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WORK AND HUMAN SKILLS IN THE AGE OF AI: A LITERARY PERSPECTIVE

Dr. Rakhi J. Malhi
HOD, Department of BBA
Smt. Maherbanu College of Science & Commerce, Akola
Sant Gadge Baba Amravati University, Amravati
Email : drrakhimalhi@gmail.com

Abstract

AI (in particular generative AI) is fundamentally altering the way work is structured, done and assessed. AI systems can now be used to assist with writing, analysis, prediction, coding, communication, information processing and content creation. This has led to a very pertinent question: if intelligent systems can be brought to bear on an ever increasing number of routine cognitive tasks, what human capabilities will be left? The paper looks at this question via a qualitative narrative review of the academic and institutional literature on AI, employment, skills, AI literacy and human–AI collaboration. The impact of AI shouldn't be viewed as a simple trade-off between human jobs and machine jobs. It's about a reconfiguration of work and the emergence of new forms of human-machine collaboration. As the mundane aspects of information processing become increasingly automated, the value of capabilities such as critical thinking, creativity, communication, emotional intelligence, collaboration, ethical reasoning, adaptability and leadership will grow ever more important. The ILO has evidence that many jobs which are exposed to Generative AI are more likely to be transformed than displaced as human input is still required. The OECD likewise finds that the importance of social, analytical, digital and management capabilities is on the rise. Based on the literature review, the paper puts forward a Human–AI Complementarity Framework around five interrelated capabilities: AI fluency, critical judgement, creative agency, human connection and ethical responsibility. The paper contends that future employability will be less about being either purely technical or purely human and more about the combination of technological fluency with human judgement and responsibility. This has significant implications for universities, managers, the workforce and organisations as they go about designing work in an AI enabled economy.

Keywords: Artificial Intelligence, Generative AI, Human Skills, Future of Work, AI Literacy, Critical Thinking, Creativity, Emotional Intelligence, Human–AI Collaboration, Employability

1. Introduction

AI has gone from being a rather niche technological thing to being a real part of the working day. AI is now used in the workplace for everything from communications and data analysis through to content creation, customer service, recruitment, coding, forecasting, learning and support for management decision making. The pace of development of generative AI has accelerated this process as the current generation of systems are capable of producing text, images, code, summaries and presentations with very little human input.

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The increasing capacity of AI has of course led to concerns about job loss. Previous waves of technological change have also seen similar fears of massive job displacement. The body of work we've looked at presents a much more nuanced picture. AI can automate certain tasks but it can also augment workers, improve productivity, create new tasks and indeed new jobs. The OECD work identifies automation, the creation of new tasks and jobs and productivity gains as the key channels through which AI can impact labour markets.

The ILO's work on generative AI further suggests that a significant proportion of workers are in occupations to some extent exposed to Genai. Exposure does not necessarily equate to the disappearance of the occupation. The more likely scenario is that the work will be reorganised with the technology taking on some of the tasks and people continuing to do the tasks which require judgement, interaction, accountability and context.

These changes raise all sorts of practical questions for teachers and managers. If AI can do so many of the routine cognitive tasks so quickly, what are we going to teach the students? What capabilities are going to be of value to employers? How do you introduce AI in the workplace without in any way undermining human agency and responsibility? The paper takes on these questions by reviewing and interpreting the relevant literature and then going on to propose a conceptual framework for human–AI complementarity.

2. Objectives of the Study

- To review the literature concerning human skills and AI-enabled workplaces.
- To examine how the nature of work is changing with the wider use of artificial intelligence.
- To analyse the increasing importance of critical thinking, creativity, communication, emotional intelligence, ethics and adaptability.
- To identify human capabilities that can complement AI systems rather than compete directly with them.
- To examine the role of AI literacy in the employability of future workers
- To develop a conceptual framework for explaining human–AI complementarity.
- To suggest implications for business education, management practice and organisational development.

3. Research Methodology

The study is a qualitative narrative literature review. It is based on academic research, research reviews and institutional reports on AI, employment, workplace skills, education and human–AI collaboration. Particular focus has been placed on the ILO, OECD, WEF and relevant academic work.

Rather than a statistical meta-analysis the study reads the literature thematically in order to identify the recurring themes around the changing nature of work and the skills which are likely to remain important as AI becomes embedded in the routine processes of organisations. The themes considered are skill demand, human judgement, creativity, communication, emotional intelligence, ethical reasoning, adaptability and AI literacy.

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A drawback of this approach is the rate at which AI capabilities and working practices are changing. Findings on future skills should therefore be viewed as dynamic rather than definitive. The conclusions are based on the literature reviewed in this paper and will undoubtedly need to be updated as the technology, the regulation and the way organisations actually work all continue to evolve.

4. Review of Literature

4.1 Artificial Intelligence and the Transformation of Work

The authors Bankins Hu and Yuan (2024) explain the impact of AI on the workplace by using three categories of processes: automation of current activities, improvement of human capabilities, and creation of new types of work. The issue of implementation is also emphasized. The impact of the technology on the work of workers does not depend solely on the technology itself; organizational design, management support, and the process of involvement of workers in the implementation are important as well.

Such an approach shifts the focus of the problem from the question of whether the technology will influence human work to the question of how the technology will change human work. It is stated in the ILO (2025) report that most jobs impacted by the Generative AI tend to be reorganized instead of being deleted because of human involvement. In general, according to the literature, AI should be regarded as a technology able to transform human work.

4.2 Changing Demand for Skills

OECD studies reveal that AI is shaping the skills needed by workers even in areas that do not develop AI systems. Studies on occupations exposed to AI reveal that there will be a need for a blend of skills such as business and management skills, social and interpersonal skills, digital skills, analytical skills, and language skills. This is particularly true in relation to management education since future employees are more likely to work with AI than develop the models themselves.

Therefore, a person that needs to be employed requires a mixed package of skills such as analytical skills, communication, digital skills, AI knowledge, collaboration, creativity, emotional intelligence and ethics.

4.3 Human Skills and Future Employability

The Future of Jobs Report 2025 from the World Economic Forum lists AI and big data as some of the most rapidly developing technological skills, in addition to creativity, resilience, adaptability and agility, curiosity, continuous learning, leadership, influence, and analytical thinking. The significance of this combination is in the fact that future work will not be limited to purely technical skills anymore.

The connection can be explained by a clear split of competences. AI is able to process vast amounts of data, provide possible solutions, and recognize patterns quickly. Yet, human beings have to interpret this information, evaluate what choice works in this particular situation, assess the validity of data, and determine what needs to be done next. Thus, the human role increases alongside the development of AI technology.

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5. Human Skills in the Age of AI

5.1 Critical Thinking

The application of critical thinking is particularly essential when the AI systems provide convincing answers that might be erroneous, based on unfounded assumptions or biased conclusions. The employees have to analyze the results of AI systems, assess the evidence, identify the assumptions made, consider other possibilities, and make decisions in an informed manner. In higher education too, some recent studies stress the importance of critical thinking, contextualized judgment, ethical agency, and reflective thinking.

5.2 Creativity and Original Thinking

There are numerous ways that generative AI can be used to create multiple solutions, but creativity is not just about generating multiple solutions. The human aspect of creativity includes being able to identify problems that are worthy of being addressed, contextualizing them, making connections between seemingly unrelated ideas, and having new insights into an area while being selective about which ideas are relevant to the audience.

5.3 Communication Skills

Communication remains central, even when AI assists with drafting messages, reports, or presentations. Human communicators must understand why a message is being delivered, who will receive it, what tone is appropriate, and how cultural and relational factors may affect its interpretation. Effective communication therefore becomes an important interface between human intention and AI-generated content.

5.4 Collaboration and Teamwork

AI does not eliminate the need for teamwork. Employees increasingly collaborate with colleagues, managers, customers, digital platforms, and AI systems, often across functional boundaries. Effective collaboration requires active listening, negotiation, trust, conflict management, and shared ownership. These relational capabilities cannot be reduced to information processing.

5.5 Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is concerned with an individual's ability to identify his/her emotions and regulate them, as well as identifying and appropriately reacting to the emotions of other people. These competencies become especially important for leadership, team management, customer care, negotiation, counseling, and conflict resolution. The OECD research indicates that social and emotional competencies become more significant for jobs influenced by AI since machines can analyse the behavioural data, whereas human leaders have to comprehend the situation and react to people.

5.6 Ethical Reasoning

The implementation of AI brings up issues related to issues such as discrimination, privacy, data protection, intellectual property rights, accountability, transparency, equity, and human autonomy. The AI-based system may generate a solution that is technically feasible but without proving that the solution is also ethically sound. It is left to humans to weigh the implications and decide on automating an action.

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5.7 Adaptability and Lifelong Learning

AI is progressing fast, and hence the competencies needed at one point in time may not suffice for the next one. People need to acquire new competencies, be adaptable, learn new things, question old working styles, and grow continually. The stress by WEF on the traits of resilience, adaptability, agility, curiosity, and continuous learning further strengthens the concept that employability will depend upon the willingness to learn.

5.8 AI Literacy

AI literacy should not be understood as highly developed programming skills. For most employees, it implies knowledge of what an AI algorithm is capable of and unable to do, comprehension of how its output is generated, ability to provide adequate instructions, verification of the generated information, spotting errors and biases, identification of tasks which require human action, and responsible use of AI technology. There is also evidence from the recent literature that links AI literacy with purposeful usage, contextual judgement, ethics, and maintenance of independent human thought.

6. Human–AI Complementarity Framework

The literature reviewed in this study points towards a complementary rather than competitive relationship between people and AI. Based on this, the paper proposes a Human–AI Complementarity Framework consisting of five interrelated capabilities.

1. AI Fluency: Understanding AI tools, their capabilities, limitations, and suitable applications.

2. Critical Judgment: Evaluating AI-generated information and making decisions that account for context and evidence.

3. Creative Agency: Framing meaningful problems, generating ideas, imagining possibilities, and converting ideas into value.

4. Human Connection: Using communication, empathy, collaboration, leadership, negotiation, and relationship-building skills.

5. Ethical Responsibility: Maintaining fairness, accountability, transparency, privacy, and responsible decision-making.

The framework can be represented as a connected sequence: AI fluency → critical judgment → creative agency → human connection → ethical responsibility → effective human–AI collaboration.

One of the lessons learned from the framework is the fact that each capability on its own is not enough. Without critical thinking, even AI fluency can lead to mistakes quickly. Without ethics, creativity can have harmful results. Without good communication, technical skill becomes less effective. Therefore, future employees need a comprehensive set of capabilities, not technical skills alone.

7. Implications for Management Education

The changing structure of work has direct implications for business and management education. Traditional approaches often place considerable emphasis on examinations, functional knowledge, theoretical

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understanding, and technical competence. These remain useful; however, an AI-enabled workplace requires a broader learning model.

Technical and Digital Skills

- AI literacy
- Data literacy
- Use of digital tools
- Basic understanding of AI systems

Cognitive Skills

- Critical thinking
- Problem-solving
- Analytical thinking
- Decision-making

Human Skills

- Communication
- Creativity
- Collaboration
- Leadership
- Emotional intelligence

Ethical Skills

- Responsible technology use
- Data ethics
- Privacy awareness
- Academic integrity
- Professional accountability

The process of assessing should also be modernized. Rather than assessing a student on whether or not he/she can provide the right answer, teachers can assess the process behind the answer; how the answer was generated by the AI, how the answer was assessed, what assumptions were made, any ethical concerns that might have been brought up, and how the proposed solution would work in practice in an organization.

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8. Implications for Organisations and Managers

AI should be seen as an adoption of a solution that includes both people and work design.

- Training in AI literacy in practice.
- Allows for continuous learning and re-skilling.
- Work redesigned to use AI in place of routine or information-based activities.
- Ensures human-in-the-loop for significant decisions.
- Involve employees in decision-making on AI adoption.
- Ensuring employee well-being through periods of technological disruption.
- Creating responsible AI usage policies.
- Such policies should foster conditions for creativity and innovation.
- Improving leadership, communication and collaboration skills.
- Fostering ethical, transparent and accountable use of AI.

The objective should be augmentation, not random substitution. If AI is well suited to tasks that involve repetitive or information-based activity, humans can then focus on decision-making, creativity, building relationships, leadership, problem formulation, ethics, and accountability.

9. Major Findings of the Study

Finding 1: AI is transforming tasks rather than simply eliminating jobs. Its effects include automation, augmentation, new tasks, and productivity improvements.

Finding 2: Human skills remain highly relevant. Critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, emotional intelligence, and ethical reasoning continue to support effective work.

Finding 3: AI literacy is becoming a basic workplace capability. Employees need to use AI effectively and responsibly, even when they are not AI specialists.

Finding 4: Critical thinking becomes more important in AI-supported work because AI-generated information can be inaccurate, incomplete, or biased.

Finding 5: Emotional and social skills remain valuable. Leadership, empathy, negotiation, teamwork, and relationship management continue to depend heavily on human interaction.

Finding 6: Adaptability is essential because rapid technological change requires workers to continuously learn and adjust to changing responsibilities.

Finding 7: Human responsibility cannot be completely delegated to AI. People remain accountable for decisions involving values, fairness, ethics, and consequences.

10. Discussion

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In this case, the literature cannot support the simplistic interpretation of human versus machine regarding the future of work. A better way of viewing the future workplace is a human–AI ecosystem, whereby work is divided between machines and people depending on their respective capabilities.

Machine learning is especially efficient in information processing, pattern recognition, repetitive tasks, fast content creation, data processing, and routine predictions. Humans will have some unique advantages in areas that involve context, ethics, empathy, responsibility, complex thinking, relationships, creativity, and moral reasoning. For people to excel in the work environment in the future, they need to understand the areas that require AI and the areas that need human decision making.

This will change the concept of employability. While a standard framework involves knowledge and technical skills, a better one is knowledge, digital/AI literacy, human skills, adaptability, and ethics.

11. Conclusion

Artificial Intelligence is changing not the tools people use at work but also the nature of the capabilities that organisations value. As Artificial Intelligence takes over or helps with data work and making content the relative importance of human abilities such as critical thinking, creativity, emotional intelligence, communication, teamwork, leadership, ethics, flexibility and judgment becomes more visible.

Therefore the future worker should not be imagined as someone competing directly with Artificial Intelligence. A realistic model is a professional who knows how to work smartly with Artificial Intelligence while still owning responsibility for decisions, relationships, values and outcomes. Students and professionals need more than technical knowledge. They need the skill to ask questions judge evidence speak clearly work together with others make responsible choices and keep learning.

The useful question in the Artificial Intelligence era is not whether people can compete with machines. It is how humans can collaborate with technologies without losing their judgment, dignity, creativity, responsibility and agency. This review therefore points toward a balance, between understanding Artificial Intelligence and boosting human capability.

Therefore the emerging future is not an age of Artificial Intelligence but an age in which human and Artificial Intelligence increasingly work together.

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