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Review Article

Need for AI Ethics in Legal Education in Nigeria

Rahmatu Ishaq Ahmed[1]*, Dr. Gambo Abdulsalam[2], Adama Usman[2]

[1]Deputy Director Academics, with the Corporate Law Practice Department, of the Nigerian Law School, Kano Campus
[2]Deputy Director & Head of Department Professional Ethics and Skills, Nigerian Law School, Kano Campus

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***Corresponding author:** Rahmatu Ishaq Ahmed
Deputy Director Academics, with the Corporate Law Practice Department, of the Nigerian Law School, Kano Campus

Abstract

The integration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies is fundamentally reshaping the legal profession, presenting both unprecedented opportunities for efficiency and innovation, and profound ethical and professional challenges. This article argues that the imperative for robust AI ethics must be conscientiously integrated into legal education, particularly within vocational institutions like the Nigerian Law School (NLS). Drawing on an analysis of AI's role, history, and defining characteristics, the article identifies critical ethical sustainability challenges, including algorithmic bias, data privacy breaches, challenges to academic integrity (such as plagiarism and unauthorized content generation), and the critical issue of accountability for AI-generated legal errors. The article proposes that legal education must shift its focus from preventing AI use to teaching responsible, ethical use, equipping future practitioners with the requisite technical literacy, critical thinking, and human judgment necessary to mitigate risks and uphold core professional duties, such as competence, integrity, and the duty not to mislead the court. Ultimately, fostering a culture of ethical and responsible AI engagement is essential to ensure the long-term viability and integrity of the legal profession in the digital age.

Keywords: AI Ethic, Artificial Intelligence, Law Schools, Legal Education, Nigeria, Technology Governance.

INTRODUCTION

Artificial Intelligence (AI) has emerged as a transformative force in nearly every facet of modern society, with the field of legal education being no exception [1]. The integration of AI technologies promises to revolutionise the way law is taught, practiced, and understood, offering opportunities to streamline legal research, enhance access to legal resources, and provide novel solutions to complex legal challenges [2]. AI-driven tools, such as Large Language Models (LLMs) like ChatGPT, are rapidly becoming ubiquitous, challenging traditional methodologies and necessitating a critical reappraisal of foundational educational practices [3].

The legal profession in Nigeria, like its global counterparts, stands at an inflection point. Historically, the Nigerian Law School (NLS) has sought to provide vocational, practice training aimed at producing professionals who are "fit and proper" to be called to the Bar, traditionally emphasizing procedural knowledge, skills, and ethics through methods that often involved lecturing and note-taking [4]. However, the shift towards a technology-driven landscape demands that legal training institutions adopt a student-centered, practice-based approach, integrating skills, values, and knowledge to ensure that lawyers are equipped to respond to current national and international legal challenges [5].

[1] Balan, A. "Examining the ethical and sustainability challenges of legal education's AI revolution", (2024), International Journal of the Legal Profession, https://doi.org/10.1080/09695958.2024.2421179. Accessed on 24/01/25

[2] ibid

[3] Goswami, P. "RevolutionIng Legal Education: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Shaping the Future of Law Teaching and Learning", https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5123719, accessed on 21/1/26.

[4] Enebeli V N, 'Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Legal Education: Lessons from the United Kingdom and South Africa' (2024) 15 Journal of Education and Practice 89

[5] Idris, J. F. and Adeleke, L. A., "Repositioning Legal Education in Nigeria towards students' centered learning"

Amidst this technological revolution, questions surrounding ethics, accountability, and professional integrity have become pivotal considerations that require urgent scrutiny. The ethical implications of AI adoption cannot be understated, spanning concerns from algorithmic bias and the perpetuation of existing inequities to safeguarding data privacy and ensuring transparency in AI-driven decisions [6]. The unchecked use of AI, particularly Generative AI (GenAI), poses serious professional risks, as demonstrated by legal precedents where reliance on AI-generated, unverified content has led to professional consequences. Such incidents underscore the lawyer's paramount duty of due diligence and candor to the court, a responsibility that extends even to candidate legal practitioners [7].

This article examines the complicated intersection of AI adoption, ethics, and legal education, arguing for the urgent need to embed AI ethics and literacy into legal curricula in Nigeria. By exploring the evolving role of AI, the nature of legal education, and the specific ethical challenges posed by AI tools, this article aims to contribute insights into fostering a more responsible and sustainable approach to preparing future legal professionals in the era of AI. The ultimate goal is not to create barriers to technological adoption, but to build bridges between traditional legal rigour and technological innovation, ensuring that AI serves as a valuable tool while preserving the core ethical values of the legal profession.

DEFINITION

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is broadly defined as the simulation of human intelligence processes by machines, specifically computer systems. This encompasses a wide range of tasks that typically require human intellect, such as learning, reasoning, problem-solving, decision-making, natural language processing (NLP), and self-correction [8].

AI is an umbrella term that encompasses a wide variety of technologies, including machine learning [9], deep learning [10] , and natural language processing (NLP) [11].

The field of AI is often categorized into:

1. **Weak AI (or Artificial Narrow Intelligence - ANI):** This form of AI is trained and designed to perform specific, narrow tasks. This category includes most AI systems in use today, such as machine learning (ML), deep learning (DL), and NLP applications like virtual assistants, recommendation engines (Netflix), and legal research software [12].
2. **Strong AI (or Artificial General Intelligence - AGI):** This refers to a theoretical state in which computer systems would possess general, human-level intelligence, capable of performing any intellectual task a human can, generalizing knowledge across diverse situations, and possessing consciousness. AGI does not currently exist [13].

In the legal context, AI technology assists with legal reasoning but does not replace it, automating routine tasks and acting as a starting point for more complex work. Professional-grade AI, such as CoCounsel Legal, is built on curated, verified legal content, unlike consumer-grade tools (like public ChatGPT) that often incorporate unverified or incorrect information [14].

[6] Ajevski M and others, 'ChatGPT and the Future of Legal Education and Practice' (2023) 57 The Law Teacher 352

[7] LexisNexis, 'Generative AI and the Future of the Legal Profession' (2024) https://www.lexisnexis.co.uk/insights/generative-ai-and-the-future-of-the-legal-profession/index.html accessed 22 October 2024

[8] Laskowski, L. C. What is AI (Artificial Intelligence)? Definition, Types, Examples & Use Cases, https://www.techtarget.com/searchenterpriseai/definition/AI-Artificial-Intelligence, accessed 22/12/25

[9] Machine learning is a subfield of artificial intelligence that uses algorithms trained on data sets to create models capable of performing tasks that would otherwise only be possible for humans, such as categorizing images, analyzing data, or predicting price fluctuations. Today, machine learning is one of the most common forms of artificial intelligence and often powers many of the digital goods and services we use every day. Sourced from https://www.coursera.org/articles/what-is-machine-learning?isNewUser=true, accessed on 22/12/25

[10] Deep learning is a branch of machine learning that is made up of a neural network with three or more layers: Input layer: Data enters through the input layer, Hidden layers: Hidden layers process and transport data to other layers and Output layer: The final result or prediction is made in the output layer. Ibid

[11] Natural Language Processing (NLP) is an AI field enabling computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language (text/speech) by blending computer science, linguistics, and ML, powering tools like Siri, Google Translate, chatbots, and sentiment analysis to bridge human communication with machine understanding. See Staff, C., What Is Artificial Intelligence? Definition, Uses, and Types, What Is Artificial Intelligence? Definition, Uses, and Types | Coursera, accessed on 2/11/25

[12] Understanding the different types of artificial intelligence, https://www.ibm.com/think/topics/artificial-intelligence-types, accessed on 22/12/25

[13] ibid

[14] Richter, M. J. D., "Artificial Intelligence and law: Guide for legal professionals",

Legal Education in Nigeria

Legal education encompasses the formal processes involved in training individuals to enter the legal profession, focusing on developing knowledge, skills, and ethical awareness. Historically, legal education in Nigeria has operated within a modified two-tier system, separating the academic stage (university law faculties) from the vocational stage (Nigerian Law School - NLS).

1. **The Academic Stage (LLB):** In Nigeria, the LLB is an undergraduate degree intended to provide a systematic theoretical approach to the study of law, emphasizing subjects like Contract Law, Constitutional Law, Criminal Law, and Jurisprudence. However, traditional methodologies often relied heavily on lecture-type teaching methods, leading to a focus on memorization and disconnected subjects, limiting the integration of skills and values [15].
2. **The Vocational Stage (NLS):** The Nigerian Law School (NLS) was established to provide the vocational training necessary for law graduates to be admitted to practice as Barristers and Solicitors. The NLS curriculum focuses on practical courses like Civil Litigation, Criminal Litigation, Property Law Practice, Corporate Law Practice and Professional Ethics and Skills. Recent reforms, particularly those stemming from the Legal Education Review Committee Report (2007), emphasized shifting the curriculum to be outcome-based, skills-focused, and student-centred, integrating core skills (such as interviewing, negotiation, trial advocacy, and communication) and professional values (ethics) into the teaching of substantive law [16].

The modern objective of legal education is to produce graduates who are technically competent, ethically sound, and equipped to engage in complex practice, make judgments under uncertainty, and contribute to public service, viewing law as an instrument of social engineering.

History of AI in Law

The application of artificial intelligence principles to the legal field, known as LawTech or Legal AI, is not a sudden phenomenon but an evolution spanning several decades. This history can be broadly divided into three main phases:

A. Early Expert Systems (Pre-2000s)

The roots of AI in law trace back to the late 20th century, where initial efforts focused on creating expert systems. These systems aimed to simulate the reasoning and logic of experienced attorneys in highly specialized domains, such as tax law. The development of these rule-based programs sought to replicate human judgment using computational logic, establishing a foundational concept that AI could be applied to legal reasoning. A notable example of this early work was the development of systems intended to replicate human logic and replicate specific aspects of the legal process. However, these early systems were fundamentally constrained by limited computational power and the scarcity of large, digitized datasets [17].

B. The Rise of Digitization and Initial Analytics (2000s–2010)

The widespread adoption of the internet and growing computational capacity in the 1990s and 2000s facilitated the creation of massive online legal databases, leading to initial analytical tools. This period marked the emergence of foundational legal research platforms [18].

E-Discovery and Keyword Search: Starting in the early 2000s, e-discovery tools began using AI to search through large volumes of digital documents, improving results beyond simple keyword matching to include concept searching.

Legal Analytics: From roughly 2010 to 2018, AI began to be used for legal analytics, analyzing past cases to predict outcomes or identify trends. For instance, Thomson Reuters Westlaw and LexisNexis later adopted AI and machine learning for legal research during this period [19].

C. The Era of Machine Learning, NLP, and Generative AI (Post-2010)

The most significant leap in Legal AI occurred post-2010, fueled by advances in Machine Learning (ML), Natural Language Processing (NLP), and neural networks. Advanced Legal Tech: AI tools gained the capability to understand legal language with greater nuance, automating document review, contract analysis, and providing outcome forecasting. Milestones included judicial approval for predictive coding in *Da Silva Moore v. Publicis Groupe* (2012) and the launch of IBM Watson-powered legal research platforms like ROSS Intelligence (2016).

The launch of GenAI tools like Chat [20]. Today, AI continues to accelerate change in the legal field, influencing workflow, efficiency, and job

https://legal.thomsonreuters.com/blog/artificial-intelligence-and-law-guide, accessed on 22/12/25.

[15]Ojukwu, E., Legal Education in Nigeria: A Chronicle of Reforms and Transformation under Tahir Mamman (Abuja: Council of Legal education, 2013)

[16]ibid

[17] Dolidze, T., "The Evolving Role of Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education and Research", https://lawandworld.ge/index.php/law/article/view/677, accessed on 22/12/25.

[18]Ibid

[19]Ibid

[20]Ibid

responsibilities; approximately 44% of legal tasks could potentially be automated by AI [21].

Role of AI in Legal Education

The integration of artificial intelligence into legal education represents a significant shift in pedagogical paradigms globally. Legal education scholars have identified several key areas where AI demonstrates transformative potential: personalized learning pathways, automated assessment and feedback, legal research assistance, simulation-based learning environments, and administrative efficiency [22]

AI tools are pivotal in preparing law students for a technology-driven legal landscape, enhancing efficiency, innovation, and learning outcomes [23]

Enhanced Legal Research and Practice Simulation: AI provides future legal professionals with capabilities previously unimaginable, fundamentally transforming research and practical training.

GPT in late 2022 marked a "disruption" in legal technology, significantly increasing efficiency in tasks like document summarization and brief drafting. Domain-specific LLMs built on trusted content emerged quickly thereafter, focusing on reducing "hallucination" [24] rates (the generation of plausible but false information). This rapid emergence highlighted the immediate necessity for ethical guidance from professional bodies like the American Bar Association (ABA) and various state bar associations [25].

AI-powered tools are now essential for legal professionals. Platforms such as Westlaw Edge and Lex Machina can scan vast databases to identify relevant cases and statutes with high accuracy. These tools streamline legal research, contract analysis, and document review, tasks that traditionally required immense time. Students must be trained in using these technologies effectively [26]. This will enhance the students with:

1. **Practice Simulations and Experiential Learning:** Law schools can incorporate AI-based practice simulations. Platforms like Modria can simulate online negotiation environments, allowing students to interact with AI-powered virtual characters representing opposing parties. Virtual moot courts and other AI-powered simulations bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing students with safe, controlled environments to develop skills in litigation, negotiation, and critical thinking by applying knowledge to realistic contexts [27].
2. **Efficiency in Legal Tasks:** AI tools help automate routine legal tasks, such as initial drafting, document summarization, and case management, freeing up practitioners and—by extension—future lawyers to focus on complex legal analysis and strategic decision-making. This efficiency, driven partly by GenAI, is changing workflows in law firms, necessitating new skill sets in graduates [28].

[21] Generative AI Could Automate Almost Half of All Legal Tasks, Goldman Sachs Estimates, https://www.law.com/legaltechnews, accessed on 21/1/26.

[22] Sule, I., Ahmed, R. I., et al, "Transforming Legal Education in Nigeria Through Artificial Intelligence: A Case Study of the Legal Education AI Platform" paper presented at All Africa Clinical Legal Education Colloquium organized by NULAI on 6th & 7th November 2025 at Nile University of Nigeria, Abuja.

[23] Garba, A. S and Waziri, A. I, "Integrating Artificial Intelligence Into Legal Education In Nigeria: Navigating The New Frontier For The Judicial System", Kampala International University Law Journal (KIULJ) [2023] Vol. 5, Issue II, https://kiulj.kiu.ac.ug/assets/articles/1716379145_integrating-artificial-intelligence-into-legal-education-in-nigeria-navigating-the-new-frontier-for-the-judicial-system.pdf. Accessed on 22/12/25.

[24] See *Mavundla v MEC: Department of Co-Operative Government and Traditional Affairs KwaZulu-Natal and Others* (7940/2024P) [2025] ZAKZPHC 2. The *Mavundla* case is a cautionary tale about the irresponsible reliance on GAI in legal research. The court went to great lengths to highlight the duties of legal practitioners to the court before ultimately concluding that relying on AI for legal research is irresponsible and unprofessional.[15] The court's decision to refer the matter to the Legal Practice Council underscores serious ethical and procedural risks posed by the unchecked use of GAI tools by legal practitioners.

[25] Matthee, J. and Stopforth, G., "The Importance of Ethical and Responsible Ai Training in Law Schools to Avoid Career-Ending Pitfalls for Aspiring Legal Practitioners", **J**ournal for Juridical Science 2025:50(1):49-67: Published: 30 June 2025

[26] Goswami, P. "Revolutionizing Legal Education: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Shaping the Future of Law Teaching and Learning", https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5123719, accessed on 22/12/25.

[27] Xing, Y., Xiao, Y., e'tal, "hancing Practical Legal Training ThroughVirtual Reality Moot Court Simulations: A Digital Pedagogical Approach for Law Students", International Journal of Human–Computer Interaction, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/395369739_Enhancing_Practical_Legal_Training_Through_Virtual_Reality_Moot_Court_Simulations_A_Digital_Pedagogical_Approach_for_Law_Students, accessed on 22/12/25.

[28] Akanle, O. O., "The Role of Artificial Intelligence in enhancing Legal Services Delivery in Nigeria:Challenge, Opportunities and Future Prospects", https://bacolaw.edu.ng/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/7.-

3. **Personalized Learning and Curriculum Adaptation:** AI facilitates a shift towards a more student-centric and adaptable educational model. AI-powered adaptive learning platforms tailor educational content, pacing, and difficulty to individual student needs and learning styles. By analyzing performance data in real-time, these systems reinforce understanding in areas where a student struggles or challenge proficient students with advanced materials [29].

Legal institutions are beginning to integrate AI-related topics directly into their curricula, including courses on AI and the law, legal technology, data privacy, and AI ethics. This ensures students understand the legal system's evolution and prepares them for an AI-enabled profession. In the Nigerian Law School (NLS) context, this aligns with existing calls for integrating skills and ethics into core modules like "Law in Practice" [30].

AI technologies help democratize access to education. Virtual assistants, digital libraries, and online learning platforms lower barriers for students from diverse backgrounds and geographical locations, promoting equity. The ability of AI to assist students with disabilities (e.g., text-to-speech tools) further fosters an inclusive learning environment [31].

Crucially, AI's role is that of an assistant, not a substitute for human judgment and professional skills. The automation of mundane tasks elevates the necessity of developing uniquely human competencies that AI cannot replicate: [32]

While AI assists in complex tasks, legal education must actively train students in critical thinking and analytical reasoning, which are essential for interpreting AI outputs and maintaining the human judgment necessary for legal practice [33].

AI cannot replicate the empathetic and personalized counsel human lawyers provide. Human skills like creativity, humility, and emotional intelligence remain crucial for crafting creative solutions, understanding client intentions, and navigating ambiguity, especially in complex legal scenarios operating in grey areas [34].

Ethical Challenges of AI in Legal Education

The necessity for AI ethics is driven by the significant risks and sustainability challenges that technological integration introduces to the legal profession and educational practices. These issues extend beyond pedagogical concerns to encompass systemic failures related to fairness, accountability, privacy, and integrity [35].

The implications of AI adoption in legal education extend beyond just pedagogical enhancement; they encompass ethical and sustainability dimensions. Concerns arise regarding equitable access to AI-driven resources, the preservation of data privacy and the mitigation of AI biases. Moreover, the ethical dilemmas posed by AI technologies, such as the potential for algorithmic discrimination and the erosion of human-centric legal practices, underscore the imperative for a robust framework of sustainability ethics within legal education [36].

1. Algorithmic Bias and Fairness

AI bias refers to systematic errors in AI systems that lead to unfair or skewed outcomes. This can include issues such as incorrect predictions, a high false negative rate or decision-making that disproportionately affects marginalized groups. This is based on prejudiced assumptions made in its development and deployment, like during AI data collection and preparation [37].

One of the most persistent ethical challenges is the risk of algorithmic bias. AI systems are trained on massive datasets derived from human actions and historical records; if these data reflect societal prejudices (e.g., race or gender biases), the resulting AI output will perpetuate and potentially amplify existing discrimination [38].

Akanle-The-Role-of-AI-in-Enhancing-Legal-Services-Delivery-in-Nigeria.pdf, accessed on 22/12/25.

[29]Goswami, P. opcit.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Ibid

[32]E. Trish, AI and marketing research: Treating AI as an assistant, not a replacement, https://www.quirks.com/articles/ai-and-marketing-research-treating-ai-as-an-assistant-not-a-replacement, accessed on 21/1/26

[33]D. Tatia, "The Evolving Role of Artificial Intelligence in Legal Education and Research", https://lawandworld.ge/index.php/law/article/view/677, accessed on 21/9/26.

[34]Ibid

[35] Goswami, P. "RevolutionIng Legal Education: The Role of Artificial Intelligence in Shaping the Future of Law Teaching and Learning", https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5123719, accessed on 21/1/26

[36] B. Anil, "Examining the ethical and sustainability challenges of legal education's AI revolution", https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09695958.2024.2421179#abstract, accessed on 21/1/26.

[37] V. Aly, "Understand AI Fairness in Practice", https://www.blueprism.com/resources/blog/bias-fairness-ai, accessed on 21/1/26.

[38] F. Tommy, "Bias and Fairness in AI Algorithms", https://www.researchgate.net/publication/390073540_Bias_and_Fairness_in_AI_Algorithms, accessed on 21/1/26.

The utilization of biased AI in legal education may perpetuate existing inequities by providing unequal access to resources or opportunities for marginalized student groups. In practice, biased AI can lead to unjust outcomes, such as discriminatory predictive policing or risk scores in recidivism models, undermining principles of justice and equal treatment under the law [39].

Addressing bias requires comprehensive strategies, including regular internal and external audits for fairness, using transparency features, and developing algorithms trained on diverse and representative datasets. Law schools must instill in students the critical ability to identify and assess potential biases in AI work products before relying on them [40].

2. Accuracy, Reliability, and Accountability for Error

The lack of reliability in AI-generated content poses a direct threat to the core professional duty of competence.

GenAI models, particularly early or consumer-grade versions, have a known propensity to "hallucinate". AI hallucination is when large language models (LLMs) generate confident, yet false, nonsensical, or misleading information that isn't grounded in reality, including citing non-existent legal precedents, often stemming from patterns learned from vast, imperfect training data, leading to serious issues like fake legal citations or bad advice. These "hallucinations" aren't conscious errors but rather glitches where the AI fabricates plausible-sounding but untrue details, highlighting the need for human oversight and "guardrails" to ensure accuracy in critical applications [41].

The use of unverified AI output carries severe consequences for legal professionals. The principle remains that lawyers bear the ultimate responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and diligence of their work, regardless of its source. The duty of the legal practitioner not to mislead the court, whether intentionally or negligently, is paramount. The South African case of *Mavundla v MEC: Department of Co-Operative Government and Traditional Affairs KwaZulu-Natal and Others [42]* serves as a stark cautionary tale, where relying on fabricated case law led to severe consequences, including referral to the Legal Practice Council (LPC) and personal cost orders.

In this case, Mavundla challenged a decision made by the Department of Co-Operative Government and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) in KwaZulu-Natal relating to a traditional leadership dispute. His legal representatives filed a supplementary notice of appeal, citing several authorities. Upon examination, the court found that many of the cited cases did not exist in any recognised legal database. The judge conducted an independent search using ChatGPT, an AI chatbot, to verify one of the citations. The AI incorrectly confirmed the case's existence and details, showing how unreliable such tools can be for legal research. The court found that the legal team had likely relied on AI-generated material without checking its accuracy, which led to fictitious case references being submitted.

It became clear that the AI-generated research included references to made-up cases, raising serious concerns about the reliability of legal work produced with the help of AI [43].

Lawyers must implement mandatory human verification protocols and supervision mechanisms ("human-in-the-loop review") when deploying AI. Responsibility for AI errors ultimately rests with the natural or legal persons involved, not the AI system itself. [44]

3. Academic Integrity and the Challenge of Plagiarism

The widespread availability of GenAI tools has intensified concerns regarding academic integrity, creating ambiguities around plagiarism, authorship, and cheating. AI can generate text so similar to human-authored content that detection by conventional plagiarism software or educators is highly difficult, raising the potential for "untraceable cheating". This has led some institutions to consider returning to "pen and paper" exams [45].

Questions abound as to whether using AI-generated text constitutes plagiarism, contract cheating, or an acceptable form of support. The traditional notion of authorship is challenged, especially when AI generates content based on user prompts.

[39]Goswami, P, opcit.
[40]Ibid.
[41] S. Yujie, et al, "AI hallucination: towards a comprehensive classification of distorted information in artificial intelligence-generated content", https://www.nature.com/articles/s41599-024-03811-x, accessed on 22/1/26
[42](7940/2024P) [2025] ZAKZPHC 2; 2025 (3) SA 534 (KZP)
[43] https://www.michalsons.com/blog/mavundla-v-mec-department-of-co-operative-government-and-traditional-affairs-kwazulu-natal-genai/77431, accessed on 22/1/25.
[44]Ibid.
[45] M. D. Diep and T. P. Hai, "Relationship between artificial intelligence and legal education: A bibliometric analysis", https://www.businessperspectives.org/images/pdf/applications/publishing/templates/article/assets/20596/KPM_2024_2_Mong.pdf, accessed on 22/1/26

Law schools must develop clear guidelines and comprehensive policies that define acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI, ensuring transparency and requiring students to disclose AI assistance in their work. Institutions must shift the focus from merely banning AI to educating students on responsible, ethical integration, maintaining the rigour of original thinking [46].

4. Data Privacy and Security

The functionality of AI systems relies on processing vast amounts of data, often including sensitive and confidential information, which introduces severe privacy and security concerns [47].

When lawyers or students use AI platforms (especially public-facing tools like ChatGPT), they risk sharing confidential client or sensitive personal data, running afoul of professional obligations related to confidentiality and information sharing.

Data privacy is framed as a long-term sustainability issue, as failure to protect data integrity and prevent surveillance (e.g., "social scoring") has enduring consequences for individuals and society [48].

Legal education must emphasize compliance with stringent data protection laws, such as the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Nigeria Data Protection Act[49] which imposes limits on how consumer data is used, affecting AI training and functionality. Robust safeguards are necessary to protect student data.

Role of the Nigerian Law School in Embedding AI Ethics

The necessity for integrating AI ethics is particularly critical for the Nigerian Law School (NLS), given its mandate to ensure that aspiring legal practitioners meet the requisite standard of being a "fit and proper person" before Call to the Bar. The NLS must lead the way in embedding ethical AI training through strategic institutional reforms [50].

Curriculum Reform and Ethical Integration

The NLS, building on the foundation of its 2008 curriculum reforms, must ensure AI literacy and ethics permeate the academic programme. Dedicated modules or compulsory components on AI ethics, AI governance, and legal technology must be introduced. This should cover topics such as: AI liability, managing algorithmic bias, data protection in legal practice, and the ethical use of GenAI for legal drafting and research [51].

Ethical AI practices should be integrated contextually across core modules—Civil Litigation, Criminal Litigation, Corporate Law Practice, and Property Law Practice. For example, Civil Litigation should incorporate discussions on AI in e-discovery and compliance with data privacy in litigation, while Corporate Law Practice should address ethics in automated contracting and corporate governance[52] and Intellectual property of generative AI [53].

Training must explicitly focus on teaching students to critically evaluate AI-generated content, recognizing the limitations, biases, and unreliability of AI outputs (e.g., hallucinations). This reinforces the duty of diligence and competence, which is essential to avoid professional pitfalls [54].

Institutional Policy and Academic Integrity

The NLS should establish clear, enforceable policies governing AI use to maintain academic integrity and uphold professional standards. The NLS should provide clear guidelines, defining acceptable and unacceptable uses of AI in academic work, and require students to disclose when and how AI was used. This addresses the blurred line between acceptable assistance and academic dishonesty.

Assessment methods should be redesigned to focus on uniquely human skills that AI struggles with, such as ethical judgment, critical thinking, empathy, and creative problem-solving. Assessments should utilize supervised practical exercises and move towards discussion-based evaluations where appropriate [55].

To combat identity fraud and unauthorized AI assistance during examinations, adopting a biometric identification system is a necessary step consistent with maintaining modern standards.

Effective ethical integration hinges on competent and trained faculty. Sustainable faculty

[46]Ahmed, R. I., "The AI Dilemma: Navigating Academic Integrity in Modern Legal Education", a paper presented at a virtual workshop titled: AI in education, challenges, prospect and tools for the future" held on 26th January 2025.
[47]"AI and Law: What are the Ethical Considerations?", https://www.clio.com/resources/ai-for-lawyers/ethics-ai-law, accessed on 22/1/26
[48]Ibid.
[49]2023
[50]Ahmed, R. I., "The AI Dilemma: Navigating Academic Integrity in Modern Legal Education" , a paper presented at a virtual workshop titled: AI in education, challenges, prospect and tools for the future" held on 26th January 2025.
[51]Ibid.
[52]Ibid
[53]This is now a topic in the Corporate Law Practice module as agreed by the faculty in the Yola retreat held at City Green Hotel, Jimeta-Yola from 9th-13th April 2025
[54]Ibid
[55]Ibid

development programmes are crucial to equip educators with the knowledge and skills needed to integrate AI effectively. Training should cover not only AI technologies but also pedagogical strategies for ethical AI instruction, emphasizing problem-solving and critical thinking regarding AI's societal and environmental implications.

The NLS must address the overwhelming student-to-staff ratio and upgrade infrastructure to support interactive and small-group learning, which is essential for effective skills and ethics training. Adequate provision of ICT infrastructure, including dedicated IT staff and proper training, is necessary to support e-learning and research [56].

CONCLUSION

The need for AI ethics in legal education is not merely an optional enhancement but an absolute necessity for upholding professional standards and ensuring the relevance of future lawyers in the digital age. The integration of AI technologies, particularly GenAI, presents a dual challenge: maximizing the immense benefits of efficiency and access, while rigorously mitigating the ethical risks associated with bias, inaccuracy, privacy breaches, and challenges to academic and professional integrity.

For the Nigerian Law School, this imperative demands a continuation and acceleration of reforms that move beyond traditional content delivery towards outcome-based, student-centered learning that holistically integrates knowledge, skills, and values. As demonstrated by cautionary tales in jurisprudence, the professional duty of diligence and the responsibility for verification rest ultimately with the lawyer, making critical engagement with AI output a non-negotiable ethical skill.

The adoption of AI exacerbates the digital divide, creating disparities between students who have access to necessary technology and digital literacy skills, and those who do not.

If AI resources are disproportionately accessible to privileged students, this inequitable distribution could lead to a widening educational gap, affecting the sustainability and fairness of the legal profession.

Moving forward, legal education institutions must adopt a holistic strategy that encompasses: robust policy development addressing AI usage and integrity; investment in comprehensive and continuous faculty training; development of accessible infrastructure to mitigate the digital divide; and profound curriculum restructuring that embeds AI ethics and literacy into every facet of legal training. By equipping students with the capacity for human-centric skills—empathy, critical judgment, and strategic creativity—alongside technical literacy, the NLS can ensure that its graduates are prepared not just to adapt to the future of law, but to lead it with competence, integrity, and social responsibility. This dedication to ethical excellence will secure the long-term viability and public trust essential to the legal profession in an ever-evolving world.

[56]Ibid