

Does Artificial Intelligence Integration into Blended Executive MBA Curriculum Drive Skill Development Outcomes? A Path Modeling Investigation

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Abstract

Artificial intelligence (AI)-led technologies are disrupting how executives work and altering expectations from their role. For instance, AI-based digital tools have transformed how digital marketers manage full-scale digital marketing campaigns and conduct routine tasks like social media management, content creation, and consumer data mining. Still, lack of education and training in using AI remains the most common barrier why executives have been unable to adopt these technologies (2024 State of Marketing AI Report). Given this backdrop, the integration of generative AI tools like ChatGPT and Copilot into the executive education curriculum to drive AI-ready skill development outcomes is the need of the hour. However, there is limited understanding of the causal pathways and mechanisms to achieve these outcomes, a gap this study addresses. An innovative test-and-learn pilot project was conducted with participants attending a two-year-long executive MBA program in the blended mode. A path model comprising three constructs – active learning (AL), intrinsic motivation (IM), and skill development (SD) – was conceptualized and validated. Data was collected from 322 participants in a semester-long course, which incorporated structured ChatGPT- Copilot-based learning activities and assignments. Data analyses contribute three pertinent insights: One, incorporating active learning strategies may not generate skill development outcomes directly. Instead, it ‘triggers’ intrinsic motivation in learners, which fully mediates the relationship between active learning and skill development. Two, based on importance-performance gap analysis, interest/enjoyment and effort/importance were identified as the strongest predictor variables of skill development. Three, the empirical evidence generated in this research is well-aligned with the principles of connectivism learning theory, providing a conceptual roadmap for AI integration. Overall, this research enriches evidence-based teaching practices for achieving AI-led skill development outcomes in executive learning.

Keywords

Artificial intelligence (AI) skills, executive education, skill development outcomes, active learning, intrinsic motivation.