

Global Agilist: A Conceptual Framework Integrating Emotional Intelligence, Cultural Intelligence and AI into Career Readiness in the Post-digital Era

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Abstract: In the post-digital age, the conventional linear approach to career progression has been rendered outdated due to the swift emergence of autonomous Artificial Intelligence (AI) and a highly interconnected, global workforce. Although technical skills are still essential, "Global Agility", which refers to the capacity to adapt across cultural, emotional, and digital divides, has become the key factor for achieving sustained career success. This paper introduces a new conceptual framework that integrates Emotional Intelligence (EQ), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), and AI Fluency into a cohesive model for career preparedness. The proposed framework utilises a triangular integrative model to illustrate how EQ offers the psychological strength to manage disruptions caused by AI, while CQ fosters the collaborative efforts required in decentralised, hybrid work settings. Central to this framework is the role of AI not merely as a tool, but as a collaborative "agent" that augments human soft skills through data-driven self-reflection and predictive career navigation. By shifting the focus from "static skill acquisition" to "dynamic adaptive agility," this study provides a roadmap for higher education institutions and HR practitioners to redesign curriculum and training programs. The findings suggest that the future of career readiness lies at the intersection of human-centric empathy and machine-driven efficiency, ensuring that the global workforce remains both technologically proficient and psychologically prepared for a volatile professional landscape.

Keywords: *Global Agilist, Career Readiness, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Emotional Intelligence (EQ) or (EI), Cultural Intelligence (CQ), Workforce Transformation*

Introduction

Significant shifts are underway as we move into the fourth industrial revolution, also known as Workforce 4.0. As companies and workers implement advanced technologies and remote work arrangements, new trends are emerging. In the rapidly evolving landscape of Workforce 4.0, the traditional metrics of "Career Readiness" are undergoing a fundamental recalibration. As Artificial Intelligence (AI) and automation increasingly commoditise technical expertise, the competitive advantage of the modern professional has shifted toward uniquely human capabilities. The global markets are no longer defined solely by physical presence but by Global Virtual Teams (GVTs) and cross-border collaborations that demand unprecedented levels of psychological and cultural agility. Understanding the scope of the problem is the first step toward building a future-ready workforce. By investing in education, reskilling, and inclusive talent strategies, businesses can create new opportunities and strengthen their digital capabilities.

Despite this shift, current career readiness frameworks remain largely "monocultural" and technically focused, often failing to account for the complexities of navigating diverse human landscapes. While Emotional Intelligence (EQ) has been established as a cornerstone of professional success, recent scholarship (e.g., Iienstitu, 2026) highlights a critical limitation: EQ often operates most effectively within familiar cultural boundaries. EQ is foundational for understanding emotions, but in a globalised, hybrid, and diverse work environment, it is insufficient on its own. A key shift is required from self-awareness to cultural self-awareness, from empathy to cultural empathy, from Social Skills to Cross-Cultural Communication, and from Relationship Management to Multicultural Relationship Building. When applied globally, high EQ without a corresponding "cultural filter" can lead to "Empathic Inaccuracy," where a professional's attempts at empathy are misinterpreted due to differing cultural codes.

This study emphasises this gap by proposing an integrated framework that synergises EQ with Cultural Intelligence (CQ). We argue that if EQ is the "internal engine" of interpersonal success, CQ is the "external operating system" that allows that engine to function across different cultural software. Without this integration, professionals risk hitting a "cultural ceiling" in which their social skills fail to translate into global influence. The combination of EQ and CQ enhances Team performance, leading to better collaboration in multicultural teams, as members can navigate both emotional undercurrents and cultural nuances. Leaders with high EQ and CQ are better able to manage international assignments, build trust, and drive innovation across borders. The framework helps reduce anxiety during cross-cultural interactions and manage the "exhaustion" that comes with leading diverse teams. In the post-digital era characterised by AI, remote work, and instant global connectivity, Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) have shifted from "nice-to-have" skills to essential competencies for survival and success. While AI and automation take over technical tasks (AI), EQ and CQ represent the uniquely human, irreplaceable

skills needed to navigate complex interpersonal relationships and diverse, borderless environments. The intersection of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) is an emerging, multidisciplinary field that examines how technology can augment human soft skills and enhance cross-cultural collaboration.

"As AI-driven translation and communication tools become ubiquitous, there is a rising risk of 'Digital Friction'—where the ease of technical communication masks deep-seated emotional and cultural misunderstandings. Professionals are increasingly 'electronically connected' but 'culturally disconnected.'"

Research Objectives

The primary objective of this conceptual study is to redefine "Global Career Readiness" not as a list of skills, but as a dynamic state of Global Agility. This study aims to examine global career readiness in the era of artificial intelligence. It seeks to deconstruct the limitations of monocultural career readiness and highlight the need for broader intercultural competencies in modern professional environments. The study further theorizes the synergistic relationship between emotional intelligence (EQ) and cultural intelligence (CQ), emphasizing their combined importance for effective leadership and collaboration in diverse settings. Additionally, it evaluates the role of artificial intelligence as a "cognitive scaffold" that can support individuals in developing global career readiness. Finally, the study proposes a new typology of the "Augmented Global Agilist," describing professionals who integrate human intelligence, intercultural competence, and AI-assisted capabilities to navigate complex global work environments.

Literature Review:

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognize, understand, and manage one's own emotions while also being attuned to the emotions of others. It involves key competencies such as self-awareness, empathy, emotional regulation, and social skills. These abilities form the foundation of strong interpersonal relationships and effective decision-making—qualities that are indispensable in any professional setting[3]. Integrating emotional intelligence into education prepares students for the realities of the modern workplace. The Educators can incorporate Self-Awareness Activities, Role-Playing Scenarios, Team Projects, Feedback and Coaching in their teaching pattern so that the students will learn to manage their emotions and navigate relationships.

Kumar, S. K. U., & Abraham, S. (2025) states that Emotional Intelligence (EI) positively influences career readiness among business graduates by enhancing clarity of thought and stress management. The study found strong correlations between EI and these factors, indicating that emotionally intelligent individuals are better equipped to make career decisions and handle pressures. However, the link between EI and attitude-

behaviour balance was weak. The research suggests incorporating EQ training in education to prepare students for future career challenges effectively[2]

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence:

Woods, A., & Jones, B. (2025) [6] states that for global career readiness, both Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Emotional Intelligence (EQ) are essential. AI enhances efficiency and data-driven decision-making, enabling individuals to manage complex global tasks and operations. However, AI lacks emotional sensitivity, making EQ—self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills—crucial for interpreting AI outputs with human context, building trust, and navigating cultural diversity. The AI+EQ framework emphasizes balancing technical skills with emotional intelligence to foster ethical leadership and effective collaboration in global, hybrid human-AI work environments. Developing both AI literacy and EQ competencies prepares professionals to succeed in dynamic, multicultural workplaces.

Hammad, T. (2024) highlights that for career readiness, there is a growing importance of acquiring skills at the intersection of artificial intelligence (AI) and emotional intelligence (EI). As AI tools that analyze and interpret emotions become increasingly integrated into workplaces, professionals who understand both the technological and emotional aspects will have improved career opportunities. Developing competencies in managing emotional data, navigating privacy and ethical concerns, and leveraging AI to enhance interpersonal skills will be essential. This equips workers to engage effectively with AI-enabled systems, fostering empathetic leadership, teamwork, and personal well-being in evolving organizational environments [7].

Emotional Intelligence and Cultural intelligence:

Emotional intelligence assists leaders in understanding emotions, but it lacks instruction on how these emotions are influenced by cultural context. It presupposes a common emotional language, which typically does not apply for international teams. This is where cultural intelligence in leadership becomes essential. Cultural intelligence evaluates your capacity to adapt and function successfully amidst cultural variations, broadening emotional awareness into a global perspective.

Kokubun, K., Nemoto, I., & Yamakawa, T. (2025) highlights that both Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) are important for career readiness in today's globalized society. EQ helps individuals manage emotions, build motivation, and maintain social relationships, which support workplace success. CQ enables effective functioning in culturally diverse environments through metacognitive awareness and motivation to adapt, important for global career contexts. Both intelligences, especially the use of emotion (EQ) and metacognitive CQ, are linked to self-regulated learning skills that enhance adaptability and goal achievement critical for career development [8].

(Dogra & Dixit, 2019) emphasis that Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) are critical competencies for career readiness. EQ involves

recognizing and managing one's own emotions and those of others, enabling effective communication and motivation within teams. CQ equips individuals to understand and adapt to cultural differences, which is especially important in diverse and global workplaces. Together, EQ and CQ enhance leadership capabilities and improve team performance, thus preparing individuals to succeed in multicultural and dynamic organizational contexts [9].

Artificial Intelligence and Cultural intelligence:

Cultural Intelligence in Artificial Intelligence refers to the capability of an AI system to recognize, interpret, and appropriately respond to human behavior and communication patterns that are specific to different cultural contexts. This capacity moves beyond mere linguistic translation to encompass social norms and values [10]. McKnight, K. (2025, October 7) Shayne Longpre, researcher at MIT and lead of the Data Provenance Initiative, puts it, that the future of AI depends on human experts to generate, curate and validate trustworthy, nuanced data. Without humans in the loop, AI collapses into itself. It becomes safe. Predictable. Infinitely bland. Unable to surprise or reflect cultural nuance [11]. Sokolova, H. (2025). Multinational organisations struggle to attract and retain international employees. This study examines the importance of intercultural competence in leadership, especially with the rise of AI decision-making tools. It compares human cultural intelligence (CQ) with artificial intelligence (AI) in leadership roles [12].

Conceptual Framework:

Global Career Readiness is a three-dimensional construct where technology (AI) enhances cognitive capacity, while psychology (EQ and CQ) manages the human-to-human interface.

Theoretical Framework: Augmented Global Agility (A-GA)

Across recent research, three capabilities stand out for global career readiness: AI-related competencies, emotional intelligence (EQ), and cultural intelligence (CQ). Together, they shape how people navigate fast-changing, international careers, beyond technical skills and grades.

Roles of EQ, CQ and AI in Career Theory

- EQ is framed as a core “career meta-competency” that supports adaptability, self-efficacy, employability, and both objective and subjective career success. Parmentier, M., Pirsoul, T., & Nils, F. (2019) state that emotional intelligence doesn't just help with emotional state, but it builds the mental flexibility needed to navigate changing careers [13]. (Wang et al., 2023) A study involving commercial pilots demonstrated that EI positively influences employee thriving, which in turn enhances safety performance. This effect is more pronounced in individuals with higher career adaptability, suggesting that EI and career adaptability together

improve workplace outcomes [22]. (Mayang, 2025) Another study emphasised the role of EI in helping students manage stress and adapt to dynamic academic and social environments, further supporting the link between EI and adaptability [23]. (Cintantya et al., 2025). The author states that, in the context of job transfers, EQ significantly affects career adaptability among employees. A study of employees undergoing job transfers found a moderate correlation (69.8%) between EI and career adaptability, indicating that higher EI levels facilitate better adaptation to new roles [24]. O'Boyle, E. H., Humphrey, R. H., Pollack, J. M., Hawver, T. H., & Story, P. A. (2011) emphasise that the study conducts a meta-analysis to examine how emotional intelligence (EI) influences career-related outcomes across multiple previous studies. The results show that individuals with higher emotional intelligence tend to perform better at their jobs, experience greater job satisfaction, demonstrate stronger career commitment, and exhibit improved leadership effectiveness. EI helps individuals manage emotions, build relationships, and handle workplace stress, which positively affects career success. The findings suggest that emotional intelligence is an important predictor of professional development and workplace effectiveness, and organisations may benefit from developing EI through training and leadership programs [14]. Miao, C., Humphrey, R. H., & Qian, S. (2017) state that Emotional intelligence (EI) positively contributes to career success by improving interpersonal relationships, leadership ability, job performance, and career satisfaction. The systematic review concludes that individuals with higher EI are better at managing workplace emotions, adapting to challenges, and building professional networks, which ultimately support long-term career development and advancement [15].

- CQ is positioned as a distinct “real-world” intelligence for functioning effectively in culturally diverse settings, especially in global and expatriate careers. Li, M., Mobley, W. H., & Kelly, A. (2016) The author examines how cultural intelligence (CQ) influences the sustainable career competitive advantage of design students. It finds that students with higher cultural intelligence—especially those skilled in understanding, adapting to, and interacting with different cultures—develop stronger global competencies, creativity, and collaboration skills. These abilities help them gain a long-term competitive advantage in their careers, particularly in international and multicultural work environments. Presbitero, A. (2017) the study explores how career adaptability and cultural intelligence (CQ) influence individuals' intentions to pursue expatriate careers. The findings show that people with higher cultural intelligence and stronger adaptability are more willing and prepared to work in international environments. These abilities help individuals manage cultural differences, adjust to new workplaces, and handle uncertainty abroad. The study concludes that CQ and career adaptability are key psychological resources that encourage global career mobility [16].

- AI is described as a double-edged disruptor: it reshapes job roles, triggers insecurity and exploration, but also creates new tools and pathways for career development. Tams, S., Ahuja, M., Thatcher, J. B., & Grover, V. (2021). The systematic interdisciplinary review examines how artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming different stages of careers, including career choice, development, and transitions. The study highlights that AI is reshaping job roles, skill requirements, and career pathways, creating both opportunities and challenges for workers. It emphasizes the growing importance of adaptability, continuous learning, and digital skills to remain competitive in AI-driven workplaces. The paper also identifies research gaps and proposes future directions for studying the relationship between AI, work, and career development[18].World Economic Forum. (2023). The paper explains that artificial intelligence (AI) is transforming the job market beyond simple automation. Instead of only replacing tasks, AI is reshaping job roles and redefining career readiness. Workers now need a combination of technical skills, adaptability, creativity, and human-centered abilities such as critical thinking and collaboration. The study highlights that future career success will depend on how well individuals integrate AI tools with uniquely human skills, making continuous learning essential in the evolving workforce[19].Ng, E. S., & Chan, C. K. (2022) the author examines how artificial intelligence (AI) and job automation are affecting secondary students' career development and life planning. It highlights that rapid technological changes are creating uncertainty about future jobs and required skills. The paper emphasizes the importance of career guidance, digital literacy, adaptability, and lifelong learning to help students prepare for an AI-driven workforce. It concludes that education systems must support students in developing flexible career planning skills so they can adjust to evolving job markets[20].Elena VFrolova, E. V., Rogach, O. V., & Ryabova, T. M. (2020) states that the study explores how artificial intelligence (AI) is influencing the future of professions and the way career guidance is provided to schoolchildren. It highlights that AI is transforming job structures and skill demands, making traditional career guidance insufficient. The paper suggests that career counselling should focus on developing digital literacy, adaptability, creativity, and critical thinking so students can navigate an AI-driven job market. It concludes that educators must integrate knowledge about AI and emerging technologies into career guidance to help students make informed future career decisions[21].

The AGA model views AI not as a replacement for human skills but as a tool that strengthens Emotional Intelligence (EQ) and Cultural Intelligence (CQ). AI can support cross-cultural communication through tools like real-time sentiment analysis and help individuals improve emotional resilience by simulating challenging workplace situations using digital simulations

Comparative Focus Areas

Focus	Main contributions to readiness
Emotional intelligence	Adaptability, employability, well-being
Cultural intelligence	Global or expatriate intentions, competitive advantage
AI competencies & context	New skill demands, guidance tools, disruption

Table 1: Comparison of EQ, CQ, and AI for global careers readiness

This model illustrates the Global Career Readiness Framework, a sophisticated system that explains how a modern professional moves from basic competence to high-level "Global Agility." Unlike traditional skill lists, this is a functional engine where three specific intelligences interact to transform your foundational skills into a global competitive advantage

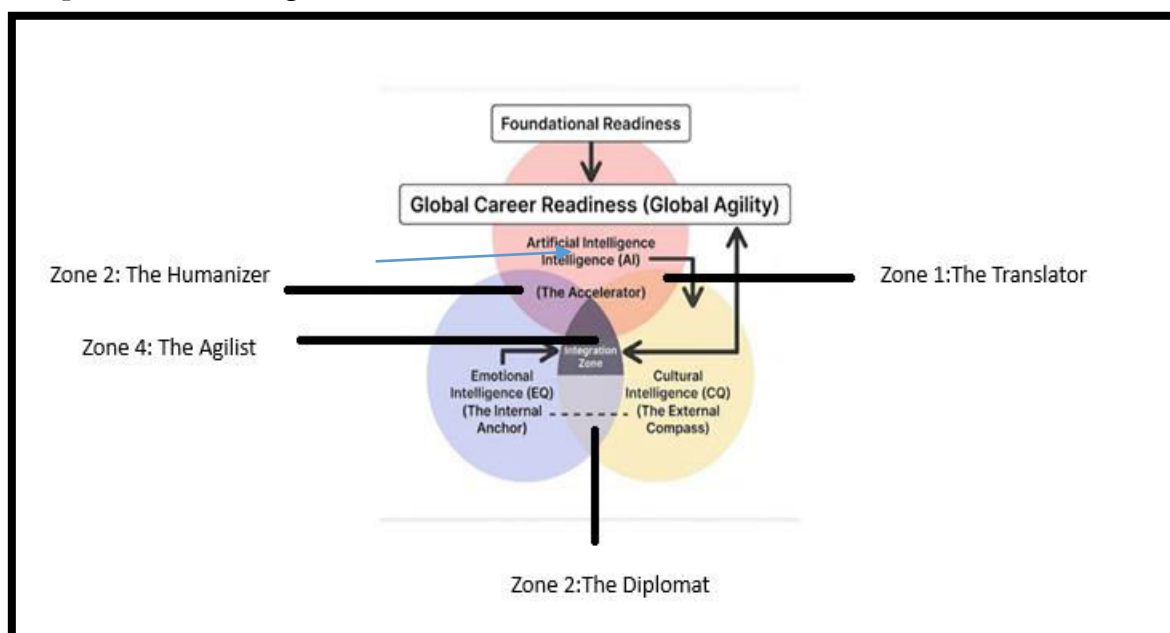


Figure 2 Global Career Readiness Framework: Integration of EQ, CQ, and AI

The breakdown of the integrated EQ, CQ, and AI is shown below:

1. The Starting Point: Foundational Readiness

At the top, we have **Foundational Readiness**. This is the independent variable: the technical skills, domain expertise (like your extensive IT background), and basic professional standards. In a stable environment, this is sufficient; however, in a

complex global market, it is merely the raw material. It is the shift from seeing a degree as a "finished product" to seeing a career as a continuous series of version updates

2. The Core Triad (The Dynamic System)

The three circles represent the "Intelligences" that process your foundational readiness:

- **Artificial Intelligence (AI) - *The Accelerator***: Located at the top of the triad, AI acts as a **Cognitive Scaffold**. It provides the "efficiency path" by processing vast amounts of cultural and market data instantly. It bypasses the need for years of manual research, enabling you to strategise more quickly.
- **Emotional Intelligence (EQ) - *The Internal Anchor***: Represented as the "Psychological Stabiliser," EQ is the **Internal Mediator**. It filters your actions through self-awareness and empathy. It ensures that as you move fast (powered by AI), you remain grounded and resilient, preventing "Cognitive Overload" or burnout.
- **Cultural Intelligence (CQ) - *The External Compass***: This is the **External Moderator** or "Contextual Filter." It takes the outputs of your AI strategy and your EQ-driven empathy and translates them into the local "language" of norms, values, and etiquette. It ensures that your internal competence translates into external success.

3. The Integration Zone

The dark center where the circles overlap is known as the **Integration Zone**. This is the "sweet spot" where a professional is utilising all three intelligences simultaneously.

- AI provides the *Data*.
- EQ provides the *Stability*.
- CQ provides the *Context*.

4. The Outcome: Global Career Readiness (Global Agility)

The final result of this entire process, as shown by the upward arrows, is **Global Agility**. This is the dependent variable. It represents a professional who is not just "ready for a job," but is capable of pivoting, leading, and thriving in any market, regardless of technological shifts or cultural borders.

Synergy Zone	Component Mix	Theoretical Outcome
Zone 1: The Translator	AI + CQ	High-speed contextual decoding of unwritten rules. "Contextual Acceleration"
Zone 2: The Humanizer	AI + EQ	Ensuring AI-generated global strategy remains authentic and empathetic. "Human-Centric Tech"
Zone 3: The Diplomat	EQ + CQ	Navigating high-stakes cross-cultural conflicts with emotional grace. "Relational Resilience"
Zone 4: The Agilist	AI + EQ + CQ	The Dark Center: Total career readiness for the global economy. "Global Agilist"

Table 2: Synergising Zone, Component Mix and Theoretical Outcomes

"As illustrated in the Triad of Augmented Global Agility (Figure 2), this study moves beyond a fragmented view of professional skills. We propose that Global Career Readiness is a trilateral construct where AI Literacy functions as a cognitive scaffold, Emotional Intelligence as a self-regulatory anchor, and Cultural Intelligence as a contextual filter. The synergy between these domains creates a 'Hybrid Intelligence' that is essential for navigating the complexities of the present global labor market."

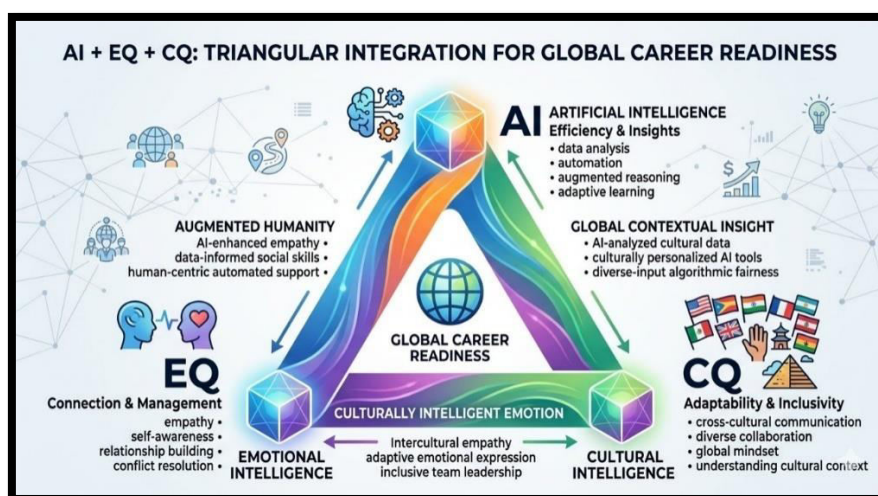


Figure 2 :AI+EQ+CQ triangular integration for global career readiness

This integrated approach is necessary for professionals looking to build "career durability" is a long-term ability to thrive, rather than just survive, in the future workforce

Methodology:

This study employs an Integrative Literature Review (ILR) methodology, following the framework established by Torraco (2005, 2016). This approach is designed to generate new frameworks and perspectives by synthesising mature or emerging topics—in this case, the intersection of AI, EQ, and CQ—it blends them to create a deeper theoretical understanding.

Limitation:

Integrating AI, Emotional Intelligence (EQ), and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) can effectively equip individuals for international careers, but there are limitations. Firstly, there exists a phenomenon akin to the "uncanny valley" in professional communication. This indicates that while AI can grasp cultural nuances accurately, the human emotional aspect might come across as less authentic or sincere, resulting in interactions that feel strained or synthetic. Secondly, juggling three forms of intelligence simultaneously (AI technologies, emotional competencies, and cultural sensitivity) can place significant strain on a person's cognitive resources. In the absence of adequate technological assistance and supportive systems, this can lead to mental fatigue and, ultimately, burnout.

Discussion:

The "human premium" refers to the increasing importance assigned to distinctive human abilities that cannot be automated, such as creativity, profound empathy, ethical reasoning, and physical presence, as artificial intelligence takes on more routine, data-oriented tasks. This change is not about turning away from technology, but instead emphasizes a strategic approach that centers on human elements (AI) to improve, rather than supplant, human abilities. By integrating Emotional Intelligence (EQ) to navigate feelings and Cultural Intelligence (CQ) to understand contextual factors, leaders can promote a deeper and more accurate understanding as well as enhance communication effectiveness. In global virtual teams (GVTs), the digital-cultural gap signifies the tension that arises when different cultural values clash with the constraints and characteristics of digital communication platforms. This gap is not just about time zones; it's about how different cultures interpret silence, hierarchy, and "lean" versus "rich" digital.

Conclusion:

Global career readiness is no longer just about technical or academic excellence. Research converges on a model where AI literacy, emotional intelligence, and cultural intelligence jointly underpin sustainable international careers. The Theory of

Augmented Global Agility emphasizes that "Career Readiness" is no longer an individual trait, but a Human-Machine Collaboration. Since these technologies are new and evolving fast, we still lack long-term evidence, making it difficult to clearly understand their true impact, safety, and consequences for society. The study emphasizes the need for a shift in the recruitment process from "Skills-Based Hiring" to "Intelligence-Synergy Audits." And a proposal for Universities to stop teaching EQ and AI as elective "soft" and "hard" skills. They must be taught as an integrated **Triad**. EQ and CQ help individuals adapt, connect, and thrive across cultures, while AI reshapes contexts and tools making human socio-emotional and intercultural strengths more, not less, central to future career theory and practice.

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