

## **Prioritizing humans: HRD's vital role in AI adoption for workplace success**

Rajashi Ghosh Columbia University

Stefanos Nachmias Nottingham Trent University

Donna Murdoch Columbia University

Dave McGuire Napier University

The human resources landscape is undergoing a seismic shift, largely driven by the advent of Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. While AI has been a game changer in certain sectors, its potential to transform Human Resources (HR) functions ubiquitously is equally compelling. While AI and its branches such as machine learning have been used and applied for intelligence in many sectors, the ability to use words to convert concepts, skills, and potential bias make this a unique and opportune time to augment human intelligence with this advanced technology. Being mindful of this dichotomy is imperative. The capabilities needed to programme AI are not usually as complex as in past iterations, but is its ease of application and use a good thing? This paper, 'Attention is All You Need' (Vaswani et al. 2017), explored this capability, and it was put into use with the first Large Language Model, ChatGPT (OpenAI), in 2022.

The rapid pace of technological advancement places Human Resource Development (HRD) squarely at the forefront of pioneering innovative approaches to navigating the intricate interplay between human development and workplace technology. Yet, despite this pivotal role, the existing literature falls short in providing comprehensive insights into how we can actively shape ongoing discussions and effectively guide organisations and stakeholders towards addressing future HRD imperatives. Hence, the scope of this Special Issue is to offer an initial exploration of how HRD can navigate this transformative era and velocity of change that is unlikely to abate in the workplace and the world, focusing on career development, skill building, and ethical considerations. Just as in everyday life, AI demands meticulous attention. It can be so easy to apply, yet its error scan be life-altering, so data fidelity, ethical considerations, and precision matter more than ever. We must also prioritise privacy, data security, and informed consent. Being considerate in our actions aligns with ethical HRD practices. Effective communication of AI insights is crucial. Complex findings should be conveyed with empathy and personalisation to ensure everyone understands without compromising the integrity of the knowledge produced. Adhering to best practices is essential. It includes transparency, model improvement, and integrating human feedback into AI systems (Natarajan et al. 2022).

In this backdrop, it is incumbent on HRD professionals to consider how the digital revolution shaping the landscape has disrupted how organisations function and how individuals learn and perform their roles. The rise of artificial intelligence presents the field of HRD with complex opportunities that are intertwined with risks. But by embracing this transformation with vision, leadership, and human-centred strategies, HRD professionals can steer their organisations into an empowering AI enabled future, one where both human potential and AI capabilities are elevated in harmony. However, to accomplish this challenging task, HRD professionals (scholars and practitioners) need to embrace the paradox stemming from the benefits that both automation and humanisation of the workforce present. In other words, while the digital revolution has clearly pointed out how certain jobs and roles can be easily automated to increase efficiency, we have also seen the benefits of balancing that with a focus on humanising the workforce with particular attention to employee well-being and health.

The HRD community is tasked with a multifaceted responsibility encompassing moral, professional, and academic imperatives. It necessitates a deliberate pivot towards discerning the precise roles that technologies like AI can play as catalysts in augmenting employee well-being. This strategic shift entails harnessing AI's capabilities to orchestrate targeted upskilling and reskilling initiatives, thereby fostering a culture of continuous growth and adaptability among employees. Simultaneously, it underscores the para-mount importance of cultivating symbiotic human-technology partnerships within the intricate fabric of the workplace ecosystem. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that essential human qualities such as empathy and a nuanced understanding of individual employee circumstances are not inherently embedded in AI offerings. Therefore, it falls upon us, as HRD professionals, to navigate this evolving landscape with conscientious deliberation.

In today's dynamic and ever-changing world, talent emerges as a decisive strategic differentiator for organisations. Thriving amidst disruption hinges on leadership that collaborates closely with HRD professionals to identify and address areas where employees require skill development to reinvent their roles in personally meaningful and fulfilling ways. This collaborative approach thrives when HRD professionals exhibit proactive strategic thinking, engaging with a diverse array of stakeholders, including leaders, employees, investors, customers, and communities impacted by organisational operations. This collaborative ethos aligns seamlessly with the Outside-in HR perspective advocated by Ulrich (2024), which emphasises a shift towards stakeholder interests over traditional shareholder-centric approaches. Embracing this perspective, the HRD field must judiciously identify the value it can deliver to stakeholders (c.f. Bierema et al. 2023) through the adept utilisation of cutting-edge technological innovations. However, amidst the optimism surrounding technological advancements, HRD professionals must maintain a critical stance, actively scrutinising potential negative implications. By posing critical questions about

the societal ramifications of automation, HRD can ensure that the benefits accrued from AI can benefit all stakeholders, thus ensuring that the work-force, for example, can be developed to avoid job losses.

To facilitate the enlightenment of HRD professionals in this endeavour, a number of scholars within our field were invited to contribute to a Special Issue on AI and HRD. Collectively, there is a collection of six scholarly articles, each offering valuable insights and perspectives on the intersection of artificial intelligence and HRD:

- The first article, titled 'A New Framework for Ethical Artificial Intelligence: Keeping HRD in the Loop' by Shyamal Pandya and Jia Wang offers a holistic and comprehensive understanding of existing research on AI in career development through a scoping review of 101 journal publications. In doing so, the authors juxtapose the positive implications of AI for streamlining career development processes, such as transforming lifelong learning, promoting adaptive learning, and enabling continuous skill development, with the identification of potential disruptive effects on careers and ethical concerns associated with the integration of AI into career development programmes by HRD professionals. The article serves as a timely reminder that while AI can be harnessed to personalise learning experiences and advance individual careers through tailored skill roadmaps, the potential threats to psychological safety arising from ethical breaches must also be acknowledged to ensure the establishment of sustainable career paths for employees through the cultivation of effective human-machine collaborations.

The second article titled 'Developing AI Literacy in HRD: Skills, Approaches, and Implications' by Sehoon Kim and Hanwen Li explores the concept of AI literacy, focusing on the required competencies that HRD professionals can help to build. Based on research on the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) in the context of AI, the authors analyse AI-related competencies from four aspects: skills, relevance, values, and knowledge. One of the insightful findings of this study is that the extant literature does not give sufficient attention to the need for developing organisational AI literacy. The authors propose future research directions highlighting HRD's critical role in enabling the workforce with AI literacy with attention towards how that capacity can be built at the organisational level and how cultural nuances can inform such capacity building on an international scale.

- The third article titled 'Artificial Intelligence and Human Integration: A Conceptual Exploration of its Influence on Work Processes and Workplace Learning' by Jessica Li and Roland Yeo draws from sociotechnical systems (STS) theory to examine the influence of AI on job and organisational processes. The authors make a pioneering effort towards offering an AI-human integration model that illustrates how the

relationships between individuals, work processes, and sociotechnical systems through multilevel interactions can be leveraged for learning and innovating. To our knowledge, this is the first attempt at articulating how relationship between humans and AI can evolve through different stages and what considerations HRD professionals need to reflect upon for each stage of the evolution. Through offering this model, the authors challenge the field of HRD by raising questions about whether AI-human interaction will transform the way learning occurs in the work-place. The paper offers a number of different implications on how employees can be prepared to embrace AI as an integral part of their work lives while considering the potential risks stemming from AI adoption that are applicable on a global scale.

- The fourth article titled 'Using Generative AI in Human Resource Development: An Applied Research Study' by Alexandre Ardichvilli, Khalil Dirani, Sami Jabarkhail and Walid El Mansour reports the findings from a qualitative experimental study examining how participants engage with a particular application of Generative AI to design an HRD intervention. The authors drew from Activity Theory from Human-Computer Interaction research to analyse the intervention plans, prompts used by participants, outputs received from ChatGPT, and participants' responses to open-ended questions. While the findings clearly identified the value of ChatGPT in initial planning and brainstorming ideas for HRD interventions, its limitations were apparent in generic responses and lack of contextual understanding. This study helped to underscore that humans can play a critical role in refining ChatGPT's output such that AI is treated as a learning device and not as a source of ultimate knowledge and wisdom. As we are wrestling with the apprehensions of threatening the value of human expertise, this study is an important reminder that the impact of AI will be shaped by whether we can challenge our perspectives to see the use of AI as a developmental tool that can extend human capabilities instead of replacing them.
- The fifth article produced by Lyle Yorks titled 'Applying Generative AI Ethically in HRD Practice' offers a review of how ethical concerns can be addressed through a framework of critical questions guiding HRD professionals to ensure oversight of AI in organisations. These questions are informed by his review of the emerging literature as well as interviews, with practitioners applying Generative AI to different organisations.
- The final article produced by Jia Wang and Roya Pashmforoosh titled 'A New Framework for Ethical Artificial Intelligence: Keeping HRD in the Loop' proposes a new conceptual framework through integrating general AI principles and ethical guidelines developed by the academy of Human resource Development(AHRD).

Given that most of the existing solutions to the ethical concerns about adoption of AI are informed by the perspectives of non-HRD fields, and hence, do not centre humans, the authors in this article map out an ethical boundary consisting of nine human-centred principles and suggest a sample of six HRD interventions that can facilitate responsible AI practices in organisations globally.

As a result, the topics addressed by our selected papers are of utmost importance and relevance in ensuring that humans remain ‘in the loop’, especially as errors, ethical issues, and biases can easily arise, regardless of intent. Critical thinking must be integral to any Generative AI implementation process, as its importance cannot be overstated in lever-aging the new capabilities available for HRD. This Special Issue offers three distinct, important messages:

Firstly, it underscores the imperative for HRD professionals to navigate the intricate intersection of AI and workplace dynamics with diligence and foresight. As technologies continue to reshape the landscape of HR functions, it is essential to embrace a holistic understanding of AI’s potential while remaining vigilant about the ethical, societal, and human-centric considerations inherent in its adoption.

Secondly, it provides a rich discourse on the multifaceted challenges and opportunities that AI presents for HRD. From discussions on ethical frameworks and AI literacy to explorations of AI-human integration and applied research studies, these articles collectively illuminate the path forwards for HRD professionals seeking to harness AI in ways that empower both individuals and organisations, uphold ethical principles, and preserve human dignity in this transformative era.

Thirdly, as we embark on this journey of AI integration into HRD practices, collaborative, critical inquiry, and ethical discernment are paramount. We hope this Special Issue encourages HRD professionals to engage with these insights, adapt best practices, and continue advancing the discourse on AI adoption in workplaces. It is crucial to ensure that human potential remains at the forefront of technological innovation in this complex terrain. Finally, we hope this Special Issue marks the beginning of addressing the challenges AI has brought to our society, offering a foundation for further research and inquiry in this field.

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