From Classroom to Boardroom: Assessing Curriculum Development for International Business Major Gaps in Undergraduate Business Education

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Abstract

The rapidly evolving global business landscape demands that undergraduate business education, particularly within the International Business (IB) major, adapt to equip students with the necessary skills and knowledge for career success. This study aims to critically assess the current IB curriculum to identify gaps and propose enhancements that align educational outcomes with the competencies essential for thriving in a global marketplace. Utilizing a qualitative approach, this research draws on 26 in-depth interviews with students, alumni, and industry experts to explore the effectiveness of the curriculum in addressing key areas such as practical application, specialization in emerging business trends, and career readiness.

The findings reveal significant gaps in the curriculum, including the need for earlier and more consistent integration of practical experiences, the development of specialized tracks in critical areas like digital transformation and sustainability, and the enhancement of career services tailored to global business careers. By engaging with a diverse range of stakeholders, this study emphasizes the importance of ongoing curriculum assessment and stakeholder involvement to ensure the IB program remains relevant and effective in a dynamic global environment. The research contributes to the broader discourse on curriculum development by providing actionable recommendations that ensure graduates are both theoretically informed and practically prepared to excel in their careers. These findings align with SDG 4 by enhancing the quality of education and with SDG 8 by preparing graduates with the skills needed for sustainable economic growth.

Keywords: international business education, curriculum development, employability, practical application, sustainability, digital transformation

1. Introduction

The global business environment, particularly within the International Business (IB) sector, has been significantly disrupted by the gig economy and other emerging trends, necessitating critical adaptations in educational curricula (Caza, 2020; McClellan, 2021). These changes demand that educational programs not only equip students with theoretical knowledge but also ensure they are prepared with practical skills that align with industry expectations (Alashmawy & Yazdanifard, 2019). This study specifically focuses on the IB major, recognizing the urgent need to better prepare students for the complexities of a rapidly evolving global marketplace.

Applying stakeholder theory and gap analysis, this study critically assesses the discrepancies between the current IB curriculum and the competencies required for employment readiness and career advancement (Saurbier, 2021). The research methodology is enhanced through qualitative data gathered from in-depth interviews with students, alumni, and industry experts. By incorporating insights from industry professionals, the study identifies specific gaps in curriculum development and proposes actionable improvements to better align educational outcomes with real-world business demands (Atkinson, 2018).

Bridging the gap between academia and industry is imperative for ensuring graduates can transition smoothly from classroom learning to professional practice (Liew et al., 2012; Rosi et al., 2018; Sui et al., 2018). The inclusion of industry expert perspectives adds a crucial layer of insight into how curricula can be tailored to meet the specific needs of employers in the global business environment, thereby enhancing the relevance and impact of educational

programs (McClellan, 2021).

The findings of this study offer comprehensive insights into the current state of the IB curriculum, highlighting critical areas in need of improvement from both academic and industry perspectives. These insights are intended to guide educators and curriculum developers in aligning the IB major more closely with the demands of the global business environment, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the relevant skills and knowledge needed for success in their careers (Caza, 2020; McClellan, 2021).

2. Literature reviews

2.1. Current Trends in Business Education and IB Programs, the Integration of Real-World Experiences

As the global business landscape rapidly evolves, particularly due to technological advancements, business education programs, including IB programs, must continuously adapt to prepare students for modern workforce challenges. AI and digital transformation are among the most significant drivers of change, reshaping industries by automating processes, enhancing decision-making, and creating new business models (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Integrating AI and digital competencies into business curricula is now a necessity for preparing students for future jobs (Aoun Joseph, 2017; Sudlow, 2019). These competencies include technical skills in AI and data analytics, as well as the ability to apply these technologies strategically in global business operations.

Globalization further increases the demand for professionals with strong cross-cultural competencies and the ability to navigate international markets. IB programs must emphasize these global skills, integrating courses on cross-cultural management and IB strategy (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016). Moreover, the growing emphasis on sustainability and ethical business practices is changing business expectations, requiring IB programs to integrate these themes into their curricula (Mendoza et al., 2023). Despite challenges, students value sustainability and prefer working for companies that prioritize it, highlighting the need for IB curricula to effectively prepare them for sustainability challenges (Erskine & Johnson, 2012).

Equally important is the integration of real-world experiences into the IB curriculum to bridge the gap between theory and practice. Experiential Learning Theory (Kolb, 1984) provides a foundational framework, emphasizing that effective learning occurs when students engage in both concrete experiences and reflective observation, allowing them to apply theory to practice (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Experiential learning in IB education can take various forms, including internships, case studies, and project-based learning, which enhance students' understanding of business concepts and develop essential soft skills valued by employers (Finch et al., 2015; Silva & Mesquita, 2019).

Research shows that students involved in experiential learning are better prepared for the workforce and more likely to succeed in their careers (Cord et al., 2011; Gault et al., 2010; Mirrer, 2010; Rubin & Dierdorff, 2009; Webber et al., 2023). Integrating real-world experiences into the IB curriculum also aligns with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 2010), ensuring that graduates meet the demands of the global business environment. This approach benefits students and industry stakeholders by keeping the IB curriculum relevant and effective (Freeman, 2010; Kolb, 1984).

These trends underscore the need for IB curricula to be dynamic and responsive to the evolving global economy. Continuous adaptation is required to equip students with the necessary knowledge and skills to succeed in a complex, interconnected world. By aligning with these trends, IB programs can better prepare students for the modern business environment, enhancing their employability and ability to drive innovation and sustainability in their careers (Donald et al., 2018; Ghoshal, 2005; Mahapatra & Dash, 2021; Webber et al., 2023).

2.2 Discrepancy in Skills and Knowledge

In recent years, there has been growing concern among educators and industry leaders regarding the persistent gap between the skills and knowledge imparted by higher education institutions and the competencies demanded by employers, particularly in the field of International Business (IB) (Choi & Park, 2022; Mainga et al., 2022). This discrepancy is not only a challenge for recent graduates, who find themselves ill-prepared to meet the expectations of the global workforce, but also for employers who struggle to find candidates with the necessary skills to contribute effectively from day one (Christiansen & Even, 2024; Payan-Carreira et al., 2019).

Human Capital Theory provides a useful framework for understanding the economic implications of this skills gap. According to this theory, education is an investment in human capital that enhances an individual's productive capabilities, thereby increasing their value in the labor market (Becker, 1993; Leoni, 2023; Schultz, 1961). However, when educational programs fail to align with the evolving demands of the business environment, this investment yields lower returns both for individuals and the economy as a whole (Acemoglu & Autor, 2011; Van Der Colff,

2004). The gap between the competencies developed through traditional business education and those required in the modern workplace is particularly evident in areas such as communication, teamwork, and critical thinking—skills that are essential for success in the dynamic and multicultural contexts of international business (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Daniel et al., 2019; Jackson, 2013; Van Rompay-Bartels & Tuninga, 2023). While technical knowledge remains important, employers increasingly prioritize soft skills that enable graduates to navigate complex organizational structures and cultural differences (Jayaram & Musau, 2017; Lepeley, 2021). Osmani et al. (2019) noted that undergraduate programs should prioritize developing employability competencies, including technical and soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, adaptability, and resilience.

For the IB curriculum to effectively prepare students for their future careers, it must address these deficiencies by integrating skill-building opportunities that reflect real-world challenges. This includes a greater emphasis on experiential learning, interdisciplinary approaches, and the development of soft skills alongside technical expertise (Hruby et al., 2020; Johnson & Jordan, 2019; Silva & Mesquita, 2019). By doing so, educational institutions can ensure that their graduates are not only equipped with the necessary knowledge but also the practical skills required to thrive in the global business landscape (Camillo, 2015). In summary, bridging the skills gap in IB education is crucial for enhancing the human capital of graduates and, by extension, the economic competitiveness of the labor market. Addressing these gaps will require a concerted effort to align educational outcomes with employer expectations, ensuring that the next generation of business leaders is well-prepared to meet the challenges of the global economy (Longmore et al., 2018; Tymon & Mackay, 2016).

2.3 Assessing Curriculum Development Gaps

A critical examination of the curriculum development process in IB education reveals several gaps that hinder the alignment between educational outcomes and the competencies required by the global business environment. These gaps are often rooted in outdated curriculum designs that fail to incorporate the rapidly evolving demands of the industry, leaving graduates inadequately prepared for the challenges they will face in their careers (Husain et al., 2020; Jackson et al., 2016; Mahapatra & Dash, 2021; Vinish et al., 2022)

Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 2010) provides a valuable lens through which to assess these curriculum gaps. This theory posits that educational institutions must consider the needs and expectations of all relevant stakeholders such as students, faculty, employers, and society at large when developing curricula. By failing to engage these stakeholders effectively, curricula may become misaligned with the practical needs of the industry, leading to a disconnect between what is taught and what is required in the workplace (Freeman, 2007). Recent studies highlight the importance of involving industry stakeholders in the curriculum development process to ensure that educational programs remain relevant and responsive to market needs. For instance, collaborative curriculum design, which includes input from industry professionals, has been shown to enhance the employability of graduates by ensuring that the skills taught are directly applicable in professional contexts (Arunachalam et al., 2024; Ferns et al., 2019; Jackson, 2015; O'Regan et al., 2022; Rashdan, 2017). Moreover, the inclusion of industry insights helps to identify emerging trends and competencies that are not yet covered in traditional curricula but are critical for future business leaders (Birchall & Chanaron, 2006; Purg et al., 2018).

One significant gap identified in the current IB curriculum is the lack of emphasis on global competencies and cross-cultural management skills, which are essential for operating in today's interconnected business environment (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016). Despite the global nature of the IB major, many programs still focus predominantly on domestic business practices, neglecting the international perspectives that are crucial for success in the global marketplace (Li et al., 2013). This oversight can be addressed by revising the curriculum to include more comprehensive coverage of IB strategies, cultural intelligence, and global leadership skills, ensuring that graduates are better equipped to navigate the complexities of international business (Chirino-Klevans, 2019; Goodman, 2012; Henson, 2016). Additionally, there is a growing recognition of the need for curricula to be flexible and adaptable, allowing for the integration of new and emerging business trends such as digital transformation, sustainability, and ethical leadership (Cosa & Torelli, 2024; Lin et al., 2021; Nozari, 2023; Philip & Gavrilova Aguilar, 2022; Weber-Lewerenz & Vasiliu-Feltes, 2022). Ngo (2017) highlights the importance of embedding digital literacy in business education, citing a successful pilot program with a scenario-based Digital Literacy Module (DLM) that aligned with industry expectations and enhanced students' competencies. Integrating such elements into the IB curriculum can better prepare students for the challenges and opportunities in the workforce.

Assessing curriculum development gaps through the lens of Stakeholder Theory highlights the importance of aligning educational programs with the evolving needs of the global business environment. By involving industry stakeholders in curriculum design and addressing identified gaps, educational institutions can ensure their programs

produce graduates who are both knowledgeable and equipped with the practical skills needed for success in international business.

2.4 Application of Stakeholder Theory in Curriculum Development

Integrating Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 2007) into curriculum development is essential for creating educational programs that are both relevant and responsive to the demands of the global business environment. This approach involves active engagement with various stakeholders, including industry professionals, alumni, and employers, to ensure that the curriculum aligns with the skills and competencies required in the marketplace. Stakeholder feedback plays a critical role in identifying gaps in the curriculum, particularly where industry-specific skills and knowledge are lacking, enabling targeted improvements that enhance the employability of graduates (Khasawneh, 2024; Okorie et al., 2023; Zanu et al., 2024). However, Human Capital Theory (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961) further supports the integration of stakeholder input by framing education as a strategic investment in human capital. According to this theory, the alignment of educational programs with industry demands maximizes the return on investment for both individuals and society. When curricula are developed with direct input from stakeholders, they are more likely to equip students with the practical skills and knowledge needed to succeed in their careers, thereby enhancing their economic value and contribution to the workforce (Acemoglu & Autor, 2011).

In higher education, Stakeholder Theory emphasizes the importance of creating value through strong, trust-based relationships between educational institutions and their stakeholders, including students, faculty, and external partners (Langrafe et al., 2020). By fostering mutual trust and aligning the interests of all parties involved, educational institutions can enhance the strategic positioning of their programs, ensuring they remain competitive and relevant (Freudenreich et al., 2020; Menghwar & Daood, 2021; Zumente & Bistrova, 2021). Furthermore, Stakeholder Theory advocates for the incorporation of real-world challenges into the curriculum through internships, project-based learning, and other experiential opportunities (Gault et al., 2010). These practical experiences, informed by stakeholder input, are crucial for developing the competencies that students need to meet the demands of the professional world (Freudenreich et al., 2020; Menghwar & Daood, 2021; Ranabahu, 2020; Zumente & Bistrova, 2021). By adopting a stakeholder-oriented approach, educational institutions not only enhance the career readiness of their graduates but also contribute to societal and economic development by producing highly skilled professionals who are equipped to address contemporary challenges. Moreover, Human Capital Theory highlights the broader economic implications of aligning curricula with market needs. When educational programs are designed with a clear focus on developing the human capital necessary for economic growth, they contribute to the overall productivity and competitiveness of the workforce (Becker, 1993). This alignment ensures that graduates are not only prepared for the job market but are also capable of making significant contributions to their industries and the economy as a whole (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961).

In conclusion, the integration of Stakeholder Theory and Human Capital Theory in curriculum development provides a comprehensive framework for creating business education programs that are aligned with industry demands, enhance student readiness for the workforce, and contribute to broader societal and economic goals. Future curriculum development efforts should continue to incorporate stakeholder input and focus on maximizing the return on investment in education, ensuring that graduates are well-prepared to navigate the complexities of the global business landscape.

3. Closing the Curriculum Development Gap and Research Questions

The literature review identified significant gaps in the IB curriculum, particularly in aligning educational outcomes with industry demands and preparing students for the complexities of the global business environment (Johnson & Jordan, 2019; McCord et al., 2015). Addressing these gaps requires a curriculum development process that incorporates stakeholder engagement and practical learning experiences, ensuring that students are well-prepared to meet the demands of the modern workforce. The integration of insights from stakeholders such as industry professionals, alumni, and employers-is critical for aligning the curriculum with the skills and competencies required in the marketplace (Freudenreich et al., 2020; Menghwar & Daood, 2021; Zumente & Bistrova, 2021). By incorporating this feedback, educational institutions can create curricula that better reflect real-world business challenges, thus enhancing the relevance and effectiveness of the educational programs. Practical experiences, such as internships and project-based learning, are essential components of this approach, as they bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and its application in professional settings (Gault et al., 2010; Uddin et al., 2022). Given these curriculum gaps and the need for practical alignment, the primary research question of this study seeks to explore: What differences exist between stakeholder expectations and the curriculum content in International Business

education?

To comprehensively address this question, the study will delve into several specific sub-questions. First, (1) How do stakeholders perceive the practical application and real-world preparedness provided by the IB curriculum? This exploration is critical in understanding whether the curriculum equips students with the practical skills and knowledge necessary for success in the business world, reflecting the growing importance of experiential learning in modern education. Second, (2) To what extent does the IB curriculum offer depth and specialization in key business areas? This sub-question is particularly relevant in assessing whether the curriculum's focus areas align with the specialized skills required in today's dynamic business environment. Finally, (3) How well does the IB curriculum prepare students for specific career paths and job prospects? This investigation will evaluate the alignment between the curriculum and the diverse career opportunities available to graduates, assessing how effectively the program enhances students' employability and readiness for the job market.

This study aims to develop a curriculum that aligns with stakeholder expectations and addresses broader economic challenges, ensuring graduates are well-prepared for the business world. In conclusion, aligning the IB curriculum with stakeholder expectations and global market demands is crucial for closing gaps in business education. Integrating stakeholder insights and focusing on practical learning experiences are key to enhancing the value of business education and ensuring its relevance for successful careers.

4. Methodology and Approach

4.1 Research Design

This study employs a phenomenological qualitative research design to investigate the gaps in curriculum development within the IB major, focusing on how well the curriculum prepares students for industry demands. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for a deep exploration of the lived experiences of participants, providing nuanced insights into how the curriculum aligns with industry demands, which is essential for understanding the complex educational issues at hand (Creswell, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Following the trustworthiness criteria of Decrop (2004), we ensured credibility through data triangulation and member checks, supported transferability with rich, thick descriptions, and achieved dependability by having multiple researchers review and discuss the data. Confirmability was reinforced through reflexivity and memo. These strategies collectively enhanced the rigor and reliability of the study's findings, providing a robust foundation for curriculum development recommendations (Patton, 1999; Soulard et al., 2019).

4.2 Sampling Strategy and Participant Selection

A purposive sampling technique was deliberately chosen to select participants who could provide the most relevant and diverse insights into the curriculum's effectiveness and gaps. This non-probabilistic sampling method aligns with the study's objective of gathering rich, relevant data from individuals most familiar with the IB curriculum (Palinkas et al., 2015).The selection process focused on achieving a balance between gender, academic year, and professional status (current students, alumni, and industry experts), ensuring a broad representation of perspectives. This demographic diversity was crucial for capturing the full spectrum of experiences related to curriculum gaps. In total, twenty-six participants (N=26) were selected, comprising fourteen current students, eight alumni, and four industry experts (Appendix A, Table A1, and Figure A1). The participants were evenly distributed across gender and academic years, providing a balanced and comprehensive view of the curriculum's strengths and weaknesses.

4.3 Data Collection Procedures

Data for this study were collected through semi-structured interviews, a method particularly effective for exploring complex issues and obtaining detailed qualitative insights (Creswell, 2018). The interview guide, developed based on existing literature included both pre-determined questions and space for follow-up inquiries (Kvale, 2009). This approach allowed for flexibility in exploring new themes as they emerged during discussions, thereby enriching the data collected. The interviews were conducted in February and March 2024 over four separate sessions using the Zoom online platform, chosen for its convenience and ability to facilitate participation from individuals in different geographical locations. Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes, allowing ample time for participants to articulate their experiences and opinions. To enhance the richness of the data and ensure accurate communication, the interviews were conducted in either Thai or English, depending on the participant's preference. To maintain data equivalence across the bilingual interviews, we employed professional translators for back-translation of the interview transcripts, ensuring that nuanced meanings in participants' responses were preserved across languages (Brislin, 1970; Creswell, 2018).

4.4 Data Analysis of Qualitative Methodology

The data collected from the interviews were analyzed using a rigorous thematic analysis following the procedures outlined by Braun & Clarke (2006); Clarke & Braun (2017). Thematic analysis was chosen for its ability to systematically identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes within qualitative data, making it particularly suitable for exploring complex multifaceted issues in the curriculum of the IB program. The analysis was conducted in several stages, beginning with the research team transcribing all interviews verbatim. The transcripts were read multiple times to ensure a deep understanding of the content, with researchers familiarizing themselves with the data by also listening to the original recordings to capture tone, emphasis, and context—critical elements in qualitative research.

The coding process employed both inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive coding allowed themes to naturally emerge from the data, while deductive coding focused on identifying themes related to predefined research questions (Blair, 2015; Byrne & David, 2022). Following the initial coding, the research team grouped the codes into potential themes, examining how different codes combined to form overarching themes that addressed the research questions. To ensure reliability, two independent researchers coded the data separately and then compared and discussed their findings until consensus was reached. The analysis identified four major themes and fifteen sub-themes (Appendix B, Figure B1), reflecting key patterns in the curriculum while considering broader societal contexts and economic challenges. Stakeholder engagement emerged as crucial for aligning educational outcomes with diverse needs, including real-world applications for industry professionals.

To validate the analysis, peer debriefing sessions were conducted with external experts in qualitative research to review the coding process and the emerging themes (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Additionally, participant quotes were incorporated as supporting evidence, with codes assigned to each quote to ensure accuracy. These codes were distinguished by assigning participant identifiers (e.g., A1, B3, C2) to each quote (Creswell, 2018; Khoa et al., 2023). The final phase involved defining and naming the themes in a way that clearly conveyed their essence, followed by writing detailed descriptions that related each theme to the overall research questions. This structured approach enabled a comprehensive exploration of student and alumni experiences and expectations, offering insights into the transition from classroom learning to professional practice (Connelly et al., 2023; Donald et al., 2018; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019; Watkins et al., 2024). The analysis (Appendix B, Table B1 – B4) provided a solid foundation for making targeted recommendations to educational institutions aimed at curriculum enhancement.

5. Finding and Discussion

This section provides an integrated analysis of qualitative data from interviews with students, alumni, and industry experts, organized around the research questions to assess the IB curriculum's effectiveness in preparing students for the global business environment. The findings are categorized into four primary themes: practical application and work preparedness, curriculum depth and specialization, career readiness, and the importance of sustainability and ethics. Each theme is explored in detail, identifying both strengths and areas for improvement to better align with industry needs. By integrating these findings with existing literature, the discussion addresses the research questions and offers actionable recommendations for enhancing the curriculum (Appendix C, Table C1). This approach ensures that graduates are equipped with the necessary skills, specialized knowledge, and ethical awareness to navigate the complexities of the modern business world.

5.1 Theme 1: Practical Application and Real-World Preparedness

The effectiveness of the IB curriculum in preparing students for real-world business environments was a significant concern among participants. A considerable number of them, including both students and industry experts, emphasized the need for more timely and effective practical experiences, particularly in relation to the integration of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and digital tools. For example, 3rd year student expressed frustration with the curriculum's focus on theory over practice, stating, "*Some courses like Management Science focus more on theoretical aspects. I don't know how to apply them in real life.*" (Student, Speaker C1). This sentiment was echoed by other students, alumni, and industry experts who felt that while the curriculum includes practical elements, these are often introduced too late in the program to be fully effective.

The timing of practical applications within the curriculum was a recurring issue. Participants highlighted that practical experiences should be integrated earlier in the course structure to ensure that students have sufficient time to develop and refine their skills before entering the workforce. This aligns with Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, which posits that learning is most effective when students can apply theoretical concepts in real-world

scenarios (Kolb, 1984). Delaying practical applications until later in the program may reduce their effectiveness, as students might not have enough opportunities to practice and refine these skills throughout their studies. Moreover, many participants, suggested that a mix of traditional lectures with more interactive, hands-on methods would better prepare them for the complexities of the business world. An alumnus reflected on their experience, noting, "*The lectures are informative, but we need more interactive sessions where we can apply what we learn directly to case studies or projects. That's when the real learning happens.*" (Alumni, Speaker A2). This call for a varied approach to teaching is supported by educational theories that emphasize the value of combining theoretical knowledge with practical, hands-on learning experiences to enhance students' readiness for real-world challenges (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

In addition to integrating emerging technologies, participants emphasized the need for practical experiences that develop foundational business skills. One third-year student expressed this need, stating, "*We learn a lot of theories, but applying them in real-life situations feels lacking."* (Student, Speaker C3). This sentiment was echoed by an alumnus who noted, "*The curriculum provides a good foundation, but we need more opportunities to practice what we learn in different business contexts.*" (Alumni, Speaker A6). These insights align with Kolb (1984) Experiential Learning Theory, which highlights the importance of learning through experience in developing these foundational skills.

Biggs & Tang (2011) also emphasize the value of active, experiential learning approaches in higher education, supporting the need for practical, hands-on activities that allow students to apply core business concepts across various functions. Additionally, Lan (2021) highlights that internships and similar practical experiences significantly enhance students' job marketability by enabling them to apply their knowledge in real-world settings. While traditional lecture-based teaching is valuable for conveying theoretical knowledge, it may not be sufficient to fully prepare students for the dynamic and practical nature of the business environment. Incorporating more interactive sessions, such as case studies, simulations, and projects, could enhance students' ability to apply their knowledge in real-world situations, thereby improving their overall preparedness for their careers (Donald et al., 2018; Silva & Mesquita, 2019).

Another critical aspect highlighted by participants was the gap between the curriculum and workplace demands. While the IB curriculum provides a strong theoretical foundation, it lacks in equipping students with the practical skills needed for their careers. As one alumnus noted, "*When I started my job, I realized that the theories we learned were just the tip of the iceberg. The real challenge was in applying those theories in a fast-paced, practical environment.*" (Alumni, Speaker A8). This gap between academic training and workplace expectations is a well-known issue in business education. Johnson & Jordan (2019) argue that a theory-heavy curriculum can leave graduates unprepared for the practical demands of the modern business environment. Participant feedback supports this, indicating the need for the IB program to better integrate career-focused skills and practical applications.

Additionally, the integration of emerging technologies, particularly AI and digital tools, was emphasized by several participants, including industry experts. One expert remarked, "*The ability to apply AI and digital tools in practical settings is becoming essential for business graduates. Students must not only understand these technologies but also know how to implement them effectively in real-world business scenarios.*" (Industry Expert, Speaker E1). The emphasis on emerging technologies reflects the growing importance of digital literacy in business. Integrating these technologies into the curriculum is crucial for preparing students to navigate modern business environments, where digital tools are central to operations and strategy. This is supported by Ngo et al. (2017), who highlight that digital literacy is becoming a critical competency for business graduates.

In summary, this theme highlights the need for the IB curriculum to enhance its focus on practical application, interactive teaching methods, and the integration of emerging technologies. Addressing these areas will better prepare students for the demands of their future careers, particularly within the rapidly evolving digital landscape. This discussion directly addresses RQ1: How do stakeholders perceive the practical application and real-world preparedness provided by the IB curriculum? The findings suggest that while the current curriculum has strengths, particularly in its theoretical foundation, there is a clear need for more effective practical applications to ensure students are adequately prepared for real-world business challenges.

5.2 Theme 2: Depth and Specialization of Curriculum

Participants consistently expressed concerns that the IB curriculum lacks sufficient depth and specialization, limiting students' ability to acquire the specific competencies needed in the global business environment. An alumna pointed out, "*IB courses do not delve sufficiently deep in comparison to other disciplines, particularly in a corporate setting where specific competencies are imperative.*" (Alumni, Speaker A7). This reflects a critical gap in the curriculum:

while it provides a broad foundational knowledge, it does not equip students with the specialized expertise necessary for addressing complex, industry-specific challenges.

The necessity for specialized tracks is further supported by the literature, which emphasizes that tailored curriculum enhancements aligned with industry demands can significantly improve students' employability (Borah et al., 2021). For example, there is a significant need for specialized pathways in areas such as supply chain management, international logistics, and sustainability. A graduate remarked, "*I had to grasp numerous practical aspects of global logistics while working because the coursework covered the basics of management.*" (Alumni, Speaker A4). This feedback highlights the importance of providing targeted training that bridges the gap between theory and practice and equips students with the specialized skills relevant to their chosen fields.

Furthermore, managing people in diverse cultural settings was identified as another critical area requiring more depth in the curriculum. A third-year student noted, "*Understanding how to manage people across different cultures is vital, especially as businesses continue to globalize.*" (Student, Speaker C3). This aligns with the growing demand for cross-cultural management skills in the global business environment (Bird & Mendenhall, 2016). Specialized courses in managing people within diverse cultural contexts would better prepare students to navigate complex, multicultural organizational settings. Another alumnus stated, "*We need more focus on people management skills that are relevant across different countries and cultures.*" (Alumni, Speaker A5), reinforcing the need for deeper coverage in these areas to enhance career readiness (Hruby et al., 2020).

The integration of sustainability into these pathways would not only align with industry expectations but also prepare students to contribute to global sustainability efforts. Courses in sustainable logistics management, for example, could equip students with the tools to implement environmentally responsible practices within the supply chain, meeting both industry needs and sustainability goals (Mendoza et al., 2023). This approach would significantly enhance the curriculum's relevance by increasing students' skills and knowledge, making them more competitive in the global marketplace. Participants also stressed the importance of integrating emerging business trends, such as digital transformation, into the curriculum to maintain its relevance. One student commented, "*Our courses should include more about digital transformation and global business practices to keep up with current industry trends.*" (Student, Speaker C2). This need for curricular updates is supported by Mendoza et al. (2023), who emphasize that business education must continuously evolve to incorporate contemporary issues and trends. Without sufficient depth in core subjects, the curriculum risks misalignment with the complex needs of the business world, potentially leaving students unprepared for specialized roles that require advanced knowledge and skills. Enhancing the curriculum by adding more in-depth courses and specialized tracks would address these gaps and better align with industry expectations, thereby improving graduates' employability and career prospects (Mahapatra & Dash, 2021).

The findings for Theme 2 clearly indicate that the IB curriculum provides a broad foundation but lacks the depth and specialization necessary to fully prepare students for specific career paths. This directly answers RQ2 by highlighting the extent to which the current curriculum falls short in offering the necessary specialization in key business areas. To address these gaps, the curriculum must incorporate more thorough coverage of fundamental subjects, specialized pathways, and integration of emerging business trends. By aligning the curriculum more closely with industry needs, as supported by Borah et al. (2021) and Mendoza et al. (2023), the IB program can better prepare students for the challenges of the modern business landscape

5.3 Theme 3: Career Readiness and Job Prospects

The alignment between the IB curriculum and job market demands emerged as a critical area of concern among participants, with many expressing doubts about whether the curriculum fully prepares them for specific career paths. This concern is particularly pronounced in the context of specialized skills, such as those required in digital transformation and AI-driven industries. A fourth-year student reflected on this gap, stating, "*While we get a good foundation, I'm worried that the curriculum doesn't go far enough in preparing us for the specific challenges we'll face challenging in our careers, especially with all the new technologies coming into our life.*" (Student, Speaker D4). This sentiment was echoed by alumni, one of them noted, "*The IB program gave me a broad understanding, but when I entered the workforce, I realized that I needed more specialized knowledge for my work such as Microsoft excel spreadsheet, particularly in the areas of data analytics and digital marketing.*" (Alumni, Speaker A8). This gap between the curriculum's general focus and the specialized skills required in the modern job market not only highlights a key issue in Theme 1 but also sets the stage for a deeper exploration of specialized pathways discussed in Theme 2. This broader trend in business education highlights the need for curricula that go beyond foundational knowledge, ensuring that graduates are equipped with the targeted skills that employers demand in today's rapidly evolving marketplace. As Brynjolfsson and McAfee (2014) argue, the rapid pace of technological advancement has

transformed the skills landscape, making specialized knowledge in areas like AI and digital tools increasingly essential. If the IB curriculum does not evolve to include these specialized skills, students may find themselves at a disadvantage in the competitive job market, despite having a strong foundational education (Christiansen & Even, 2024).

Internships and co-op programs emerged as crucial for bridging the gap between education and career readiness. Participants emphasized the need for these opportunities to align more closely with their career goals and the specific skills they need. A fourth-year student remarked, "*Internships are great, but they need to be more tailored to what we want to do in our future careers. Sometimes the assignments are too general and don't help us gain the specialized skills we need.*" (Student, Speaker D4). This feedback reflects employer expectations for graduates to possess relevant and specialized skills (Borah et al., 2021). Gault et al. (2010) argue that internships must align with industry demands to enhance students' employability effectively. Without this alignment, internships risk becoming mere formalities rather than transformative learning experiences.

Career services were also highlighted as needing improvement. Participants noted the necessity for more targeted career guidance, especially in navigating specialized fields like digital marketing, global supply chain management, and AI-driven industries. A third-year student observed, "*Career services are helpful, but they need to focus more on specific industries and roles that align with our studies. Right now, it feels a bit too general.*" (Student, Speaker C3). Jackson (2013) supports this view, stressing that career services must be tailored to students in specialized programs to help them identify and pursue relevant career opportunities.

The need for curriculum alignment with emerging job roles was frequently mentioned, especially in sectors driven by digital transformation and technological innovation. Students have expressed concerns that the current curriculum does not adequately prepare them for evolving roles in the modern workforce. As one second-year student commented, "*We are learning a lot about traditional business practices, but there should be more emphasis on current trends and in-demand skills like digital transformation and data analytics.*" (Student, Speaker B2). Similarly, a final-year student remarked, "*The job market is changing fast with new technology like AI. The curriculum feels outdated in some areas, and we need more focus on these emerging roles to stay competitive.*" (Student, Speaker D5). These concerns are echoed by industry professionals, with one expert stating, "*The job market is changing quickly with the rise of AI and digital tools. The curriculum needs to keep up to ensure students are ready for the jobs of tomorrow.*" (Industry Expert, Speaker E3). Aoun Joseph (2017) supports this view, arguing that educational programs must be dynamic and responsive to industry changes, particularly in rapidly evolving fields. Without incorporating these emerging trends, the IB curriculum risks leaving graduates ill-prepared for the challenges of the modern workforce.

In conclusion, the findings from Theme 3 highlight the need for the IB curriculum to evolve beyond providing a strong foundational education to include specialized training, tailored internships, and targeted career services that align more closely with the demands of the modern job market. While the program's broad base of knowledge is a strength, it must be complemented by deeper, industry-specific learning opportunities. This will enhance students' career readiness and ensure they remain competitive in a rapidly changing business environment, effectively answering RQ3: How well does the IB curriculum prepare students for specific career paths and job prospects? The evidence suggests that while the foundation is solid, there is a clear need for targeted improvements to meet today's specialized job market demands.

5.4 Theme 4: Importance of Sustainability and Ethical Considerations

As the global business environment increasingly prioritizes sustainability and ethical practices, it has become imperative for IB programs to fully integrate these elements into their curricula. This need is not just theoretical; it is driven by the demands of employers and the expectations of society at large. Participants in this study ranging from students to industry experts consistently emphasized that while sustainability and ethics are acknowledged in the curriculum, they are often treated as peripheral topics rather than as central tenets of modern business education.

The integration of sustainability and ethical considerations into the curriculum was seen as crucial by stakeholders. While these topics are included, there was also a call for more in-depth and practical approaches to these subjects. A student expressed, "*Sustainability is crucial for the future and it's continually evolving.*" (Alumni Speakers and Student Speaker D4). This indicates a need for the curriculum to not only cover these topics more extensively but also to provide practical applications and case studies to prepare students for the ethical challenges in their future careers. Ferrer-Estévez & Chalmeta (2021) emphasize the importance of integrating sustainable development goals into educational institutions to prepare students for the global business environment. Furthermore, an industry expert highlighted this issue, stating, "*Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; it's a critical component of business*

strategy. Graduates need to be equipped not only with the knowledge of sustainable practices but also with the ability to implement them in real-world scenarios." (Industry Expert, Speaker E4). This reflects a broader trend in business education, where sustainability is increasingly seen as essential to long-term corporate success and resilience. This trend highlights the broader need, highlighted in Theme 1, for practical, experiential learning that bridges theory and practice. Furthermore, as discussed in Theme 2, integrating sustainability into specialized tracks enhances the curriculum's relevance, preparing students to meet modern business challenges effectively. However, as noted by a fourth-year student, "*We talk about sustainability and ethics in class, but I feel like we don't go deep enough into how these concepts apply in real business decisions.*" (Student, Speaker D6). This comment highlights a significant gap between theoretical discussions and the practical application of these concepts, a gap that the current IB curriculum has yet to bridge effectively.

The importance of addressing this gap is well-supported by the literature. According to Benn et al. (2023), embedding sustainability into the core of business education is crucial for developing future leaders who are capable of driving sustainable growth and responsible business practices. This aligns with the principles of Stakeholder Theory, which posits that businesses have a responsibility to consider the interests of all stakeholders, including society and the environment (Freeman, 2010). Stakeholder Theory not only supports the ethical dimension of sustainability but also emphasizes its strategic importance in creating long-term value for businesses. Moreover, the integration of sustainability and ethical considerations into the curriculum is vital for aligning education with the evolving demands of employers. Ghoshal (2005) argues that business schools have a moral responsibility to produce graduates who are not only technically competent but also ethically grounded and socially responsible. This is particularly relevant in the context of Human Capital Theory, which suggests that education is an investment in the skills and competencies that contribute to economic growth and societal well-being (Becker, 1993; Schultz, 1961). As the demand for sustainable and ethical business practices continues to grow, the need for education that equips students to meet these challenges becomes increasingly urgent.

Participants also expressed a desire for more practical applications of sustainability and ethics within the curriculum. For example, a third-year student stated, "*It's not enough to know what sustainability is; we need to learn how to apply it in different business scenarios, especially when facing real-world pressures and constraints.*" (Student, Speaker C8). This call for action echoes Kolb (1984), Experiential Learning Theory, which emphasizes the importance of learning through experience. Kolb (1984) argues that true understanding comes from engaging with real-world challenges, suggesting that IB programs must go beyond classroom discussions to include case studies, simulations, and projects that allow students to apply ethical and sustainable practices in realistic business contexts. The gap between current curriculum offerings and the practical application of sustainability and ethics represents a critical area for improvement. Addressing this gap is not just a matter of enhancing the curriculum; it is essential for preparing graduates who can navigate the complex ethical landscapes of global business. By integrating more experiential learning opportunities focused on sustainability and ethics, IB programs can ensure that their graduates are not only well-versed in these areas but also capable of implementing them in ways that drive real business value.

6. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of the International Business (IB) curriculum's effectiveness in preparing students for the demands of a competitive global job market. The findings disclose significant gaps in practical application, career readiness, and specialization in emerging business areas such as digital transformation, sustainability, and ethical business practices. While the curriculum offers a robust theoretical foundation, it requires early and frequent integration of experiential learning opportunities, including internships, simulations, and project-based assignments. This practical focus is essential to foster career-ready graduates capable of navigating today's rapidly changing business environment.

The research contributes to educational theory by expanding Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory, emphasizing the importance of continuous practical learning for student engagement and knowledge retention. Stakeholder Theory is applied by demonstrating the alignment of educational outcomes with the expectations of stakeholders—including students, employers, and broader society. Human Capital Theory is reinforced by illustrating the economic advantages of curricula aligned with labor market demands, thereby improving graduates' career prospects and supporting sustainable economic growth.

Furthermore, this study supports the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4: Quality Education and SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth. By advocating for curriculum reforms that align education with labor market needs, it emphasizes both high-quality education and long-term employability.

While offering valuable insights, the study acknowledges its limitations. The geographical context may limit the broader applicability of findings. Furthermore, the reliance on qualitative data, though rich, may benefit from complementary quantitative analysis to strengthen validation. Future research could explore the long-term impacts of the recommended reforms through longitudinal studies and investigate how emerging trends such as AI and digital transformation are integrated into business education globally. These findings lay the groundwork for continuous innovation in business education, ensuring graduates are equipped to thrive in evolving professional landscapes.

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Appendix A

The demographics of study participants: International Business students and alumni, categorized by year of study and alumni status, including the industry experts.

Table A1. The Participants' Demographic Data

| No.	Participant Code	Gender	Status (as of Interview Date)	Affiliation/Role
1	A1	Male	Alumni	International Business
2	A2	Female	Alumni	International Business
3	A3	Female	Alumni	International Business
4	A4	Male	Alumni	International Business
5	A5	Female	Alumni	International Business
6	A6	Male	Alumni	International Business
7	A7	Male	Alumni	International Business
8	A8	Female	Alumni	International Business
9	B1	Female	Student Year 2	International Business
10	B2	Female	Student Year 2	International Business
11	B3	Male	Student Year 2	International Business
12	B4	Female	Student Year 2	International Business
13	B5	Female	Student Year 2	International Business
14	C1	Female	Student Year 3	International Business
15	C2	Female	Student Year 3	International Business
16	C3	Female	Student Year 3	International Business
17	C4	Female	Student Year 3	International Business
18	C5	Female	Student Year 4	International Business
19	D1	Male	Student Year 4	International Business
20	D2	Female	Student Year 4	International Business
21	D3	Female	Student Year 4	International Business
22	D4	Female	Student Year 4	International Business
23	E1	Male	Industry Expert	International Business
24	E2	Female	Industry Expert	International Business
25	E3	Female	Industry Expert	International Business
26	E4	Male	Industry Expert	International Business
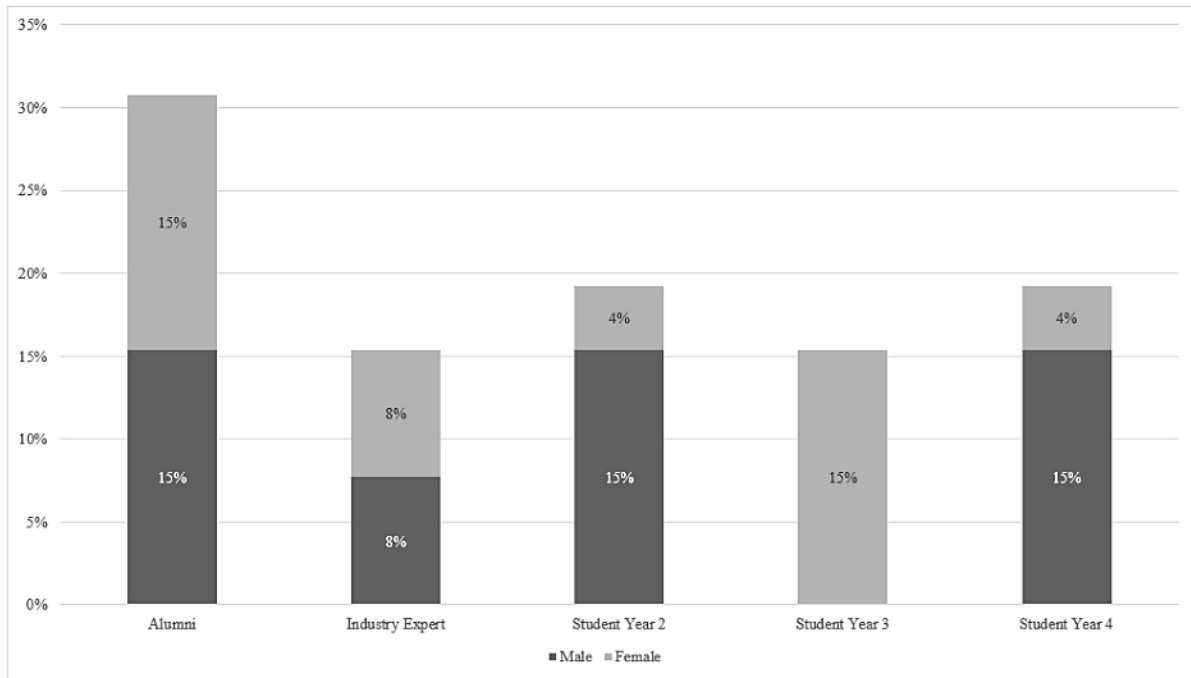
Figure A1. Demographic Breakdown of Participants by Gender and Stakeholder Group

Appendix B

The figures of the hierarchical structure and frequency of the main themes and sub-themes identified in the study. And the examples of raw data quotes, categorized under empirical themes and sub-themes, with frequency and conceptual insights. Each theme and sub-theme address the main research question and sub-research questions in this study.
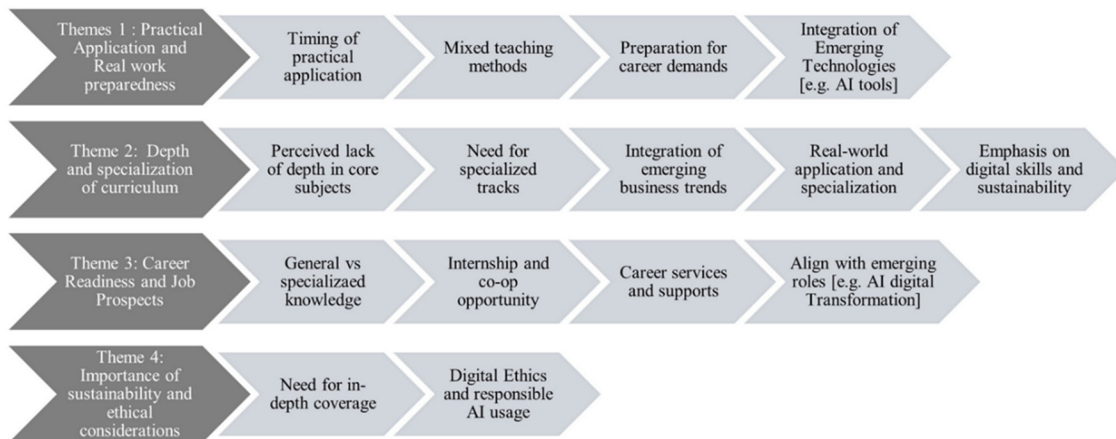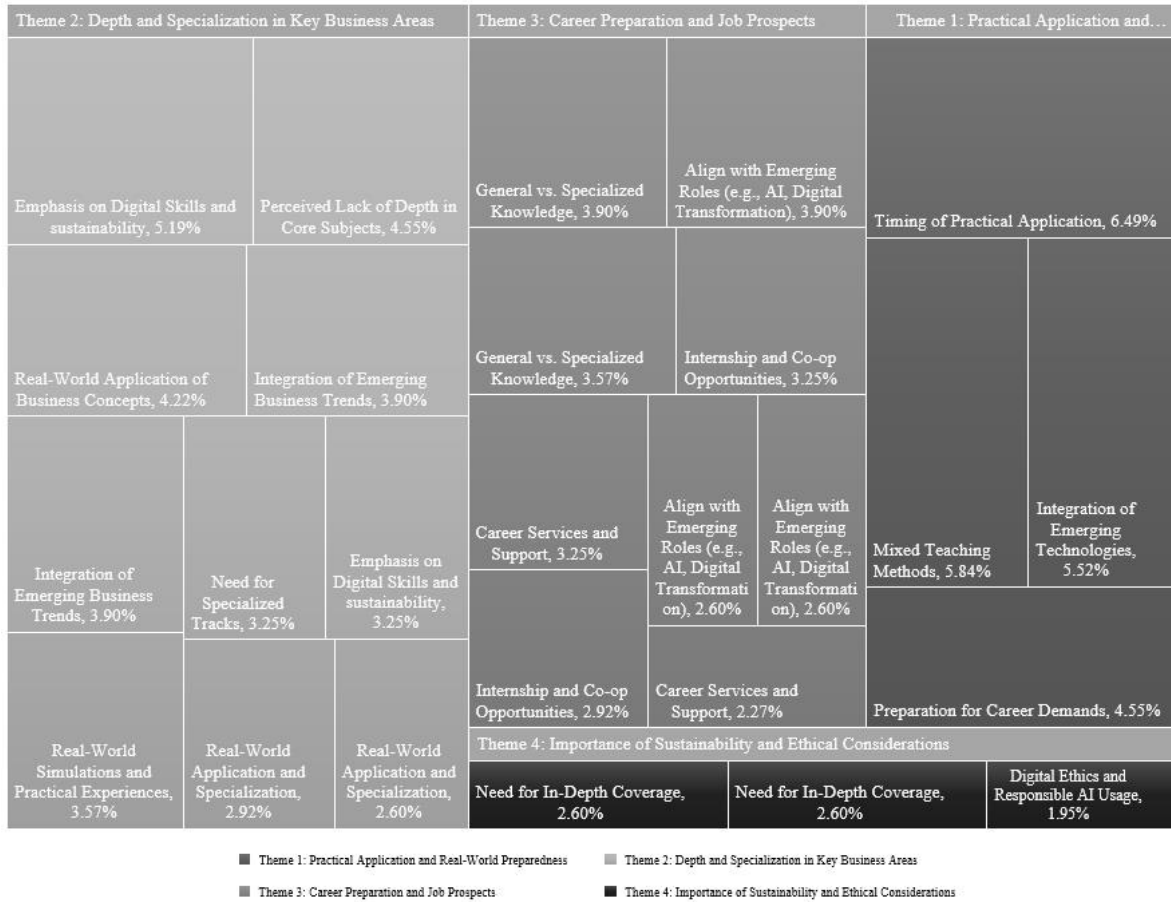

Figure B1. The Structure of Themes and Sub-themes

Figure B2. Structure and Frequency of Emerging Themes and Sub-Themes in Curriculum Evaluation Findings

Table B1. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 1 - Practical Application and Real-World Preparedness

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data - Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 1: Practical Application and Real-World Preparedness	Timing of Practical Application	"In the first two years I wasn't very serious, but it became serious in year 3 because of the general education component" (Alumni, Speaker A1)	15	Early integration of practical experiences is crucial to maintain student engagement and focus throughout the curriculum.	Sub-Research Question 1
	Mixed Teaching Methods	"I prefer a mix of lectures and practical work such as applying theories to case studies" (Student, Speaker B5)	20	A blend of theoretical and practical learning enhances understanding and retention, making education more holistic and effective.	Sub-Research Question 1
	Preparation for Career Demands	"Now managing imports, I know all the practical details from initial contacts to final processes but there's a lot I had to learn on the job" (Alumni, Speaker A5)	18	Job readiness and practical skills training are essential for transitioning smoothly from education to the workplace.	Sub-Research Question 1
	Integration of Emerging Technologies	"The program should integrate more technology-focused learning, as the business world is increasingly reliant on digital tools" (Industry Expert, Speaker E3)	14	Integrating technology into the curriculum ensures students are prepared for the digital aspects of modern business.	Sub-Research Question 1

Table B2. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 2 - Depth and Specialization in Key Business Areas

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data – Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 2: Depth and Specialization in Key Business Areas	Perceived Lack of Depth in Core Subjects	"IB courses don't delve deep enough compared to other majors especially in a corporate context where specific skills are required" (Alumni, Speaker A7)	17	In-depth coverage of key subjects is necessary to prepare students for specialized roles within the industry.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Need for Specialized Tracks	"The broad scope of the IB program is beneficial, but it falls short in preparing us for specific career paths. Specialized tracks would help us gain the in-depth knowledge we need" (Student, Speaker D1)	14	Specialized tracks within the curriculum can provide the necessary in-depth knowledge for specific career paths.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Integration of Emerging Business Trends	"Our courses should include more about digital transformation and global business practices to keep up with current industry trends" (Student, Speaker C2)	10	Incorporating current industry trends into the curriculum ensures its relevance and applicability in the modern business environment.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Integration of Emerging Business Trends	"As an industry expert, I've noticed that the new generation entering the workforce is not always equipped with the necessary skills to adapt quickly to industry needs, particularly in the areas of sustainability and digital literacy" (Industry Expert, Speaker E3)	12	Addressing emerging trends like sustainability and digital literacy ensures students are better prepared for future challenges.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Real-World Simulations and Practical Experiences	"They provided us with a simulation to use and we tried selling products as if it were real life" (Student, Speaker C3)	12	Real-world simulations bridge the gap between theory and practice, providing relevant and practical learning experiences.	Sub-Research Question 1
	Real-World Application of Business Concepts	"Our projects often involved real companies, which helped me understand how business theories apply in practice" (Student, Speaker C1)	11	Applying business concepts to real-world scenarios enhances students' ability to translate theoretical knowledge into practice.	Sub-Research Question 1

Table B2. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 2 - Depth and Specialization in Key Business Areas (cont.)

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data – Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 2: Depth and Specialization in Key Business Areas	Real-World Application and Specialization	"I had to learn a lot of practical details about international logistics on the job because the coursework was too general" (Alumni, Speaker A4)	13	Practical training in specialized areas is crucial for career readiness and application of knowledge in real-world scenarios.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Real-World Application and Specialization	"Adding specialized courses in sustainable logistics and people management would significantly enhance the relevance of the IB curriculum" (Industry Expert, Speaker E1)	9	Specialized courses focusing on areas like sustainability and people management align the curriculum with current industry needs.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Emphasis on Digital Skills and sustainability	"Graduates need to be prepared to work in environments where digital literacy is as important as traditional business skills" (Industry Expert, Speaker E2)	8	Digital literacy is becoming increasingly crucial, and the curriculum must reflect this to enhance employability.	Sub-Research Question 2
	Emphasis on Digital Skills and sustainability	"Sustainability should be a core component of every business course; it's not just a trend but a necessity for future business leaders" (Industry Expert, Speaker E4)	10	Integrating sustainability deeply into the curriculum is essential for preparing students for future leadership roles in a global economy.	Sub-Research Question 2

Table B3. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 3 - Career Preparation and Job Prospects

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data – Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 3: Career Preparation and Job Prospects	General vs. Specialized Knowledge	"We've studied a wide range of topics, making it difficult to apply for specific positions" (Student, Speaker D4)	16	A balance between general and specialized knowledge is essential for preparing students for specific career paths.	Sub-Research Question 3
	General vs. Specialized Knowledge	"The broad education we receive is good, but it doesn't prepare us well for specific roles in the industry" (Industry Expert, Speaker E7)	12	Industry feedback highlights the need for more specialized training to meet job market demands.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Internship and Co-op Opportunities	"Internships provided me with a real-world perspective that was missing in the classroom" (Student, Speaker C5)	11	Hands-on experience through internships and co-op opportunities is critical for career readiness.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Internship and Co-op Opportunities	"Internships should be aligned with industry needs to make sure students are gaining the skills that employers are looking for" (Industry Expert, Speaker E5)	10	Aligning internships with industry expectations ensures that students gain relevant skills and increase their employability.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Career Services and Support	"Career counseling and job placement services could be more proactive in helping us find relevant opportunities" (Alumni, Speaker A7)	9	Enhanced career services and support are vital for assisting students in navigating the job market and securing relevant opportunities.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Career Services and Support	"The job market is competitive, and students need more guidance and support to understand where they can apply their skills" (Industry Expert, Speaker E6)	7	Strengthening career services to provide targeted guidance can help students effectively transition into the job market.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Align with Emerging Roles (e.g., AI, Digital Transformation)	"Our courses should include more about digital transformation and global business practices to keep up with current industry trends" (Student, Speaker C2)	10	Incorporating current industry trends into the curriculum ensures its relevance and applicability in the modern business environment.	Sub-Research Question 3

Table B3. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 3 - Career Preparation and Job Prospects (cont.)

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data –Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 3: Career Preparation and Job Prospects	Align with Emerging Roles (e.g., AI, Digital Transformation)	"The job market is changing quickly, especially with the rise of AI and digital tools. The curriculum needs to keep up with these changes to ensure students are ready for the jobs of tomorrow" (Industry Expert, Speaker E3)	12	The curriculum must evolve to include emerging technologies like AI and digital transformation to prepare students for future job roles.	Sub-Research Question 3
	Align with Emerging Roles (e.g., AI, Digital Transformation)	"Graduates need to be prepared to work in environments where digital literacy is as important as traditional business skills" (Industry Expert, Speaker E2)	8	Digital literacy is becoming increasingly crucial, and the curriculum must reflect this to enhance employability.	Sub-Research Question 3

Table B4. Examples of Data Structure: Theme 4 - Importance of Sustainability and Ethical Considerations

Theme	Sub-Theme	Raw Data – Example of Quotes	Frequency	Conceptual	Addresses
Theme 4: Importance of Sustainability and Ethical Considerations	Need for In-Depth Coverage	"Sustainability is crucial for the future and it's continually evolving" (Alumni, Speakers A4; and Student, Speaker D4)	8	Incorporating sustainability and ethics extensively prepares students for contemporary business challenges.	Main Research Question
	Need for In-Depth Coverage	"Sustainability is no longer just a buzzword; it's a critical component of business strategy. Graduates need to be equipped not only with the knowledge of sustainable practices but also with the ability to implement them in real-world scenarios" (Industry Expert, Speaker E4)	8	Ensuring that graduates are proficient in sustainability practices is essential for their success in the global business environment.	Main Research Question
	Digital Ethics and Responsible AI Usage	"Understanding the theory is one thing, but knowing how to navigate ethical dilemmas in a global context is what we really need to focus on" (Student, Speaker C7)	8	Ethical considerations in global business contexts are critical for preparing students to make responsible decisions in the international marketplace.	Main Research Question
	Digital Ethics and Responsible AI Usage	"As AI becomes more integrated into business, it's vital that students learn to use these tools responsibly and ethically" (Industry Expert, Speaker E2)	6	Teaching students to navigate ethical challenges in the use of AI and digital tools is key to ensuring they make responsible decisions in their careers.	Main Research Question

Table C1. Summary of Key Findings and Implications from Curriculum Evaluation Interviews

Theme	Finding	Supporting Evidence	Implications
Theme 1: Practical Application and Real-World Preparedness	Practical experiences are introduced too late in the curriculum. Simulations and internships need earlier integration to better align with job preparation needs.	"Some courses like Management Science focus more on theoretical aspects. I don't know how to apply them." (Student, Speaker C1)	Early integration of internships and simulations can improve students' preparedness for real-world business challenges.
	Need for more interactive and hands-on methods	"The lectures are informative, but we need more interactive sessions where we can apply what we learn directly." (Alumni, Speaker A2)	Combining theoretical and practical learning approaches can enhance engagement and knowledge application.
	Importance of digital tools and AI integration	"The ability to apply AI and digital tools is essential for business graduates. Students must know how to implement them effectively." (Industry Expert, Speaker E1)	Integrating emerging technologies equips students to meet modern business demands.
Theme 2: Depth and Specialization	Insufficient specialization in areas like digital transformation, cross-cultural management, and sustainability.	"We need specialized tracks to prepare for industries like tech or sustainability." (Alumni, Speaker A7)	Creating specialized tracks enhances skills and career readiness for key industry roles.
	Need for clearer pathways to specialization	"It's hard to know which courses help with a specific career path. More clarity is needed." (Student, Speaker C2)	Tailored academic tracks provide students with a roadmap for their career development.
Theme 3: Career Readiness and Job Prospects	Theoretical foundation not fully aligned with evolving job roles	"Employers are looking for more than theory—they want practical experience." (Industry Expert, Speaker E5)	Strengthening internships and real-world projects improves job placement and graduate success.
	Career services lack tailored support for emerging roles	"The career office needs to provide more industry-specific guidance." (Student, Speaker D4)	Industry collaboration can enhance tailored career services and networking opportunities.
Theme 4: Importance of Sustainability and Ethics	Sustainability and ethics are present but lack integration in practical projects.	"We hear about sustainability but rarely get projects focused on it." (Student, Speaker D6)	Embedding sustainability into coursework prepares students for leadership roles in responsible business practices.
	Greater focus on real-world ethical challenges	"Ethics should be taught with actual business cases." (Industry Expert, Speaker E4)	Case-based learning helps students understand the complexity of ethical decision-making in business.

Authors contributions

Dr. Wallapa Suengkamolpisut was responsible for the study design, manuscript drafting, methodology development, and data analysis. Ms. Thipsukhon Chuensodsai contributed to data collection, data presentation in the findings section, manuscript revision, and ensuring adherence to the journal's formatting guidelines. Additionally, she served as the corresponding author. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have influenced the findings or conclusions of this study.

Informed consent

Obtained.

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The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

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The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.