

Embracing Technology and Digitisation for Effective Justice Delivery in Ghana

Justice Agyei Ampofo¹, *Obeng Owusu-Boateng², Simeon Martey³, Mariam Mumuni Atipaga⁴

¹Judicial Service of Ghana, Tamale, Ghana.

²Department of Mathematics & ICT Education, E. P. College of Education, Bimbilla. Ghana.

^{3*4}Department of Law, University for Development Studies, Tamale. Ghana.

***Correspondence Author**

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ABSTRACT

The delivery of justice in Ghana has changed considerably over the past 20 years, owing to the increased use of technology and digital innovation. The move to an electronic justice system, electronic filing, online dispute resolution and data-driven management of court proceedings is a strategic solution to the long-standing inefficiencies of the justice system. This paper examines how technology has facilitated access to justice, increased transparency and improved efficiency in Ghana through a comprehensive approach that synthesises academic literature, policy reports, institutional documents and media coverage since 2000. The results illustrate the successes and shortcomings of the reforms of the digital justice system, particularly in the areas of infrastructure differences, cybersecurity and digital literacy. This paper concludes that digitisation of the judiciary in Ghana has prospects that can be achieved through sustained investment, capacity building and an inclusive policy framework.

Keywords: Technology, Digitisation, Justice Delivery, Ghana, e-Justice, Legal Reform.

Introduction

The delivery of justice is a key element of democratic governance, but the Ghanaian judicial system has long been characterised by inefficiency, slowness and inaccessibility. Mechanic case management and the lack of adequate court infrastructure, as well as geographical imbalances, have hampered the access of citizens, especially rural ones, to justice over the years (Judicial Service of Ghana. (2023: Ashong-Elliott et al., 2024). However, in response to this, both the Ghanaian government and the judiciary have taken an increasing interest in technology and digitisation as a means of judicial reform. The E-Justice project (also known as paperless courts or Electronic Case Management System, (ECMS) is an important step in this direction, which will automate the manual filing systems in court registers, starting with the submission of cases, online and mobile payments and real-time notifications via SMS and e-mail. Other digitisation initiatives include the e-judgment platform, which allows the judiciary to publish and share judgments and decisions at different levels of courts, to promote research and public access. By mid-2024, over 11,700 judgments from different courts had been published on this website. In addition, as part of the e-Justice (paperless court) programme, more than 228 courts were automated by August 2024 and more than 71,000 cases were filed through the system. In addition, online court proceedings have become more widespread, particularly during the court holidays and the COVID-19 crisis. For example, in the legislative year 2021-22, the Ministry of Justice introduced virtual court hearings during holidays, including 3,177 cases, 1,255 cases heard via virtual channels and 126 cases cleared via virtual channels.

Greater Accra also has virtual courts which have been used during holidays, saving time and costs for court users. The Chief Justice (former), Gertrude Araba Esaaba Sackey Torkornoo noted that the development of virtual courts and teleconferences is helping to facilitate the delivery of justice. Digitisation aims at making

justice faster and more efficient, but also more transparent and citizen-oriented. These measures are based on the institutional desire to minimise physical barriers (e.g. travel costs and distances), to promote proactive dissemination of case information and to minimise the risk of corruption and administrative delays. However, despite these positive achievements, a number of challenges remain: the digital divide (ICT infrastructure in most of the districts), the lack of technical capacity of judicial staff and the legal and constitutional implications of virtual courts and e-trial processes. This thesis takes a critical approach to see how far technology and digitisation have revolutionised the delivery of justice in Ghana, examining their impact on access to justice, efficiency, transparency and other challenges. It examines how recent reforms have been implemented, their results and what lessons can be drawn for future policies and practices.

Methodological Approach

This paper uses the scope-integrated method developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2025) to chart and synthesise the evidence of the impact of technology on Ghana's judiciary. It synthesises peer reviewed scholarship and informal sources, including policy reports, court documents and newspaper articles, on the major developments in the judiciary from 2000 to 2025. The primary sources will be reports issued by the Ghanaian Judiciary, the Ministry of Justice, the Ghana Bar Association and civil society organisations participating in the Digital Justice programmes. The data was thematically structured around: (1) the development of technological reforms; (2) digitisation of judicial processes; (3) access to justice based on technology; (4) results in terms of efficiency and transparency; (5) challenges and policy implications. This integrated approach offered a concise but inclusive perspective on the digital justice transition in Ghana.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Judicial reform and digital transformation literature in Africa notes the growing recognition of technology as a pillar of judicial modernisation. Mensah and Adu-Gyamfi (2023) argues that the digitisation of the judiciary in Ghana has increased efficiency and access to justice, particularly through online filing and mediation. According to Owusu and Sackey (2021), digital innovation can help to increase the level of transparency and accountability of judicial processes by reducing the involvement of people in judicial proceedings. At national level, as Darko (2024) points out, although African courts have made progress in their digital switchover, data security, infrastructure asymmetries and lack of funding remain insufficient. Research work on the e-Justice project in Ghana highlights that the integration of technologies has resulted in a reduction and improvement in the backlog of cases. Tracking of individual cases but not doing enough to address rural access inequalities. Asante (2022), Owusu-Boateng and Ampofo (2026), and Amoako (2020), stressed that technology is helping to increase alternative dispute resolution and save litigation costs, but that its uptake is low outside urban areas. Taken together, the literature suggests that the success of digital justice reform depends on institutional capacity, long-term investment and general digital literacy. This literature is a basis for analysing the current situation and future prospects of the adoption of technology in Ghana to ensure justice.

Technological Reform History in the Ghanaian Justice System

The transformation of the judiciary began at the beginning of the millennium, when Ghana began to invest in small-scale ICT investments in the automation of court registers and better data management. The World Bank-funded e-Justice project with the Government of Ghana is a turning point for 2018. This project has resulted in electronic filing systems, an electronic timetable, real-time monitoring of cases and electronic archives (Judicial Service of Ghana, 2022). The subsequent reforms included the creation of online access to legal documents, the introduction of electronic court fees and pilot virtual court sessions, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic. These innovations have reduced the backlog of cases and increased the efficiency of selected high courts in Accra and Kumasi.

Technology and Access to Justice

Technology has increased access to justice, especially for those living in remote or poorly served areas. Online dispute resolution and online alternative dispute resolution mechanisms have enabled parties to resolve disputes in a cost-effective and almost immediate manner compared to the costs and time spent on traditional litigation.

Legal awareness tools. The mobile application and SMS tools that allow NGOs and legal aid organisations to reach people in rural areas have helped to raise awareness and participation. Moreover, the introduction of digitisation of court records has made courts more transparent and accountable to society, as claimants can follow their cases from the comfort of their own homes and there is less scope for tampering or tampering with court records (Mensah and Adu-Gyamfi, 2023).

Institutional Performance, Efficiency and Transparency

Digitisation has increased the efficiency of the flow of work in the judicial chain. The advantages of e-case management systems include document sharing, reduction of administrative barriers and improved coordination between judges, clerks and lawyers. The capacity to collect data and analyse judicial policies is also being strengthened, allowing more effective monitoring of performance indicators and case statistics (Owusu and Sackey, 2021). Notably, the computerisation of the judicial system has resulted in procedural fairness, predictability and public confidence in the judicial system.

Difficulties in Digital Justice Reform

Although some improvements have been made, several barriers still prevent the full potential of digitisation from being realised: the lack of ICT infrastructure in rural courts, inconsistent internet connectivity, the lack of technical skills among legal practitioners and court staff and the issues of insufficient funding. Moreover, digital justice projects may potentially increase inequality if these vulnerable groups are technologically illiterate or lack access to technology (Darko, 2024). Privacy issues and threats to data security are also major obstacles. It is essential to address these challenges in order to ensure that the digitalisation agenda of the judiciary in Ghana is inclusive and resilient.

Policy and Practical Implications

Priority should be given to strategic initiatives to strengthen the digital transformation of Ghana: increasing ICT connectivity, institutionalising digital skills building, developing a national policy on digital justice and ensuring digital inclusion. Civil society and partnerships with private technology providers should be strengthened to ensure the sustainability and innovation of the system in the long term. There should also be continuous monitoring and evaluation systems to quantify impacts and to bring about policy changes.

CONCLUSION

Ghana's judiciary is on the verge of the new digital age. Digitisation and the use of technology have redefined the way in which justice is accessed, experienced and perceived. Efficiency, transparency and accountability have improved with the introduction of e-justice websites, online dispute resolution systems and online case management. But these gains must be institutionalised through sustained systemic investment, capacity development and inclusive policy structures. By adopting the technology, Ghana is reaffirming its constitutional commitment to equity as a social good that is available to all citizens. Digital justice in Ghana is linked to how Ghana balances innovation with equity and institutional advantage.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To consolidate the gains made through judicial digitisation, it is recommended that Ghana's judiciary adopts a comprehensive and long-term national digital justice strategy anchored on sustained public investment. This strategy should prioritise the expansion and maintenance of digital infrastructure across all courts, including lower and superior courts in Ghana, to prevent the emergence of a digital divide in access to justice delivery. Continuous capacity development for judges, magistrates, court staff, lawyers and other legal and justice sector actors must be institutionalised through mandatory training and professional development programmes.

Additionally, robust cybersecurity frameworks and data protection protocols should be strengthened and adhered, in order to safeguard judicial information and maintain public trust in digital justice systems.

Furthermore, inclusive and adaptive policy and regulatory frameworks should be developed to guide the ethical and equitable use of technology within the justice delivery system in Ghana. These policies should ensure that digital justice platforms are accessible to vulnerable and marginalized groups, including persons with disabilities, low-income litigants and individuals with limited digital literacy. Public education initiatives and legal aid integration with digital platforms are essential to ensure that technological innovation does not inadvertently exclude sections of the society.

By fostering inter-institutional collaboration between the judiciary, legislature, executive and private technology partners, Ghana can achieve a balanced approach that harnesses innovation while preserving fairness, accountability and constitutional principles and tenets of justice for all.

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