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Integrating artificial intelligence to transform legal education in South Africa

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1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming various sectors, including legal education. In South Africa, where legal education faces persistent challenges such as resource constraints, accessibility barriers, and the need to keep pace with evolving professional demands, AI presents both meaningful opportunities and notable risks. This study explores the potential integration of AI technologies, including tools such as ChatGPT, Copilot, and other AI-driven platforms, into South African legal education. The primary objective of this chapter is to examine how these tools can contribute to curriculum transformation and enhance the overall learning experience for students.

AI has the capacity to augment traditional legal education by improving research efficiency, facilitating personalised learning experiences, and offering innovative approaches to legal analysis.[1] Additionally, AI-powered tools can assist in automating certain such as generating standardised feedback or managing administrative content delivery, allowing educators to focus on higher-order cognitive skills such as critical thinking and complex legal reasoning.

The evolution of legal education in South Africa has been marked by significant milestones, from the establishment of the first law schools to the adoption of modern teaching methods. Traditionally, legal education relied heavily on lectures, case studies, and moot court

1 C Dziuban and others 'Blended learning: The new normal and emerging technologies' (2015) *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education* 12.

exercises.[2] However, these methods have faced challenges such as limited access to resources, disparities in educational quality, and the need to keep pace with global legal developments. The integration of AI presents an opportunity to address these challenges by providing innovative tools that enhance learning and make legal education more accessible.

While the potential benefits of AI in legal education are considerable, its integration also raises concerns that warrant critical examination. Key challenges include the risk of diminishing students' critical thinking abilities, issues related to academic integrity and plagiarism, and uncertainties about the future employability of law graduates in an AI-dominated job market.[3] These concerns highlight the need for a balanced approach that leverages AI's advantages while safeguarding the core objectives of legal education.

Although AI is increasingly reshaping higher education on a global scale, its application within South African higher education institutions remains underexplored. Existing studies have highlighted some of the broader challenges and opportunities associated with AI integration, particularly socio-economic and technological constraints such as disparities in digital literacy and limited internet access in under-resourced areas. areas.[4] While AI itself cannot directly overcome the problem of limited connectivity, its effective adoption in such contexts is contingent upon parallel investments in digital infrastructure and inclusive access strategies to ensure equitable implementation. Despite these broader discussions, there remains a distinct gap in research that specifically investigates how AI-driven tools can be adopted to enhance legal education within South Africa's unique higher education landscape. Addressing this gap is essential to ensuring that AI's integration aligns with the specific needs and realities of South African law schools and their students.

This chapter seeks to contribute to this emerging field by examining the role of AI in legal education, particularly in relation to curriculum transformation, pedagogical innovation, and accessibility. It examines

2 As above.
3 G Quinot & L Greenbaum 'The contours of a pedagogy of law in South Africa' (2015) *Stellenbosch Law Review* 40.
4 D Sanders & S Mukhari 'Lecturers' perceptions of the influence of AI on a blended learning approach in a South African higher education institution' (2024) *Discover Education* 138.

AI's potential to support adaptive learning, automate certain teaching processes, and reduce educational disparities in institutions that lack sufficient resources. Furthermore, this chapter proposes strategies for the responsible and ethical incorporation of AI-driven tools into legal education, ensuring that their implementation enhances, but not undermine the fundamental principles of legal training, research and learning. By contextualising AI's role within South Africa's higher education system, this chapter, further aims to provide insights into how AI can be effectively integrated into blended learning environments in a manner that is not only innovative but also sustainable and equitable.

2 The role of AI in legal education

AI-powered tools are revolutionising legal education by automating research, improving access to legal materials, and facilitating interactive learning experiences. Platforms such as ChatGPT and legal AI assistants like LexisNexis AI are already reshaping how students and academics engage with legal scholarship.[5] AI technologies can efficiently process and analyse extensive legal datasets, thereby supporting both students and educators in their research activities. Rather than diminishing student engagement, AI has proven to be an auxiliary tool that enhances analytical skills by optimising research efficiency and providing structured access to relevant information.

The University of Pretoria has integrated AI tools such as ChatGPT into its guidelines to enhance teaching and learning across various disciplines. These AI technologies are being used to provide personalised and adaptive learning experiences, improve student engagement, and reduce the burden on educators and administrators.[6] While specific applications in legal education are not detailed, the broader integration of AI at the university highlights its potential value in law as well. Similarly, the University of Cape Town has embraced AI-driven innovations through initiatives like the AI Teaching Innovation Grants, which

5 D Donnelley 'The tortoise and the hare': An allegorical exploration of traditional legal education in a rapidly digitising profession' in M Njotini & C Maimela (eds) *Harnessing education (teaching and learning) in the fourth industrial revolution* (2024) 51.

6 University of Pretoria 'Guide for ChatGPT usage in teaching and learning' https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/391/pdfs/up-guide-for-chatgtp-for-teaching-and-learning.zp233629.pdf (accessed 10 February 2025).

support the development and implementation of AI tools in teaching and learning.[7]

The University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) has also been proactive in integrating AI into its teaching and learning practices. Wits has developed comprehensive guidelines for incorporating AI tools like ChatGPT to enhance educational experiences across various disciplines. These guidelines emphasise the responsible and ethical use of AI, encouraging students to engage critically with AI-generated content by fact-checking, critiquing, and evaluating responses.[8] The Centre for Learning, Teaching, and Development (CLTD) at Wits organises workshops and webinars to educate faculty and students on the effective use of AI in education, covering topics such as AI ethics, data privacy, and the potential benefits and challenges of AI.[9] These efforts demonstrate the recognition of the possible potential of AI to transform educational practices, including in legal education.

Recent advancements in AI technology, such as natural language processing and machine learning, have opened new possibilities for legal education.[10] Tools like LexisNexis AI have developed sophisticated algorithms that analyse vast amounts of legal data and provide insights in real-time. These technologies are used to create personalised learning experiences, automate administrative tasks, and support faculty in delivering high-quality education.[11]

Institutions of higher learning provide students with access to extensive online libraries and research databases through institutional subscriptions. Platforms such as Google Scholar, HeinOnline, Juta, and LexisNexis allow students to search for scholarly writings, case law, and statutory materials using keyword searches. In addition to these

7 University of Cape Town 'AI teaching innovation grants' https://cilt.uct.ac.za/uct-ai-teaching-innovation-grants-2025 (accessed 10 February 2025).

8 University of the Witwatersrand 'AI in teaching and learning at Wits' https://www.wits.ac.za/media/wits-university/learning-and-teaching/cltd/documents/AI-in-teaching-and-learning-at-Wits.pdf (accessed 10 February 2025).

9 University of the Witwatersrand 'How do we use artificial intelligence in higher education for good?' https://www.wits.ac.za/future/stories/how-do-we-use-artificial-intelligence-in-higher-education-for-good.html (accessed 10 February 2025).

10 Sanders & Mukhari (n 4) 139.

11 Y Dong & B Min 'The In-depth integration of artificial intelligence and higher legal education innovative models, teaching efficacy, and ethical considerations' (2024) *Journal of Current Social Issues Studies* 3.

subscription-based services, students can also access open-access journal articles and electronic books from publishers that make legal scholarship freely available.

AI contributes to this evolving research landscape by improving accessibility through features such as automated summarisation and intelligent search capabilities. These technologies enable students to refine complex search queries, filter results more efficiently, and quickly identify the most relevant sources within vast legal databases. While AI streamlines these processes, it does not replace the critical thinking required in legal analysis.[12] Instead, students must engage with AI-generated summaries and suggestions by applying their own reasoning, interpretation, and critical assessment of the material. AI merely optimises the research workload, it remains the student's responsibility to evaluate sources, construct legal arguments, and ensure the integrity of their analysis.

It can be argued that excessive reliance on AI may weaken students' legal thinking and professional ethics.[13] While AI tools can provide quick answers and streamline research processes, they can also lead to a superficial understanding of legal principles if not used critically. Students might become dependent on AI for solutions, bypassing the rigorous analytical processes that are essential for developing strong legal reasoning skills.[14] This dependency can result in a lack of depth in their legal arguments and a diminished capacity for critical thinking. Therefore, it is crucial for educators to guide students in using AI tools as aids rather than crutches, ensuring that they engage deeply with the material and develop their own interpretations and arguments.

Moreover, the ethical implications of AI in legal education cannot be overlooked. The use of AI in legal research and practice raises important questions about data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for dehumanisation in legal processes. Students must be taught to recognise and address these ethical issues, understanding the limitations and potential biases inherent in AI systems.[15] By fostering a critical approach to AI, educators can help students develop a balanced perspective that

12 Donnelley (n 5) 63.
13 Dong & Min (n 11) 10.
14 As above.
15 Dong & Min (n 11) 14.

values both technological efficiency and ethical integrity. This dual focus will prepare students to navigate the complexities of modern legal practice, where technology and human judgment must coexist harmoniously.

The argument of this chapter is not whether AI should be embraced or rejected in legal education, but rather how students can be taught to use AI responsibly and ethically. Instead of rejecting AI outright, institutions of higher education should focus on teaching students how to use it responsibly and ethically through integrating AI literacy into the curriculum, equipping students with the skills to use these technologies as research aids without compromising academic rigor or ethical considerations.[16] By fostering a responsible approach to AI in legal studies, educators can ensure that future legal professionals harness its benefits while maintaining the analytical depth and integrity required in the discipline.

The integration of AI in legal education offers a unique opportunity to enhance the learning experience while requiring a careful and responsible approach. Rather than debating the merits of AI, the emphasis should be on effective and ethical utilisation. This can be achieved by embedding AI literacy into the curriculum, equipping students to use these technologies as research aids without sacrificing academic rigor or ethical standards.[17] Institutions of higher education must create comprehensive AI literacy programs that address both the technical and ethical dimensions of AI use. These programs should guide students in critically evaluating AI-generated content, recognising the limitations and potential biases of AI tools, and applying AI to strengthen their legal reasoning and analytical skills. By promoting a critical approach to AI, educators can encourage students to appreciate the balance between technological efficiency and ethical integrity.

Moreover, it is essential to create a learning environment that encourages ethical AI use. This includes establishing clear guidelines on the acceptable use of AI tools, promoting transparency in AI-generated outputs, and implementing mechanisms to monitor and evaluate

16 C Maimela 'Do digital technologies suitably promote indigenous languages in higher education? A scholarly approach' in M Njotini & C Maimela (eds) *Harnessing education (teaching and learning) in the fourth industrial revolution* (2024) 34.

17 Quinot & Greenbaum (n 3) 39.

the impact of AI on learning outcomes.[18] Educators should design assignments and assessments that require students to engage deeply with AI-generated content, ensuring that they do not rely solely on AI for their research and analysis.[19]

Despite its benefits, AI in legal education presents significant challenges. Concerns over academic dishonesty, diminished critical thinking, and the reliability of AI-generated legal insights must be carefully addressed to ensure ethical and professional integrity. To combat academic dishonesty, institutions should implement clear guidelines on the ethical use of AI tools, educate students about the importance of academic integrity, and employ AI-detection tools in conjunction with traditional assessment methods. Assignments can be designed to require critical engagement with AI-generated content, such as reflective essays or oral presentations, where students must explain their thought processes and the use of AI in their work.

To prevent the decline in critical thinking skills, educators should emphasise the importance of human judgment and analysis in conjunction with AI tools.[20] Courses should encourage students to critically evaluate AI-generated insights, identify potential biases, and apply their own reasoning. Practical exercises, such as case studies and moot courts, can be used to develop these skills. By integrating AI as a supplementary tool rather than a replacement, students can learn to leverage AI for efficiency while maintaining the analytical depth required in legal practice.

To ensure the reliability of AI-generated legal insights, it is important to educate students on the limitations and potential biases of AI tools.[21] This includes understanding the data sources used to train AI models and the potential for algorithmic bias. Institutions should promote transparency in AI outputs and encourage students to cross-verify AI-generated information with traditional legal research methods. By fostering a critical approach to AI, students can learn to use these

18 P Goswami 'Revolutionizing legal education: The role of artificial intelligence in shaping the future of law teaching and learning' (2025) *NFSU Journal of Cyber Security Digital Forensic* 17.

19 Goswami (n 18) 25.

20 Donnelley (n 5) 63.

21 G Prakash & V Nair 'Integrating generative AI into legal education: Form casebooks to code, opportunities and challenges' (2024) *Law, Technology and Humans* 64.

tools responsibly and effectively, ensuring that AI enhances rather than undermines the quality of legal education.[22]

In addition to technical training, students must be educated on the broader ethical implications of AI in legal practice. This includes understanding issues related to data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential for AI to perpetuate existing inequalities in the legal system.[23] By incorporating discussions on these topics into the curriculum, educators can prepare students to navigate the ethical challenges of using AI in their future careers.

Furthermore, collaboration between educators, policymakers, and technologists is crucial to ensure that AI integration aligns with the principles of academic integrity and educational excellence. Policymakers should develop regulations that promote the responsible use of AI in education, while technologists should work on creating AI tools that are transparent, fair, and accessible to all students. Indeed, working together, these stakeholders can create a framework that maximises the benefits of AI while mitigating its potential risks.[24]

Ultimately, the goal is to harness the transformative potential of AI to enhance legal education without undermining the core values of the discipline. By teaching students to use AI responsibly and ethically, educators can ensure that future legal professionals are well-prepared to leverage these technologies in a way that upholds the integrity and rigor of the legal profession. This balanced approach will enable students to benefit from the efficiencies and innovations brought by AI while maintaining the analytical depth and critical thinking skills essential for legal practice.

Teaching and learning in higher education are crucial for the socio-economic development of South Africa. Higher education institutions play a pivotal role in shaping the future leaders, professionals, and innovators of the country. These institutions contribute significantly to the economic development of South Africa by producing graduates who are equipped with the skills and knowledge needed in various sectors, thereby enhancing productivity and innovation, which drives

22 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 65.
23 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 66.
24 Goswami (n 18) 5.

economic growth.[25] Moreover, higher education promotes social equity and inclusion by providing opportunities for individuals from diverse backgrounds to access quality education. This helps bridge the gap between different socio-economic groups and fosters a more inclusive society.

Higher education institutions are also hubs for research and innovation. They contribute to the advancement of knowledge and the development of new technologies, which can address various societal challenges and improve the quality of life. Higher education fosters critical thinking, problem-solving, and analytical skills, promoting personal growth and enabling individuals to become more informed and engaged citizens.[26] Additionally, a strong higher education system enhances the global competitiveness of South Africa by producing graduates who can compete in the international job market. It also attracts international students and researchers, contributing to the global exchange of knowledge and ideas.

3 Benefits of AI integration

AI-driven platforms can provide educational resources and personal learning experiences to students from various backgrounds, including those in remote areas. While these technologies have the potential to democratise access and help bridge educational gaps, their effectiveness depends on addressing underlying challenges such as internet connectivity and availability of digital devices. Therefore, fostering a more inclusive learning environment requires coordinated efforts to improve infrastructure and ensure equitable access alongside AI adoption.

There are numerous AI tools available that can significantly enhance the learning experience for students. Some of the most commonly used tools include ChatGPT for AI writing, Grammarly for grammar and editing, Quillbot for paraphrasing, and Google Gemini for research. These tools offer a range of functionalities, from generating content and summarising information to improving writing quality and providing real-time feedback. For instance, ChatGPT can assist students in drafting essays and legal arguments, while Grammarly helps ensure that their

25 Donnelley (n 5) 63.
26 Quinot & Greenbaum (n 3) 39.

writing is grammatically correct and stylistically appropriate. Quillbot can be used to rephrase sentences and improve clarity and Google Gemini aids in conducting thorough research by providing relevant and up-to-date information.

Despite the benefits, there are several constraints and limitations associated with these AI tools. One of the primary challenges is the cost of subscriptions.[27] While some tools offer free versions, these often come with significant limitations. For example, the free version of Grammarly only provides basic grammar and spelling checks, while the premium version offers advanced features such as style suggestions and plagiarism detection. Similarly, Quillbot's free version limits the number of words that can be paraphrased at a time, and Google Gemini's free access is restricted during peak hours.[28] With usage limitations imposed to prioritise paid user*s*, such restrictions reflect broader concerns about the monetisation of generative AI and the inequity of access, particularly during high-demand periods.[29] These subscription fees are barriers for many students, particularly those from under-resourced areas and historically disadvantaged institutions.

To mitigate these challenges, institutions of higher learning can play a crucial role in providing free access to AI tools to students and educators.[30] Universities can negotiate institutional subscriptions to AI tools, making them available to all students at no additional cost. This approach not only reduces the financial burden on students but also ensures that everyone has equal access to these valuable resources.[31] Additionally, institutions can explore alternative AI tools that are less expensive or offer more comprehensive free versions. For example, tools like Microsoft Copilot and Natural Readers provide robust functionalities at lower costs or with more generous free tiers.[32] By integrating these tools into the curriculum and providing training on their effective use, universities can enhance the learning experience and help students develop essential writing skills.

27 Goswami (n 18) 21.
28 E Rentier 'To use or not to use: exploring the ethical implications of using generative AI in academic writing' (2024) *AI and Ethics* 2.
29 Rentier (n 28) 2.
30 Goswami (n 18) 21.
31 Goswami (n 18) 25.
32 Rentier (n 28) 3.

Rather than replacing traditional legal pedagogy, AI should serve as a complementary tool that enhances legal education. For instance, AI can be used for preliminary research, while deeper analysis and interpretation remain central to human experts.[33] AI tools can enrich legal scholarship by offering advanced research capabilities. For example, AI can streamline the process of legal research by quickly sifting through vast amounts of data to find relevant information, thereby enhancing the efficiency and depth of scholarly work.[34] This does not replace existing research methods but rather complements them, making legal research more efficient and allowing scholars to focus on higher-level analysis and critical thinking.

While AI-powered translation facilities can be helpful, they are limited by the availability of trained models for all languages, potentially disadvantaging students whose languages are underrepresented. This challenge is particularly evident in institutions of higher learning in South Africa, where the exclusion of indigenous languages as a medium of instruction persists.[35] Despite the constitutional recognition of multiple official languages, the dominance of English in legal education continues to marginalise students who are more proficient in indigenous languages, reinforcing existing inequalities in higher education.[36] By neglecting the potential benefits of incorporating these languages into the learning process, institutions further entrench barriers to access and comprehension.

AI has the potential to bridge this linguistic gap by simplifying legal instruction rather than merely translating it. If developed with a focus on linguistic inclusivity, AI tools can enhance learning experiences for students from diverse backgrounds by making complex legal concepts more accessible. However, the failure to integrate indigenous languages into AI models limits this potential, ultimately reinforcing the very disparities that AI could help mitigate. A more intentional approach to language inclusivity in AI development could therefore serve as a meaningful step toward addressing linguistic inequalities in legal education.[37]

33 Sanders & Mukhari (n 4) 140.
34 Sanders & Mukhari (n 4) 138.
35 Quinot & Greenbaum (n 3) 33, See also Maimela (n 16) 30.
36 Maimela (n 16) 31.
37 Sanders & Mukhari (n 4) 139.

AI-powered systems can provide real-time feedback, helping students identify strengths and weaknesses in their legal reasoning. Personalised learning paths allow students to engage with material at their own pace, ensuring a deeper understanding of complex legal concepts. Integrating AI into legal education in South Africa offers transformative potential by enhancing both the learning experience and the practical readiness of law graduates.[38]

By offering custom content, real-time feedback, and adaptive learning paths, AI-driven platforms ensure that students receive tailored support that meets their unique progress and areas for improvement. This structured approach to learning aligns with the call for integrated, coherent legal education models, as emphasised by Quinot and Greenbaum, ensuring that students not only grasp substantive law but also develop essential skills in a context-sensitive manner.[39]

Moreover, AI-driven tools can significantly enhance student engagement by providing immediate, personalised feedback on their progress. This real-time feedback mechanism allows students to identify their strengths and weaknesses promptly, enabling them to make necessary adjustments to their learning strategies. The use of AI in creating interactive and engaging learning materials, such as quizzes and scenario-based case studies, further enriches the learning experience. These AI-generated resources can be customised to align with specific learning outcomes, ensuring that students are actively involved in their education and are better prepared for the practical demands of the legal profession.[40]

AI can play a role in promoting diversity and inclusion by accommodating students with different learning needs. It can translate legal concepts into multiple languages, provide text-to-speech capabilities for visually impaired students, and create customised study plans based on individual performance metrics.

38 Quinot & Greenbaum (n 3) 30.
39 Quinot & Greenbaum (n 3) 49.
40 Sanders & Mukhari (n 4) 140.

4 Challenges and ethical considerations

The integration of AI into legal education raises several ethical considerations that must be carefully managed to ensure that these technologies enhance rather than undermine academic integrity, critical thinking, and equitable access to education. One of the primary concerns is the potential for AI to weaken students' ability to engage in deep legal analysis. While AI can assist in summarising legal materials and generating preliminary insights, there is a risk that students may over-rely on these tools instead of developing their own reasoning skills.[41] To address this, educators must emphasise the importance of critical engagement by designing assignments that require students to assess and interpret AI-generated content rather than passively accepting it. Encouraging students to view AI as a supplementary aid rather than a substitute for legal reasoning will help maintain the rigor of legal education.

The integration of AI in legal education requires a robust regulatory framework to ensure ethical use and protect students' rights. Currently, there are limited guidelines on the use of AI in education, and existing regulations do not adequately address the unique challenges posed by AI technologies. While the UP has taken positive steps in integrating AI tools like ChatGPT into its teaching and learning framework, there is limited publicly available information detailing how these guidelines specifically address legal education or broader ethical concerns such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and academic integrity.[42] Strengthening these aspects by incorporating clear standards for responsible AI use, faculty training, and student accountability would align UP's approach more closely with best practices observed at institutions like Wits. Policymakers must develop comprehensive policies that promote transparency, accountability, and fairness in AI applications. This includes establishing standards for data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the ethical use of AI in academic settings.[43]

The long-term implications of AI integration in legal education extend beyond the classroom. As AI becomes more prevalent in the legal

41 Goswami (n 18) 21.
42 University of Pretoria 'Guide for ChatGPT usage in teaching and learning' https://www.up.ac.za/media/shared/391/pdfs/up-guide-for-chatgtp-for-teaching-and-learning.zp233629.pdf (accessed 10 February 2025).
43 J Bliss 'Teaching law in the age of generative AI' (2024) *Jurimetrics* 149.

profession, future lawyers will need to develop new skills to navigate an AI-enhanced legal landscape. This includes understanding how to use AI tools effectively, interpreting AI-generated insights, and addressing ethical considerations. Legal education must evolve to prepare students for these changes and ensure they are equipped with the skills needed to succeed in a technology-driven world.[44]

Another ethical challenge is the potential for AI-generated content to compromise academic integrity. AI tools, such as ChatGPT, can produce sophisticated text that may be used without proper attribution, raising concerns about plagiarism and originality in student work.[45] Institutions must implement clear guidelines on the responsible use of AI, ensuring that students disclose when and how these tools have been used in their research and writing. To promote transparency and ethics, institutions should establish clear consequences for non-disclosure of AI tool usage. However, AI detection tools remain unreliable, as highlighted by Prakash and Nair, often yielding false positives that could misrepresent students' engagement with AI.[46] To address these concerns, reflective writing assignments can also help educators assess whether students are using AI ethically and critically

Equity and accessibility also present significant ethical considerations in AI-driven legal education. While AI has the potential to democratise access to legal knowledge, disparities in digital literacy and access to AI-powered tools may deepen existing inequalities among students. Many students in under-resourced areas may lack the necessary technological infrastructure or training to effectively use AI in their studies. To prevent AI from exacerbating these disparities, universities must ensure that all students have equal access to AI resources, provide digital literacy training, and develop inclusive policies that accommodate diverse learning needs.[47]

Concerns regarding data privacy and bias in AI systems must be addressed. AI tools rely on vast datasets to generate responses, and these datasets may contain biases that affect the accuracy and fairness of AI-generated content.[48] In legal education, biased AI outputs could

44 Bliss (n 43) 149.
45 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 65.
46 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 65.
47 Bliss (n 43) 150.
48 Goswami (n 18) 22.

reinforce existing inequalities in legal interpretation and scholarship. Institutions must adopt transparent AI policies, promote the use of diverse and ethically sourced training data, and educate students on the limitations of AI-generated information.[49] By embedding ethical AI literacy into legal curricula, law schools can equip students with the skills to critically evaluate AI's role in legal reasoning while upholding principles of fairness, accountability, and integrity.

Additionally, the development of critical AI literacy among students is important. This involves teaching students to scrutinise the validity and quality of AI-generated outputs and to understand the limitations and potential biases of these tools.[50] By fostering a critical approach to AI, educators can help students develop a balanced perspective that values both technological efficiency and ethical integrity. This dual focus will prepare students to navigate the complexities of modern legal practice, where technology and human judgment must coexist harmoniously.

Law school policymakers must establish adaptable, transparent policies for AI use that are regularly reviewed to keep pace with rapid advancements. These policies should clearly define acceptable AI uses, distinguishing supportive functions (like spell-checking) from actions that compromise academic integrity (such as generating full submissions). Outright bans are impractical because students are likely to continue using AI tools covertly, which can lead to a lack of transparency and accountability, putting their work and academic integrity at risk. Without proper guidance and oversight, students may misuse AI tools, leading to issues such as plagiarism and reliance on unverified information. Instead, policies should be clear, accessible, and foster open dialogue among students, faculty, and administration. This approach encourages responsible use of AI and ensures that students understand the ethical implications of their actions. By promoting transparency and accountability, institutions can create an environment where AI is used to complement traditional learning methods rather than undermine them.

49 Goswami (n 18) 22.
50 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 64.

5 Strategies for ethical and effective AI integration

To effectively integrate AI into legal education, institutions must embed AI tools within the curriculum. This includes developing courses that teach students how to use AI responsibly and critically. Both educators and students require proper training to understand AI's capabilities and limitations. Training programs should cover ethical considerations, best practices, and hands-on experience with AI tools.[51]

The integration of AI in legal education is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvement. Feedback loops and iterative development are crucial for refining AI tools and teaching methods. Educators must regularly assess the effectiveness of AI applications and make necessary adjustments to enhance their impact. This includes gathering feedback from students and faculty, conducting pilot programs, and staying informed about the latest advancements in AI technology.[52] This process should be supported by existing teaching and learning units or designated structures within institutions to ensure that educators are not solely responsible for implementation and evaluation.[53]

Policies to ensure the responsible and fair use of AI in legal education should include guidelines on ethical AI usage, data privacy, and academic integrity. These policies should also address the need for transparency in AI-generated outputs and provide mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the impact of AI on learning outcomes. Additionally, institutions should develop courses specifically designed to teach students how to effectively and ethically use AI tools in their legal studies.

To ensure the responsible and fair use of AI in legal education, institutions should develop comprehensive courses that address various aspects of AI usage. These courses should begin with an introduction to AI in legal education, offering an overview of AI technologies and their applications in the legal field. Like foundational law courses, this module should cover key concepts such as machine learning, natural language processing, and data analytics, explaining how these technologies enhance legal research, analysis, and practice. Ethical AI use must be a central focus, emphasising academic integrity, the avoidance

51 Dong & Min (n 11) 8.
52 A Serra 'AI lawyering skills trainers: Transforming legal education with generative AI' (2025) *Journal of Law, Technology, & the Internet* 74.
53 Serra (n 52) 74.

of plagiarism, and awareness of potential biases and limitations in AI tools.[54] This can be incorporated into existing ethics courses, where students critically evaluate AI-generated content and ensure their use of AI aligns with academic and professional standards.

Data privacy and security can be addressed within courses on legal research and information management. Students should learn about the legal and ethical implications of data collection, storage, and usage, covering relevant data protection laws and regulations, such as the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA). Practical applications of AI in legal studies can be included in advanced research and writing courses. These modules would provide hands-on training with AI-powered platforms for legal research, document drafting, and case law analysis, including practical exercises and case studies to help students apply their knowledge in real-world scenarios.

To develop critical thinking skills in the context of AI, assignments and assessments should require students to engage deeply with AI-generated content, ensuring they do not rely solely on AI for their research and analysis.[55] This can be integrated into existing courses that focus on legal reasoning and analysis. Broader ethical implications of AI in the legal profession can be explored through seminars and workshops, encouraging discussions and debates on issues such as data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the potential impact of AI on employment and access to justice. These sessions can be part of professional development programs or elective courses.

By embedding these components into the existing curriculum, institutions can ensure that students are well-prepared to use AI tools responsibly and ethically, without adding an excessive burden to their coursework. This approach will help students harness the benefits of AI while maintaining the analytical depth and integrity required in the legal profession.

Designing tasks that require students to critically evaluate AI-generated outputs ensures that they actively engage with the material. For example, students can use AI to generate a list of relevant case laws and then analyse the legal principles involved, compare different cases, and form their own arguments. This approach ensures that students

54 Bliss (n 43) 150.
55 Goswami (n 18) 16.

develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills while using AI as a tool to enhance their learning.

For example, institutions of higher learning can integrate AI into the legal writing module for final-year LLB students. Students use ChatGPT to draft legal arguments based on hypothetical case studies. The AI provides instant feedback on structure, coherence, and citation accuracy.[56] However, students must refine their drafts through peer review and professor feedback to ensure they engage critically with the material. To mitigate concerns about academic dishonesty, lecturers implement AI-detection tools and require students to submit reflective essays explaining how they used AI in their drafting process. This approach ensures that AI complements rather than replaces legal reasoning skills.

A holistic approach is essential to integrating AI into the legal curriculum, requiring a comprehensive strategy that embeds AI across courses to meet educational goals.[57] Ethical AI use can be taught through modules on AI ethics, data privacy, and professional responsibility, helping students understand relevant dilemmas. Hands-on learning with AI tools, such as predictive analytics, can be achieved through simulations, role-play, and real-world projects, enhancing practical skills.[58] Interdisciplinary collaboration with fields like computer science, through joint projects enables deeper learning. AI-driven platforms offer personalised learning experiences, while ongoing faculty development, through workshops and collaborative research, ensures effective AI integration. Faculty experimentation and sharing of best practices further support continuous improvement in teaching methods, preparing students for an AI-enhanced legal landscape.

Assessment methods should be redesigned to measure students' effective and ethical use of AI tools. Performance-based, project-based, and formative assessments with clear rubrics can evaluate both technical and critical thinking skills. Adequate resources, such as AI software, computing facilities, and technical support, are essential for AI integration, requiring funding and partnerships to access advanced tools.[59] Despite the promising potential of AI in enhancing legal

56 Goswami (n 18) 17.
57 Goswami (n 18) 11.
58 Prakash & Nair (n 21) 66.
59 As above.

education, scepticism persists among some academics regarding its efficacy in teaching non-clinical subjects. Critics argue that reliance on AI tools may undermine critical pedagogical principles, potentially leading to passive learning experiences instead of the desired active engagement. However, AI has the potential to foster engagement and transform passive learning into immersive, active learning experiences in legal education. By generating complex legal scenarios, facilitating debates, and promoting ethical analysis, AI can help students develop higher-order cognitive skills essential for modern legal practice.

6 Possible solutions and recommendations

To effectively integrate AI into legal education while addressing its challenges, a multi-faceted approach is necessary. First, structured AI integration in legal curricula should be developed to ensure that AI tools enhance, rather than replace, critical thinking and legal reasoning.[60] Law faculties should incorporate AI-assisted research and analysis tools while maintaining a strong emphasis on human judgment, ethics, and analytical reasoning. Developing best practices for AI-assisted learning can help students use these tools responsibly and productively.

Second, ethical guidelines and academic integrity policies should be strengthened to prevent over-reliance on AI for academic work. Current institutional policies often lack explicit provisions that address AI-specific misconduct, resulting in uncertainty about what constitutes acceptable use. In some cases, guidelines are too general, fail to distinguish between legitimate assistance and academic dishonesty, or are not consistently communicated or enforced across departments. With clear frameworks in place to guide students on the responsible use of AI, they will understand that it complements rather than replace their role in the academic task. Just as plagiarism carries academic consequences, failing to use AI ethically or within the provided guidelines should also result in clear penalties. However, a framework is only effective if it is enforced institutions must outline clear consequences for misuse or non-compliance to uphold academic integrity.

Third, collaboration between policymakers, educators, and professional bodies is essential. Institutions such as the Legal Practice

60 Goswami (n 18) 5.

Council and universities should work together to establish AI-related competency frameworks that align with professional legal standards. This collaboration will ensure that AI in legal education serves to uphold the profession's core values, including ethical practice, analytical rigor, and public service.

Finally, future research on AI's impact on legal education should be prioritised. Empirical studies should assess how AI affects students' legal reasoning, research habits, and overall academic development. Such research need not be confined to legal scholars alone but can benefit from interdisciplinary approaches involving education specialists, legal academics, and researchers in cognitive science to ensure a well-rounded understanding. Additionally, research should explore AI's role in promoting accessibility and diversity in legal education, ensuring that its benefits reach a broad spectrum of students.[61]

7 Conclusion

The integration of AI into legal education presents both opportunities and challenges. While AI can enhance efficiency and accessibility, it must be implemented in a way that safeguards academic integrity and fosters the development of essential legal skills. A well-balanced approach one that combines AI-driven innovation with traditional legal training will ensure that students graduate with the critical thinking, analytical abilities, and ethical grounding required for the profession.

As AI continues to evolve, South Africa must take a proactive stance in shaping its role in legal education. By fostering collaboration among legal educators, policymakers, and professional bodies, and by conducting further research into AI's long-term effects, the legal education system can harness AI's benefits while mitigating its risks. In the end, AI should be seen as a tool that enhances legal education, not one that diminishes the core principles of legal reasoning, ethical practice, and professional responsibility.

61 Goswami (n 18) 23.