

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE ETHICS AND LEGAL EDUCATION IN AFRICA: PREPARING LAWYERS FOR ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE

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Abstract

The development of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its increasing use raise significant issues regarding transparency, accountability, fairness, privacy and human rights. While there have been a significant number of discussions related to AI governance, relatively little attention has been devoted to the ability of legal education to develop future generations of lawyers who will be able to meet this emerging challenge, especially within Africa. This paper provides an examination of the interrelationship between AI ethics, algorithmic governance and legal education in Africa. Through the application of a doctrinal and analytical method, the paper suggests that effective algorithmic governance is dependent on Lawyers who possess a range of competences, including AI literacy, ethical reasoning, digital rights, technological accountability and interdisciplinary collaboration. The research demonstrates that many legal education systems in Africa currently lack the necessary preparation to respond effectively to the realities of algorithmic governance. It

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proposes a competency-based framework for integrating AI ethics into legal education and recommends reforms aimed at strengthening responsible, accountable, and rights-respecting AI governance across the continent.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, AI Ethics, Legal Education, Algorithmic Governance, Digital Justice, Africa.

1. INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has evolved as one of the most transformative technologies of the twenty-first century. Its influence extends far beyond technical innovation and commercial efficiency.¹ AI has begun shaping how governments allocate resources, businesses make decisions, financial institutions assess risk and public authorities deliver services. Novozhilova et al., explain that in numerous jurisdictions today, algorithmic systems are determining decisions involving employment, healthcare, credit allocation, social welfare, law enforcement and judicial administration.² Consequently, AI has moved from being merely a technological phenomenon to a major governance issue, creating legal and ethical implications.

The growing use of AI tools in making decisions has led to an increase in concerns about how accountable such systems are. According to Goldsmith & Yang, proponents believe that AI is able to provide greater efficiency, greater consistency, and a better way to predict outcomes. However, opponents point out that AI systems will likely support or strengthen current social inequities, will make it harder to

¹ Greenstein, S. (2021). Preserving the rule of law in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). *Artificial Intelligence and Law*, 30(3), 291–323. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10506-021-09294-4>

² Novozhilova, E., Mays, K. K., & Katz, J. E. (2024). Looking towards an automated future: U.S. attitudes towards future artificial intelligence instantiations and their effect. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 11(1). <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-024-02625-1>

understand the process of decision-making, and will affect previous mechanisms of accountability.³ Intensified concern on algorithmic bias, transparency, violation of privacy, and discriminatory outcomes has amplified demands for greater regulatory oversight.⁴ These regulatory oversight frameworks need to be implemented so as to allow developers and users of AI technology to develop and use, in conformity with basic legal principles, ethical standards, and human rights.

This debate is increasingly relevant to the continent of Africa. Over the last ten years, several governments across Africa and private sector organizations have begun utilizing artificial intelligence (AI) for the improvement of administrative services, financial inclusion, digital identification systems, health care service delivery, and as well as improving security.⁵ For example, Fintechs are rapidly growing in Nigeria; Kenya has created an environment for developing a digital financial system; Rwanda has established itself as an incubator of digital transformation initiatives; and South Africa has established a solid foundation of research for Artificial Intelligence.⁶ However,

³ Goldsmith, S., & Yang, J. (2026). AI and the Transformation of Accountability and Discretion in Urban Governance. In *ArXiv.org*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ugj.2026.02.005>

⁴ K Yeung "Algorithmic regulation: A critical interrogation" (2018) 12/4 *Regulation and Governance* 505 at 508–510

⁵ Aderibigbe, A. O., Ohenhen, P. E., Nwaobia, N. K., Gidiagba, J. O., & Ani, E. C. (2023). Artificial Intelligence In Developing Countries: Bridging The Gap Between Potential And Implementation. *Computer Science & IT Research Journal*, 4(3), 185–199. <https://doi.org/10.51594/csitrj.v4i3.629>

⁶ On Nigeria's fintech sector see Central Bank of Nigeria *National Financial Inclusion Strategy* (2018); on Kenya's digital ecosystem see Communications Authority of Kenya *Digital Economy Blueprint* (2019); on Rwanda see Republic of Rwanda *National AI Policy* (2023); on South Africa see Department of Science and Innovation *National AI for the Public Benefit* (2023), available at: <https://www.dst.gov.za>. See also AO Aderibigbe et al "Artificial intelligence in developing countries: Bridging the gap between potential and implementation" (2023) 4/3 *Computer Science and IT Research Journal* 185.

while there has been an increase in the use of AI within these environments, it has not resulted in an equivalent development of the regulatory framework for oversight and regulation in all jurisdictions.

The challenges identified above extend beyond just regulation. Lawyers play a central role in governance structures. They draft legislation and advise government and corporate clients, represent individuals affected by decisions made using AI systems, litigate disputes arising from the use of AI tools and participate in institutional reform processes.⁷ Additionally, lawyers are increasingly utilizing AI technologies within their own legal practice. Examples, according to Abuzir, include AI-assisted legal research, automated document review, predictive analytics and generative AI tools, which are allowing lawyers to deliver legal services in new ways.⁸ Therefore, contemporary lawyers must understand not only the legal implications of AI, but also the professional responsibilities associated with using such technologies. Notwithstanding the growing impact of emerging technologies on legal practice, many African legal education systems remain rooted in doctrinal models of instruction that are predominantly based on conventional legal subjects and provide limited exposure to the governance implications of emerging technologies.⁹ Therefore, many graduates who enter professional practice have had limited

⁷ Chaffin, B. C., Gosnell, H., & Cosens, B. (2014). A decade of adaptive governance scholarship: synthesis and future directions. *Ecology and Society*, 19(3). <https://doi.org/10.5751/es-06824-190356>

⁸ AI-assisted legal research platforms include Westlaw Edge and Lexis+ AI; automated document review is widely deployed in litigation and due diligence; predictive analytics tools such as Lex Machina analyse judicial outcomes; generative AI tools including Harvey and Counsel are increasingly adopted by law firms globally. See Y Abuzir "Artificial intelligence in legal practice: Applications, challenges, and prospects" (2025), available at: <https://doi.org/10.46238/jobda.1629307>.

⁹ A Kankindi and V Chimbwanda, "Legal education and its contemporary challenges in sub-Saharan Africa" (2021) 5/1 *Strathmore Law Journal* 145 at 148–153

exposure to the competences required to address the ethical issues created by AI systems.

Much scholarship has examined AI ethics, AI governance and legal education reform areas of study.¹⁰ Comparatively, little attention has been devoted to the intersection of these fields within the African context. Specifically, there is very little scholarly examination of the competences required by lawyers to engage effectively with algorithmic governance¹¹ and to respond to the ethical challenges posed by AI systems.

Through the application of a doctrinal¹² and analytical method, this study argues that effective algorithmic governance in Africa requires a paradigm shift in legal education. Future lawyers will need foundational competencies in AI literacy, ethical reasoning skills to consider digital rights and technological accountabilities when considering responsible uses of AI in legal practice. The article proceeds in four parts. After the introduction in part two of this article, we discuss AI Ethics, Algorithmic Governance and the evolving role

¹⁰ Existing scholarship addresses AI ethics - see M Coeckelbergh *AI Ethics* (2020, MIT Press) — AI governance frameworks - see I Rahwan "Society-in-the-loop: Programming the algorithmic social contract" (2018) 34/2 *Ethics and Information Technology* 5 — and legal education reform generally — see N Davitashvili "The future of AI-enhanced legal education" (2024), available at: <https://doi.org/10.55843/isc2024conf89d>.

¹¹ Algorithmic governance refers to the use of data-driven automated systems to assist or replace human decision-making in institutional processes. See T Danaher et al "Algorithmic governance: Developing a research agenda through the power of collective intelligence" (2017) 4/1 *Big Data and Society* 1; M Ashtiani "Algorithmic governance, data-driven decision making, and the transformation of democratic accountability in contemporary states" (2025) *Zenodo*, available at: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18009536>.

¹² For further reading on doctrinal research methodology. See Ekpenisi, Collins, *et al*, (2026) Constitutional, Legal, and Procedural Perspectives on Witness Protection: A Comparative Study of Nigeria, India, and the United States. *International Journal of Constitutional and Administrative Law*, 75-92.

of lawyers. Following this discussion in part three, we analyse whether Legal Education systems in Africa can prepare students adequately to address the emerging technical challenges. Finally, in part four, we identify a competency-based framework for preparing lawyers to govern responsibly and accountably through AI systems in Africa. Part five presents' conclusions and recommendations.

2. AI ETHICS, ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE AND THE ROLE OF LAWYERS

Artificial Intelligence has now become a major defining aspect of modern governance.¹³ Though AI represents many different types of technologies, it generally describes a type of computer system designed to perform tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning, reasoning, predicting, classifying, and making decisions.¹⁴ When government structures incorporate AI technologies, they begin to make decisions about individuals and communities. Thus, AI-based systems provide an opportunity to develop a form of 'algorithmic governance.' In the context, algorithmic relates to computational rules, data-driven models, and artificial intelligence systems and other automated tools used to facilitate, support or direct traditional human decision-making activities.¹⁵ According to Danaher, it is a sequence of commands that are followed by a computer when processing data so as to produce the desired output. When applied to governance, business, or legal processes, algorithms can analyse large volumes of data, identify patterns, make predictions, and assist in

¹³ Ashtiani, M. M. (2025). Algorithmic Governance, Data-Driven Decision Making, and the Transformation of Democratic Accountability in Contemporary States. Zenodo (CERN European Organization for Nuclear Research). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18009536>

¹⁴ Chang, M. C. (2024). Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning in Spine Research: A New Frontier. PubMed Central, 11(9), 915–915. <https://doi.org/10.3390/bioengineering11090915>

¹⁵ T Danaher et al "Algorithmic governance: Developing a research agenda through the power of collective intelligence" (2017) 4/1 *Big Data and Society* 1

decision-making.¹⁶ Algorithmic governance refers to the use of data-driven automated systems to assist or replace human decision-making in institutional processes.

Algorithmic governance provides tremendous possibilities. Government agencies could utilize AI to increase service delivery, streamline administrative operations, identify fraud and corruption, optimize the distribution of resources, and support better public planning. Businesses use AI to analyse customer behaviour, assess risk and build operational efficiencies.¹⁷ The courts and other justice institutions are beginning to test digital tools used to help manage cases and administrative procedures. However, the increasing impact of AI raises significant ethical issues that challenge current legal standards. One of the most prominent ethical issues is the presence of algorithmic bias and discrimination. Most AI systems are developed utilizing large databases created during past time frames or social conditions.¹⁸ Therefore, the results generated from those database inputs will likely generate similar discriminative impacts on certain populations. The determination of employment status, loan approval, insurance coverage, access to housing, etc., may be impacted negatively when considering the above-mentioned biases.¹⁹ These

¹⁶ T Danaher et al "Algorithmic governance: Developing a research agenda through the power of collective intelligence" (2017) 4/1 *Big Data and Society* 1

¹⁷ Olutimehin, D. O., Ofodile, O. C., Ejibe, I., Odunaiya, O. G., & Soyombo, O. T. (2024). Implementing Ai In Business Models: Strategies For Efficiency And Innovation. *International Journal of Management & Entrepreneurship Research*, 6(3), 863–877. <https://doi.org/10.51594/ijmer.v6i3.940>

¹⁸ Jha, R. (2024). Algorithmic Bias And Social Inequality In Ai Decision-Making Systems From A Sociological Perspective. *ShodhKosh Journal of Visual and Performing Arts*, 5(6). <https://doi.org/10.29121/shodhkosh.v5.i6.2024.6167>

¹⁹ Atenas, J., Havemann, L., & Timmermann, C. (2023). Reframing data ethics in research methods education: a pathway to critical data literacy. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education*, 20(1), 11–11. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-023-00380>

impacts cause concern over equality, fairness, and non-discrimination, which continue to exist at the centre of contemporary law.

Additionally, transparency creates a second concern. Most advanced AI systems are able to perform through extremely complex computational methods that are difficult for users, regulators and in some cases even developers to completely understand. This condition is usually called the black box problem, which hinders the ability to identify the reasons behind decisions made. According to Kinchin, if individuals are negatively impacted due to an algorithmic decision, a lack of explanation can detract from fair procedure and limit accountability mechanisms.²⁰ Lastly, privacy concerns are becoming more critical. Data is collected and analysed by advanced AI systems, though data-based technologies can create efficiency and innovation, they create a risk of surveillance, profiling and misuse of individual information.²¹ The increased volume of private information being collected and processed raises important questions about consent, autonomy, and protecting fundamental rights.

These ethical problems have created a rising interest internationally toward creating standards for developing accountable artificial intelligence (AI) systems. According to Schmidt & Vöenky, international guidelines such as the UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of Artificial Intelligence and OECD Principles on Artificial Intelligence, illustrate values of transparency, accountability, fairness,

²⁰ Kinchin, N. (2024). "Voiceless": the procedural gap in algorithmic justice. *International Journal of Law and Information Technology*, 32. <https://doi.org/10.1093/ijlit/eaee024>

²¹ Rath, A. (2025). Artificial Intelligence And Privacy Concerns. *International Journal of Applied Mathematics*, 38, 2746–2750. <https://doi.org/10.12732/ijam.v38i10s.1291>

human oversight, and respect for human rights.²² The African Union also recognizes the necessity for governments in Africa to develop governance frameworks that promote responsible AI use while promoting innovation and digital transformations. Indeed, across all of Africa's jurisdictions, governments are using AI technology in many sectors. Including public administration, healthcare, finance and security.²³ Examples of their efforts include Nigeria's progress towards a digital economy, Kenya's leadership in Fintech, Rwanda's digital transformation strategy, and South Africa's growth in its AI research ecosystem. However, the capacity of regulatory authorities to respond to innovative uses of AI is commonly inadequate.²⁴ There remains a significant gap in regard to accountability mechanisms, transparency requirements, data protections requirements and regulatory oversight mechanisms.²⁵

In light of the evolving nature of this environment, lawyers play an important role. A successful model for governance of AI requires both technical expertise and legal guidance. Lawyers assist in developing regulatory frameworks for governing AI, inform organizations about compliance obligations related to AI systems, advocate on behalf of

²² Schmidt, T., & Vöenky, S. (2022). *Fostering the Common Good*. In Cambridge University Press eBooks (pp. 123–149). Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009207898.011>

²³ Ibeneme, S., Okeibunor, J., Muneene, D., Husain, I., Bento, P., Gaju, C., Ba, H., Chibi, M., Karamagi, H., & Makubalo, L. (2021). Data revolution, health status transformation and the role of artificial intelligence for health and pandemic preparedness in the African context. *BMC Proceedings*, 15, 22–22. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12919-021-00228-1>

²⁴ Balogun, O. D., Ayo-Farai, O., Ogundairo, O., Maduka, C. P., Okongwu, C. C., Babarinde, A. O., & Sodamade, O. T. (2023). Integrating Ai Into Health Informatics For Enhanced Public Health In Africa: A Comprehensive Review. *International Medical Science Research Journal*, 3(3), 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.51594/imsrj.v3i3.643>

²⁵ Townsend, B., Sihlahla, I., Naidoo, M., Naidoo, S., Donnelly, D., & Thaldar, D. (2023). Mapping the regulatory landscape of AI in healthcare in Africa. *Frontiers in Pharmacology*, 14, 1214422–1214422. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fphar.2023.1214422>

clients making algorithm-based decisions and help settle disputes based upon emerging technologies. Beyond assisting in developing regulatory frameworks, lawyers help to advocate for the rights of citizens and hold organizations accountable for their actions.

The significance of this is further magnified due to the growing use of AI in the legal profession itself. AI-assisted research tools, automated drafting tools, predictive analytics, and generative AI applications are becoming increasingly common in the delivery of legal services. While AI may lead to improvements in efficiency in the legal field, it will create new ethical responsibilities for attorneys. Attorneys will have a duty to review the output produced by AI systems, maintain confidentiality when dealing with client information, detect any errors made by the system, and make independent professional judgments.²⁶ Therefore, effective governance of AI will require legal professionals who understand both the laws regarding AI systems and the ethical implications of utilizing AI in practicing law.²⁷

Therefore, issues arising from the governance of AI represent more than merely technological challenges, but are fundamentally legal challenges. Issues relating to fairness, accountability, transparency, protection of rights and institutional legitimacy are at the centre of current debates over the governance of algorithms. With each passing day, the use of AI will continue to reshape governance structures in Africa, therefore there will be a greater demand for attorneys trained to address the governance needs created through these changes.

²⁶ Kumar, O. A. (2026). AI Applicability in Law: Opportunities, Limitations, and Governance in a Hybrid Legal Ecosystem. Zenodo (CERN European Organization for Nuclear Research). <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.18169951>

²⁷ Ekpenisi, Collins, Amos Godfrey Atim, Paul Atagamen Aidonjje, Eregbuonye Obieshi, and Micheal Inagbor (2026). Artificial Intelligence-Driven Mediation in Nigeria: Insights from Emerging Global Practices. *Malaqbi Law Review* 1, no. 1 : 56-78.

3. LEGAL EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL PREPAREDNESS IN AFRICA

Legal Education is the primary means of preparation for all legal professions. Traditionally, across the continent of Africa, legal education has placed emphasis on legal theory, legal reasoning, and the ability to interpret legislation and advocate.²⁸ The foundation of legal training remains crucial. It allows students to make sense of legal principles and apply them to dispute resolution. However, the speed at which technology such as artificial intelligence (AI) continues to evolve exposes limitations in traditional legal education. Curricula based on an analog legal system are unlikely to be sufficient to address a new generation of government decision making that relies upon algorithms, big data analytics, and automated decision-making processes.

One of the biggest hurdles that legal education faces in Africa is the low amount of technology related disciplines included in legal curricula.²⁹ Most law faculty departments include some form of IT law course, cyber law, or data protection courses. Fewer than those will explore AI ethics, algorithmic governance, or the legal implications of automated decision making. This means many law graduate students are well trained in legal doctrine, however, they are missing the understanding to comprehend how AI works, its increasing impacts on societal processes, and how to take action against new technology risks. This gap is especially pronounced in regards to regulatory

²⁸ Kankindi, A., & Chimbwanda, V. (2021). Legal Education and its Contemporary Challenges in Sub-Saharan Africa. *Strathmore Law Journal*, 5(1), 145–179. <https://doi.org/10.52907/slj.v5i1.143>

²⁹ Adegbite, A., & Oyedokun, Prof. G. E. (2025). Regulatory challenges in the adoption of artificial intelligent for legal research and training in faculties of law in Nigeria. *International Journal of Law Justice and Jurisprudence*, 5(2), 539–550. <https://doi.org/10.22271/2790-0673.2025.v5.i2f.268>

governance. More often, lawyers are called on to provide advice to government agencies, regulatory agencies, corporate entities and civil society organizations regarding issues of AI deployment and accountability.³⁰ However, few legal education programs consider technology to be a governance issue that intersects with other areas of legal practice. Therefore, future lawyers may be entering a profession that lacks the competency to effectively address modern technological issues.

A number of countries in Africa have recognized the reality. Some universities in South Africa have created programs and research initiatives to look at the inter-relationship between law, technology and AI.³¹ An increasing number of Kenya-based institutions have taken part in conversations surrounding digital governance and innovation-based legal issues. Due to its position as a leading country in technological advancement, Kenya is viewed as a model for others.³² Similar trends have occurred in Nigeria as there has been an increase in the interest of regulating fintechs, developing digital governance and data protection laws. This trend has led to additional conversation about technology-based legal education.³³ These

³⁰ Fikriah, M. S. P., Nurus Sakinatul, Hartini, S., Rafizah, A. H., & Iman, P. (2024). Bridging Legal Education and Practice: An Empirical Insights Into Artificial Intelligence Accountability in Healthcare. *Asian Journal of University Education*, 20(3), 790–806. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v20i3.27862>

³¹ Lubinga, S., Maramura, T. C., & Masiya, T. (2023). The Fourth Industrial Revolution Adoption: Challenges in South African Higher Education Institutions. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education*, 6(2), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.46303/jcve.2023.5>

³² Entsua-Mensah, F. O., Kwanya, T., & Hoskins, R. (2026). Balancing Innovation and Privacy: A Framework for Personal Data Protection in AI-Enhanced Higher Education in Africa. *Education for Information*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/01678329261437382>

³³ Garba, A. S., & Waziri, A. (2023). Integrating Artificial Intelligence Into Legal Education In Nigeria: Navigating The New Frontier For The Judicial System.

examples show a growing realization among stakeholders that legal education needs to grow along with changes in technology.

In spite of these positive trends, numerous hurdles exist. Legal education curriculum reform usually requires long institutional processes under control of accrediting bodies, such as law councils, professional associations and University regulatory structures.³⁴ There is little room to teach emerging interdisciplinary areas of study in many jurisdictions. Resource shortages create even greater challenges for reform efforts. Many law faculties work with very constrained budgets and lack specialized resources to provide instruction on AI. The faculty's capacity for learning, quality of technological infrastructure, and availability of instructional resources presents numerous challenges at many institutions.³⁵

These challenges cannot serve as a basis to do nothing. The goal is not to turn law students into computer programmers or software developers. Instead, it aims at providing future attorneys with sufficient technological knowledge to assess the impacts of AI systems, and to analyse them from a regulatory perspective. This method preserves the strengths of traditional legal education while accepting that modern governance presents many different dimensions.

Kampala International University Law Journal, 5(2), 99–129. <https://doi.org/10.59568/kiulj-2023-5-2-06>

³⁴ Greenfield, S. (2021). Exploring Entertainment Law's Boundaries: Applying a Transdisciplinary Approach. *Entertainment and Sports Law Journal*, 20(1). <https://doi.org/10.16997/eslj.1099>

³⁵ Chen, J. (2025). Interdisciplinary Integration of Legal Education and Cultivation of Application-Oriented Rule of Law Talents in the Age of AI. *Beijing Law Review*, 16(4), 2625–2638. <https://doi.org/10.4236/blr.2025.164133>

Furthermore, the need for reform is also demonstrated by the increasing uses of AI in legal practice itself. Previously stated, there has been an increase in the number of legal services being applied through AI. Legal professionals are utilizing AI-based research platforms, automated document preparation tools, predictive analytic tools, and generative AI tools. While these tools have improved legal service delivery efficiencies and expanded access to those services, they create additional concerns related to professional responsibility, client confidentiality, data integrity and regulatory oversight. Therefore, law students must be educated to both regulate AI and utilize it appropriately in the provision of legal services. Attorneys who can identify the limits of AI generated outputs, and independently apply professional judgement are necessary.

Therefore, the challenge for African legal education is not whether to address AI, but how to address it in a way that makes sense in each individual jurisdiction, taking into account available resources, and is sustainable. Reform must recognize institutional impediments while recognizing that technological change is rapidly changing legal practices and governance. If the educational community does not adapt quickly, then it risks creating professionals whose capabilities will become less relevant as they attempt to govern them.

4. A COMPETENCY-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR PREPARING LAWYERS FOR ALGORITHMIC GOVERNANCE

The increasing presence of AI in governance systems necessitates changes in legal education. Legal competencies have remained unchanged; however, they are insufficient by themselves today. Therefore, lawyers of tomorrow must have additional knowledge and skills which will allow them to understand, assess, control and utilize AI systems in a responsible manner. Consequently, the issue is not

about whether AI should be integrated into legal education, it is rather about what type of integration this should take. Based on this rationale, this article presents a competency-based framework intended to prepare lawyers for the reality of algorithmic governance.

AI Literacy is the first competency. Lawyers do not need to be technical specialists in machine learning or programming.³⁶ However, they need some basic understanding of how AI systems function and how they generate algorithmic decisions as well as at what point there might be technological limits. Without such basic understanding, lawyers will likely find difficulty assessing the legal implications of automated decision-making systems or engaging meaningfully in regulatory discussions related to emerging technologies. Furthermore, AI literacy allows legal professionals to go beyond abstractions and actively participate in governance processes involving new technologies.

Ethical reasoning, professional responsibility, and the use of AI within legal practice constitutes the second competency. At present most of the discussion around the ethics of using AI relates to the obligation of governments and corporate bodies that deploy AI systems.³⁷ Of equal importance are the obligations of lawyers who more frequently turn to AI assisted tools for their own work. The increased reliance on AI has created several new ethical dilemmas including, identifying inaccuracies in AI-generated outputs, protecting client confidentiality

³⁶ Naomy, A.-H., Yasmina, R.-V., Kiara, N.-M., & Luis, S.-R. J. (2025). Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education: A Systematic Review on the Development of Digital and Ethical Competencies. 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1109/icalter69698.2025.11355058>

³⁷ Ortega-Bolaños, R., Bernal-Salcedo, J., Ortiz, M. G., Sarmiento, J. G., Ruz, G. A., & Tabares-Soto, R. (2024). Applying the ethics of AI: a systematic review of tools for developing and assessing AI-based systems. *Artificial Intelligence Review*, 57(5). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10462-024-10740-3>

when utilizing AI-assisted research tools and automated drafting programs, and ensuring that the use of technology does not undermine professional independence. Thus, ethical reasoning extends beyond controlling AI, to providing oversight of the responsible use of AI within legal practice itself.

The third competency focuses on Digital Rights and Regulatory Governance. The influence of AI has created an increasing number of basic rights at risk, including the right to privacy, equal treatment under the law, free speech and the right to seek redress.³⁸ In turn, lawyers must learn about laws relating to data protection, discrimination and accountability when it comes to algorithms. Lawyers must start learning about emerging concepts in AI governance, including; what constitutes algorithmic due process, explainability and rights-based approaches to AI governance. For regulatory oversight of AI to exist effectively, there must be competent legal practitioners who can find a middle ground where the legal protections of basic rights do not impede innovation.

Access to technology and access to justice is the fourth competency. The way in which people receive legal services and resolve disputes is being dramatically changed by digital technologies.³⁹ This is why we see so many changes in online dispute resolution platforms, virtual courts, AI-assisted legal services and automated administrative

³⁸ Matijašević, J., Bećirović, A., Nikšić, J., & Mašović-Muratović, I. (2026). Human rights and civil law risks of artificial intelligence: A systematic analysis of surveillance, algorithmic bias, automated decision-making, and restrictions on freedom of expression. *Univerzitetska Misao - Casopis Za Nauku Kulturu i Umjetnost Novi Pazar*, 25, 38–56. <https://doi.org/10.5937/univmis2525038m>

³⁹ Bhushan, T. (2023). The Impact of Digital Technologies on Alternative Dispute Resolution. *REVISTA BRASILEIRA DE ALTERNATIVE DISPUTE RESOLUTION*, 5(10). <https://doi.org/10.52028/rbadr.v5i10.art16.ind>

processes.⁴⁰ While there are great opportunities for increased access to justice in the use of technology (for example, online dispute resolution), technology could also cause new forms of exclusions and inequality. Future lawyers need to be aware of both the positive and negative aspects of using technological tools in the delivery of justice. In particular, they must be able to assess whether technological innovations promote fairness and accessibility or merely provide new formats for existing barriers to access to justice.

Finally, interdisciplinary cooperation is represented as the fifth competency. Regulation of AI cannot be achieved by legal experts alone. It requires cooperation between computer scientists, engineers, policymakers, ethicists, economists, civil society organizations, etc.⁴¹ In short, lawyers must become proficient in communicating across disciplines and working collaboratively in multi-stakeholder governance processes.⁴² Interdisciplinary cooperation is particularly essential in addressing complex problems surrounding accountability for algorithms, designing technologies and implementing regulations.

To achieve these competencies will require purposeful educational reform. There are two methods for doing so. One is by adding specific courses focusing on AI & Law, AI Ethics and Technology Governance. An alternative would be to embed AI-related themes or

⁴⁰ Parycek, P., Schmid, V., & Novak, A.-S. (2023). Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Automation in Administrative Procedures: Potentials, Limitations, and Framework Conditions. *Journal of the Knowledge Economy*, 15(2), 8390–8415. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13132-023-01433-3>

⁴¹ Cheong, B. C. (2024). Transparency and accountability in AI systems: safeguarding wellbeing in the age of algorithmic decision-making. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, 6. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2024.1421273>

⁴² Sonko, S., Adewusi, A. O., Chimezie, O., Onwusinkwue, S., & Atadoga, A. (2024). A critical review towards artificial general intelligence: Challenges, ethical considerations, and the path forward. *World Journal of Advanced Research and Reviews*, 21(3), 1262–1268. <https://doi.org/10.30574/wjarr.2024.21.3.0817>

issues into pre-existing course subjects such as Constitutional Law, Human Rights Law, Administrative Law, Evidence, Professional Ethics, IP Law, etc. Student engagement with real world technological challenges can be enhanced through clinical programs, simulation programs and experiential learning experiences. Additionally, professional training schools should include AI governance and technological accountability in their continuing legal education programs.

While institutional reforms will certainly contribute significantly to developing necessary competencies, regional and cooperative reform efforts will likely also make important contributions to creating change. For instance, law faculty members from universities located throughout Africa, professional organizations and research centres can leverage cooperative networks as a mechanism to facilitate knowledge sharing, curriculum development and building capacity. Cooperative reform efforts can help address resource constraints and create relevant reform efforts based on local contexts in regards to legal education.

Ultimately preparing lawyers for algorithmic governance will involve much more than adding new courses. Rather it will demand a more comprehensive rethinking of legal education itself. Lawyers of the future must be equipped to navigate the complexities inherent in the interactions between law, technology, ethics and governance. Through developing competencies in AI literacy, ethical reasoning, digital rights, access to justice and interdisciplinary collaboration, legal education can make meaningful contributions toward the development of responsible, accountable and human-centred AI governance throughout Africa

5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

AI continues to transform governance, public administration, legal practice and economic activities throughout Africa. Although the changes that are occurring as a result of AI offer potential opportunities for new ways of thinking about and addressing some long-standing development challenges, they also present serious ethical and regulatory issues related to accountability, transparency, fairness, privacy and rights protection. The increasing influence of automated (algorithmic) decision-making processes in all areas of life means that lawyers will have a growing obligation to ensure that AI is developed and deployed in a manner that respects individual rights and promotes fair and equitable treatment. The article made it clear that successful regulation of algorithms will require more than just reforms to laws or regulations. Legal professionals need to be well-equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to understand, evaluate, regulate, and appropriately deploy AI technologies. Unfortunately, many law school programs in Africa continue to be poorly prepared to meet this evolving reality. To close this gap, the article proposed a competency-based model focused on AI literacy, ethical reasoning and professional responsibility with regard to responsible AI deployment, digital rights and regulatory frameworks for AI, technology and access to justice, and collaborative practices among disciplines.

Therefore, it is recommended that African law schools must include AI ethics and governance of algorithms in their curriculum offerings. Additionally, legal education accrediting bodies must develop requirements for technology-related competencies. Further, universities must foster interdisciplinary collaborations and training institutions offering continuing education in the use of AI in legal practice. Building these capabilities will enable future generations of lawyers to support the adoption of AI in a way that is both accountable and respectful of the dignity of individuals across Africa.

