

INTERNATIONAL Initiatives

BY AMY DVORAK

ALA teamed with the Lagos Business School and launched a much-needed higher education curriculum for Nigerian legal practitioners. In this article, we take you along for the journey.



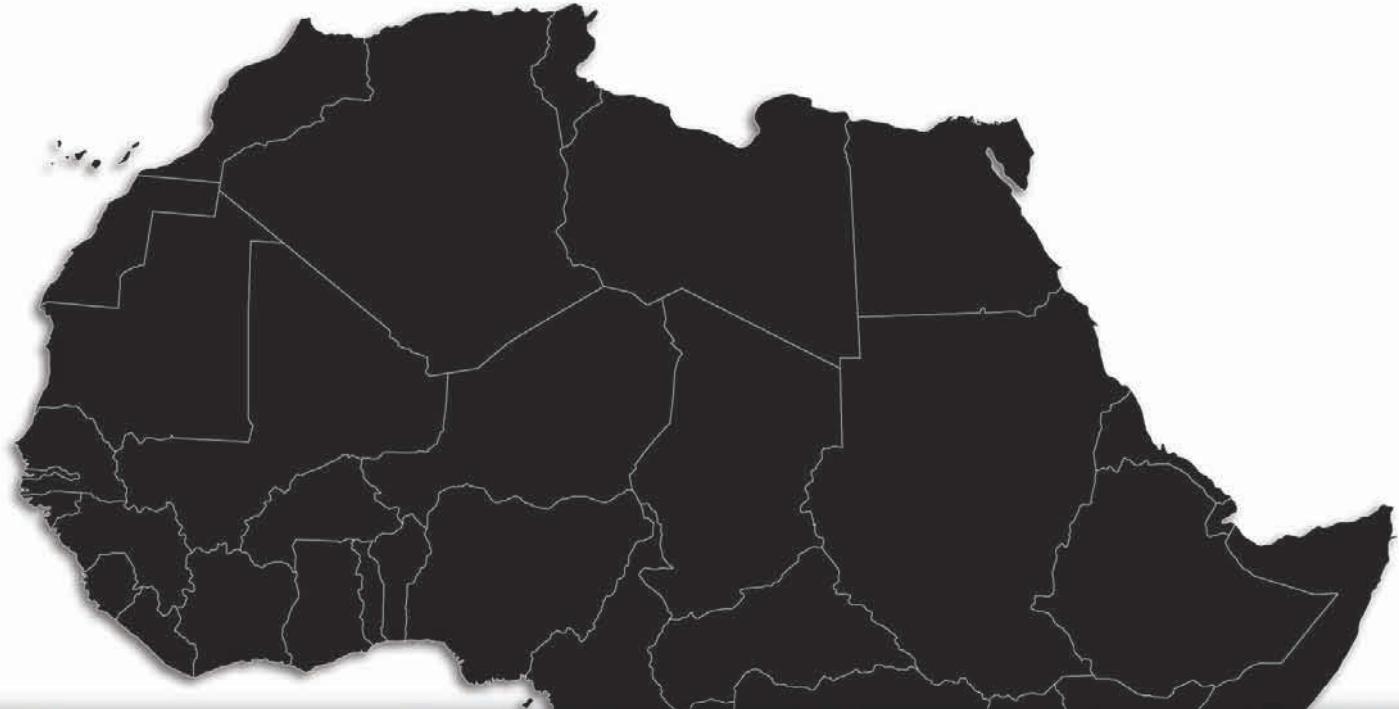
Nigeria's population: 125 million people. Of that, 50,000 are practicing lawyers, and the country's law schools produce about 3,500 lawyers annually. Yet when it comes to the business of law, there are few, if any, continuing education resources for legal practitioners in Nigeria.

Those were the startling statistics brought to our attention in 2006 by Nigerian ALA member, Joy Harrison-Abiola. In an email to Executive Director John Michalik, she said, "The legal management profession in Nigeria is – at best – at its infancy level. Sincerely, I see a huge opportunity for ALA in Nigeria. If the aim is to improve the quality of management in the legal service industry [and] support the advancement of the legal management profession internationally, indeed there is a great opportunity to be harnessed in Nigeria."

So in an effort to support one of the Association of Legal Administrators' (ALA) goals to develop and deliver programs and products that will provide high-quality, competency-based education to members of the legal management team, ALA helped launch a program for legal practitioners at the Lagos Business School (LBS) in Lagos, Nigeria. In 2009, with a grant from the Foundation of the Association of Legal Administrators (FALA), the "Management Development Programme for Legal Practitioners" was born.

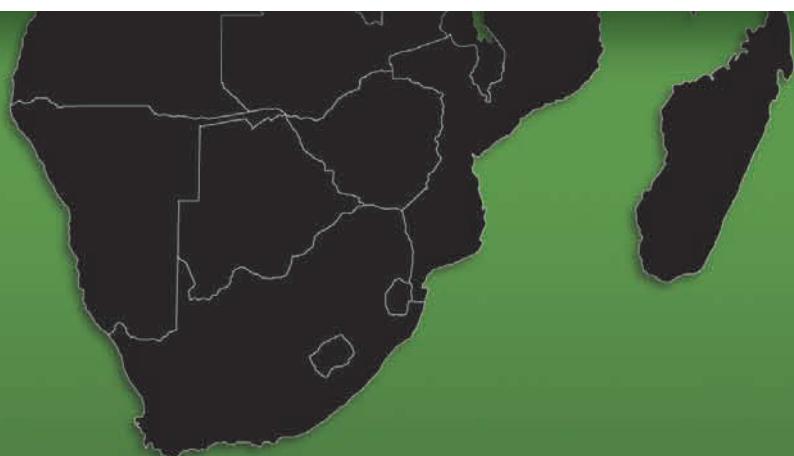
THE DESIGN

Co-designed by LBS executive education faculty and then ALA Professional Development Program Manager, Kelley Chrouser, Ph.D., the program was divided into three modules: one held in April, May and June 2009.



Each module ran four to five days and was comprised of day-long sessions, held from 9 a.m. to 4:45 p.m.

Along with Chrouser, ALA sent the following five visiting U.S. scholars to participate in the launch of ALA's first co-branded international legal administration higher education curriculum: ALA members Richard (Dick) Nigon, CLM, and Lorri Salyards, CLM; and consultants Robert Millard, Deborah Novachick and Stephen (Pete) Peterson; and ALA members Richard (Dick) Nigon, CLM, and Lorri Salyards, CLM.



THE COURSES

As legal administrators are rare in Nigeria (most are attorneys who take on the business

management duties), the initial session provided an introduction to legal management and helped to explain the role and core competencies of the legal administrator position. While ALA sent five U.S. scholars to teach the program, the Lagos Business School also arranged for local faculty members to participate. Collectively, they taught the following courses:

- Human Resources Management
- Leadership and Interpersonal Skills
- Operations Management
- Ethics and Codes
- Financial Management and Strategy

Ten students total participated in the Management Development Programme for Legal Practitioners – mostly attorneys. Each day consisted

of a one-hour case study session for the participants to prepare and discuss the cases before the class sessions.

"Nearly all the LBS students were lawyers very familiar with the case study methodology, and very experienced arguing opposing positions," said Novachick. "Many were experienced business people rather heavily invested in doing things certain ways. Facilitating a debate created a good practical experience for them: They had to think like someone very different and had to defend a very different way of doing things."

REFLECTING NOW

"This project really called us all to think and adapt creatively," said Novachick. "The end result was we

delivered significant value to the university and to the students. And our U.S. team learned a great deal not only about Nigeria, but about doing this kind of project in any country with a young, developing legal industry."

In Nigeria, the reactions to the program were positive, as well. "The programme went well, and we were very happy to have ALA scholars with us," said Henry Andoh, Director of Programmes at LBS. "I can assure you that this will be the maiden edition of the programme that will continue for years to come. From all of us at LBS, we say thank you very much again for partnering with us."

For more information on the Lagos Business School, visit www.lbs.edu.ng/.

