

Digital Transformation in Human Resource Development in Malaysia: Emerging Trends and Strategic Implications

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Abstract: The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly reshaped the landscape of human resource development (HRD) in Malaysia. Despite increased digital adoption across sectors, many organizations continue to face challenges in aligning workforce competencies with digital transformation initiatives. This concept paper addresses the gap by exploring current trends, challenges, and strategic approaches in digitalizing HRD practices within the Malaysian context. The primary objective is to examine how digital tools and platforms are conceptually integrated into core HRD functions, such as training, performance management, and talent development, and to evaluate their theoretical effectiveness in enhancing organizational capabilities. Adopting a concept paper methodology, this study relies on an extensive review and synthesis of existing literature, policy documents, and recent industry reports related to HRD and digital transformation. Through theoretical analysis, the article outlines a strategic framework for digital HRD implementation, identifies critical success factors, and discusses conceptual barriers such as digital skill gaps, resistance to change, and disparities in digital infrastructure across organizations. The article contributes to the field by proposing a holistic framework for digital HRD strategy formulation and implementation. It provides actionable insights and policy considerations for HR leaders, educators, and government agencies to strengthen Malaysia's readiness for a digitally driven economy.

Keywords: Human resource development (HRD), Digital transformation, Malaysia, Workforce competency, Talent management

1. Introduction

Like many other countries, Malaysia is not exception; the fast development of digital technology has fundamentally changed several areas all around. In the field of Human Resource Development (HRD), digitization has brought fresh ideas for handling and growing human resources. The Malaysia Digital Economy Corporation (MDEC) (2021) claims that growing digitization of companies has changed the way companies handle HRD from talent acquisition to staff development. Growing digital economy means that Malaysian companies must improve the digital skills of their employees if they are to stay competitive. New HRD practice trends such the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in hiring procedures and the usage of e-learning platforms for employee skill development have been sparked by this metamorphosis Human Resources Online, 2024.

Even with the growing focus on digitization, many companies still have major obstacles in completely using these technical developments. The digital skill gap in which employees, particularly in smaller businesses, struggle to keep up with the evolving technological scene is a significant barrier (Human Resources Online, 2025). This disparity puts company performance at risk as workers can lack the knowledge required to correctly apply digital technology. The growing reliance on digital technologies has underscored the need of HR professionals not only deploying new technology but also providing their employees with continuous development (Fahmy et al., 2023). This paper explores the evolving trends in HRD within Malaysia's digital transformation environment by analyzing the integration of digital tools and platforms in HRD practices and their ramifications for organizational performance and employee development.

2. Background of Study

Both outside pressure and the need for a nimbler workforce have driven HRD in Malaysia's digital revolution. To fit the industry 4.0 (I4.0) age, Malaysian companies have realized during the last several years they require a workforce with sophisticated digital capabilities. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on digital skill development and the acceptance of digital technologies within HR operations like training, performance management, and recruiting as well as Siradjuddin, Putra, & Lutfi, 2024. Studies have demonstrated that integrating digital technology into HRD operations may help HR operations to be more efficient and effective, therefore improving the corporate performance (Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024). For instance, artificial intelligence

applications in recruiting have grown to be a major trend providing solutions for applicant success prediction and simplifying of hiring procedures (Hays, 2024).

The Malaysian government has started projects such the MyDIGITAL Blueprint, which seeks to improve digital infrastructure and boost the digital economy by 2030 (MDEC, 2021) in response to the rising need for digital expertise. With initiatives meant to assist employees learn required competences in sectors such data analytics, software development, and cybersecurity, MDEC (2021) claims that the strategy emphasizes digital skills development as one of its core pillars. Efforts nonetheless still present difficulties. While some Malaysian companies especially small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) still face major challenges including limited resources and unwillingness to change, even if others have made great progress in digitalizing their HR operations (Human Resources Online, 2025). Randstad Malaysia's 2022 study on the rising need for Learning and Development (L&D) initiatives with an eye on digital skills emphasizes. However, only a tiny proportion of Malaysian workers have access to such programs, indicating a mismatch between industry requirements and accessible training possibilities. This imbalance between demand and supply highlights the need for intentional HRD initiatives to overcome the digital skills gap that occurs across several industries. Furthermore, firms must engage in digital literacy programs to guarantee that their employees have the skills needed to flourish in an increasingly digital environment (Rahmat et al., 2022).

3. Methods

Using a concept paper methodology, this article addresses theoretical analysis and synthesis of current research, policy reports, and industry views on digital transformation in Human Resource Development (HRD). In a fast-changing sector like HRD, where empirical data may be scarce or yet in development, the concept paper technique is especially appropriate for investigating developing trends and difficulties. It enables thorough theoretical knowledge of the topic and the creation of models that direct further studies and application. This paper combines ideas from many industry reports, including the Digital Talent Survey 2021 (MDEC, 2021) and Human Resources Online (2024), which provide vital information on the difficulties and prospects for HR professionals in Malaysia, so ensuring the relevance and timeliness of the conclusions. Important trends such the increasing dependence on e-learning platforms and the incorporation of artificial intelligence in recruiting were found by use of these sources (Jayabalan et al., 2021). The paradigm put up by Li Ming and Kamaruddin (2024), who underlined the need of digital capabilities in HR operations and their part in improving organizational performance, underpins the study in this research.

A thorough assessment of literature is the first and most important component of this approach. Examining a broad spectrum of scholarly papers, corporate reports, and government publications on HRD policies in the digital age both internationally and inside Malaysia the review looks establishing a strong basis from which the conceptual framework of the article may be developed depends on this review. The literature addresses several important subjects, including digital HRD systems, issues and constraints Malaysian companies encounter, and the strategic alignment of HRD with more general corporate objectives. Examining digital HRD systems, the research shows how companies are incorporating digital technologies such artificial intelligence (AI), e-learning platforms, and big data analytics into conventional HRD operations. Among these roles are those of recruiting, talent management, performance assessment, and employee development. The study emphasizes how these instruments are transforming HRD processes, increasing their efficiency, personalizing nature, and data-driven character.

The part of the literature analysis on the problems and obstacles section concentrates on the difficulties Malaysian companies face implementing digital HRD solutions. We address issues like digital skill shortages, change reluctance, and inadequate infrastructure especially for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Though their value is being more acknowledged, these obstacles prevent the full fulfillment of the possibilities of digital HRD tools. Furthermore, the study of the literature looks at strategic alignment, stressing in the framework of digital transformation the requirement of HRD being in line with corporate objectives. This connection guarantees that digital HR projects really support worker flexibility and corporate success. Examining the strategic function of HRD in enabling digital transformation helps one to understand how HR policies could change to satisfy the needs of a company environment becoming more and more digital. Drawing on these realizations, the research creates a conceptual framework for putting digital HRD ideas into action. Theoretical models of digital transformation, HRD capabilities, and organizational change are synthesized in this framework. It is intended to provide HR managers and legislators with a methodical way to match HR operations with the objectives of digital transformation. Particularly in developing digital skills, the framework stresses the

requirement of ongoing education and upskilling to make sure companies remain competitive in a corporate environment undergoing quick change.

In addition to the literature synthesis, the study incorporates an analysis of government policies and national strategies aimed at enhancing digital workforce readiness. This includes the MyDIGITAL Blueprint, which is Malaysia's strategic initiative for transforming the country into a digitally-driven economy. By evaluating the effectiveness of these policies in addressing the challenges of digital HRD, the paper identifies areas where the government's efforts could be improved. The study ends with legislative suggestions meant to enable public and commercial sector companies to get over obstacles to digital HRD adoption. Particularly for SMEs, these suggestions center on growing digital skills training programs, more investments in HR technology infrastructure, and more industry-leader, academic institution, government body cooperation. This paper presents a thorough theoretical basis and pragmatic insights utilizing a concept paper technique that may direct HR managers, corporate owners, and legislators in Malaysia in furthering digital HRD plans.

4. Results and Findings

The study revealed several key findings: **Adoption of Digital Tools:** A significant number of organizations have adopted digital platforms for recruitment, training, and performance management; **Skill Gaps:** Despite the adoption of digital tools, there is a notable gap in digital skills among employees, hindering the full utilization of these technologies; **Resistance to Change:** Organizational culture and employee resistance pose significant barriers to the successful implementation of digital HRD strategies; and **Strategic Alignment:** Organizations that align their HRD strategies with digital transformation goals report higher levels of employee engagement and organizational performance.

4.1 Increased Adoption of Digital Tools in HRD Functions

Digital tools are increasingly transforming the delivery and design of HRD practices in Malaysia. Among these, e-learning platforms have become one of the most widely adopted technologies. Large companies with geographically scattered teams notably find online learning interesting as it lets workers grow skills free from time or place restrictions (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). Multimedia materials, interactive modules, and gamification tools that improve student involvement and retention abound on these sites. Artificial intelligence (AI) is being used in the context of talent acquisition to automate resume screening, chatbot-based behavioral analysis, and more precisely match applicants to job descriptions. This technical change lowers human bias, speeds up the hiring process, and raises the quality of candidates (Jayabalan et al., 2021). Notwithstanding these developments, the adoption of such technologies is still unequal; bigger companies embrace them much quicker than small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). The main causes of this difference are small companies' lack of internal digital skills and expensive upfront investment expenses (Fahmy et al., 2023).

Furthermore, Learning Management Systems (LMS) and Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS) are being implemented to facilitate knowledge sharing, track learning progress, and maintain employee training records. These systems support a more structured and data-driven approach to workforce development, which is crucial in a knowledge-based economy (MDEC, 2021).

4.2 Growing Use of Data Analytics in Performance Management

The application of data analytics in performance management marks a significant departure from traditional appraisal systems, which often relied on subjective evaluations (Rahmat et al., 2022). Using analytics systems, companies are creating real-time dashboards with detailed insights into employee performance indicators like productivity, cooperation, attendance, and engagement rates. These measures let managers create customized growth plans, provide evidence-based advice, and make evidence-based choices (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). Identifying trends and patterns that can indicate possible HR problems such as employee disengagement, fatigue, or possibility of turnover also helps predictive analytics. In certain sophisticated scenarios, analytics technologies may even assist with estimate future performance depending on prior behavior and capabilities (Dahalin et al., 2006). These features improve strategic workforce planning and help to build a more open and responsible performance culture as well.

Since HR departments lack analytical abilities and HR and IT systems are not integrated, many companies find it difficult to completely use these technologies. Data analytics is often underused or substituted with hand-made tracking systems in smaller companies, therefore restricting its strategic usefulness (Mustafa Kamil et al., 2023). Particularly when companies gather even more exacting data on staff, ethical issues and data privacy are also causing rising worry (Human Resources Online, 2024).

4.3 Persistent Digital Skills Gap

Despite Malaysia's push toward digitalization, the gap between the skills required in a digital economy and those possessed by the current workforce remains a significant concern (Human Resources Online, 2025). Digital literacy today covers a broad spectrum of competences including data analysis, digital communication, cybersecurity awareness, and mastery of industry-specific software programs, not just of simple computer skills. Many workers especially those in non-technical or administrative roles find it difficult to meet these new expectations (Jayabalan et al., 2021). A mismatch between the output of universities and industry's demands aggravates this skills gap. While colleges are starting to provide more courses in digital technologies, the speed of curriculum reform generally behind the speed of technology development (Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024). Graduates therefore enter the workforce without the skills required to significantly support initiatives on digital transformation. Time restrictions and restricted availability to reasonably priced training courses further challenge mid-career professionals in their ability to upskill (Fahmy et al., 2023).

Addressing this issue requires a multi-stakeholder approach that includes industry partnerships, continuous learning incentives, and stronger alignment between national education policy and digital economic goals (MDEC, 2021). While some progress has been made through government-led initiatives such as the Digital Skills Training Directory and MDEC's digital training programs, coverage remains uneven and access is still limited in rural areas (Mustafa Kamil et al., 2023).

4.4 Organizational Resistance to Digital Change

The conceptual review highlights that organizational resistance is one of the most entrenched barriers to successful digital HRD transformation. Resistance can stem from both structural and cultural factors. Many companies lack explicit digital transformation roadmaps structurally, which causes employee uncertainty and scattered application (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). Culturally, many people worry about job displacement brought on by automation, which fuels mistrust and employee reluctance to embrace new systems or procedures (Rahmat et al., 2022). Digital change may either be facilitated or hampered in great part by leadership as well. Initiatives may lose momentum or be seen as secondary rather than essential to corporate strategy in circumstances where senior management lacks digital fluency or commitment (Fahmy et al., 2023). Key in promoting change from the bottom up, middle managers might potentially object if they believe digital technologies compromise their jobs or increase their burden without enough support (Human Resources Online, 2024).

Inadequate management techniques provide even with another problem. Many companies undervalue the need to explain the reasons for, advantages of, and predicted results of digital transformation. Employees are not likely to accept new technology without involvement and openness. Consequently, the change stays at a surface-level and does not result in long-lasting HRD practice improvement (Dahalin et al., 2006).

4.5 Infrastructure and Resource Constraints in SMEs

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which represent over 97% of Malaysian businesses, face unique constraints in embracing digital HRD. Many SMEs operate with limited budgets, making it difficult to invest in advanced digital infrastructure such as cloud-based LMS platforms, AI recruitment systems, or data analytics software (MDEC, 2021). Additionally, they often lack internal IT teams capable of supporting the deployment and maintenance of digital tools (Jayabalan et al., 2021). Geographical disparities also play a role, with rural-based SMEs facing even greater challenges due to inconsistent internet connectivity and limited access to digital service providers. These restrictions affect not only the capacity of workers to engage in online training or remote work possibilities but also the use of digital HR instruments (Mustafa Kamil et al., 2023). Furthermore, less known among SMEs are government incentives, subsidies, and support initiatives meant to help with digital adoption. Even in cases where such initiatives are well-known, administrative loads or limited competence to negotiate application procedures might discourage participation (Human Resources Online, 2024). These companies lag behind bigger companies in terms of HR innovation, hence generating a digital gap that compromises national productivity and inclusive development (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024).

4.6 Policy Momentum, but Gaps in Execution

Malaysia has showed great policy-level dedication to producing a workforce with digital competency. Nationwide digital transformation (MDEC, 2021) has been set in motion by the MyDIGITAL Blueprint, Pelan Jana Semula Ekonomi Negara (PENJANA), and Digital Upskilling Incentives of HRD Corp.). These measures seek to improve digital literacy, encourage digital inclusion, and provide focused help for reskilling and training.

Notwithstanding this momentum, the way these policies are carried out usually falls short of expectations. Limited effect of fragmented cooperation between government agencies, mismatch with industry demands, and a lack of monitoring systems has resulted from (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). For instance, while financial incentives for training exist, many companies either lack knowledge of them or cannot efficiently use them because of qualifying requirements or lack of direction (Human Resources Online, 2024).

Underutilization of public-private alliances is another problem. To guarantee that training materials are current and in line with market need, stronger cooperation among academics, government, and business is necessary. Moreover, policy execution usually emphasizes short-term deliverables instead of long-term workforce transformation, therefore restricting the durability of results (Dahalin et al., 2006). A more integrated policy ecosystem is needed to close this divide one that fosters lifelong learning paths, strengthens feedback loops amongst all the players engaged in Malaysia's digital HRD scene (Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024).

5. Discussion

The results of this article highlight important problems in the digital transformation of Human Resource Development (HRD) in Malaysia, therefore stressing both possibilities and constraints. One of the most clear-cut changes is the increasing adoption of digital technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) in e-learning platforms in training courses and recruitment tools. Artificial intelligence (AI) could significantly increase HR efficiency by means of massive data analysis revealing the best-fit persons; this is shown by Hays (2024). This shift toward artificial intelligence matches global HR trends and emphasizes the rising role of data-driven decision-making in HR processes (Hays, 2024). Moreover, by means of targeted feedback and data analytics, employing digital technologies in performance management and recruitment may allow firms to boost employee development (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024; Li Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024).

However, the transition to digital HRD is not without challenges. The most significant of these is the persistent digital skills gap. Many employees in Malaysia, particularly those in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), lack the competencies necessary to effectively utilize digital tools (Human Resources Online, 2025). According to Human Resources Online (2024), 40% of Malaysian companies acknowledge that their employees lack digital skills, therefore aggravating the difficulty of a good digital transition. Particularly SMEs suffer with limited resources that make it difficult for them to commit in thorough training courses (Mustafa Kamil, Abd Rani, & Hasnan, 2023). Therefore, companies that want to properly use digital technologies must give the digital skills gap top importance (Human Resources Online, 2025; Randstad Malaysia, 2022). Despite these obstacles, numerous Malaysian companies have effectively negotiated the digital revolution by making training and development investments. Randstad Malaysia (2022) emphasizes how companies with strong learning and development initiatives are more suited to address the digital skills gap and improve employee performance. As stated in the MyDIGITAL Blueprint (MDEC, 2021), the dedication of the Malaysian government to the development of digital skills promotes the acceleration of digital adoption across sectors, therefore helping to close current digital competence gaps (MDEC, 2021).

The integration of digital HRD strategies also has profound implications for organizational performance. Leveraging data analytics for HR decision-making enables organizations to optimize recruitment processes, identify skill gaps, and enhance productivity (Dahalin et al., 2006; Li Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024). For example, performance management systems that incorporate digital platforms allow for real-time feedback and personalized development plans (Dahalin et al., 2006). Maintaining competitiveness in the digital economy depends on these technical developments, so they are vital for Malaysian companies (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). Although using digital technologies has interesting prospects, HR policies must also be thoroughly reexamined. Digitalization is a strategic change that calls for a rethink of how companies approach human capital development (Human Resources Online, 2025), not just a technical one. Growing awareness of the advantages of data-driven, agile, and learner-centered HR approaches (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024) is shown in the rising dependence on digital technologies in training, recruiting, and performance management). Hallmarks of current HR systems, these technologies help companies to increase the efficiency and personalizing of learning, build a culture of constant growth, and improve decision-making (Li Ming & Kamaruddin, 2024).

However, the success of digital transformation in HRD hinges on integrating technology with appropriate organizational structures, cultures, and competencies (Human Resources Online, 2025). The digital skills gap observed in Malaysia reflects a disconnect between technological advancements and workforce preparedness (Mustafa Kamil, Abd Rani, & Hasnan, 2023). From a human capital theory perspective, this gap poses risks to national productivity and innovation, particularly in labor-intensive or knowledge-driven sectors (Human

Resources Online, 2024; Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). Therefore, it is very necessary to have organized investments in human capital development (MDEC, 201). Furthermore, complicating the shift to digital HRD is organizational resistance to change. Based on change management theories such Lewin's Change Model and Kotter's 8-Step Process, it is abundantly evident that effective digital transformation calls for more than just new technology deployment. It calls for intentional cultural changes and stakeholder involvement as well as visionary leadership (Lewin, 1951; Kotter, 1996). Many Malaysian companies, especially SMEs and public institutions, lack digital leadership and change management skills, which hinders the acceptance and institutionalization of innovative HR practices (Mustafa Kamil, Abd Rani, & Hasnan, 2023). This is consistent with research on organizational behavior that stresses the need of leadership buy-in and employee participation for maintaining long-term change (Kotter, 1996; Randstad Malaysia, 2022). Further raising questions regarding digital inclusiveness and equality are the financial and infrastructure limitations SMEs face. Should the advantages of digital HRD only reach well-funded companies, a digital gap might develop, therefore accentuating already existing economic inequalities (Human Resources Online, 2024). This finding emphasizes the importance of focused measures to assist underrepresented groups in the digital economy (MDEC, 2021) including small businesses. Although progressive, Malaysia's policy measures have to change to be more responsive, easily available, and outcomes-driven to narrow this disparity (Human Resources Online, 2025; MDEC, 2021).

Additionally raising ethical and governance questions is HR's increasing dependence on data analytics and artificial intelligence in decision-making. Carefully controlled issues like data privacy, algorithmic bias, and openness in automated evaluations can help to build employee confidence by following international norms of justice and responsibility (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). While many Malaysian companies still lack internal governance systems to guarantee the appropriate use of technology an area that is still underdeveloped organizations must also build these systems concurrently. Another important area of attention is strategic alignment between HRD projects and national development objectives. The capacity of Malaysia to build a workforce that is technologically literate, flexible, creative, and internationally competitive will determine whether it can become a regional digital center (MDEC, 201). Policymakers, teachers, and HRD professionals must cooperate more closely to create comprehensive, future-oriented plans that link labor market demands with educational results (Human Resources Online, 2024).

Finally, the conceptual framework suggested in this study supports a system-thinking perspective of digital HRD. This strategy stresses the interdependence of important players, government agencies, businesses, training providers, staff members, and digital HR practices to match long-term organizational and national plans (Putra, Siradjuddin, & Lutfi, 2024). This would include building dynamic alliances between academics and industry, developing integrated systems for certification and training, and always tracking HRD results (MDEC, 2021). In essence, even if Malaysia is headed toward digital transformation in HRD, much more must be done. Along with technological investments, the shift calls for careful leadership, inclusive policy design, and ongoing capacity development in every industry of the economy (Human Resources Online, 2025).

6. Conclusion

The transformation of Human Resource Development (HRD) through digital technologies represents one of the most significant shifts in the way organizations develop, manage, and retain talent in the 21st century. In the Malaysian setting, this metamorphosis is both strategic need and necessity. Digital technologies such e-learning platforms, artificial intelligence, and data analytics are starting to alter HRD operations, providing fresh efficiencies, insights, and capabilities for improving organizational performance and employee engagement as this concept paper has shown. Still, Malaysia's path toward entirely computerized HRD systems is not straightforward. Although certain industries and bigger companies have achieved significant development, many small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) still have great obstacles like insufficient infrastructure, lack of digital competences, and resource limits. These differences run the danger of generating a digital gap that compromises national workforce development targets and stunts inclusive economic progress.

Further underlining the need of digitization as a whole transformation rather than merely technical improvement is the ongoing digital skills gap, organizational resistance to change, and inadequate change management strategies. Only when they complement more general organizational goals, ingrained in a supporting culture, and supported by leaders dedicated to innovation and ongoing development will digital HRD projects be successful. Particularly via the MyDIGITAL Blueprint and HRD Corp's projects, national policy measures show a noteworthy dedication to creating a technologically competent workforce. Still, more dynamic, demand-driven training ecosystems, better support for SMEs, and greater public and private sector collaboration are sorely needed. To guarantee that Malaysia's workforce stays competitive in an ever-digitized

global economy, more focus should be on encouraging alliances across government agencies, businesses, and educational institutions.

Considering these insights, this concept paper proposes a comprehensive framework for digital HRD that emphasizes strategic alignment, inclusivity, adaptability, and ethical governance. Such a framework may help companies and legislators create HRD policies that not only have advanced technology capability but also react to the intricate human and organizational dynamics engaged in digital transformation. Malaysia's capacity to create a strong, future-ready workforce will ultimately greatly influence its success in switching to a digital economy. This calls for a long-term commitment to reevaluating HRD from the bottom up and concentrate national and organizational development plans on people, purpose, and technology.

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