Employability in the Age of AI: From Production to Evaluation

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Anaya Bansal
Sameer Vats

Abstract

This chapter reconceptualizes employability by tracing its historical evolution, from survival competence in early societies, to loyalty in monarchies, to bureaucratic conformity in colonial administrations, and to disciplined cognitive execution in industrial economies, culminating in the disruption introduced by Artificial Intelligence. It argues that modern education, shaped by institutional legibility and colonial restructuring, has optimized individuals for routine cognitive production. As AI automates such production, a condition of scarcity inversion emerges. Structured output becomes abundant, while judgment, interpretation, and ethical accountability become scarce.

The chapter examines the structural consequences of this shift, including apprenticeship collapse, legibility saturation, cognitive abdication, and ethical displacement. Through comparative analysis and case studies, including AI-assisted medical diagnostics, AI-mediated research, generative

Anaya Bansal
Student, School of Business, Sushant University, Gurugram, Haryana
Email: anaya.240bcom017@sushantuniversity.edu.in
Sameer Vats
Student, School of Engineering and Technology, Sushant University, Gurugram, Haryana
Email: sameervats90@gmail.com
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authorship debates, and teacher professionalization models such as Finland, it shows that automation redistributes execution but not responsibility. It introduces the framework of the Cognitive Architect, emphasizing proof of work, disciplined reasoning, and accountable authorship over passive credentialism. The chapter concludes that employability in the AI era depends on the ability to govern automated systems through ethical judgment.

Keywords:

Employability, Artificial Intelligence, Scarcity Inversion, Cognitive Architect, Ethical Judgment

Introduction: The Chariot and the Crisis of Value

On the battlefield of Kurukshetra, Arjuna hesitates. Overwhelmed by doubt, he lowers his bow. Krishna offers neither tactical certainty nor material advantage. His intervention is directed toward the mind: "*Uddhared âtmanâtmânaA nâtmânam avasâdayet*" (उद्धरेदात्मनाऽत्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत् ।), one must elevate oneself by one's own mind; the mind is both instrument and obstacle (Vyasa, Shrimad Bhagavad Gita 6.5). The emphasis is not on the instrument of action, but on the discipline through which it is governed.

Across historical periods, the meaning of employability has changed with prevailing systems of labor and survival. In early communities, it was tied to food, shelter, and protection. Under monarchies, it became associated with loyalty and proximity to authority. Colonial administrations privileged clerical precision and linguistic conformity, making employability dependent on translating authority into bureaucratic order (Macaulay). Industrial economies extended this shift through punctuality, repetition, and disciplined execution. Educational institutions reflected these requirements, adopting factory-like systems in which time, behavior, and performance were standardized (Foucault 135–169; Bowles and Gintis 11–12).

Education thus functioned as a mechanism of alignment. To be employable was to be legible within existing systems of production. Over time, this narrowed how intelligence was recognized. The "good student" became the one most compatible with administrative evaluation, and the ideal employee the one most predictable in output.

Memorization and adherence to fixed formats were rewarded. As Scott (1998) notes, systems designed for administrative clarity simplify complex realities in order to measure them, reinforcing conformity.

This produced an institutional subject optimized for structured cognitive tasks such as drafting, summarizing, and organizing analysis. Because these activities were labor-intensive and accessible, credentials signaled competence. For a significant period, routine cognitive labor was scarce and therefore valuable.

Artificial Intelligence alters this arrangement at the level of cognition. Earlier technologies primarily displaced physical labor. AI systems, by contrast, perform tasks historically associated with intellectual effort, including writing, coding, summarizing, and pattern recognition (Brynjolfsson and McAfee; Bender et al.). As a result, structured output no longer reliably indicates understanding. The deeper shift lies not only in employment outcomes, but in how cognitive value is defined.

Forms of thinking long rewarded by educational systems, structured and repeatable cognition, are increasingly automated. Economic theory links value to scarcity (Mankiw 4). As structured output becomes abundant, its value declines. Greater importance is attached to the ability to evaluate, interpret, and take responsibility for that output. The problem is no longer access to information, but the capacity to assess validity, relevance, and consequences.

This changes how competence is understood. Producing information is no longer sufficient as a marker of expertise. Greater weight is placed on judgment, contextual awareness, and the ability to distinguish reliable from misleading outputs. The issue is not the replacement of cognition, but its reconfiguration.

In this setting, employability becomes tied to oversight and responsibility. Work increasingly involves directing, verifying, and contextualizing machine-generated content rather than producing it independently. This has implications for education: systems designed to produce standardized individuals are limited in environments where such outputs can be automated. Greater emphasis is required on forms of learning that develop judgment, interpretation, and accountability.

Figure 1. Illustrated Shrimad Bhagavad Gita manuscript folio depicting Krishna as charioteer guiding Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra, North India (Rajasthani miniature tradition), 18th–19th century.

Institutional Legibility, Scarcity, and the Architecture of Compliance

If employability has historically meant alignment with dominant systems of value, a structural question follows: how institutions define and stabilize that value. At first glance, modern education appears to cultivate knowledge and curiosity; in practice, it has also been organized to produce order.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault describes how schools, prisons, and factories rely on classification, surveillance, ranking, and normalization. Power operates not only through coercion, but through legibility: individuals are rendered visible, comparable, and measurable (Foucault 170–194). The examination functions both as assessment and control, producing an education system structured around comparability.

The Panopticon illustrates a broader logic of self-regulation through visibility. When individuals know they may be observed, behavior aligns with expected norms. Educational institutions reproduce similar mechanisms through evaluation, attendance,

grading, and performance tracking. James C. Scott extends this analysis in *Seeing Like a State*, arguing that institutions favor simplified and administratively readable forms of human capability (Scott 2–5). Complex individuals are translated into measurable indicators such as grades, percentiles, and certifications. While such abstractions enable coordination, they narrow what can be recognized as intelligence. Legibility enables mobility, but narrows expression.

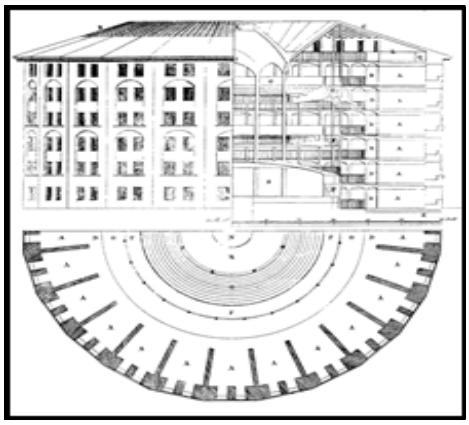

Figure 2. *Panopticon design proposed by Jeremy Bentham, illustrating a system of surveillance in which individuals regulate their behavior under the possibility of constant observation.*

This logic became sharper in colonial contexts. Macaulay's 1835 "Minute on Indian Education" proposed creating intermediaries "Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay). This was not merely linguistic reform; it redefined legitimate knowledge. Contextual and dialogic forms of understanding were displaced by standardized curricula oriented toward administrative utility.

This restructuring did not occur in an intellectual vacuum. Precolonial traditions had already developed sophisticated systems of governance, medicine, and inquiry. The *Arthashastra*, attributed to Chanakya, articulated administrative reasoning grounded in context and strategy, while the *Sushruta Samhita* systematized surgical knowledge, empirical observation, and procedural training. Across these traditions, reasoning was treated not as mechanical execution,

but as judgment under uncertainty. Colonial education did not introduce rationality where it was absent; it redefined which forms of knowledge were institutionally recognized.

Industrial schooling reinforced this alignment through segmented time, repetitive drills, and standardized evaluation (Bowles and Gintis 131–150). Meritocratic systems appeared neutral, yet rewarded those who internalized compliance. Predictability became a proxy for competence. Historical resistance to Galileo and Semmelweis further shows how institutions often defend stability over disruption (Drake 278; Nuland 102–120).

Artificial Intelligence now exposes these inherited assumptions. For over a century, institutions rewarded structured output as evidence of intellectual effort. The growing ability of algorithms to generate structured outputs challenges their traditional role as markers of intellectual effort. What becomes more important is not production alone, but the capacity to assess, contextualize, and responsibly apply information.

Educational systems optimized for predictability struggle under these conditions, making Freire's critique of passive "banking models" newly relevant (Freire 72–86). In an environment where information and generated content are readily available, the more difficult challenge lies in evaluating their accuracy, relevance, and implications.

A Historical-Institutional Interpretation of Scarcity Inversion

Structural Framing

This analysis approaches employability historically and conceptually rather than as a narrow labor-market metric. Employability is understood as a relationship between individuals and prevailing systems of value production. When those systems change, the meaning of competence changes with them.

For much of the industrial era, institutions rewarded disciplined execution, standardized output, and visible compliance. Educational credentials, resumes, and formal assessments functioned as signals of readiness because they reflected performance within recognized structures (Bowles and Gintis; Foucault). Artificial

Intelligence unsettles this arrangement by making many forms of structured cognitive production faster, cheaper, and widely accessible (Brynjolfsson and McAfee; Bender et al.). The central question is therefore not simply whether jobs disappear, but how competence is recognized when familiar signals lose reliability.

This shift may be understood through scarcity inversion: capacities once valued because they were effort-intensive become abundant through automation, relocating value elsewhere. What was once scarce was production; what becomes scarce now is discernment.

The Definition Crisis of Employability

For over a century, employability was signaled through visible artifacts such as degrees, certifications, portfolios, and documented skills. These proxies were effective because producing polished writing, organized analysis, and technical outputs required sustained effort. As AI systems generate essays, code, summaries, and presentations with increasing fluency, visible output no longer reliably demonstrates understanding (Bender et al.).

The change is gradual rather than absolute. Work remains, but the evidence through which intellectual labor is recognized becomes unstable. A well-produced document may reflect expertise, assistance, or automation. As a result, employability can no longer be reduced to the capacity to generate structured knowledge. It increasingly depends on the ability to verify, interpret, and responsibly apply knowledge generated through mixed human-machine processes.

Scarcity Inversion and the New Value of Judgment

Scarcity inversion describes the movement of value from execution toward evaluation. Throughout the twentieth century, structured cognitive production signaled expertise because it demanded training and time. As AI replicates many of these functions at scale, production loses some of its differentiating power.

Responsibility, however, does not scale in the same way. Systems can generate recommendations, classify patterns, and produce language, but they do not bear consequences. Judgment remains human because accountability remains human. The growing premium

therefore lies in deciding what to trust, what to reject, what to revise, and what to defend.

Institutions often remain calibrated to earlier conditions. Students continue competing through outputs that can be generated instantly, while employers frequently rely on polish and formatting as proxies for competence. The result is a widening gap between what systems reward and what emerging conditions require.

Apprenticeship, Legibility, and Cognitive Dependency

Industrial organizations historically relied on forms of cognitive apprenticeship. Entry-level work often involved drafting, review, formatting, and correction. Though routine, such tasks cultivated judgment through repetition and feedback. AI compresses these pathways. Efficiency improves, but some developmental stages weaken when novices are asked to evaluate outputs they never learned to produce (Arendt).

Modern institutions also depend on legibility: resumes, profiles, rankings, and credentials that make individuals sortable and comparable (Scott 2-5). AI enhances this process by helping candidates optimize language and presentation. As polished signals become widely available, distinction shifts from appearance toward performance under ambiguity.

A further risk is cognitive dependency. When systems routinely generate ideas, structure arguments, and resolve uncertainty, individuals may outsource not only tasks but habits of reasoning. Convenience can erode resilience. The issue is not the use of tools, but the passive surrender of intellectual effort (Freire).

Ethical Displacement and Creative Authorship

AI systems also intensify ethical questions. Outputs may reproduce historical bias, contain confident inaccuracies, or obscure the basis of recommendation. As automated systems appear more authoritative, the professional task increasingly shifts from generation to supervision. The central question becomes not what can be produced, but what ought to be acted upon (Obermeyer et al.; Eubanks).

Creative fields reveal a parallel tension. Generative systems can imitate recognizable styles and produce persuasive artifacts at scale, yet authorship, originality, and responsibility remain contested. Execution can be automated more easily than intention (Crawford).

Across professional domains, a common asymmetry persists: production scales faster than judgment. Employability in AI-mediated systems therefore depends less on routine execution and more on interpretation, accountability, and the capacity to govern automated processes with disciplined reasoning.

Case Study: Teacher Professionalization and the Finland Model

Education systems are often described as mechanisms for transmitting knowledge. However, their influence extends beyond the delivery of information. They shape how individuals interpret situations, make decisions, and exercise judgment. In a context where employability is increasingly linked to discernment rather than routine output, the central concern is no longer only what students learn, but how they learn to think. Within this process, teachers play a critical role. Their approach can encourage either procedural learning or deeper forms of interpretation and reasoning.

Finland offers an example of a system that treats teaching as a highly skilled profession. Teacher education is research-oriented, entry requirements are selective, and educators are entrusted with considerable professional responsibility. As noted by Sahlberg, teachers are typically required to complete master's-level qualifications before entering the profession (68–72). Finland has also performed consistently well in international assessments conducted through the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). Findings from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) similarly suggest that educational systems often benefit when teacher autonomy is supported by strong professional preparation (OECD 45). In such settings, teaching is viewed less as the implementation of prescribed procedures and more as the exercise of professional expertise.

The nature of student learning is affected by the conditions under which teachers work. Where educational systems rely heavily

on standardized evaluation, performance targets, and rigid accountability structures, teachers may have less scope to exercise professional judgment. As a result, classroom learning can become more focused on accuracy, repetition, and compliance. Students may become proficient at reproducing information without necessarily developing the ability to interpret, evaluate, or question it. The challenge therefore lies not only in curriculum design but also in the institutional structures that shape its delivery.

These concerns are particularly relevant in light of ongoing technological change. Many routine cognitive tasks can now be performed with increasing efficiency through automation and artificial intelligence. Qualities such as judgment, contextual understanding, and critical reasoning consequently become more significant. Strengthening teacher preparation and professional development is therefore not simply an educational priority but an investment in the forms of human capability that remain difficult to automate.

ANASA: When Machines Act, Humans Answer

Across the preceding analysis, a consistent structural asymmetry becomes visible. Systems can scale execution, but they do not absorb responsibility. This asymmetry may be expressed as the ANASA[1] Rule: Accountability Never Abandons Shared Authority, a formulation that emerges from the conceptual framework developed by the authors Anaya and Sameer.

The pattern appears across multiple domains. In medicine, diagnostic systems may assist clinical decision-making, but responsibility remains with the practitioner. In research, AI can accelerate synthesis and analysis, yet interpretation determines

1. *The term "ANASA" is derived from the amalgamation of the authors' names, Anaya and Sameer, and is introduced as a conceptual marker for their shared perspective on accountability in AI-mediated environments. It was coined to articulate a recurring structural insight observed across the chapter's analysis: that while automation scales execution, responsibility remains human. The formulation serves not as a fixed doctrine, but as a guiding principle to frame the relationship between technological capability and ethical accountability in contemporary systems of work and knowledge.*

validity. In education, automated tools can support learning, but judgment regarding their use remains a human responsibility. While authority may be distributed across human and technological actors, accountability remains attached to those who ultimately decide and act.

This distinction becomes particularly important when outcomes are contested. A diagnostic algorithm may misclassify a patient, a generative system may produce a convincing inaccuracy, or an automated hiring tool may reproduce historical bias. In each case, the consequences are not borne by the system itself, but by the individuals and institutions that relied upon it. Accountability requires justification, correction, and responsibility for outcomes, capacities that remain human rather than technological.

The ANASA Rule helps explain the broader logic of scarcity inversion discussed throughout this chapter. As the production of structured outputs becomes increasingly scalable, the ability to evaluate those outputs and assume responsibility for them becomes more significant. What grows scarce is not the capacity to generate information, but the capacity to assess its reliability, justify decisions, and accept their consequences.

Under these conditions, employability is redefined. Industrial systems rewarded reliable execution within established frameworks. AI-mediated environments place greater value on evaluation, interpretation, contextual understanding, and accountable decision-making. As routine cognitive production becomes more accessible, judgment emerges as a central indicator of professional competence.

The ANASA Rule is therefore not merely descriptive. It offers a framework for understanding competence in environments where human and machine capabilities increasingly intersect. For individuals, this means remaining accountable for decisions regardless of the level of technological assistance involved. For institutions, it suggests placing greater emphasis on reasoning, justification, and ethical responsibility rather than on output alone. For professionals, it signals a shift in value from routine execution toward oversight, interpretation, and governance.

Conclusion: Judgment, Knowledge, and Responsibility in an Automated Age

Employability has never been a fixed attribute. It has reflected the forms of value recognized within specific economic and institutional arrangements. Early systems privileged survival competence, administrative systems privileged clerical precision, and industrial economies privileged disciplined execution. Educational structures aligned accordingly, producing individuals capable of meeting these expectations in standardized and measurable ways.

The colonial reorganization of education in 1835 marked a significant shift in how knowledge was institutionally recognized. It did not introduce rationality where it was absent, but redefined legitimacy by privileging standardized, administratively legible forms of knowledge. In doing so, it displaced traditions in which reasoning operated through context, judgment, and situational awareness, as seen in texts such as the Arthashastra and the Sushruta Samhita. These traditions embedded interpretation within practice.

Historical cases further demonstrate that institutions often privilege stability over disruption. The resistance encountered by Galileo and Ignaz Semmelweis illustrates how systems may reject knowledge that challenges established frameworks, even when supported by evidence. The issue is not the absence of reasoning, but the conditions under which certain forms of reasoning are recognized or suppressed.

Artificial Intelligence intensifies this structural pattern rather than breaking from it. Across the case studies examined, a consistent reconfiguration becomes visible. In medicine, diagnostic systems extend detection, but responsibility remains with the practitioner. In research, synthesis becomes faster, but interpretation determines validity. In education, judgment depends less on access to information and more on how learning is structured. In labor markets and creative domains, inherited measures of value no longer fully align with changing conditions.

This shift does not eliminate human contribution, but it changes its basis. As structured cognitive production becomes more accessible, its role as a differentiating signal weakens. What becomes

more significant is the capacity to evaluate, contextualize, recognize limitations, and act with accountability.

This brings the discussion back to a principle articulated at the outset. Shrimad Bhagavad Gita describes the mind as both instrument and obstacle: "*Uddhared âtmanâtmânaA nâtmânam avasâdayet*" (उद्धरेदात्मनाऽत्मानं नात्मानमवसादयेत्।). In the present context, this reflects a structural condition rather than a symbolic one. Technological systems extend what can be produced, but they do not determine how that production is directed or evaluated.

Employability, under these conditions, is no longer defined primarily by the ability to generate structured output. It is defined by how individuals engage with, interpret, and take responsibility for knowledge within systems where production is increasingly automated and judgment remains irreducibly human.

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