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TVET EXPERT, QUALIFICATIONS AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

A FLAGSHIP PRACTITIONER'S GUIDE

Embedding Employability Skills *into Schools and Colleges*

A Flagship Practitioner's Guide for Education and Workforce Leaders across the GCC and MENA Region.

FEATURING: THE DEGAZON EMPLOYABILITY MATURITY MODEL | CASE STUDIES | IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAPS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

About this publication

This guide is addressed to school principals, college directors, curriculum managers, ministry officials, and workforce development leaders across the GCC and MENA region who recognise that qualifications alone are not producing work-ready graduates — and who want to change that with practical, evidence-based action.

It is written from field experience, not from a desk. The frameworks and tools here are drawn from more than 30 years of work in vocational education and training across twelve countries, including direct delivery experience supporting over 6,000 young people through the Bahrain Tamkeen Employability Initiative and a nationally significant graduate competency framework covering 250 schools and 300,000 students in Abu Dhabi.

What This Guide Contains

THE CENTRAL ARGUMENT

Employability skills are not an add-on to quality education. **They are the point of it.** A learner who holds a Level 3 qualification in Engineering but cannot communicate professionally, manage their time, or take feedback constructively is not ready for employment. The qualification says they are. Their first employer will disagree.

The institutions that close this gap do not wait for a national policy directive or a new framework. **They start.** This guide gives them the tools to do so.

THE EMPLOYABILITY GAP

01 Why qualifications alone are not delivering work-ready graduates

Across the Gulf Cooperation Council, education systems have made extraordinary investments in qualification attainment over the last two decades. Enrolment is up. Completion rates have improved. More young people hold formal credentials than at any point in the region's history. And yet employer satisfaction surveys, nationalisation programme evaluations, and graduate employment statistics tell a consistent story: **something is still missing.**

The gap is not primarily technical. Most graduates from TVET programmes and colleges in the GCC have acquired the occupational knowledge their qualification requires. What they frequently lack is the set of **professional behaviours, social skills, and workplace attitudes** that employers use to evaluate whether someone is worth hiring — and investing in.

> **FROM THE FIELD — BAHRAIN, 2021–2022**
>
> In post-programme evaluations across multiple Bahrain Tamkeen cohorts, employer feedback consistently identified the same pattern: graduates who had completed structured training could describe what they were supposed to do. Many struggled to demonstrate the professional conduct, communication, and self-management that would make them effective from day one of employment.

What Employers Are Actually Asking For

Across employer engagement exercises conducted in Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, and Oman, the consistent top priorities were not technical — they were behavioural:

- **Reliability** and professional punctuality
- **Communication** — expressing clearly, listening actively, adapting to different audiences
- **Initiative and problem-solving** — acting rather than waiting to be directed
- **Professionalism under pressure** — maintaining standards when things go wrong
- **Teamwork and interpersonal conduct** — working with others, receiving feedback, managing conflict
- **Self-awareness** — knowing what you do not know and asking for help appropriately

None of these require a separate qualification. All of them require deliberate, sustained practice — the kind that only a school or college can provide before a learner enters the workforce.

Why This Gap Persists

THREE REASONS THE GAP ENDURES	
Qualification metrics crowd out employability metrics	Institutions are measured on completion rates and certification scores. Not on whether graduates get and keep jobs. What gets measured gets managed.
Employability is treated as someone else's responsibility	Careers services and dedicated modules receive the mandate. Curriculum tutors — who shape the daily experience that forms professional habits — are left out of the conversation.
System-level change is used as an excuse for inaction	Leaders identify the gap clearly, then wait for national policy or a funded programme. The institutions that produce work-ready graduates do not wait.

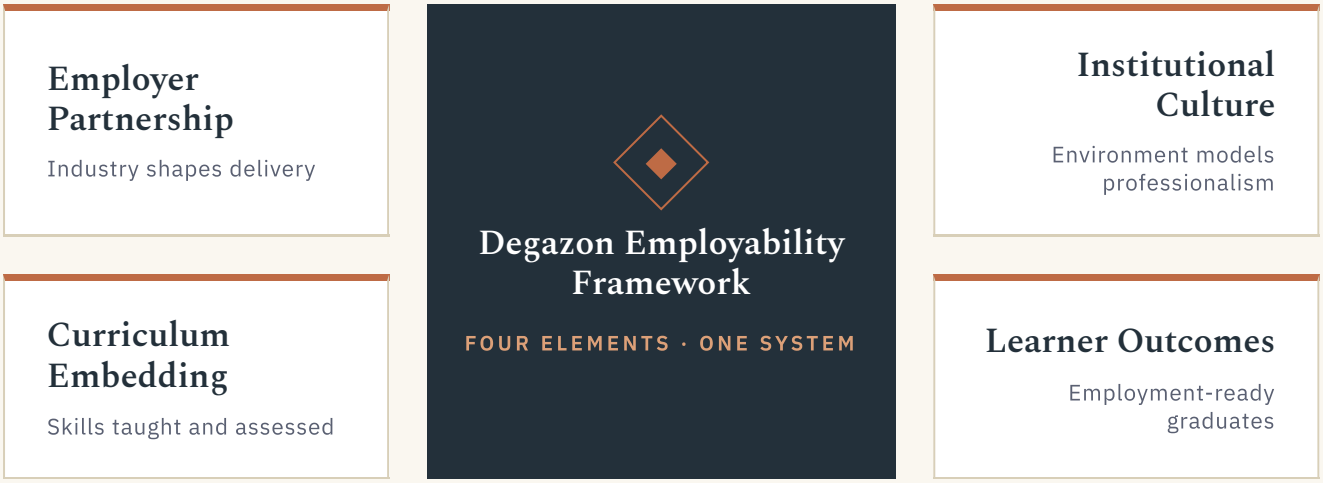
THE FRAMEWORK

02 The Degazon Employability Framework

Four Elements. One System.

Embedding employability skills is not a single intervention. It is the result of four mutually reinforcing elements operating simultaneously. Institutions that succeed do so not because they found an exceptional programme or a gifted careers adviser — they succeed because they aligned their leadership, curriculum, culture, and employer relationships around a shared outcome.

The Degazon Employability Framework sets out these four elements and the relationship between them. It is designed to be used as a planning tool, a diagnostic framework, and a communication device for leadership teams, boards, and national authorities.



The four elements are mutually reinforcing. Strength in any single element amplifies impact in the others. Weakness in any single element limits the whole.

The Four Elements in Practice

Employer Partnership

The most powerful and the most neglected. When employers genuinely shape what happens in the classroom — through live briefs, assessment contribution, guest delivery, and placement — the relevance of the curriculum shifts. Learners understand what they are preparing for. Tutors understand what the job actually requires. This element amplifies all others.

Institutional Culture

The environment in which learning happens either models or undermines the professional standards the curriculum tries to teach. An institution that expects punctuality, professional communication, and accountable conduct from day one produces graduates who understand what work feels like. An institution that tolerates the opposite produces the opposite.

Curriculum Embedding

Skills must be taught, practised, and assessed within programmes — not delivered in a standalone session and forgotten. Curriculum embedding means that every programme makes the employability dimension explicit: naming the skills, creating opportunities to practise them, and designing assessments that require learners to demonstrate them.

Learner Outcomes

The point of the framework. Graduates who hold both technical competence and professional capability: who can get a job, perform in it from day one, and build on it over time. Outcome data — destination tracking, employer satisfaction, employment retention — is the evidence that validates or challenges the rest of the framework.

FROM AWARENESS TO WORKFORCE READY — A FIVE-LEVEL PROGRESSION

03 The Degazon Employability Maturity Model

The Degazon Employability Maturity Model provides a structured framework for understanding where an institution currently sits and what the progression to the next level requires. It is designed for use in institutional self-assessment, strategic planning, national system review, and advisory diagnostics.

The five levels are not fixed categories — they are waypoints on a developmental continuum. An institution may operate at Level 3 in curriculum design and Level 1 in employer engagement. The value of the model is in understanding the pattern, not producing a single summary number.

1	2	3	4	5
Awareness	**Integration**	**Institutionalisation**	**Employer-Aligned**	**Workforce Ready**

1 LEVEL 1 Awareness

The institution recognises that employability skills matter and has begun to discuss the issue at a leadership level. Individual staff members may be doing good work in this area, but there is no institutional structure, policy, or systematic approach in place.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Employability discussed but not planned
- Individual staff initiative only
- No formal policy or strategy
- No employer engagement beyond occasional visits
- Learners receive no structured employability development

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

- Competing priorities displace employability from the agenda
- Without a champion, progress stalls when individuals leave
- No baseline data to measure progress against

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Senior leader has named employability as a priority
- ✓ At least one staff development session has addressed the topic
- ✓ The term 'employability skills' appears in institutional planning documents

2 LEVEL 2
Integration

The institution has begun to integrate employability skills into curriculum design and institutional planning. Some programmes include explicit employability content. Initial employer relationships have been established. Progress is uneven — strong in some areas, absent in others.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Employability appears in some schemes of work
- At least one programme has assessed employability skills
- Initial employer advisory relationships established
- Professional conduct expectations communicated to learners
- A curriculum map or audit has been attempted

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

- Integration is person-dependent — when a champion leaves, progress reverses
- Employer engagement is informal and episodic
- Assessment of employability skills lacks consistency and rigour

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Curriculum map completed and reviewed by senior leadership
- ✓ Employer contributes to at least one programme review annually
- ✓ Learners can name at least three employability skills they are developing

3 LEVEL 3
Institutionalisation

Employability is embedded across the institution as a systematic expectation. Systems, policies, and processes support consistent delivery. The institutional environment actively models professional standards. This is no longer dependent on individual champions.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Employability strategy formally adopted
- Consistent professional conduct standard applied across institution
- Structured tutor CPD on employability integration
- Learner employability tracker in use
- Employer engagement structured and documented

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

- Risk of compliance rather than genuine embedding — the form without the substance
- Sustainability requires ongoing leadership investment
- Measuring outcomes (not just inputs) remains challenging

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Self-assessment includes employability as a quality indicator
- ✓ Three or more employer partners contribute actively to delivery
- ✓ Learner destination data collected and reviewed annually

4 LEVEL 4
Employer-Aligned

The institution has built substantive, reciprocal employer relationships that actively shape what learners experience. Industry practitioners contribute to design, delivery, and assessment. Learners regularly engage with real employer contexts. The gap between the institution and the workplace is narrow.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Employers co-design or co-deliver programme components
- Live industry briefs and work experience are standard features
- Employer satisfaction formally measured and used
- Graduate employment rates tracked and benchmarked
- Employer feedback drives curriculum review cycles

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

- Maintaining quality control when employers are involved in delivery
- Scaling employer relationships beyond a small number of partners
- Ensuring all learners — not just high performers — access employer contexts

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Employer satisfaction surveys conducted and published
- ✓ Graduate employment rate benchmarked against sector data
- ✓ At least 30% of learners have structured work experience or live briefs per year

5 LEVEL 5
Workforce Ready

The institution produces graduates who are demonstrably ready for employment from day one — confirmed through employer feedback, employment data, and independent evaluation. The institution actively influences sector and national practice and contributes to workforce policy.

CHARACTERISTICS

- Independent graduate employment evaluation conducted
- Institution contributes to national or sector workforce frameworks
- Employability outcomes published and benchmarked externally
- Institution cited as leading practice by peers or regulators
- Alumni engagement sustained as an institutional asset

TYPICAL CHALLENGES

- Sustaining performance as leadership changes
- Avoiding complacency when outcomes are strong
- Maintaining relevance as labour market demands evolve rapidly

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Published independent evaluation of graduate employment outcomes
- ✓ Cited in national skills or workforce policy documents
- ✓ Invited to contribute to sector or national employability framework development

CURRICULUM · INSTITUTION · EMPLOYER PARTNERSHIP

04 The three levels of embedding

The three-level framework describes how employability embedding works in practice — from the lesson to the institution to the wider labour market. All three levels need to operate together. The most common failure is investing in one level while neglecting the others.

LEVEL	WHAT IT MEANS	HOW IT WORKS	IN PRACTICE
LEVEL 1 **Curriculum**	Employability skills are taught as explicit, assessed content within existing subjects and programmes.	Skills named in schemes of work. Learners assessed on communication, problem-solving, and professional conduct within subject contexts.	A hospitality programme grades learners on client communication, not just food preparation. An engineering programme requires a professionally formatted report.
LEVEL 2 **Institution**	The school or college operates as a professional environment that models and expects the behaviours it teaches.	Dress codes, punctuality, and professional conduct applied consistently. Staff model professional standards. Induction sets employment expectations from day one.	Absence is followed up within 24 hours. Staff address learners formally. The centre feels credible to a visiting employer from the moment they walk in.
LEVEL 3 **Employer Partnership**	Real employers shape what learners experience — contributing to design, delivery, and assessment.	Live briefs, work experience, guest practitioners, employer-led assessment. Employer feedback drives curriculum review.	A logistics company sets a real supply chain problem as a programme assessment. An engineering firm reviews final project outcomes with the awarding tutor.

FROM THE FIELD — BAHRAIN, 2021–2022

The Tamkeen programme in Bahrain operated across all three levels simultaneously. We redesigned the learner's daily experience — how they were received, what was expected of them, how their work was assessed, and who they met from industry. Outcomes reflected that investment. Institutions that invest only in Level 1 consistently plateau.

WHAT YOU CAN DO WITHOUT A FULL SYSTEM OVERHAUL

05 Five practical starting points

Every institution in this region has budget pressures, legacy systems, and competing priorities. This section does not assume a blank slate. It assumes a functioning institution with limited discretionary resource and a leadership team that wants to make progress this term — not next year.

01 Map Where Employability Skills Already Exist in Your Curriculum

WHAT TO DO

Before adding anything new, audit what is already there. Most programmes already teach communication, teamwork, and problem-solving — they just do not name, assess, or make them visible to learners or employers. A curriculum map takes one to two days and usually reveals that 60–70% of the infrastructure is already in place.

HOW TO START

Form a working group of three to four curriculum leads. Give each a simple grid: programme, units, skills currently taught, skills currently assessed, skills visible to employers. Collate and review as a senior team.

Timescale: 4–6 weeks

02 Introduce a Professional Conduct Standard from Induction

WHAT TO DO

The highest-impact, lowest-cost change most institutions can make. Set clear expectations around punctuality, communication, professional dress, and peer respect from day one — and apply them consistently. Employers consistently report that these basic professional habits are the gap they experience most acutely in new hires.

HOW TO START

Write a one-page Professional Conduct Standard. Include it in the learner induction pack. Brief all tutors before the next intake. Discuss it in the first session of every programme.

Timescale: Before the next intake

03 Build One Employer Relationship Properly Before Scaling

WHAT TO DO

Do not try to build twenty employer relationships at once. Identify one employer in your primary sector already connected to your institution. Have a senior conversation about what they see in graduates and what they wish was different. Ask them to contribute one session, brief, or piece of assessment feedback this year.

HOW TO START

The principal or director makes the call — not the work experience coordinator. Frame it as a strategic partnership, not a favour. Offer something in return: a named acknowledgement, early access to candidates, a graduate pipeline.

Timescale: One term to establish, one year to embed

04 Add a Reflective Employability Component to Existing Assessment

WHAT TO DO

You do not need a new qualification to assess employability. Add a structured reflection to an existing assignment: learners identify professional skills used, what went well, and what they would do differently. This builds the self-awareness employers value as much as technical competence.

HOW TO START

Draft a one-page reflection template. Pilot with one tutor in one unit this term. Review together, refine, roll out to two more units next term.

Timescale: One term to pilot, one year to embed

05 Measure Something — and Use What You Find

WHAT TO DO

You cannot improve what you do not measure. Introduce a simple employability readiness tracker — a learner self-assessment completed at start, mid-point, and end of programme. Use the data to identify learners needing support and to evaluate whether your integration is working.

HOW TO START

Adapt the readiness checklist in this guide into a learner-facing ten-statement confidence scale. Administer in a tutorial session. Share aggregate results with curriculum leads. Act on the patterns.

Timescale: One term to design, one year to generate meaningful data

SEQUENCING ADVICE

→Implementation note: Begin with **Starting Point 2 — the Professional Conduct Standard.** It costs nothing, can be in place before the next intake, and sets the institutional tone that all other starting points depend on. Starting Point 1 (curriculum mapping) is the most important analytical step. Do not attempt all five simultaneously.

THREE PROGRAMMES. THREE LESSONS.

06 Case studies from the field

The following case studies are drawn from direct advisory and delivery engagement. They are presented not as models to be replicated wholesale, but as evidence of what is possible when leadership, curriculum, and employer engagement are aligned around a common goal.

CASE STUDY 1

Bahrain Tamkeen Employability Initiative

CONTEXT

Bahrain's labour market has faced persistent youth unemployment, with national candidates — particularly high school and university graduates — struggling to compete with established expatriate workforces. The Tamkeen Training Fund recognised that a qualification in a technical subject was insufficient. Candidates needed structured, assessed employability skills training delivered at scale.

CHALLENGE

Over 6,000 unemployed young Bahrainis needed to develop employability skills sufficient to enter and remain in private-sector employment. The programme needed to operate across 25 training centres simultaneously, maintain consistent quality, and produce measurable improvements in employment readiness within a three-month delivery window.

INTERVENTION

A 150-credit Employability Skills Certificate programme was delivered across 25 training centres. The curriculum covered communication, teamwork, problem-solving, self-management, and understanding the world of work, with specialist pathways in Retail, Hospitality, Health, and Construction. All delivery was employer-aligned, with sector-specific contextualisation. Capacity building was provided to centre staff to ensure consistent quality and external verification across the network.

RESULTS

Over 6,000 individuals completed the programme within a 14-month period. Post-programme evaluation showed consistently higher employment entry rates among completers compared with control groups receiving technical training alone. Employer feedback highlighted measurable improvement in professional conduct, communication, and workplace readiness from programme graduates.

→ **Lessons for Leaders:** Scale does not require sacrificing quality — but it does require robust quality assurance from the start. The sector-specific pathways were the most significant differentiator: learners who could connect employability skills to the actual work they were pursuing showed the strongest outcomes. Generic employability training, delivered without industry context, consistently underperformed.

CASE STUDY 2

Graduate Competency Framework — Abu Dhabi Schools (ADEK)

CONTEXT

The Abu Dhabi Education and Knowledge Authority (ADEK) recognised that Abu Dhabi schools were producing graduates who performed well on academic metrics but were not consistently demonstrating the 21st-century competencies — including communication, critical thinking, digital fluency, and financial literacy — that the UAE's knowledge economy required. An educational system transformation was needed.

CHALLENGE

Developing a Graduate Competency Framework for implementation across 250 schools, impacting over 300,000 students, required a co-creation approach that engaged teachers as active participants rather than passive recipients. Materials needed to work across diverse communities, in both print and digital formats, and be adaptable at the classroom level without sacrificing fidelity to the framework.

INTERVENTION

A comprehensive Graduate Competency Framework was developed in partnership with ADEK, shifting the focus of learning from teaching inputs to learning outputs — from what teachers delivered to what learners could do. Professional development was provided to teachers in pilot schools, with GCF champions identified to support wider rollout. Assessment materials were developed to gauge prior learning, monitor progress, and support portfolio-based summative assessment. The co-creation approach ensured teachers helped design and quality-assure the materials they would use.

RESULTS

The framework was implemented across 250 schools, impacting over 300,000 students. The pilot school cohort demonstrated stronger learner ownership of their development and more consistent articulation of capabilities by graduates. Teacher professional development resulted in a measurable shift in how learning objectives were framed — from content coverage to capability development. The GCF has become a foundational reference for Abu Dhabi's school quality system.

→ **Lessons for Leaders:** The critical lesson from Abu Dhabi is that competency framework implementation fails when teachers are treated as delivery agents rather than co-creators. The schools that adopted the GCF most effectively were those where teachers had been involved in shaping and quality-assuring the materials — not those given the best resources. Ownership precedes implementation.

CASE STUDY 3

Employer-Led Qualification Development — Americana Group, Egypt

CONTEXT

Americana Group is one of the largest corporations in MENA, operating across 13 countries with over 63,000 employees spanning franchise operations including KFC, Pizza Hut, Hardee's, TGI Fridays, and Costa Coffee. The group required qualifications that would support structured staff development, formalise succession pathways, and provide internationally recognised certification for operational and leadership staff.

CHALLENGE

Standard qualification frameworks were not sufficiently contextualised to the fast-food and hospitality sector in the MENA context. Americana needed qualifications that reflected actual workplace practice, could be delivered at the place of work without significant operational disruption, and would provide a credible pathway from frontline to management.

INTERVENTION

Four qualifications were developed at the place of work, directly contextualised to Americana's franchise operations: Level 2 Diploma in Quick Service Restaurant; Level 3 Diploma in Quick Service Restaurant Supervisor; Level 4 Leadership and Management; Level 5 Leadership and Management. Capacity building was provided to 60 Americana staff in assessment and internal quality assurance, enabling the group to own and sustain the qualification delivery internally. This created a genuinely employer-led model, with the employer as an active assessment and verification partner.

RESULTS

The four qualifications provided Americana with a structured talent pipeline from frontline to senior management. Internal promotion rates among qualified staff improved. The capacity building of 60 internal assessors and verifiers created an institutional capability that has sustained the programme beyond initial delivery. The employer-led model reduced dependency on external providers and embedded quality assurance within the organisation itself.

→ **Lessons for Leaders:** Employer-led qualification development is fundamentally different from employer-informed qualification development. Americana's success came from the decision to build internal assessment and verification capacity — making the employer a genuine partner in the quality system, not just a context provider. The investment in the 60 internal assessors was more valuable than any single qualification delivered.

WHY HUMAN SKILLS MATTER MORE AS AUTOMATION ADVANCES

07 Employability in the age of AI

Artificial intelligence is reshaping work faster than any previous technological transition. For schools and colleges, this creates both urgency and clarity. The skills that AI finds hardest to replicate are precisely the skills that employability frameworks have always identified as essential — and that most educational institutions have historically undervalued.

This is not a section about AI hype. It is a practical analysis of what automation means for employability education — and why investing in human skills now is not a soft option, but a strategic imperative.

What AI Is Actually Displacing — and What It Is Not

AI systems are increasingly capable of performing routine cognitive tasks: processing information, generating text, identifying patterns, making rules-based decisions. What they cannot do — at least not yet, and not reliably — is exercise the kind of context-sensitive human judgement that most complex jobs require at their most critical moments.

AT RISK OF AUTOMATION

- Routine data entry and processing
- Rules-based decision-making
- Repetitive report generation
- Standard customer query resolution
- Basic scheduling and logistics

HUMAN ADVANTAGE

- Complex communication and relationship management
- Ethical decision-making under uncertainty
- Creative problem-solving in novel contexts
- Leadership, coaching, and team development
- Cultural sensitivity and interpersonal judgement

Seven Human Skills That Schools and Colleges Must Develop Now

Critical Thinking	The ability to evaluate information, identify assumptions, and reason through complex problems is not automated — and becomes more valuable as AI generates more information. Schools and colleges need to explicitly teach and assess the difference between locating information and evaluating it.
Communication	As AI handles routine written and verbal communication, the premium on sophisticated human communication — negotiating, persuading, explaining complexity, managing difficult conversations — increases. Learners need to practise high-stakes communication, not just information exchange.
Adaptability	The half-life of specific technical skills is shortening rapidly. The most valuable graduates will be those who can learn new skills quickly, adjust to changing contexts, and tolerate ambiguity without losing effectiveness. This cannot be taught as a module — it must be the experience of the institution itself.
Collaboration	AI tools enhance individual productivity. They cannot replicate the complexity of human teams navigating real disagreement, power dynamics, and shared accountability. Structured team-based learning — with genuine collaborative assessment — develops this skill.
Ethical Decision-Making	As AI systems take on more consequential decisions, the demand for humans who can evaluate ethical implications, challenge algorithmic outputs, and take moral responsibility for decisions increases. This is not a philosophy module — it is a practical workforce skill.
Digital Literacy	Every graduate needs to be a competent, confident user of digital tools — including AI tools. Digital literacy is no longer a specialist skill. It is a baseline professional expectation equivalent to numeracy and literacy.
AI Literacy	Distinct from digital literacy: the capacity to understand what AI systems can and cannot do, to use them appropriately, to recognise their limitations, and to make informed judgements about when human judgement is required. This is the new critical thinking for the AI age.

STRATEGIC IMPLICATION FOR EDUCATION LEADERS

The most significant competitive advantage a graduate will have in an AI-augmented labour market is not their ability to use AI tools — those skills will be taught everywhere. It is their ability to do what AI cannot: **build trust, take responsibility, navigate ambiguity, and lead people.** Schools and colleges that understand this are already ahead.

Practical Implications for Institutions

Embedding AI literacy does not require a new department or a significant budget. It requires a deliberate leadership decision and three practical steps:

- → Audit your curriculum for AI-vulnerable content — tasks that AI can now do better than a trained human — and redesign assessment to require higher-order human skills instead.
- → Introduce AI tools into your learning environment deliberately, with structured guidance on when and how to use them — modelling the critical evaluation that professional contexts will require.
- → Brief your employer partners on what you are doing and ask them to confirm that the skills you are developing match their emerging needs. This conversation, in 2026, is more valuable than any advisory board agenda.

A SCORED SELF-ASSESSMENT ACROSS FIVE DOMAINS

08 Institutional readiness diagnostic

Rate each statement on a scale of 1 to 4. Maximum score: 100. Total your score across all five sections and refer to the Maturity Interpretation table below.

1
Not in place
The practice is absent or exists only in individual effort.

2
Partial
Intentions exist but application is inconsistent.

3
Established
Consistently in place across the institution.

4
Embedded and improving
Deeply embedded, self-monitoring, continuously developing.

A — Leadership and Strategy

#	STATEMENT	RATING (1–4)	EVIDENCE / NOTES
1	Our senior leadership team has discussed employability as a strategic priority in the last 12 months.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
2	A named senior leader holds accountability for employability outcomes across the institution.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
3	Employability skills development is referenced in our institutional plan or quality strategy.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
4	We review employability outcomes data (destination tracking, employer satisfaction) at least annually.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
5	Our staff development programme includes content on embedding employability skills.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	

B — Curriculum Design

#	STATEMENT	RATING (1–4)	EVIDENCE / NOTES
1	We have mapped where employability skills appear across our curriculum.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
2	Employability skills are named and visible in schemes of work and lesson plans.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
3	At least one programme includes assessed — not just taught — employability content.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
4	Learners are told explicitly which employability skills they are developing and why.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
5	Our curriculum review process includes an employability skills audit.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	

C — Institutional Environment

#	STATEMENT	RATING (1–4)	EVIDENCE / NOTES
1	We have a Professional Conduct Standard communicated to all learners at induction.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
2	Staff model the professional behaviours we expect from learners.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
3	Punctuality and attendance are followed up consistently, as an employer would.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
4	Our physical environment communicates professional expectations.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
5	Learners are addressed and treated as professionals in training.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	

D — Employer Engagement

#	STATEMENT	RATING (1–4)	EVIDENCE / NOTES
1	We have at least one active employer relationship that goes beyond occasional visits.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
2	At least one employer has contributed to programme review or delivery in the last 12 months.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
3	Learners have access to at least one structured work-related activity per year.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
4	We collect employer feedback on graduate readiness and use it to inform curriculum decisions.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
5	An employer can describe our institution accurately — what we teach and how well graduates perform.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	

E — Learner Readiness and Support

#	STATEMENT	RATING (1–4)	EVIDENCE / NOTES
1	Learners can name the employability skills they are developing through their programme.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
2	Learners receive structured guidance on CV writing, job search, and interview preparation.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
3	We have an early identification system for learners who may struggle with professional expectations.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
4	Our tutorial system explicitly addresses employability readiness alongside academic progress.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	
5	We track learner destinations after completion and use that data to improve our programmes.	1 · 2 · 3 · 4	

Scoring Interpretation — The Degazon Employability Maturity Diagnostic

SCORE	MATURITY LEVEL	WHAT IT INDICATES	IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES
5–9	AWARENESS	Employability is recognised as important but has not been systematically integrated. Individual staff may be doing good work in pockets; there is no institutional structure supporting it.	Adopt the Professional Conduct Standard. Conduct a curriculum map. Identify one senior leader as the employability champion.
10–14	DEVELOPING	Some systems are in place. Curriculum integration has begun in places. Employer engagement exists but remains informal. The institution needs to move from activity to structure.	Formalise employer engagement. Introduce a learner employability tracker. Review the readiness checklist as a leadership team and set three improvement priorities.
15–19	ESTABLISHED	Employability is embedded across most of the institution. Systems exist and are applied consistently. The focus now is depth and sustainability.	Introduce the Degazon Employability Maturity Model as a planning framework. Seek external peer review. Invest in tutor development to deepen curriculum integration quality.
20–25	LEADING PRACTICE	The institution operates at the frontier of employability integration. It actively shapes sector practice and contributes to national workforce readiness.	Share practice externally. Participate in national frameworks. Mentor other institutions. Publish your approach. Commission independent external evaluation.

◆ **READING YOUR SCORES**

Note: the section in which your scores are lowest is more revealing than your total. A high overall score with a very low Domain D (Employer Engagement) score signals a systemic vulnerability that aggregate numbers conceal. Use section scores, not just totals, to set priorities.

THREE PATHWAYS FOR THREE INSTITUTION TYPES

09 Implementation roadmaps

Implementation looks different depending on institutional scale, governance structure, and starting position. The three roadmaps below provide a practical action structure for small, medium, and large institutions. They are not prescriptive — use them as a planning scaffold, adjusted to your context.

Small Institution Under 500 Learners	90 DAYS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
PRIORITY ACTIONS	→ Conduct curriculum map (2-day exercise) → Write and launch Professional Conduct Standard → Identify one employer partner; arrange senior conversation → Pilot reflection component in one programme → Run checklist with leadership team	→ Formalise employer contribution to one programme → Introduce learner employability tracker → Add employability to self-assessment report → Staff briefing on AI and employability → Review curriculum map — close top three gaps	→ Employability integrated across all programmes → Annual employer satisfaction survey → Destination data tracked for all completers → Benchmark against Degazon Maturity Model → Plan for Levels 4–5: deepen employer partnership

Medium Institution 500 to 2,000 Learners	90 DAYS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
PRIORITY ACTIONS	→ Appoint senior employability lead → Commission full curriculum audit → Develop Professional Conduct Standard for all faculties → Establish employer advisory group (minimum 3 employers) → Administer baseline learner employability tracker	→ Introduce structured tutor CPD on employability → Roll out reflection assessment across all programmes → Employer contributes to at least two programme reviews → Publish employability commitments for learners → Initiate first employer-set live brief in one programme	→ Employability in strategic plan and quality framework → Formal destination tracking system operational → Three or more employer partners contributing actively → External benchmarking — invite peer or sector review → Position for Maturity Level 4: Employer-Aligned

Large Institution or System 2,000+ Learners or Multi-Campus	90 DAYS	6 MONTHS	12 MONTHS
PRIORITY ACTIONS	→ Board-level employability strategy adopted → Campus-level diagnostic using readiness checklist → Sector-specific employer engagement plans per faculty → Learner employability tracker baseline across all campuses → AI literacy integrated into staff development framework	→ Employability outcomes included in leadership KPIs → External employer satisfaction survey conducted → Structured work experience or live briefs in 30%+ of programmes → Publish institutional employability report → Graduate destination data reviewed by board	→ Independent external evaluation of employability outcomes → Contribution to national skills or workforce framework → Cited as leading practice — share externally → Alumni engagement strategy operational → Position for Maturity Level 5: Workforce Ready

HOW NATIONAL VISIONS FRAME THIS WORK

10 Regional policy context

Embedding employability skills is not a standalone institutional preference — it sits at the centre of every major national vision across the GCC. For education leaders, this policy alignment matters: it provides a strategic rationale for prioritising this work internally, and it often unlocks access to national funding, recognition, and partnership.

Saudi Arabia

VISION 2030 — HUMAN CAPABILITY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

National Transformation Through a Skilled, Employed Workforce

Vision 2030's Human Capability Development Programme makes employability skills development a national mandate. The ambition to raise Saudisation rates across private sector employment requires graduates who are genuinely work-ready — not merely qualified. Schools and colleges that embed employability skills contribute directly to Vision 2030's most visible measure of success: employment. The programme's focus on career readiness and industry alignment provides policy cover — and often funding — for exactly the curriculum development described in this guide.

United Arab Emirates

UAE CENTENNIAL 2071 / NAFIS EMIRATISATION PROGRAMME

Preparing Citizens for a Knowledge Economy That Does Not Yet Fully Exist

The UAE Centennial 2071 and the Nafis Emiratisation programme set a clear expectation: UAE nationals in productive, skilled private-sector employment. The challenge is not qualification attainment — UAE nationals are among the most educated populations in the GCC — it is the gap between formal credentials and the confidence, adaptability, and professional conduct that private-sector employers actually require. The ADEK Graduate Competency Framework, which benchmarked 250 schools against workforce readiness standards, demonstrated that the infrastructure for this work already exists — it needs embedding, not invention.

Oman

OMAN VISION 2040 — HUMAN DEVELOPMENT PILLAR

Diversification Requires a Workforce Ready to Compete

Oman Vision 2040 identifies human development as the central pillar of economic transformation. As the economy diversifies into tourism, logistics, manufacturing, and technology, the demand is for graduates who can problem-solve, collaborate, and adapt — not just hold a technical certificate. Oman's college network has invested heavily in technical qualifications. The remaining gap — consistently identified in employer surveys — is professional readiness. Embedding employability skills is therefore not a supplementary ambition; it is a strategic imperative aligned to the national plan.

Bahrain

ECONOMIC VISION 2030 / TAMKEEN TRAINING FUND

The Evidence Is Already There: Bahrain Showed What Works at Scale

The Bahrain Tamkeen Employability Initiative — which supported over 6,000 unemployed young people through structured employability and work-readiness pathways — demonstrated what embedded, employer-linked skills development can achieve at scale. Learners who completed structured employability pathways showed measurably higher rates of sustained employment than those who received technical training alone. The Tamkeen model succeeded because it combined structured curriculum, professional environment standards, and active employer engagement — the three levels described in this guide. It provides a proof of concept directly transferable to schools and colleges across the region.

WORKING WITH DR TONY DEGAZON

From diagnostic to implementation

This guide is the starting point of a progression, not the end of it. A self-assessment completed in a leadership meeting will identify where to look — but closing the gap between a score and a new operational reality requires structured support, external perspective, and sustained follow-through.

The following advisory services support institutions and national authorities at each stage of the journey from Awareness to Workforce Ready:

SERVICE	WHO IT IS FOR	WHAT IT DELIVERS
Institutional Employability Review	School groups, colleges, TVET providers	Structured diagnostic across the Degazon Employability Framework. Prioritised improvement report and 12-month action plan.
Curriculum Mapping and Redesign	Curriculum teams and faculties	Facilitated audit of programme portfolio. Identifies gaps, redesign priorities, and assessment integration points.
Employer Engagement Strategy	Training centres and colleges	Design and launch of a credible employer partnership model — from first contact to live delivery and assessment involvement.
Leadership Team Diagnostic Workshop	Senior leadership teams	Half-day or full-day facilitated session using the readiness checklist and Maturity Model as the basis for strategic planning.
National Programme Design	Ministries and national authorities	Architecture for large-scale national employability initiatives: programme design, QA framework, delivery partner development.
Tutor Development Programme	Teaching staff and curriculum leads	Structured CPD programme on embedding, teaching, and assessing employability skills within existing subject areas.
Employability Maturity Assessment	Any institution or system	Independent assessment against the Degazon Employability Maturity Model, with benchmark comparison and improvement roadmap.

GET IN TOUCH

To discuss how this work applies to your institution or system, visit degazon.net/contact

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Dr Tony Degazon is a City & Guilds TVET expert and senior international advisor with more than 25 years of experience across workforce development, qualification design, quality assurance, and institutional capacity building. He is the architect of the Degazon Workforce Capability Architecture™ — a six-stage framework development methodology refined through projects across the MENA region.

His work spans over **60,000 learners**, **450+ training centres** reviewed, and engagements across **12 countries** including Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Oman, and Jordan. Framework and qualification development projects include the ADEK Graduate Competency Framework (250 schools, 250,000+ students), the Saudi Skills Standards national assessment infrastructure (€7m), the Saudi Aramco ITQAN diploma, the Abu Dhabi Tourist Guide qualification and licensing system, and the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Court Moral Education Programme.

He holds an EdD in Education and continues to work at the intersection of policy, practice, and systems thinking in vocational and professional education.

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