

FROM EVIDENCE TO INSIGHT: HOW STUDENTS SCAFFOLDED STRATEGIC CONSULTING THROUGH AI PROMPTING IN AN EXPERIENTIAL COURSE

Aim of the Study

This study aims to examine how graduate business students used a structured AI platform alongside general-purpose AI tools to support their learning in a real-client consulting course, and to understand how their prompting behaviour related to the development of strategic consulting competencies. Generative AI is now embedded in project-based higher education, yet it remains unclear how structured AI use scaffolds students' transition from an academic mindset — oriented toward exhaustive information collection — to a consultant mindset oriented toward defensible, actionable judgment. The study addresses three specific research questions: (1) How do students distribute their AI prompts across different functional purposes during a semester-long consulting project? (2) How does prompting behaviour mature over the course of the project, and how is this maturation linked to specific learning outcomes? (3) What is the observable division of cognitive labour between AI tools and human judgment in students' strategic work, and how does this division shape their professional development as consultants?

Keywords: generative AI in education; experiential learning; AI prompting maturity; Costa's Levels of Questioning; cognitive scaffolding; human-AI division of labour; business consulting education; learning journals; mixed methods