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Emerging B-School Business Models: An AI-Triggered Transformation with special reference to Wharton School Case Study

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Abstract

With the acute emphasis on the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) system that is globally acknowledged in today's academic world, there is a considerable drift in the business models of B-Schools thriving worldwide. The conventional teacher-centric approach and lecture-oriented pattern are being redesigned to be a more learner-centric approach, including experiential learning. This new form of academic delivery largely relies on technological advancements and the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools. This research aims at understanding the four major aspects involved in B-School business model success viz., positioning, value generation, execution and outcome assessment. The research revolves around the B-School - Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and the study of itspioneeringstrategic move to bring transformation in the traditional way of academic delivery into a holistic business model through collaborative spirit with AI and analytical abilities. The study reveals that integrating with AI has strategically enabled the B-School to enhance its attainments in terms of robust curriculum design, innovative pedagogical techniques, enrichment of academic deliverables, efficient administrative processes and capturing globally smart competitive advantage. Researchers intend to showcase the success story of the B-School as a case study for building new insights among Academicians, Management committees of B-Schools, Government authorities, regulators and last but not least the learner community that needs to embrace the new horizons of education. Finally, AI and technology applications need to be considered as an aid for betterment and not a challengeby the stakeholders.

Keywords: Learner-Centric, Artificial Intelligence, B-School, Transformation, Business Model, Pedagogical Techniques, Innovation

1. Introduction

B-Schools across the globe are undergoing a lot of transitions and transformations in today's technology-driven era. Ever since the advent of technological inventions, having introduced AI tools like ChatGPT, the speed at which industries have embraced these inventions has multiplied umpteen times. (McKinsey & Company, 2024; World Economic Forum, 2023). Within a couple of years of ChatGPT's release, more than 92 percent of the top-notch companies were using generative AI tools, and the global market for AI in education was forecastedto have a massive leap till the upcoming decade. (Precedence Research, 2024). For Higher Education Institutes and for those offering the Management Education Programmes this is an indication of a big transition not just at the surface level, but challenging the business model itself.

The conventional way in which B-Schools were running their business framework relied on four major aspects viz. value proposition based on credentialed knowledge sharing, value generation through faculty led class room driven activities, value delivery through cohorts of learners and value capture through the fees being charged and placement services being rendered (Datar, Garvin, & Cullen, 2010; Thomas, Lee, Thomas, & Wilson, 2014).AI shakes up each one of these dimensions.Student-centric customised learning platforms, AI tutors providing guidance dialogue at minimal cost, rich linguistic sources for submissions and simulations, and AI-driven analysis have all reshaped the learner experience (Mollick & Mollick, 2023; Bryant, Heitz, Sanghvi, & Wagle, 2020).

Yet what is not found despite various academic contributions towards AI-driven business applications is an integrated approach that proposes AI as a strategic enabler of business model that transforms theB-School education.Researchers have tried to bridge this gap in this paper.

1.1 Research Objectives

The study primarily revolves around the following objectives:

- To propose an integrated conceptual business model for B-School businesses,highlighting the transformation based on various aspects like enablers, architecture, moderating factors, and outcomes.
- To study the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, AI strategy towards thriving business ventures with technology assistance.
- To obtain insightabout pedagogical initiatives, policy implications,student and faculty development, administrative aspects, and business performance in the AI-driven era.

1.2 Research Questions

- RQ1: What is the role of AI in reshaping componentslike value proposition, creation, delivery, and capture for B-School setups?
- RQ2: Which are those enablers and moderatorsthat ensure the successful transformation of business through AI?
- RQ3: What critical considerations does the Wharton B-School case offer to similar upcoming business ventures?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Artificial Intelligence and the Higher Education Institutes

The utility of AI in higher education encompasses intelligent tutoring (Anderson, Boyle, & Reiser, 1985; VanLehn, 2011), adaptive learning (Pane, Steiner, Baird, & Hamilton, 2015), analytics in learning (Siemens, 2013), innovative assessment techniques (Shermis & Burstein, 2013), and application of large language models (LLMs) in content development, tutoring, and simulation (Kasneci et al., 2023; Mollick & Mollick, 2024).

Zawacki-Richter et al. (2019), identified different functional clusters viz. profiling and prediction, intelligent tutoring systems, assessment and evaluation, and adaptive systems and personalisation. The recent emergence of generative AI includes an additional cluster viz. content co-creation and simulated practice at scale (Mollick, Mollick, Bach, Ciccarelli, Przystanski, & Ravipinto, 2024).

2.2 World of Academics and the ChangingBusiness Models

Changes in the business model structure are outcomes of organizational value systems (Osterwalder & Pigneur, 2010; Teece, 2010; Zott & Amit, 2010). Christensen, Horn, and Johnson (2008) and Christensen and Eyring (2011) have incorporated this idea to higher educational institutes, addressing the concern that online mode of education proves to be a challenge for universities not being able to modify their cost and value propositions. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced digital pedagogy (García-Morales, Garrido-Moreno, & Martín-Rojas, 2021), but generative AI introduced a qualitatively different disruption in education.

2.3 Contemporeary Faculty and Learners

Mollick and Mollick (2024),based upon the experimentation at Wharton, propose different pedagogical roles viz. AI: tutor, coach, mentor, teammate, tool, simulator, and student. These evolved roles redesign the roles of a faculty member from knowledge propagator to builder of AI learning experiences which can be treated as a partnership based on co-intelligence. Bryant et al. (2020), elaborates for McKinsey, the shifts in administrative functions, encompassing the AI-enabled student lifecycle management, predictive retention analytics, and chatbot-mediated student services.

2.4 Research Gap

Variety of literature work is available illustrating AI-enabled services and application of AI tools in academic world. Yet the aspects seemingly missing include (a) linking AI capabilities to all major components of the Higher Education Institutes business model, (b) favourable conditions and moderating factors, and (c) applying the understanding of the framework in a documented institutional case. The current work tries to address the gaps while validating it against the Wharton School case.

3. The Framework

Few complementary theoretical views form the basis for the conceptual model.

Resource-Based View (RBV). Barney (1991) suggests that for a organization to succeed and obtain sustained competitive advantage, resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) form the backbone. For a B-School, AI capability — comprising digital infrastructure, workable data, AI awareness and mentoring, and institutional collaborations such as Wharton's along with OpenAI — increasingly fits in the criteria.

Dynamic Capabilities Theory. Teece (2007) highlights the conceptual base through dynamic capabilities as anyorganizations ability to sense opportunities and threats, capture them through resource commitment, and re-ascertain its assets to achieve competitiveness. AI oriented changes in B-Schools is a classic dynamic-capability problem: Higher Academic establishments must identify the AI frontier,initiate steps towards curriculum and infrastructure investment, and redefinestakeholder roles, norms, and revenue frameworks.

Disruptive Innovation Theory. Christensen and Eyring (2011) indicate the AI driven digital education as disruptive to traditional education systems. Generative AI leaps towards customization in terms of cost structures, faculty and student interactions, leading to a new phase of B-School architecture.

Together, these initiatives pose AI as a strategic leap that B-Schools must embrace for building, executing, and renewing all major components of the business model.

Figure 1 presents the conceptual model.

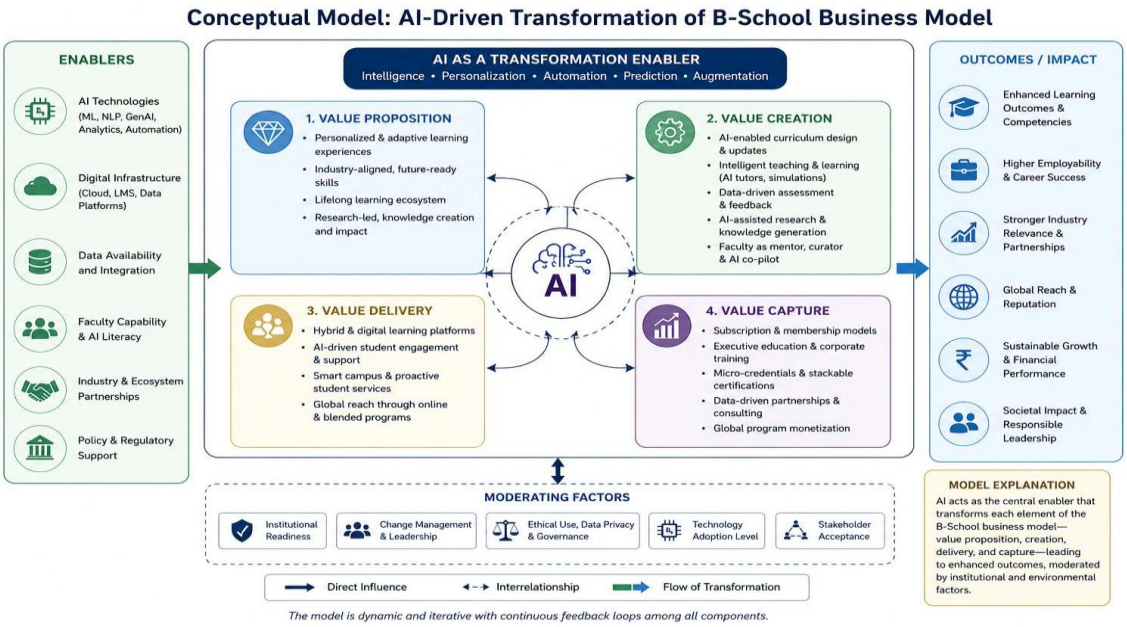

Figure 1. Conceptual Model: AI-Driven Transformation of the B-School Business Model.

Source: Authors' construction with Gen AI Tools.

4. Research Methodology

This research workis based on a singlecase study design (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018). The case study method is relevant when the research deals with concerns like 'how' and 'why' a modern world phenomenon describes its real-life context, especially when boundaries between the phenomenon and context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2018, p. 15). The Wharton School provides a critical, information-rich source (Patton, 2015) for multiple reasons like: (i) it showcased itself as the pioneeringB-School globally to initiate institutional partnership with OpenAI, (ii) it has overtly been determined about a multi-year AI & Analytics Initiative comprising dimensions like research, knowledge sharing, and execution, and (iii) the foundational pillars of its architecture lay over AI pedagogy.

4.1 Data Sources

Data were sourced from the available secondary publications during 2024–2026, including:

- Official press publications and strategicdeclarationsby the Wharton School and the University of Pennsylvania.
- Working as well as Peer-reviewed research papers from the Wharton faculty on AI in education (Mollick & Mollick, 2023, 2024; Mollick et al., 2024).
- Course catalogues and curriculum-related material of the Wharton AI for Business MBA programme.
- Documentation sourced from Wharton's digital presence.

4.2 Analytical Approach

Gathered data underwent a deductive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) using the critical business-model components viz. value proposition, value creation, value delivery, value capture. Along with it, emphasis was placed on inductive pass over themes such as faculty role transformation, moralities and regulatory norms, and global positioning.

5. Case Study:

Wharton School and its AI-Driven Business Model Transformation:

5.1 Background of the Institutional setup

Founded in 19th Centurythe Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania enrols multitudes of undergraduate, MBA, EMBA, and Ph.D.Scholars and deputes around nearly 200 plus professors across its academic departments (Wharton School, 2024a). Its Regular MBA programme has been ranked among the top three worldwide programs several times owing to its quality of delivery. The B-School's strategic move to embrace AI as a school-wide priority was initiated in early to mid 2024 with the launch of the Wharton AI & Analytics Initiative under Vice Dean Eric Bradlow, an applied statistician. (Wharton School, 2024a).

5.2 Value Proposition Revolution

Value proposition at Wharton can be summed up in three aspects. First, every candidate, irrespective to specialisation, will be utilizing AItoolkit. Wharton's Vice Dean Bradlow strategized the exposure for every student to AI in some or the other form (Huffman, 2024). Secondly, the B-School positions itself not simply as a purchaser of AI tools but as a hardcore end user of responsible business application of AI, rooted in the Accountable AI Lab directed by Professor Kevin Werbach (Clear Admit, 2025). Lastlyt the value proposition is enhanced to the degree of a continuous learning ecosystem through Wharton Online, professional education, and open-source pedagogical tools (Wharton School, 2024b).

5.3 Value Creation Revolution

5.3.1 Curriculum Design based on AI

The curriculum innovation at Wharton has spanned dual tracks. The vertical track adds several committed AI courses for candidates. Different departments of the prestigious B-School now list more than fifteen courses with overt AI content, leading candidates through the technological innovation. (Wharton OID Department, 2025). The horizontal track deep dives into traditional core courses with AI-driven tools thatprovide the faculty and students with resources to enhance, assimilate and reviewthe ways of embracing AI into classroom instruction and contents developed. (Wharton School, 2024a).

5.3.2 Pedagogical Innovation and the role played by AI

Mollick and Mollick (2024), articulate various Approaches for learning. The framework specifies distinct pedagogical roles in which generative AI can be utilized, with exclusive benefits, considerations, and functionalities:

Table 1. The AI Roles in the Wharton B-School Setup.

Role of AI	Learning Functionality	Pedagogical Use Case
AI-Tutor	Enables direct instruction and explanation.	On-demand explanations of concepts; Philosophical dialogue.
AI-Coach	Provides feedback on student submissions and processes.	Reviews on case write-ups and presentations.
AI-Mentor	Provision for reflection and metacognition.	Reflective prompts forpost strategy simulation.
AI-Teammate	Collaborator on group activities.	Ensures brainstorming partnership in entrepreneurship projects facilitating discussion.
AI-Tool	Completes delegated tasks at scale.	Accomplishes drafting, summarising, code generation activities.
AI-Simulator	Scenario based Role-play stakeholders.	Investor in a startup simulation; annoyed customer in order picking training.
AI-Student	Enables human interface to educate the AI.	Students educate AI, addressing the knowledge gaps.

This typology is critical as it revolutionizes the faculty role. As Mollick and Mollick (2023) make a point in AI application for devising Effective Teaching Strategies in Classrooms, AI can interface for value creation for various learning experiences rather than just producingthe instructional material.

5.3.3 Simulations and AI Agents at Scale

The Generative AI Labs (GAIL) at Wharton, co-directed by Ethan and Lilach Mollick, enhanced the abilities of the simulation tradition originated at Wharton into the era of generative AI. Mollick et al. (2024)., AI agents playing several roles like mentor, facilitator, educator work with simulation logic to enable AI based learning at the Wharton B-School setup. (Wharton Generative AI Labs, 2025).

5.3.4 Research and Knowledge Generation

AI, enrichedresearch productivity by automating literature review, data analysis, and code generation. The Wharton AI Research Fund, founded in 2024, enables faculty with seed resources to pursue research work integrating AI advancement with contemporary business models, industries, and global economies (Wharton School, 2024a). The Generative AI Studio provides the B-School students with mentorship for building AI-powered prototypes and models. (Wharton Generative AI Labs, 2025).

5.4 Value Delivery Revolution

5.4.1 Hybrid and Digital Platforms

Wharton Online, the B-School's digital learning platform, has gathered more than a million total learners and over 100,000 certificate completions from worldwide learners (Wharton Online, 2024). Wharton Online initiated AI in Education: Leveraging ChatGPT for Teaching on Coursera in collaboration with OpenAI (Wharton Online, 2024; Coursera, 2025). The same platformprovides AI for Business by eminent faculty members, educating students on dimensions like big data, machine learning, and generative AI (Wharton Executive Education, 2024).

5.4.2 Enterprise ChatGPT Licensing

In 2024, Wharton became the pioneeringB-School to offer ChatGPT Enterprise licenses to all full-time and executive MBA students, allowingbrowsing of the generative AI applications for the school's data-governance perimeter (Wharton School, 2024a). This moverenders critical outcomes as it shifts AI from a suspicious toolto an institutionally accepted learning ecosystem with consistent access for all learners.

5.4.3 AI-Enabled Student Engagement and Support

Though the individual student-facing chatbots and advisory agents are not overtly listed in Wharton communications, the architectural landscape is clear: the Education Innovation Fund supports educators in implementing AI tutors, simulations, and feedback systems that operate consistently beyond class hours, address the structural constraint of a single instructor and multiple learners that Lilach Mollick has explicitly identified (Mollick & Kornell, 2024). The 'extending the classroom experience' based on customised guidance, is the unique consequential pedagogical opportunity of generative AI.

5.5 Value Capture Revolution

Wharton's Revenue model has been redesigned by AI. The traditional tuition stream remains intact and arguably reinforced with Wharton B-School holding the top position in the U.S. News MBA ranking (Poets&Quants, 2024). Yet few novel streams are visible too.

Table 2. Wharton B-School and its AI-Enabled Revenue Streams.

Revenue Stream	AI-Enabled Mechanism	Significance from a Strategic View Point
Online & Coursera Programmes	AI in Education and AI for Business courses with global reach via Coursera (162M learners).	Globalises the brand at near-zero marginal cost.
Executive Education	AI for Business (Hosanagar) and bespoke corporate AI training programmes.	Captures premium-priced corporate-training spend.
Micro-credentials & Certificates	Modular, stackable courses delivered through Wharton Online.	Aligns with lifelong-learning demand; broadens funnel.
Industry & Research Partnerships	GAIL prototypes (e.g., Primer) and corporate research collaborations.	Generates IP, sponsored-research income, and brand equity.

All these streams move Wharton B-School from a primarily degree-revenue model toward what Christensen and Eyring (2011) would discuss as a hybrid model encompassing premium credential, modular education opportunities, and a research-oriented business model.

5.6 Administrative Efficiency and Operational Revolution

Though never prominently publicized alike the academic initiatives, Wharton B-Schools administrative AI deployment issignificant in variousaspects. Its ChatGPT Enterprise licenses enablesemployees, to assist with drafting, summarisation, and other analytical work. Also, the AI at Wharton centre and Analytics at Wharton B-School conduct webinar series, conferences, and corporate-engagement programmes that help in knowledge sharing and administrative coordination aspects (Huffman, 2024). The school's collaboration with the Penn Graduate School of Education and the Penn Medical School demonstrate the application of AI to collaborate with cross-school administrative and research aspects that would earlier have been complicated (Huffman, 2024).

5.7 Global Educational Standards and Positioning with AI

Accrediting bodies including AACSB International, EQUIS (EFMD), and AMBA have all indicated that responsible AI integration in curriculum, pedagogy, and governance will be in demand for accreditation purpose (AACSB International, 2024). Wharton's academic offerings portfolio is evidence directly responsive to these emerging needs. The B-School's management in this aspect has been exceptionally recognised, with Professor Ethan Mollick named to TIME magazine's 100 Most Influential People in Artificial Intelligence in 2024 (TIME, 2024) for his pedagogy driven by AI initiatives.

6. Discussion

6.1 Validating the Conceptual Model

The Wharton B-School case provides strong evidence for everydimension of its conceptual model proposed in Figure 1. The enabling layer, through its aspects like technological infrastructure, AI-enabled stakeholders, revenue structures, reflects Wharton’s transformation into acomplete AI driven business model. The four value-architecture pillars are allnotably revolutionized, as mentioned in the earlier sections. The outcomes been revolving around learning, employability, industry relevance, global reach, sustainable growth, and societal impact are allillustrated through Wharton's continued leadership, the worldwide acceptance of its offerings, and the quality of its academic delivery.

6.2 The Faculty Capability in AI-driven ecosystems

An alarming finding is the crucial role of faculty in terms of AI capability as an enabler as well as a moderator. The Wharton B-School transformation has an emphasis on managerial philosophy and execution pertaining to the enrichment of capacity and dynamic capabilities of the faculty in terms of embracing AI. B-Schools that fail to possess faculty entrepreneurs would find the transformation path much more challenging.

6.3 The Augmentation Thesis

Wharton's strategic modelmakes it clear to the learners that AI is not embraced for replacing the faculty but to overcome the limitations posed by evidence-based pedagogy (Mollick & Mollick, 2023). This 'augmentation thesis' goes hand in hand with the broader literature on human-AI complementarity (Daugherty & Wilson, 2018; Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2017) and poses a more sustainable framework for B-Schools facing challenges of acceptability from faculty.

6.4 Scope for Transferability

Wharton B-School is privileged with its exceptional resources with a USD 21 billion university endowment (University of Pennsylvania, 2024), an pioneering OpenAI partnership, and intellectually sound faculty with a worldwide reputation. Wharton’s example is hence not directly transferable to B-Schools struggling with

resources and poor revenue structures. However, multiple dimensions of the Wharton B-School stand scalable. The pedagogical role framework requires no proprietary infrastructure or resource base and is freely available for those who wish to apply.(Co-Intelligence book, Mollick, 2024).

7. Challenges and Ethical Considerations

Wharton B-School stands amidst a variety of challenging aspects and requires high consideration by other B-Schools prior to imitating the model. Some major considerations revolve around aspects like:

Academic integrity: Fairness in roles being carried out by faculty and AI intervention.

Algorithmic bias and fairness: Lopsided decisions by AI tools demanding human intervention.

Data privacy and governance: Confidentiality of stakeholder information and intellectual rights.

Digital divide and equity: Awareness, Skill building and reskilling in terms of technology adoption.

Pedagogical de-skilling: Learning- Unlearning – Relearning of AI-driven toolkit and its application.

8. Strategic Implications

8.1 For B-School Management

- Management is responsible for the vision and mission development. It is the key stakeholder for planning, organizing, monitoring and controlling the strategic intent.
- Aspects Management needs to focus on include need identification, resource availability, approval of budgets, awareness building, overcoming resistance, and controlling the project execution, fitting the deadlines and targets.
- It needs to emphasise collaborations, negotiations and risk mitigation.

8.2 For Faculty

- Accept and embrace wholeheartedly the role typology (Mollick & Mollick, 2024) as anoriginating framework for academy - AI integration.
- Rework on patterns of assessment and AI-driven exercises
- Consider prompt design as a core skillset that refines education delivery.

8.3 For Regulators

- Update accreditation norms and standards to demand evidence of AI integration with curriculum, teaching methodology, and regulations.
- Developdictionaries and repositories of vetted AI-enabled resources, based on Wharton's More Useful Things repository, for world-wide academic institutions.

8.4 For B-Schools and Higher Education Institutes

The Wharton case provides a role model move in terms of innovation, acceptance and transformation that fits the era today.The moves stands out in terms of (i) institutional acceptance of open-source pedagogical techniques (ii) collaborative approach of partnerships with global digital platforms for AI-enriched modules (iii) investment in faculty AI literacy for better deliverables.

9. Conclusion

The research aimed at developing and validating an integrated conceptual model of AI-driven business model transformation in B-School education as applied to a critical illustration by the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. The outcome illustrates that AI functions not merely as aninnovativepedagogical tool but as a strategic partner in dynamic capability building that simultaneously revolutionizes a B-School's value generation to capture phases, backed by institutional readiness, faculty potential, moral governance, along with stakeholder acceptance.

Theoretically, the paper demonstrates business-model innovationin the management-education context. Empirically, it aims to offeran integrated case study of an international B-School that has redesigned all major components of its business model through AI integration. Practically, it provides an actionable model for B-School management, faculty, regulators, and policymakers seeking to embrace comparable transformation.

The research has its constraints and limitations. It is practically based on a single illustration of a recognised institution. The secondary data limits insight into management philosophy, stakeholder resistance, and learner experience that would be expected by readers. Future research scope might include (i) multi-case comparisons, (ii) longitudinal studies pertaining to various management and learner aspects, (iii) student-side perceptions about AI application in learning and (iv) Statistical validationof the proposed conceptual model using survey or other techniques.

Finally, it can be commented that innovations with their early acceptance might reap the ‘Early Bird Incentives’ but organisations need to take into consideration every minute aspect before aiming to deploy new technologies to overcome stakeholder fear and anxiety. AI as an innovative technology, has a multitude of benefits to serve fields like academics and B-Schools.Those who deploy contemporary technology may extend these benefits to their learners at a fast pace. Yet,the management ofthese B-Schools ought to focus on their awareness, acceptance and operational excellence. How and how fast should AI integrate with their Business models are the aspects to be studied carefully by all B-Schools.

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