AI-Ready MBA Graduates: A Conceptual Framework for Curriculum Transformation and Career Readiness

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ABSTRACT

The rapid diffusion of artificial intelligence (AI) across industries is fundamentally reshaping work, occupations, and employer expectations. While higher education institutions continue to emphasize disciplinary knowledge, employers increasingly demand graduates capable of collaborating with intelligent systems, interpreting AI-generated insights, solving complex problems, and demonstrating ethical judgment in AI-supported environments. This paper develops a conceptual framework and proposes an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research design for examining how students prepare for AI-integrated workplaces. This conceptual paper examines how universities can redesign curricula to prepare students for AI-integrated workplaces. Drawing on Human Capital Theory, Experiential Learning Theory, Constructivism, and the Technology Acceptance Model, the paper proposes an integrated framework that links AI-enabled curriculum design, digital pedagogy, competency development, employability skills, and career readiness. The framework identifies critical competencies, including AI literacy, digital fluency, critical thinking, creativity, ethical reasoning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and lifelong learning. The study further discusses implications for curriculum planners, educators, accreditation agencies, and industry partners. Finally, the paper outlines future research directions and practical recommendations for embedding AI across undergraduate and postgraduate education in the Indian context.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Higher Education, Curriculum Design, Career Readiness, Graduate Employability, Future Skills, AI Literacy

INTRODUCTION

Background

Artificial intelligence (AI) has evolved from an emerging technological innovation into a transformative force that is reshaping industries, organizational processes, and the nature of work. Recent advances in machine learning, natural language processing, computer vision, robotics, and particularly generative AI have accelerated digital transformation across both private and public sectors (Dwivedi et al., 2023; OECD, 2024; World Economic Forum [WEF], 2025). AI is now deeply embedded in decision-making, service delivery, operational efficiency, and innovation, making it an indispensable component of modern workplaces rather than a niche technological capability ((Floridi & Cowls, 2022; Mikalef et al.,2023).

WEF, 2025). Consequently, organizations increasingly expect employees to collaborate effectively with AI systems, interpret AI-generated insights, and make informed decisions within technology-enabled environments (Jarrahi, 2018; Raisch & Krakowski, 2021).

The integration of AI is evident across diverse sectors. In healthcare, AI supports disease diagnosis, personalized treatment planning, medical imaging, and patient monitoring. Banking and financial services employ AI for fraud

detection, credit risk assessment, algorithmic trading, customer service, and regulatory compliance (Bughin et al., 2018; OECD, 2024). Manufacturing organizations leverage AI-powered automation to improve productivity and operational resilience (WEF, 2025). Retail organizations use AI to enhance customer experiences through personalized recommendations, demand forecasting, inventory optimization, and dynamic pricing(Warner, & Wäger, 2019). Within education, AI-enabled learning platforms, adaptive assessment systems, intelligent tutoring, and learning analytics are transforming teaching and learning processes (UNESCO, 2023). Human resource management increasingly relies on AI for talent acquisition, workforce planning, employee engagement analytics, performance management, and personalized learning pathways (Vrontis et al., 2022). Similarly, finance and public administration are integrating AI into budgeting, auditing, policy implementation, citizen services, and data-driven governance (OECD, 2024), underscoring AI's pervasive influence across occupational contexts.

The emergence of generative AI represents a particularly significant milestone in workplace transformation (Hyde, Busby, & Bonner, 2024; Bellary, 2025). Unlike earlier automation technologies that primarily replaced repetitive manual tasks, generative AI augments higher-order cognitive activities such as content creation, software development, data analysis, strategic planning, research synthesis, and decision support (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Comparing its disruptive potential to previous waves of internet and mobile technology, generative AI is starting to transform work and research across a variety of areas. It demands disciplinary-specific, systematic frameworks to comprehend and direct the future deployment of GenAI (Choudhary et al., 2023). Intelligent systems can now generate reports, summarize complex information, produce computer code, design marketing content, assist in legal research, and facilitate business decision-making with unprecedented speed and accuracy (Mollick, 2024). Rather than eliminating the need for human expertise, these technologies are redefining work by shifting employee responsibilities toward creativity, critical evaluation, problem-solving, ethical judgment, and collaborative decision-making (Raisch & Krakowski, 2021). As a result, organizations increasingly value graduates who can effectively combine human capabilities with AI-enabled technologies to achieve superior organizational outcomes (WEF, 2025).

This transformation has substantially altered employer expectations regarding graduate competencies. Contemporary organizations are no longer seeking graduates who possess only disciplinary knowledge or technical specialization. Instead, employers increasingly prioritize individuals who demonstrate AI literacy, digital fluency, computational thinking, data interpretation skills, adaptability, and the ability to work collaboratively with intelligent systems (UNESCO, 2023; WEF, 2025). Graduates are expected to understand the capabilities and limitations of AI tools, develop effective prompt engineering strategies, critically evaluate AI-generated outputs, interpret data-driven insights, and apply ethical principles when using AI technologies. Kakada and MK (2024) argued that Industry 4.0 technologies are transforming HR practices by enabling data-driven decision-making, automation, and strategic workforce management.

Mollick, 2024). Equally important are transferable human capabilities—including communication, teamwork, creativity, emotional intelligence, leadership, and complex problem-solving—that complement AI rather than compete with it (Autor, 2015; OECD, 2024; WEF, 2025). These competencies collectively enable graduates to thrive in workplaces characterized by continuous technological innovation and human–AI collaboration.

The rapid evolution of workplace expectations presents significant challenges for higher education institutions. While many universities have begun introducing AI-related courses and digital learning technologies, curriculum transformation has often lagged behind the pace of technological advancement (Holmes et al., 2022; UNESCO, 2023). Traditional curricula continue to emphasize knowledge acquisition, content mastery, and examination-based assessment, with comparatively less attention devoted to experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, authentic problem solving, and AI-enabled workplace competencies (Biggs & Tang, 2011; OECD, 2024). Consequently, many graduates enter the labor market with strong theoretical foundations but limited preparedness for working alongside intelligent technologies in dynamic organizational settings (WEF, 2025).

This widening gap between higher education outcomes and industry expectations underscores the urgent need for curriculum redesign (Crompton & Burke 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024). Universities must move beyond teaching about AI as a discrete subject and instead embed AI literacy, ethical reasoning, digital competence, and experiential learning across disciplines (UNESCO, 2023). Curriculum innovation should integrate project-based learning, industry partnerships, internships, simulations, multidisciplinary collaboration, and authentic

assessments that mirror AI-enabled workplace practices ((Kumar & Baijal, 2025; Bashir & Lapshun, 2025; Kolb, 2015). Faculty members must also transition from traditional knowledge transmitters to facilitators who guide students in critically engaging with AI technologies, reflecting on their implications, and applying them responsibly to solve real-world problems (Holmes et al., 2022).

Preparing graduates for AI-integrated workplaces, therefore, requires a comprehensive educational transformation that aligns curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment, and industry engagement with evolving workforce demands (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2024; WEF, 2025). Such transformation is essential not only to enhance graduate employability but also to develop adaptable, ethically responsible, and lifelong learners who can contribute meaningfully to organizations increasingly shaped by artificial intelligence (Mollick, 2024). This study responds to that imperative by examining how curriculum design, skill development, and career readiness can be reimagined to prepare students for successful participation in AI-integrated workplaces((Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024; Van Laar et al., 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

By changing employment responsibilities, organizational procedures, and employee expectations, artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping the global workforce (Long & Magerko, 2020; Laupichler, et al., 2023). Organizations have moved from technology-assisted operations to AI-integrated workplaces, where humans and intelligent systems work together to improve organizational performance, driven by the growing adoption of AI technologies such as machine learning, generative AI, robotics, and predictive analytics (Dwivedi et al., 2023). Higher education institutions have been forced to reevaluate the goals and design of their courses in response to the evolving nature of employment. To prepare graduates for AI-enabled businesses, where ongoing technological adaptation is crucial, traditional knowledge-based education is no longer adequate (Kumar & Baijal, 2025; Bashir & Lapshun, 2025). To ensure that graduates are employable in increasingly technology-driven workplaces, universities are expected to redesign courses that promote AI literacy, digital fluency, critical thinking, creativity, ethical reasoning, cooperation, and lifelong learning (UNESCO, 2023; OECD, 2023). These skills enable graduates to make ethical, well-informed judgments in professional settings, critically assess AI-generated outputs, and use AI tools efficiently (Kasneci et al., 2023).

AI literacy gaps among faculty, infrastructure constraints, ethical concerns, and insufficient institutional support are some of the obstacles that prevent effective graduate preparation, according to Sutton and Degenaar's (2026) investigation into the readiness of communication academics in South African universities for AI-influenced industries. One of the most important factors influencing graduate employability in AI-enabled firms is competency development, which goes beyond changes to the curriculum. In addition to technical proficiency, employers increasingly look for graduates who demonstrate flexibility, creativity, digital communication skills, innovation, analytical thinking, teamwork, and ethical decision-making (Kakada, 2024: Van Laar et al., 2020). According to Shubha et,al., (2026), workers who are more conscious of AI behave more creatively, engage in more exploratory learning, and are more prepared for change. According to their research, people who are aware of AI are more likely to welcome rather than oppose technological change, which ultimately fosters organizational creativity. These results imply that AI literacy and adaptive learning skills should be given top priority in higher education as crucial graduate qualities that can promote long-term employability in AI-integrated workplaces (Kumar & Baijal, 2025; Bashir & Lapshun, 2025).

Similarly, Hassanzadeh et al. (2026) contend that encouraging workers' creativity, risk-taking, and social innovation promotes organizational innovation. The authors use the Stimulus–Organism–Response (SOR) framework to show how AI acts as an external stimulus that boosts innovation through employees' psychological reactions, especially when people have enough faith in AI technologies. Their results highlight that AI alone does not produce creativity; rather, innovation arises when workers have the skills needed to work effectively with intelligent systems. To enable graduates to make significant contributions to AI-driven organizational performance, higher education institutions should provide learning environments that foster creativity, critical thinking, innovation, and responsible AI use (Crompton & Burke 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024). Another crucial aspect of graduate preparation in AI-integrated settings is career preparedness(Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024).

Graduates must possess qualities that go beyond technical expertise, such as communication, authenticity, ethical judgment, resilience, and professional adaptability, as companies increasingly use AI in their hiring and personnel management processes. AI-generated communication is becoming a crucial feature of recruitment methods, especially when interacting with Generation Z job searchers. The study highlights that firms still value authenticity, transparency, and ethical communication in recruitment methods, even though AI improves communication efficacy and recruitment efficiency (Kumar & Baijal, 2025; Bashir & Lapshun, 2025). These results imply that, to successfully navigate AI-enabled recruitment environments and professional interactions, graduates should have excellent interpersonal communication and ethical decision-making skills in addition to AI literacy (Long & Magerko 2020; Laupichler, et al., 2023).

The body of research shows that AI is changing graduate competency requirements and organizational expectations. Although earlier research has examined workplace innovation (Hassanzadeh et al., 2026), curricular problems (Sutton & Degenaar, 2026), AI awareness and AI-enabled recruitment, these studies mostly address these topics separately. A complete framework outlining how higher education institutions might systematically prepare graduates for AI-integrated workplaces through curricular transformation, competency development, and career preparedness has only been partially explored (Crompton & Burke 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024).To address this gap, the current conceptual paper proposes an integrated framework that uses curriculum transformation as the fundamental mechanism for developing AI-related abilities, which in turn improve graduates' preparedness for careers in AI-integrated workplaces(Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024). The framework also makes the case that graduates are prepared to work effectively with AI technologies while retaining the human-centered skills essential in the workplace of the future, through a combination of AI literacy, ethical awareness, creativity, adaptability, digital communication, interdisciplinary learning, and experiential education (Van Laar et al., 2020). By providing a comprehensive approach to training future-ready graduates who can succeed in increasingly AI-driven organizational environments, such a framework adds to the literature on higher education and workforce development (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024).

AI and Future of Work

Artificial intelligence (AI) is fundamentally transforming the future of work by reshaping organizational processes, job roles, and workforce competencies through automation, augmentation, and intelligent decision support (Behera & Nigam, 2025). While early automation primarily replaced repetitive, routine, and rule-based tasks, contemporary AI technologies increasingly augment human capabilities by supporting complex cognitive activities such as data analysis, problem-solving, decision-making, and knowledge creation(Floridi & Cowls, 2022; Mikalef et al.,2023).

The emergence of Generative AI has accelerated this transformation by enabling machines to produce human-like text, images, software code, and analytical insights, thereby enhancing productivity across knowledge-intensive occupations (Hyde, Busby, & Bonner, 2024; Bellary, 2025; Mehta et al., 2025). Rather than replacing human workers entirely, AI is fostering model of hybrid intelligence in which humans and intelligent systems complement one another by combining computational efficiency with human creativity, critical thinking, emotional intelligence, and ethical judgment. Additionally, IIM Bangalore launched a special AI for Managers program that integrates business applications, analytics, generative AI, and machine learning ideas (Hyde, Busby, & Bonner, 2024; Bellary, 2025). The program suggests that AI competency is evolving into a fundamental managerial skill by emphasizing managerial decision-making above programming (IIMB, 2022).

Artificial Intelligence in Higher Education

Artificial intelligence (AI) is rapidly transforming higher education by redefining teaching, learning, assessment, and institutional decision-making. AI-powered tutors and intelligent tutoring systems provide students with real-time feedback, personalized guidance, and continuous learning support, enabling more interactive and self-directed learning experiences (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024). Complementing these innovations, adaptive learning platforms analyze learners' progress, preferences, and performance to customize instructional content, pacing, and difficulty levels, thereby improving learning effectiveness and student engagement. Learning analytics further enhances educational outcomes by leveraging large volumes of learner data to identify academic patterns, predict student performance, detect at-risk learners, and support evidence-

based instructional interventions (Patwa et al., 2018). It makes the case that management programs should better match classroom instruction with actual workplace demands (Chavan, 2018; Mahajan, 2022) highlights that rather than relying just on curriculum, skill-readiness should be viewed as a shared duty (Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024)

These capabilities contribute to personalized education, where learning experiences are tailored to individual students' strengths, needs, and career aspirations rather than following a standardized approach (Kumar & Baijal, 2025; Bashir & Lapshun, 2025). AI has also transformed assessment practices through automated grading, intelligent feedback systems, formative assessments, and competency-based evaluation, thereby reducing administrative burden and providing timely, consistent feedback to learners (Shubha et al., 2026). However, the widespread adoption of generative AI has raised important concerns regarding academic integrity, including plagiarism, unauthorized AI-assisted assignments, authenticity of student work, and the need to redesign assessment strategies that emphasize higher-order thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. IIM Ahmedabad's engagement with OpenAI reflects a purposeful approach toward incorporating Generative AI into management education (Hyde, Busby, & Bonner, 2024; Bellary, 2025). The effort focuses on responsible AI use, enterprise decision-making, faculty development, and AI-enabled pedagogy, demonstrating that future MBA graduates demand AI literacy beyond technical understanding (IIMA, 2026). Additionally, IIM Bangalore has announced that MBA programs are being restructured to be more flexible, digital, interdisciplinary, and industry-connected. This bolsters the claim that curriculum innovation, not the addition of a single AI course, is necessary to produce graduates who are AI-ready. (IIMB, 2025)

Consequently, universities are increasingly adopting authentic assessment approaches that evaluate students' ability to apply knowledge in real-world contexts rather than merely reproduce information. Equally critical is faculty readiness, as successful AI integration depends on educators' digital competence, pedagogical innovation, ethical awareness, and willingness to redesign curricula and instructional practices. Continuous professional development and institutional support are therefore essential to enable faculty members to effectively harness AI technologies while maintaining educational quality, academic standards, and the responsible use of AI in higher education (Crompton & Burke 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024).

Graduate Employability and Future Workforce Competencies

Graduate employability has evolved beyond the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge to encompass a comprehensive set of competencies that enable graduates to succeed in rapidly changing, technology-driven workplaces. Employers increasingly emphasize graduate attributes such as critical thinking, ethical reasoning, communication, collaboration, creativity, and lifelong learning, recognizing that these capabilities enhance an individual's ability to contribute effectively in complex organizational environments (Misra et al., 2023). The emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and digital transformation has further elevated the importance of future skills, including analytical thinking, innovation, systems thinking, problem-solving, adaptability, and resilience, which enable graduates to navigate uncertainty and technological disruption (Behera & Nigam, 2025). Kakada (2024) emphasized that digital transformation has become a strategic necessity for developing agile and technology-enabled learning organizations in the post-pandemic era. Alongside these competencies, soft skills remain essential because interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, leadership, teamwork, and cultural awareness facilitate effective human interaction and complement AI-driven automation. Equally important are digital skills, encompassing AI literacy, data interpretation, digital collaboration, information management, cybersecurity awareness, and the effective use of emerging technologies to support evidence-based decision-making (Long & Magerko, 2020; Laupichler, et al., 2023).

Modern workplaces also value transferable skills that can be applied across industries and occupational contexts, including project management, critical inquiry, decision-making, negotiation, and self-directed learning, thereby enhancing graduates' flexibility in diverse professional settings (Van Laar et al., 2020). As technological innovation continues to reshape job roles and career pathways, career adaptability has become a critical employability attribute, reflecting an individual's readiness to anticipate change, continuously acquire new competencies, embrace lifelong learning, and respond proactively to evolving labour market demands (Mehta et al., 2025; Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024). Consequently, higher education institutions must redesign curricula to intentionally integrate technical, cognitive, interpersonal, and digital competencies to

develop adaptable graduates who can thrive in AI-integrated workplaces while sustaining long-term employability and professional growth (Crompton & Burke, 2023; Zawacki-Richter et al., 2024).

AI Literacy and Responsible Artificial Intelligence

AI literacy has emerged as a foundational competency for graduates entering technology-enabled workplaces, extending beyond the ability to use AI tools to encompass a comprehensive understanding of how artificial intelligence functions, its capabilities and limitations, and its broader societal implications (Floridi & Cowls, 2022; Mikalef et al., 2023). AI awareness enables learners to recognize the potential applications of intelligent systems across diverse professional contexts while developing realistic expectations regarding their benefits and risks (Sharma & Yadav, 2024). Closely associated with AI literacy is data literacy, which equips students with the ability to collect, interpret, evaluate, visualize, and communicate data effectively for informed decision-making (Long & Magerko, 2020; Laupichler et al., 2023). As generative AI becomes increasingly integrated into academic and professional activities, prompt engineering has gained prominence as a critical skill, enabling users to design precise and contextually relevant prompts that enhance the quality, accuracy, and relevance of AI-generated outputs (Deshmukh & Shrouty, 2024). However, effective AI use also requires critical evaluation, whereby individuals assess the credibility, accuracy, bias, transparency, and reliability of AI-generated information rather than accepting outputs uncritically. Such evaluative capabilities are essential for mitigating misinformation, algorithmic bias, and factual inaccuracies that may arise from AI systems(Floridi & Cowls, 2022; Mikalef et al.,2023).

Furthermore, the widespread adoption of AI underscores the importance of responsible AI, emphasizing fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy, inclusiveness, and compliance with legal and institutional standards. Ethical decision-making complements these principles by enabling graduates to balance technological innovation with human values, social responsibility, and professional integrity when deploying AI solutions (Sharma & Yadav, 2024). Consequently, higher education institutions must embed AI literacy, ethical reasoning, and responsible AI practices across curricula to prepare graduates who can leverage intelligent technologies effectively while ensuring that AI applications remain trustworthy, equitable, and aligned with societal expectations (Long & Magerko, 2020; Laupichler, et al., 2023).

Curriculum Transformation for AI-Integrated Workplaces

Preparing students for AI-integrated workplaces requires a fundamental transformation of higher education curricula from content-driven instruction to competency-oriented learning that aligns with evolving industry expectations. Competency-based education emphasizes the development and demonstration of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and professional behaviors required for workplace success, enabling students to progress by mastering clearly defined competencies rather than simply completing prescribed coursework (Sangai, 2021); Van Laar et al., 2020). Complementing this approach, outcome-based education focuses on measurable learning outcomes that ensure graduates possess the cognitive, technical, interpersonal, and ethical capabilities demanded by contemporary employers (Floridi & Cowls, 2022; Mikalef et al., 2023). Active pedagogical approaches such as problem-based learning and project-based learning further strengthen curriculum relevance by engaging students in authentic, real-world challenges that foster critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, and decision-making while encouraging the practical application of theoretical concepts (Kamerikar et al., 2019).

The growing pace of technological advancement has also increased the significance of micro-credentials and industry certifications, which provide flexible, competency-focused learning opportunities that validate proficiency in emerging technologies, AI applications, digital tools, and professional practices. These credentials enable students to continuously update their knowledge and remain competitive in rapidly evolving labour markets. Equally important are internships and work-integrated learning experiences that expose students to organizational environments, facilitate collaboration with industry professionals, and develop practical competencies through experiential learning. Capstone projects further consolidate learning by requiring students to integrate disciplinary knowledge, technological competencies, and professional skills to address complex organizational or societal problems, often in partnership with industry stakeholders. Collectively, these curriculum innovations promote experiential, interdisciplinary, and industry-aligned learning that equips graduates with the technical expertise, adaptive capabilities, and lifelong learning orientation necessary to thrive

in AI-enabled workplaces and sustain long-term employability.

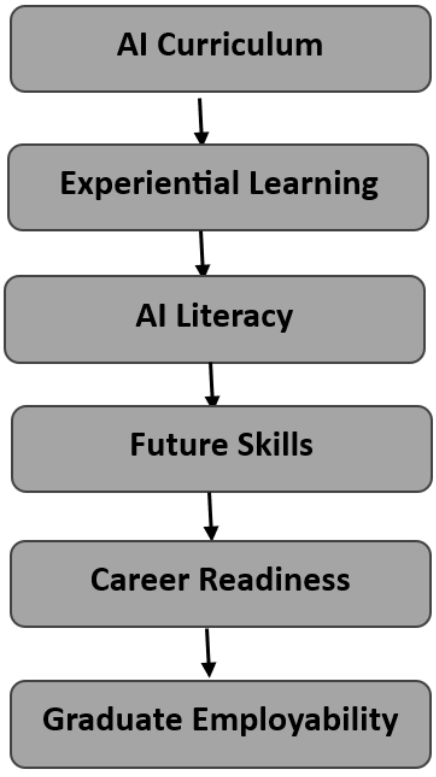
Career Readiness for AI-Integrated Workplaces

Career readiness in AI-integrated workplaces extends beyond technical competence to encompass a broad range of professional, interpersonal, and cognitive capabilities that enable graduates to succeed in dynamic and technology-driven organizational environments (Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024). Communication remains a fundamental competency, as professionals must effectively convey complex ideas, collaborate across multidisciplinary teams, interpret AI-generated insights, and engage with diverse stakeholders through both digital and face-to-face interactions. Leadership has similarly evolved to emphasize strategic thinking, ethical decision-making, emotional intelligence, and the ability to guide teams through continuous technological change and organizational transformation (Ekta & Vij, 2025). Teamwork is increasingly important as employees collaborate not only with colleagues from diverse functional backgrounds but also with intelligent systems that augment human decision-making and productivity. Equally critical is problem-solving, which requires graduates to analyze complex situations, evaluate AI-supported recommendations, integrate multiple sources of information, and develop innovative solutions to emerging challenges.

Innovation has become a distinguishing capability in AI-enabled organizations, encouraging individuals to leverage technology creatively to improve processes, products, and services while fostering organizational competitiveness. As the pace of technological advancement accelerates, adaptability enables graduates to respond effectively to changing job roles, emerging technologies, and evolving workplace expectations by embracing flexibility, resilience, and continuous skill development (Khare, 2018). Underpinning all these competencies is lifelong learning, which reflects an individual's commitment to continuously acquiring new knowledge, updating technical expertise, and engaging in ongoing professional development throughout their career. Consequently, higher education institutions must cultivate these interconnected competencies through experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, authentic assessment, and industry engagement to prepare graduates who can thrive in AI-integrated workplaces and sustain long-term employability in an increasingly complex and evolving global economy.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework Linking AI Curriculum, Experiential Learning, AI Literacy, Future Skills, Career Readiness, and Graduate Employability



Integrated Multi-Theory Framework

These four theories operate at different but interconnected levels:

Theory	Primary Focus	Role in the Proposed Framework
Human Capital Theory	Investment in education and skills	Explains why AI competencies enhance employability and productivity
Experiential Learning Theory	Learning through authentic experience	Explains how AI competencies are developed through projects, internships, and simulations
Constructivism	Active knowledge construction	Explains how learners build understanding through inquiry, collaboration, and reflection
Technology Acceptance Model	Technology adoption behavior	Explains students' willingness to use AI-enabled learning technologies

The study is concerned with lived experiences rather than measuring variables.

Sensemaking explains how students interpret uncertain futures created by AI.

Students continuously ask

- Will AI replace my job?
- What skills should I develop?
- What should universities teach?
- How can I remain employable?

Sensemaking captures these interpretations.

Research Questions

Primary Question

How do university students make sense of preparing for AI-integrated workplaces?

Secondary Questions

RQ1: How do students perceive AI's influence on future employment?

RQ2: How do students experience AI within university learning?

RQ3: Which competencies do students consider most valuable?

RQ4: How do students evaluate current curriculum relevance?

RQ5: How do students construct their career readiness in AI-enabled workplaces?

Participants

The study employs purposive sampling with a maximum variation sampling strategy to recruit **25 postgraduate students** from the various Indian Institute of Management (IIMs). This approach is intended to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives regarding preparedness for AI-integrated workplaces while ensuring rich, information-intensive data suitable for Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Final-year students are considered appropriate participants because they are approaching entry into the labour market and are likely to have experienced curriculum delivery, internships, project-based learning, and exposure to AI-enabled technologies during their academic programs. The diversity of disciplinary backgrounds facilitates a comprehensive understanding of how students from different educational contexts perceive AI, develop relevant

competencies, and construct their career readiness for AI-integrated workplaces.

Inclusion Criteria

Participants were selected based on predefined inclusion criteria to ensure they can provide rich and relevant insights into AI-integrated learning and career readiness. Eligible participants should be final-year undergraduate or postgraduate students who have used AI tools, such as generative AI applications, coding assistants, or analytics platforms, for academic learning or project work. Preference will be given to students who have completed internships or industry-based projects, as these experiences provide valuable exposure to AI-enabled workplace practices. Additionally, all participants must be willing to share their experiences, perceptions, and reflections on AI adoption, curriculum effectiveness, and preparation for future careers in AI-integrated workplaces.

Data Collection

Data was collected through **semi-structured interviews**, with each interview lasting approximately **45–60 minutes**. Interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or via online platforms such as **Microsoft Teams** or **Zoom**, depending on participant availability and convenience. With participants' informed consent, all interviews will be audio recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the data. A semi-structured interview guide comprising open-ended questions will be used to facilitate in-depth discussions on students' experiences with AI, perceptions of curriculum effectiveness, skill development, and career readiness for AI-integrated workplaces, while allowing sufficient flexibility to explore emerging themes.

Theme 1

Understanding AI

- What does AI mean to you?
- How do you think AI will affect your career?

Theme 2

University Experience

- How has your curriculum prepared you?
- Which courses were useful?

Theme 3

Skills

- What skills do employers expect?
- Which skills are missing?

Theme 4

Learning Experience

- Describe your experience using AI.
- How confident are you?

Theme 5

Career Readiness

- Do you feel prepared?
- Why?

Theme 6

Recommendations

- What should universities change?

Sensemaking Process

Drawing on Sensemaking Theory, the study conceptualizes career readiness as a dynamic process through which students construct meaning from their experiences with artificial intelligence(Warner, & Wäger, 2019). Students initially encounter AI-driven disruption in academic learning, internships, and exposure to emerging workplace technologies, creating uncertainty about future careers and the competencies required. They subsequently interpret this uncertainty by reflecting on their educational experiences, interactions with AI tools, and perceptions of evolving employer expectations. Through this reflective process, students develop personal meaning about the opportunities and challenges of AI-integrated workplaces, enabling them to identify the technical, cognitive, interpersonal, and ethical competencies necessary for future employment. This ongoing process of sensemaking ultimately shapes their confidence, adaptability, and preparedness, thereby enhancing career readiness in AI-enabled professional environments.

Theoretical contributions

Theoretical and Practical Contributions

This study makes several important theoretical and practical contributions to the emerging literature on AI-integrated higher education and graduate employability. Theoretically, it extends Sensemaking Theory by explaining how students interpret and construct meaning from AI-driven workplace transformation and its implications for their future careers. The study also demonstrates the value of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as an appropriate methodological approach for exploring graduate employability within AI-enabled educational contexts. Furthermore, it develops a student-centered conceptual framework that links students' AI learning experiences, meaning construction, competency development, and career readiness. From a practical perspective, the findings provide evidence-based recommendations for curriculum redesign that better align higher education with the competency demands of AI-integrated workplaces. The study identifies the critical technical, cognitive, interpersonal, and ethical competencies required for graduate employability, offers guidance for faculty in embedding authentic AI-enabled learning experiences and experiential pedagogies into teaching practices, and informs policymakers and university leaders in strengthening higher education policies, accreditation standards, and university–industry partnerships that support AI-ready graduates.

DISCUSSION

Universities must transition from **teaching AI** as a standalone subject to **teaching with AI**, integrating intelligent technologies into teaching, learning, and assessment across disciplines. Ultimately, higher education should focus on **teaching for AI-integrated workplaces** by embedding AI literacy, ethical reasoning, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary problem-solving into curricula (Long & Magerko 2020; Laupichler, et al., 2023) .. This progression enables students not only to understand AI technologies but also to collaborate effectively with AI systems, apply them responsibly in professional contexts, and develop the adaptive competencies required for long-term career success in an increasingly AI-driven world. Teaching for AI workplaces(Tomlinson, 2023; Jackson & Tomlinson, 2024). The reviewed literature demonstrates broad consensus that Artificial Intelligence is transforming management education from knowledge transmission to competency development. While earlier studies primarily focused on integrating digital technologies into classrooms, recent research argues that AI should fundamentally reshape managerial thinking, decision-making, and leadership development (Hyde et al., 2024; Bellary, 2025). Nevertheless, much of the existing literature emphasizes technological adoption and pedagogical innovation while paying comparatively less attention to how AI competencies should be systematically embedded across the MBA curriculum.

Preparing students for AI-integrated workplaces requires a comprehensive transformation of higher education through curriculum redesign, faculty development, strong industry partnerships, continuous curriculum updates,

ethical AI education, and interdisciplinary learning. Universities must move beyond standalone AI courses and embed AI competencies across all academic disciplines to ensure graduates develop both technical expertise and domain-specific applications. Faculty members require ongoing professional development to effectively integrate AI-enabled pedagogies, while collaboration with industry is essential to align curricula with evolving workforce requirements and emerging technologies. The emergence of Generative AI represents one of the most significant disruptions in higher education in recent decades. Existing literature acknowledges its potential to personalize learning, enhance business simulations, automate assessment, and improve student engagement (Kasneci et al., 2023; Dwivedi et al., 2023).

An interdisciplinary approach further enables students to apply AI within diverse professional contexts rather than viewing it solely as a technological discipline. Practically, AI integration should be contextualized within each field of study. Business programs should incorporate prompt engineering, AI-assisted decision-making, marketing analytics, and finance automation; engineering curricula should emphasize machine learning applications, intelligent systems, and predictive maintenance; medical education should focus on clinical AI, diagnostic support, and personalized healthcare; law programs should introduce legal analytics, AI governance, and regulatory compliance; human resource management should integrate AI-driven recruitment, workforce analytics, and talent management; while supply chain and operations management should emphasize predictive analytics, demand forecasting, logistics optimization, and intelligent inventory management. Such discipline-specific integration will equip graduates with the competencies required to effectively collaborate with AI technologies and enhance their employability in increasingly AI-enabled workplaces.

The literature consistently conceptualizes AI readiness as a multidimensional construct encompassing AI literacy, technological competence, ethical awareness, and collaborative capabilities. However, existing measurement frameworks remain fragmented. Most studies evaluate AI readiness through technological knowledge, digital skills, or behavioural intention to adopt AI, while relatively few incorporate managerial decision-making, leadership competencies, and career readiness (Mikalef et al., 2023). Moreover, current frameworks often focus on individual technology users rather than future business leaders responsible for organizational AI implementation.

Practical Implications

Preparing students for AI-integrated workplaces requires coordinated efforts from universities, faculty, industry, and government. Universities should redesign curricula, strengthen faculty training, reform assessment practices, and establish AI laboratories to provide experiential learning opportunities. Faculty members must adopt AI-enabled pedagogies, implement authentic assessments, and guide students through industry-oriented projects. Industry partners should support graduate readiness by offering internships, live projects, guest lectures, and micro-certifications that align academic learning with workplace expectations. At the policy level, governments should facilitate this transformation by developing a national AI curriculum framework, providing funding for digital infrastructure and faculty development, and establishing accreditation standards that promote AI literacy, innovation, and responsible AI education across higher education institutions.

Future Research

Future research should examine the long-term impact of AI-integrated curricula through longitudinal studies that track graduate employability and career progression. Comparative cross-country research can provide insights into how different higher education systems prepare students for AI-enabled workplaces. Further studies should also explore employers' perspectives on AI-related competencies, assess students' and faculty's readiness for AI adoption, and evaluate the effectiveness of experimental curricular interventions. Additionally, developing and validating standardized measures of AI competencies will strengthen future research and support evidence-based curriculum design and policy development.8.

CONCLUSION

AI is transforming not only workplaces but also the competencies required for graduate success. Higher education institutions must evolve beyond knowledge transmission toward developing AI-enabled professionals equipped with technical, cognitive, ethical, and interpersonal capabilities. A curriculum that integrates AI literacy,

experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and industry engagement can better prepare students for dynamic careers. The proposed framework provides a foundation for curriculum innovation and future empirical research, helping bridge the gap between academic preparation and the evolving expectations of AI-integrated workplaces.

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