Education; and

(b) He has passed the appropriate professional examinations conducted by the Council of Legal Education and served a period of pupillage of not less than twelve months with a legal practitioner of at least ten years' standing in Sierra Leone".

According to Section 11 (1) of the 2000 Act, the period of pupillage referred to in paragraph (b) of Section 10 above may now be served by employment for eighteen months not only as a Law Officer as formerly provided in the Council of Legal Education Act, No. 1 of 1989 but in "the Judicial and Legal Service Commission" as a whole.