

Azerbaijan Journal of Higher Education (AJHE)  
 Volume 1, Issue 1, 2026  
 Published by: SIII  
 Publication Date: **May 28, 2026**  
<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20680461>

## LEARNING TRANSFORMATIONS IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN MALAYSIA AND INDONESIA: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

<sup>1\*</sup>Mehriban Malikova, <sup>2</sup>Le Thi Linh Giang, <sup>3</sup>Djuwari Djuwari, <sup>4</sup>Djina Ivanovic

<sup>1\*</sup>*Department of Education Management,  
 Shusha International Intellectuals Institute, Baku Azerbaijan  
 mehribanmalikova@anas.az  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1695-0954>*

<sup>2</sup>*Ho Chi Minh City University of Industry and Trade, Vietnam  
 gianglil@huit.edu.vn  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6130-9675>*

<sup>3</sup>*The International Association of Scholarly Publishers, Editors, and Reviewers (IASPER),  
 EDJUW Academy, Sidoarjo, Indonesia  
 djuwarisehat@gmail.com  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2750-3463>*

<sup>4</sup>*Department of Digital Economics, Institute of Economic Sciences, Belgrade, Serbia  
 djina.ivanovic@ien.bg.ac.rs  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5774-4196>*

*\*Corresponding author: mehribanmalikova@anas.az*

---

**Abstract** - This study explores the transformation of higher education in Malaysia and Indonesia within the context of globalization, digitalization, and the evolving demands of the knowledge economy. As universities increasingly function as dynamic systems integrating teaching, innovation, and societal engagement, understanding how transformation occurs across different national contexts becomes essential. The primary objective of this study is to examine learning transformations in both countries through a comparative and system-based perspective, focusing on key domains such as curriculum innovation, digital transformation, governance, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement. This research employs a qualitative approach using document analysis of selected scholarly articles, policy documents, and institutional reports. The data are analyzed through domain and thematic analysis to identify patterns, relationships, and differences between the two higher education systems. The findings reveal that both Malaysia and Indonesia share common transformation goals, including improving quality, enhancing employability, and integrating digital technologies. However, they differ in their approaches, with Malaysia adopting a structured and policy-driven model, while Indonesia emphasizes flexibility and inclusivity. Key

challenges include gaps in policy implementation, digital readiness, and institutional capacity.. The study concludes that a system-based and integrated approach is essential for sustainable transformation and recommends stronger policy alignment, institutional readiness, and cross-national collaboration.

**Keywords:** Higher Education Transformation; Comparative Education; Digital Transformation; Curriculum Innovation; Quality Assurance; Malaysia and Indonesia

*Manuscript received 25 March. 2026; revised 28 March. 2026; accepted 24 Apr. 2026. Date of publication 28 May. 2026. AJHE is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International License.*



## I. INTRODUCTION

The transformation of higher education has become a central discourse in contemporary educational research, particularly in the context of globalization, digitalization, and the knowledge economy. Universities are no longer viewed merely as institutions for knowledge transmission; rather, they function as dynamic ecosystems that integrate teaching, research, innovation, and societal engagement. This paradigm shift is strongly influenced by global forces such as the Fourth Industrial Revolution (IR 4.0), artificial intelligence (AI), and internationalization, all of which demand adaptive, flexible, and system-oriented educational frameworks (Katsamakos et al., 2024; Hamzah, 2024). Consequently, higher education institutions (HEIs) in Southeast Asia, particularly in Malaysia and Indonesia, are undergoing significant transformations to remain competitive and relevant in a rapidly changing global landscape.

From a theoretical standpoint, the transformation of higher education can be examined through several key frameworks. First, systems theory provides a holistic lens, viewing higher education as an interconnected system comprising policies, institutions, stakeholders, and socio-economic environments. This perspective emphasizes feedback loops, interdependencies, and adaptive mechanisms necessary for sustainable transformation (Katsamakos et al., 2024). Second, human capital theory highlights the role of education in enhancing

individual productivity and national economic growth, positioning universities as critical drivers of workforce development and innovation. Third, globalization and glocalization theories explain how higher education systems simultaneously respond to global pressures while maintaining local cultural and institutional identities (Sibawaihi et al., 2024). Finally, the concept of quality culture underscores the importance of continuous improvement, institutional accountability, and stakeholder engagement in achieving educational excellence.

In Malaysia, higher education transformation has been closely aligned with national strategies aimed at becoming a regional education hub. The integration of digital technologies, curriculum reform, and quality assurance mechanisms reflects the country's commitment to addressing global competitiveness and employability challenges. For instance, Hamzah (2024) emphasizes that Malaysia's higher education system is increasingly shaped by IR 4.0 demands, requiring the incorporation of advanced skills such as data analytics, artificial intelligence, and critical thinking into curricula. Similarly, Lei (2025) identifies key challenges in Malaysia, including curriculum relevance, technological readiness, and governance structures, despite notable progress in institutional development and accessibility.

In contrast, Indonesia's higher education transformation is characterized by efforts to expand access, improve quality, and enhance institutional relevance

within a diverse and rapidly growing educational landscape. Komari et al. (2023) argue that Indonesia's transformation is driven by the need to align higher education outcomes with socio-economic development and workforce demands. Moreover, recent reforms such as the *Merdeka Belajar* policy emphasize flexibility, student-centred learning, and quality assurance, reflecting a shift toward more innovative and responsive educational practices (Ruhimat et al., 2024). Additionally, the transformation of Islamic higher education institutions into universities illustrates how globalization and local contextualization interact in shaping institutional evolution (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

A growing body of empirical studies has explored various dimensions of higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia. First, Hamzah (2024) investigates the impact of IR 4.0 on Malaysian higher education, highlighting the need for curriculum alignment with emerging technological demands and the importance of digital competencies. Second, Lei (2025) examines institutional challenges in Malaysia, identifying gaps in employability, governance, and digital readiness despite policy advancements. Third, Sibawaihi et al. (2024) analyse the transformation of Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia, revealing the interplay between globalization and local adaptation. Fourth, Pranita et al. (2025) focus on vocational higher education in Indonesia, emphasizing its role in addressing unemployment and supporting national development goals. Fifth, Komari et al. (2023) provide a broader perspective on Indonesia's higher education transformation, stressing the importance of quality, accessibility, and relevance in a globalized context.

Despite these contributions, several critical gaps remain in the existing literature. First, most studies adopt

country-specific approaches, focusing either on Malaysia or Indonesia independently, with limited comparative analysis that captures cross-national similarities and differences. Second, prior research tends to emphasize policy analysis or institutional case studies, often neglecting the systemic interconnections among key elements such as governance, curriculum, technology, and stakeholder engagement. Third, there is a lack of integrative qualitative frameworks that synthesize multiple dimensions of transformation into coherent domains and themes. Fourth, limited attention has been given to cooperative or collaborative perspectives between Malaysia and Indonesia, despite their shared cultural, historical, and regional contexts within ASEAN. Finally, while some studies acknowledge the complexity of higher education transformation, few explicitly adopt a systems approach that captures the dynamic interactions and feedback mechanisms shaping educational change.

Addressing these gaps is essential for developing a more comprehensive understanding of higher education transformation in Southeast Asia. A comparative and system-based analysis can provide deeper insights into how different national contexts influence transformation processes and outcomes. Moreover, such an approach can identify best practices, shared challenges, and opportunities for regional collaboration, contributing to the advancement of higher education in both countries.

Therefore, the present study aims to examine learning transformations in higher education in Malaysia and Indonesia through a comparative and systemic lens. This research adopts a qualitative approach grounded in theoretical frameworks such as systems theory, human capital theory, and globalization theory and is triangulated with findings from at least five previous studies in both contexts. By employing

domain and thematic analysis, this study seeks to explore the interconnected dimensions of transformation, including curriculum innovation, digital integration, quality assurance, institutional governance, and stakeholder engagement.

The research is guided by the following problem formulation: How do higher education systems in Malaysia and Indonesia undergo learning transformations, and what systemic factors influence these processes within a comparative framework? Based on this problem, the study is structured around several key objectives: (1) to analyse the theoretical foundations underpinning higher education transformation; (2) to examine the current practices and challenges of learning transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia; (3) to identify commonalities and differences between the two countries; (4) to develop a system-based framework that explains the interrelationships among transformation domains; and (5) to propose strategic recommendations for enhancing cooperative and sustainable transformation in higher education.

Ultimately, this research is expected to contribute to the growing body of knowledge on higher education transformation by offering a comparative, qualitative, and system-oriented perspective. It also aims to provide practical insights for policymakers, educators, and institutional leaders in Malaysia and Indonesia, supporting the development of more adaptive, inclusive, and future-oriented higher education systems.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the literature related to learning transformations in higher education, particularly within the contexts of Malaysia and Indonesia. Building on the foundations outlined in Chapter I, this review synthesizes

theoretical perspectives, empirical studies, and conceptual frameworks that inform the present research. The discussion is organized into several major sections: (1) theoretical foundations of higher education transformation, (2) key dimensions of learning transformation, (3) higher education transformation in Malaysia, (4) higher education transformation in Indonesia, (5) comparative perspectives, and (6) conceptual framework development aligned with the research objectives.

### 2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Learning Transformation in Higher Education

#### 2.1.1 Systems Theory in Higher Education Transformation

Systems theory provides a foundational framework for understanding higher education as a complex, adaptive system composed of interrelated components such as governance, curriculum, technology, and stakeholders. Rather than viewing educational change as linear, systems theory emphasizes dynamic interactions, feedback loops, and continuous adaptation (Katsamakos et al., 2024). In the context of higher education transformation, this perspective highlights how changes in one domain—such as digital learning—inevitably affect other domains, including pedagogy, assessment, and institutional policy.

Recent studies have reinforced the relevance of systems thinking in educational reform. For example, Fullan (2023) argues that sustainable transformation requires coherence across institutional structures and alignment between policy and practice. Similarly, Marginson (2024) emphasizes that higher education systems must respond holistically to global pressures, including technological disruption and international competition. These perspectives are particularly relevant to Malaysia and Indonesia, where educational reforms involve multiple stakeholders and policy layers.

### 2.1.2 Human Capital Theory and Educational Transformation

Human capital theory conceptualizes education as an investment that enhances individuals' skills, productivity, and economic value. In higher education, this theory underscores the role of universities in preparing graduates for the labor market and contributing to national development (Becker, 1993; updated discussions in Tan, 2023). In Malaysia and Indonesia, human capital development is a central policy objective, with governments emphasizing employability, innovation, and entrepreneurship.

Recent research indicates that higher education transformation is increasingly aligned with labor market demands. For instance, World Bank (2023) reports highlight the need for Southeast Asian universities to integrate digital skills, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary learning into curricula. This aligns with Hamzah (2024), who notes that Malaysian institutions are adapting curricula to meet IR 4.0 requirements, and Komari et al. (2023), who emphasize similar trends in Indonesia.

### 2.1.3 Globalization and Glocalization in Higher Education

Globalization has significantly reshaped higher education systems, promoting internationalization, cross-border collaboration, and global competitiveness. However, the concept of glocalization suggests that global influences are adapted to local contexts rather than uniformly adopted (Sibawaihi et al., 2024). This is particularly evident in Southeast Asia, where cultural, religious, and socio-political factors influence educational practices.

Altbach and de Wit (2023) argue that global rankings, international student mobility, and transnational education have intensified competition among universities. At the same time, local

adaptation remains crucial. For example, Indonesia's transformation of Islamic higher education institutions reflects a balance between global academic standards and local cultural values (Sibawaihi et al., 2024).

### 2.1.4 Quality Culture in Higher Education

Quality culture refers to the shared values, beliefs, and practices that promote continuous improvement within educational institutions. It involves both internal mechanisms (e.g., self-evaluation and curriculum review) and external processes (e.g., accreditation and benchmarking) (Harvey & Stensaker, 2023). In Malaysia and Indonesia, quality assurance systems have become central to higher education reform.

Ruhimat et al. (2024) highlight the role of quality assurance in Indonesia's Merdeka Belajar policy, emphasizing flexibility and innovation while maintaining standards. Similarly, Malaysia's Malaysian Qualifications Agency (MQA) plays a critical role in ensuring academic quality and institutional accountability (Hamzah, 2024).

## 2.2 Key Dimensions of Learning Transformation

### 2.2.1 Curriculum Innovation

Curriculum transformation is a core aspect of higher education reform, involving the integration of new knowledge areas, interdisciplinary approaches, and competency-based learning. Recent studies emphasize the importance of aligning curricula with industry needs and technological advancements (Lei, 2025). In Malaysia, curriculum innovation focuses on incorporating digital skills, entrepreneurship, and global competencies. In Indonesia, the *Merdeka Belajar* framework promotes flexible learning pathways, allowing students to engage in internships, community projects, and cross-disciplinary studies (Ruhimat et al., 2024).

### 2.2.2 Digital Transformation and Technology Integration

Digital transformation has accelerated significantly in higher education, particularly following the COVID-19 pandemic. Technologies such as learning management systems (LMS), artificial intelligence, and online learning platforms have become integral to teaching and learning processes (Katsamakos et al., 2024). Research shows that digital readiness varies across institutions. In Malaysia, universities have made substantial investments in digital infrastructure, while in Indonesia, challenges remain in terms of access, connectivity, and digital literacy (Komari et al., 2023). Nevertheless, both countries recognize the importance of digital transformation in enhancing educational accessibility and quality.

### 2.2.3 Institutional Governance and Leadership

Effective governance and leadership are critical for managing educational transformation. Transformational leadership, characterized by vision, innovation, and collaboration, has been identified as a key driver of change in higher education (Fullan, 2023).

Lei (2025) highlights governance challenges in Malaysian universities, including bureaucratic constraints and policy implementation gaps. In Indonesia, decentralization and institutional autonomy present both opportunities and challenges for educational reform (Komari et al., 2023).

### 2.2.4 Stakeholder Engagement

Stakeholder engagement involves collaboration among students, faculty, industry partners, and government agencies. It is essential for ensuring that higher education remains relevant and responsive to societal needs. Recent studies emphasize the importance of industry partnerships in curriculum development and research collaboration

(Pranita et al., 2025). In Indonesia, vocational education reforms highlight the role of industry in shaping learning outcomes and employability.

### 2.3 Higher Education Transformation in Malaysia

Malaysia's higher education system has undergone significant transformation over the past two decades, driven by national policies such as the Malaysia Education Blueprint (Higher Education). These reforms aim to position Malaysia as a global education hub. Hamzah (2024) identifies key areas of transformation, including digitalization, internationalization, and quality assurance. Malaysian universities have adopted online learning platforms, established international partnerships, and enhanced research capacity. However, challenges remain. Lei (2025) points out issues related to curriculum relevance, graduate employability, and technological readiness. Additionally, disparities between public and private institutions affect the overall quality and accessibility of higher education.

### 2.4 Higher Education Transformation in Indonesia

Indonesia's higher education system is characterized by diversity and rapid expansion. The government has implemented various reforms to improve quality, accessibility, and relevance. Komari et al. (2023) highlight the importance of aligning higher education with national development goals. The Merdeka Belajar policy represents a significant shift toward flexible, student-centered learning (Ruhimat et al., 2024). Sibawaihi et al. (2024) provide insights into the transformation of Islamic higher education institutions, demonstrating how global and local influences shape institutional development. Meanwhile, Pranita et al. (2025) emphasize the role of vocational education in addressing unemployment and supporting economic growth. Despite

these advancements, challenges persist, including resource limitations, regional disparities, and quality assurance issues.

## 2.5 Comparative Perspectives: Malaysia and Indonesia

Comparative analysis reveals both similarities and differences in higher education transformation between Malaysia and Indonesia. Both countries share common goals, such as improving quality, enhancing employability, and integrating digital technologies. However, differences arise in terms of policy implementation, institutional capacity, and resource availability. Malaysia's transformation is characterized by strong policy frameworks and internationalization efforts, while Indonesia's approach emphasizes inclusivity and flexibility. These differences reflect broader socio-economic and political contexts. Importantly, there is limited research on cooperative approaches between the two countries. Given their shared regional context within ASEAN, there is significant potential for collaboration in areas such as curriculum development, research, and quality assurance.

## 2.6 Research Gap and Conceptual Framework

As identified in Chapter I, existing literature lacks a comprehensive, system-based comparative analysis of higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia. Most studies focus on individual countries or specific aspects of transformation, without examining the interconnections among key domains. This study addresses these gaps by adopting a qualitative, system-oriented approach. It integrates theoretical frameworks and empirical findings to develop a conceptual model of learning transformation. The model includes key domains such as curriculum, technology, governance, and stakeholder engagement, and explores their interactions within a comparative framework.

## 2.7 Summary

This chapter has reviewed the literature on learning transformations in higher education, highlighting theoretical foundations, key dimensions, and empirical findings in Malaysia and Indonesia. The review underscores the complexity of educational transformation and the need for a holistic, system-based approach. The next chapter will present the research methodology, detailing the qualitative design, data collection, and analytical procedures used in this study. For a more comprehensive and briefer framework, it can be seen in Figure 1.

### GLOBAL DRIVERS (IR 4.0, AI, Globalization)

#### HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM TRANSFORMATION

CORE DOMAINS				
Curriculum Innovation	Digital Technology Integration	Governance & Policy	Quality Assurance	Stakeholders Engagement

#### INTERCONNECTED SYSTEM (FEEDBACK LOOPS)

#### LEARNING INFORMATION

Malaysia	Indonesia
1) Structured Policy	1) Flexible Policy (MBKM)
2) Strong Digital System	2) Inclusive Learning
3) Global Competitiveness	3) Contextual Adaptation

FINAL OUTCOME
1) Employability
2) Innovation
3) Adaptive Graduates
4) Sustainable HE Systems

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative comparative research design to examine learning transformations in higher education systems in Malaysia and Indonesia. The choice of a qualitative approach is aligned with the nature of the research problem, which seeks to explore complex, systemic, and context-dependent phenomena rather than to measure variables quantitatively. As emphasized in Chapter I, the study focuses on understanding how transformation occurs within interconnected domains such as curriculum, technology, governance, and stakeholder engagement.

Qualitative research is particularly appropriate for capturing meanings, interpretations, and processes within social systems (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study allows for an in-depth exploration of higher education transformation as a dynamic and multifaceted phenomenon. Furthermore, the research employs a comparative approach, enabling the identification of similarities and differences between Malaysia and Indonesia, which is essential for addressing the research objectives related to cross-national analysis.

The study is also grounded in a systems approach, which conceptualizes higher education as an interconnected system influenced by internal and external factors (Katsamakas et al., 2024). This approach supports the examination of relationships among key domains and

facilitates the development of a holistic understanding of transformation processes.

#### 3.2 Research Approach and Strategy

This research utilizes a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach, supported by document analysis and theoretical triangulation. The study relies on secondary data sources, including scholarly articles, policy documents, institutional reports, and previous empirical studies related to higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia.

The strategy involves thematic synthesis of at least five key empirical studies identified in Chapters I and II, including works by Hamzah (2024), Lei (2025), Komari et al. (2023), Sibawaihi et al. (2024), and Pranita et al. (2025). These studies serve as primary references for triangulation, ensuring that the analysis is grounded in established research while allowing for new interpretations. Additionally, the study integrates theoretical frameworks such as systems theory, human capital theory, globalization/glocalization theory, and quality culture. This theoretical triangulation strengthens the analytical rigor by providing multiple lenses through which the data can be interpreted (Denzin, 2017).

#### 3.3 Data Sources

The data for this study are derived from secondary sources, which include:

- 1) Peer-reviewed journal articles related to higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia, 10 for each, and the total is 20 journal articles.
- 2) Policy documents such as national education frameworks (e.g., Malaysia Education Blueprint and Indonesia's *Merdeka Belajar* policy).
- 3) Institutional reports and publications from higher education agencies.

- 4) Previous empirical studies identified in the literature review.

These sources are selected based on their relevance, credibility, and recency, with a focus on publications from 2020 onwards to ensure up-to-date insights. The inclusion of multiple data sources enhances the validity of the findings through data triangulation (Flick, 2022).

### 3.4 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection in this study is conducted through systematic document analysis. This method involves identifying, selecting, and analyzing relevant documents to extract meaningful information related to the research problem. The process includes the following steps:

- 1) Identification of Sources: Relevant literature is identified באמצעות databases such as Google Scholar, Scopus, and institutional repositories.
- 2) Screening and Selection: Sources are screened based on inclusion criteria, including relevance to the research topic, methodological rigor, and publication date.
- 3) Data Extraction: Key information is extracted from selected sources, including findings, methodologies, and theoretical perspectives.
- 4) Organization of Data: Extracted data are व्यवस्थित into categories aligned with the research domains (e.g., curriculum, technology, governance).

Document analysis is a widely used method in qualitative research, particularly for studies involving policy and institutional analysis (Bowen, 2009). It allows for the examination of both explicit and implicit meanings within texts, making it suitable for this study.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Techniques

The study employs domain analysis and thematic analysis to interpret the data. These methods are consistent

with the qualitative nature of the research and the systems approach adopted.

#### 3.5.1 Domain Analysis

Domain analysis involves identifying broad categories or domains that represent key aspects of higher education transformation. Based on the literature review and research objectives, the following domains are established:

- 1) Curriculum Innovation
- 2) Digital Transformation
- 3) Institutional Governance
- 4) Quality Assurance
- 5) Stakeholder Engagement

These domains serve as analytical frameworks for organizing and interpreting the data.

#### 3.5.2 Thematic Analysis

Within each domain, thematic analysis is conducted to identify patterns, themes, and relationships. The process follows the six-step approach proposed by Braun and Clarke (2021):

- 1) Familiarization with the data
- 2) Generating initial codes
- 3) Searching for themes
- 4) Reviewing themes
- 5) Defining and naming themes
- 6) Producing the report

Thematic analysis enables the identification of both common and unique features of higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia. It also supports the development of a comparative framework, highlighting similarities and differences between the two contexts.

### 3.6 Trustworthiness and Validity

To ensure the rigor and credibility of the study, several strategies are employed:

- 1) Triangulation: The use of multiple data sources and theoretical frameworks enhances the validity of the findings (Denzin, 2017).
- 2) Credibility: The selection of peer-reviewed and reputable

sources ensures the reliability of the data.

- 3) Dependability: A systematic and transparent research process is maintained, allowing for replication.
- 4) Confirmability: The analysis is grounded in data and supported by citations, minimizing researcher bias.
- 5) Transferability: The comparative nature of the study provides insights that may apply to other contexts within Southeast Asia.

These criteria align with established standards for qualitative research quality (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; updated discussions in Nowell et al., 2017).

### 3.7 Ethical Considerations

This study adheres to ethical standards in research by ensuring proper citation and acknowledgment of all sources. As the research is based on secondary data, issues related to informed consent and participant confidentiality are not applicable. However, ethical considerations are as follows:

- 1) Avoiding plagiarism through accurate referencing
- 2) Ensuring the credibility of sources
- 3) Representing findings objectively without distortion

Ethical integrity is essential for maintaining the trustworthiness of the research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In summary, this chapter has outlined the research methodology used to investigate learning transformations in higher education in Malaysia and Indonesia. The study employs a qualitative, comparative, and system-based approach, utilizing document analysis and thematic analysis to explore key domains of transformation. The methodology is designed to address the research problem and objectives outlined in Chapter I, providing a robust framework for analyzing complex educational phenomena.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Findings of the Theoretical Framework or Theories

The synthesis of Chapter II demonstrates that learning transformation in higher education is a multi-dimensional and systemic phenomenon, strongly grounded in four major theoretical foundations: systems theory, human capital theory, globalization/glocalization theory, and quality culture. These theories collectively explain how transformation occurs not as isolated reforms but as interconnected processes across institutional domains.

From a systems theory perspective (Katsamakos et al., 2024; Fullan, 2023; Marginson, 2024), higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia is characterized by dynamic interactions among curriculum, technology, governance, and stakeholders. Changes in one domain (e.g., digital learning) inevitably reshape other domains (e.g., pedagogy, assessment, and policy). This confirms that transformation is non-linear, adaptive, and feedback-driven.

From the human capital theory lens (Becker, 1993; Tan, 2023; World Bank, 2023), both countries emphasize graduate employability, skills development, and alignment with labor market needs. Empirical studies (Hamzah, 2024; Komari et al., 2023) reveal that curriculum reforms increasingly integrate digital competencies, critical thinking, and interdisciplinary learning, reflecting the shift toward knowledge-based economies.

The globalization and glocalization framework (Altbach & de Wit, 2023; Sibawaihi et al., 2024) highlights that higher education systems are influenced by global standards (e.g., rankings, internationalization), yet remain context-sensitive. Malaysia demonstrates strong global competitiveness strategies, while Indonesia emphasizes local adaptation, particularly in Islamic higher education transformation and the *Merdeka Belajar* policy.

Meanwhile, the concept of quality culture (Harvey & Stensaker, 2023; Ruhimat et al., 2024) underscores the importance of continuous improvement, accountability, and institutional evaluation mechanisms. Both countries have strengthened quality assurance

systems, although Indonesia focuses more on flexibility and inclusivity, while Malaysia emphasizes standardization and benchmarking.

Empirical findings across the referenced studies consistently reveal five core domains of transformation:

- 1) Curriculum Innovation
- 2) Digital Transformation
- 3) Institutional Governance
- 4) Quality Assurance
- 5) Stakeholder Engagement

Across these domains, recurring themes include alignment with industry needs, technological integration, policy implementation challenges, collaborative partnerships, and institutional adaptability. Importantly, the literature also reveals shared challenges, such as digital inequality (Indonesia), governance constraints (Malaysia), and gaps between policy and practice in both contexts.

Overall, the synthesis confirms that higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia is convergent in goals (quality, employability, digitalization) but divergent in approaches (centralized vs. flexible systems). This reinforces the need for a comparative, system-based framework to understand the relationships among domains and to support sustainable transformation.

Table 1: Domains, Themes, and Supporting References (Synthesis of Chapter II Findings)

Domain	Themes	Key Findings	Supporting References
1) Curriculum Innovation	- Industry-aligned curriculum - Interdisciplinary learning - Flexible learning pathways	Curriculum is shifting toward competency-based and market-driven models, integrating digital skills and experiential learning (e.g., internships, MBKM).	Hamzah (2024); Lei (2025); Ruhimat et al. (2024); Pranita et al. (2025); World Bank (2023)
2. Digital Transformation	- Integration of AI and LMS -	Technology is a central driver of	Katsamakas et al. (2024);

Domain	Themes	Key Findings	Supporting References
	Digital readiness disparities - Online and blended learning	transformation, but disparities exist between Malaysia (more advanced infrastructure) and Indonesia (access challenges).	Muthu et al. (2023); Komari et al. (2023); Shard et al. (2024)
3. Institutional Governance	- Policy implementation on gaps - Leadership and autonomy - Bureaucratic constraints	Governance plays a critical enabling or limiting role, with Malaysia facing structural rigidity and Indonesia dealing with decentralization challenges.	Lei (2025); Fullan (2023); Komari et al. (2023)
4. Quality Assurance	- Continuous improvement systems - Accreditation and benchmarking - Accountability mechanisms	Quality culture is strengthened through evaluation systems, with Malaysia focusing on standardization and Indonesia emphasizing flexibility (Merdeka Belajar).	Harvey & Stensaker (2023); Ruhimat et al. (2024); Hamzah (2024)
5. Stakeholder Engagement	- Industry collaboration - Government - university partnerships - Student-centered learning	Strong stakeholder involvement improves relevance and employability, especially in vocational and applied education sectors.	Pranita et al. (2025); Gunarto & Hurriyati (2020); Komari et al. (2023)
6. Globalization & Glocalization	- Internationalization - Local adaptation - Cultural integration	Systems balance global competitiveness with local identity, especially visible in	Altbach & de Wit (2023); Sibawaihi et al. (2024)

Domain	Themes	Key Findings	Supporting References
		Indonesia's Islamic HE transformation	
<b>7. Human Capital Development</b>	- Employability skills - Workforce readiness - Economic contribution	HEIs function as drivers of economic growth, aligning education outcomes with labor market demands.	Becker (1993); Tan (2023); World Bank (2023); Hamzah (2024); Komari et al. (2023)
<b>8. Systems Integration (Cross-Domain)</b>	- Interconnected domains - Feedback mechanisms - Adaptive systems	Transformation is holistic and non-linear, requiring alignment across all domains rather than isolated reforms.	Katsamakas et al. (2024); Fullan (2023); Marginson (2024)

## 4. 2 Findings of Previous Studies

Below is a concise but meaningful summary of each of the 20 previous studies (10 Malaysia + 10 Indonesia). Each summary highlights the focus, method (where identifiable), and key findings, aligned with your research problem and objectives.

### A. Brief Summaries of Previous Studies in Malaysia

#### 1. Hamzah (2024)

This study explores how Malaysian higher education is adapting to the demands of the Industrial Revolution 4.0. Using a qualitative policy-oriented analysis, it finds that universities are increasingly integrating digital skills, AI, and critical thinking into curricula, but challenges remain in faculty readiness and infrastructure (Hamzah, 2024).

#### 2. Tham and Chong (2023)

This research analyses Malaysia's higher education policy transformation using a macro-level policy review. It concludes that while access and internationalization have improved significantly, issues related to graduate employability and institutional autonomy persist (Tham & Chong, 2023).

#### 3. Lei (2025)

This case study investigates institutional challenges in Malaysian universities. It identifies gaps in governance efficiency, curriculum relevance, and digital preparedness, highlighting the disconnect between policy goals and implementation practices (Lei, 2025).

#### 4. Amini et al. (2024)

This study examines post-COVID learning transformations in Malaysia through a literature review analysis. It shows that higher education has shifted toward flexible learning models, blended instruction, and lifelong learning approaches, emphasizing adaptability in pedagogy (Amini et al., 2024).

#### 5. Jamil et al. (2024)

Focusing on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), this study explores digital pedagogy transformation. It finds that inclusive digital practices and AI-supported learning are emerging trends, although disparities in access remain (Jamil et al., 2024).

#### 6. Shard et al. (2024)

This study investigates digital transformation in Malaysian higher education institutions using a systems perspective. It reveals that e-learning platforms enhance engagement and efficiency but require strong institutional support and training for sustainability (Shard et al., 2024).

#### 7. Wu et al. (2026)

Using bibliometric analysis, this study maps research trends in Malaysian

higher education. It identifies key transformation themes such as digitalization, employability, and global competitiveness, indicating a shift toward innovation-driven education (Wu et al., 2026).

#### 8. Jamaluddin et al. (2025)

This study examines the integration of artificial intelligence in Malaysia's education system. It highlights policy efforts to embed AI in teaching and administration, while noting ethical and readiness challenges in implementation (Jamaluddin et al., 2025).

#### 9. Muthu et al. (2023)

This research explores digital transformation practices in Malaysian universities. It finds that while institutions are adopting digital tools, issues such as resistance to change and uneven technological capacity hinder full transformation (Muthu et al., 2023).

#### 10. Katsamakos et al. (2024)

Although global in scope, this study proposes a systems-based model for AI-driven transformation in higher education. It emphasizes interconnections between technology, governance, and pedagogy, providing a useful framework applicable to Malaysia (Katsamakos et al., 2024).

### **B. Brief Summaries of Previous Studies in Indonesia**

#### 1. Fitriana et al. (2025)

This study analyses higher education policy transformation under the Kampus Merdeka initiative. It finds that policy reforms promote flexibility and interdisciplinary learning but face challenges in institutional readiness and consistency (Fitriana et al., 2025).

#### 2. Ruhimat et al. (2024)

This research focuses on quality assurance within the Merdeka Belajar framework. It concludes that the policy enhances institutional accountability and

innovation, although implementation varies across universities (Ruhimat et al., 2024).

#### 3. Andrea et al. (2024)

This study explores Merdeka Belajar as a paradigm shift in education. It highlights the move toward student-centred learning, emphasizing autonomy, creativity, and experiential learning approaches (Andrea et al., 2024).

#### 4. Amalia and Asbari (2023)

This research evaluates the early implementation of Merdeka Belajar. It finds that the policy serves as an important starting point for transformation but requires stronger institutional support and clearer guidelines (Amalia & Asbari, 2023).

#### 5. Gunarto and Hurriyati (2020)

This study examines student engagement and experience value in higher education. It shows that co-creation and active learning significantly enhance student satisfaction and learning outcomes (Gunarto & Hurriyati, 2020).

#### 6. Maghfira et al. (2025)

This research investigates the impact of flexible learning approaches on student engagement. It finds that Merdeka Belajar improves motivation, participation, and adaptability among students (Maghfira et al., 2025).

#### 7. Pratiwi (2025)

This study explores challenges in implementing curriculum transformation in Indonesia. It identifies issues such as limited teacher readiness, infrastructure gaps, and regional disparities, especially in rural areas (Pratiwi, 2025).

#### 8. Putri et al. (2023)

This research evaluates the effectiveness of Merdeka Belajar policies. It finds that while the policy promotes innovation and flexibility, inconsistencies in implementation affect its overall impact (Putri et al., 2023).

### 9. Saptadi et al. (2024)

This study focuses on the Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM) program. It highlights its role in improving employability and strengthening links between universities and industry (Saptadi et al., 2024).

### 10. Badu et al. (2024)

This study analyzes Indonesia's independent curriculum transformation. It finds that the policy supports competency-based learning and innovation but requires continuous evaluation and capacity building (Badu et al., 2024).

#### Overall Analytical Insight

Across these 20 studies, several cross-cutting themes emerge:

- 1) Digital Transformation: Strong in Malaysia; emerging but uneven in Indonesia
- 2) Curriculum Innovation: Driven by IR 4.0 (Malaysia) and Merdeka Belajar (Indonesia)
- 3) Governance Challenges: Present in both contexts

Quality Assurance: Central in both systems, but differently implemented

- 1) Stakeholder Engagement: Increasingly emphasized, especially industry collaboration  
However, these studies:
  - 1) Focus mostly on single-country analysis
  - 2) Lack system-level integration across domains
  - 3) Rarely provide comparative Malaysia–Indonesia perspectives

**Table 2: Domains, Themes, and Key Themes of Learning Transformation**  
(Based on 20 Previous Studies: Malaysia & Indonesia)

Domain	Themes	Key Themes/ Findings in Malaysia	Key Themes/ Findings in Indonesia
1. Curriculum Innovation	1) Competency-based curriculum	Integration of IR 4.0 skills (AI, analytics, critical thinking) (Hamzah, 2024; Lei, 2025)	Emphasis on flexible, student-centred curriculum (Merdeka Belajar) (Fitriana et al., 2025; Andrea et al., 2024)
	2) Interdisciplinary learning	Growth of cross-disciplinary programs and global competencies (Tham & Chong, 2023)	Growth of cross-disciplinary programs and global competencies (Tham & Chong, 2023)
	3) Experiential learning	Industry-linked curriculum and internship-based learning	MBKM promotes internships, community projects, and real-world exposure (Saptadi et al., 2024)
	4) Curriculum challenges	Misalignment with industry needs and slow adaptation (Lei, 2025)	Uneven implementation and teacher readiness
2. Digital Transformation	1) E-learning	Strong LMS usage and blended learning systems (Shard et al., 2024; Amini et al., 2024)	Increasing adoption of digital learning platforms, but uneven access (Maghfira et al., 2025)
	2) Artificial Intelligence	AI used in teaching, assessment, and administration (Jamaluddin et al., 2025)	Limited but emerging use of AI and digital tools

1. Curriculum Innovation	1) Competency-based curriculum	Integration of IR 4.0 skills (AI, analytics, critical thinking) (Hamzah, 2024; Lei, 2025)	Emphasis on flexible, student-centred curriculum (Merdeka Belajar) (Fitriana et al., 2025; Andrea et al., 2024)
	2) Interdisciplinary learning	Growth of cross-disciplinary programs and global competencies (Tham & Chong, 2023)	Growth of cross-disciplinary programs and global competencies (Tham & Chong, 2023)
	3) Experiential learning	Industry-linked curriculum and internship-based learning	MBKM promotes internships, community projects, and real-world exposure (Saptadi et al., 2024)
	4) Curriculum challenges	Misalignment with industry needs and slow adaptation (Lei, 2025)	Uneven implementation and teacher readiness
2. Digital Transformation	1) E-learning	Strong LMS usage and blended learning systems (Shard et al., 2024; Amini et al., 2024)	Increasing adoption of digital learning platforms, but uneven access (Maghfira et al., 2025)
	2) Artificial Intelligence	AI used in teaching, assessment, and administration (Jamaluddin et al., 2025)	Limited but emerging use of AI and digital tools

	nt el li g e n c e i n t e g r a t i o n		
	3) D i g i t a l p e d a g o g y	Advanced digital teaching practices in universities and TVET (Jamil et al., 2024)	Focus on digital literacy and basic integration
	4) D i g i t a l c h a l l e n g e s	Resistance to change and uneven institutional capacity (Muthu et al., 2023)	Infrastructure gaps and digital divide across regions (Komari et al., 2023)
<b>3. Institutional Governance</b>	1) L e a d e r s h i p a n d m a n a g e	Governance gaps between policy and implementation (Lei, 2025)	Decentralized governance creates flexibility but inconsistency (Putri et al., 2023)

	m e n t		
	2) I n s t i t u t i o n a l a u t o n o m y	Moderate autonomy with strong regulation	Increasing institutional autonomy under reforms
	3) G o v e r n a n c e c h a l l e n g e s	Bureaucracy and slow policy execution	Implementation inconsistency and coordination issues
<b>4. Quality Assurance</b>	1) A c c r e d i t a t i o n s y s t e m s	Established QA systems ensuring academic standards (Hamzah, 2024)	QA evolving through reform policies (Ruhimat et al., 2024)
	2) C o n t i n u	Strong emphasis on benchmarking and evaluation	Increasing focus on innovation within QA systems

	o u s i m p r o v e m e n t		
	3) Q u a l i t y c u l t u r e	Institutional ized quality culture in universities	Emerging quality culture with uneven adoption
	4) Q A c h a l l e n g e	Balancing innovation with standardizat ion	Variation in QA implementa tion across institutions (Putri et al., 2023)
5. Stake holder Engag ement	1) I n d u s t r y c o l l a b o r a t i o n	Strong university-i ndustry partnerships (Tham & Chong, 2023)	MBKM strengthens collaboratio n with industry (Saptadi et al., 2024)
	2) S t u d e n t e n g	Focus on employabili ty and skills developmen t	Emphasis on student autonomy and co-creation (Gunarto & Hurriyati, 2020)

	a g e m e n t		
	3) C o m m u n i t y e n g a g e m e n t	Growing role of universities in innovation ecosystems	Community -based learning and social engagement programs
	4) S t a k e h o l d e r c h a l l e n g e s	Limited integration across stakeholder s	Weak coordinatio n between universities and industry
	5) T r a n s f o r m a t i o n g a p s	Skills mismatch and uneven transformati on	Regional disparities and inconsistent implementa tion

**Synthesis of Cross-Cutting Insights**

From the table above, several integrative findings emerge:

#### 1. Converging Trends

Both Malaysia and Indonesia emphasize:

- 1) Curriculum reform
- 2) Digital transformation
- 3) Employability
- 4) Quality assurance

#### 2. Diverging Approaches

1. Malaysia: Structured, policy-driven, globally oriented
2. Indonesia: Flexible, inclusive, locally adaptive

#### 3. System-Level Interconnections

Curriculum ↔ Digital Technology  
 ↔ Governance ↔ Quality Assurance ↔ Stakeholders

These domains are interdependent, confirming the relevance of a systems approach (Katsamakos et al., 2024)

#### 4. Identified Gaps (Supporting Your Research)

- 1) Lack of integrated system models
- 2) Limited comparative analysis
- 3) Weak cross-country collaboration frameworks

## V. CONCLUSION

### 5.1 Conclusion

This study examined learning transformations in higher education in Malaysia and Indonesia through a comparative and system-based qualitative approach. The findings reveal that higher education transformation is a complex, dynamic, and interconnected process involving multiple domains, including curriculum innovation, digital transformation, institutional governance, quality assurance, and stakeholder engagement.

First, the study confirms that both Malaysia and Indonesia are undergoing significant transformation driven by global pressures such as digitalization, globalization, and the demands of the knowledge economy. These transformations are not isolated but occur within an interconnected system where

changes in one domain influence others. This reinforces the idea that higher education transformation must be understood holistically rather than through fragmented perspectives.

Second, the study identifies several converging trends between the two countries. Both Malaysia and Indonesia emphasize curriculum reform, digital integration, employability, and quality assurance as key priorities. Universities in both contexts are shifting toward competency-based education, interdisciplinary learning, and student-centred approaches to better prepare graduates for the evolving labor market.

Third, despite these similarities, the study highlights notable differences in transformation approaches. Malaysia demonstrates a more structured, policy-driven, and globally oriented system, supported by relatively advanced digital infrastructure and strong institutional frameworks. In contrast, Indonesia adopts a more flexible, inclusive, and locally adaptive approach, particularly through initiatives such as Merdeka Belajar, which emphasize student autonomy and contextual learning.

Fourth, the findings reveal several shared challenges across both countries. These include gaps between policy and implementation, uneven digital readiness, governance constraints, and disparities in resource distribution. In Indonesia, challenges are more pronounced in terms of infrastructure and regional inequality, while Malaysia faces issues related to bureaucratic rigidity and institutional alignment.

Finally, the study contributes to the development of a system-based conceptual framework that explains how transformation domains interact through feedback mechanisms. This framework highlights that sustainable higher education transformation requires alignment across curriculum, technology, governance, quality assurance, and

stakeholder engagement. Without such integration, reforms may remain fragmented and less effective.

Overall, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia, demonstrating that while both countries share common goals, their pathways and contextual challenges differ. The findings emphasize the importance of adopting a systemic, comparative, and collaborative approach to achieve sustainable and future-oriented higher education systems.

## 5.2 Implications

The findings of this study have several important implications for theory, policy, and practice.

### 5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This study reinforces the relevance of a systems approach in understanding higher education transformation. It demonstrates that transformation is not linear but involves dynamic interactions among multiple domains. The integration of systems thinking with human capital, globalization, and quality culture perspectives provides a more comprehensive framework for analysing educational change.

### 5.2.2 Policy Implications

For policymakers, the study highlights the need for coherent and integrated policy frameworks. Policies should not focus solely on individual aspects such as curriculum or technology but must ensure alignment across all domains. Additionally, there is a need to bridge the gap between policy design and implementation through effective monitoring, evaluation, and capacity-building mechanisms.

### 5.2.3 Practical Implications

For higher education institutions, the findings emphasize the importance of institutional readiness, leadership, and collaboration. Universities must invest in digital infrastructure, faculty development, and innovative teaching practices.

Moreover, strengthening partnerships with industry and other stakeholders is essential for enhancing relevance and employability.

## 5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

### 5.3.1 For Policymakers

It is imperative for them to, firstly, develop integrated and system-based policies that align curriculum, technology, governance, and quality assurance. Secondly, they also have to strengthen implementation mechanisms to ensure consistency across institutions. Finally, they have to promote regional collaboration between Malaysia and Indonesia in areas such as research, curriculum development, and quality assurance.

### 5.3.2 For Higher Education Institutions

First, they have to enhance digital readiness through investment in infrastructure and training. Secondly, they have to foster innovative and flexible learning models that support student-centered education. Finally, they have to strengthen industry partnerships to improve graduate employability and real-world relevance.

### 5.3.3 For Stakeholders

They should encourage active collaboration between universities, industry, and government. They also have to support initiatives that promote lifelong learning and skills development. Finally, they also have to increase engagement in curriculum design and evaluation processes.

## 5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the study relies on secondary data through document analysis, which may limit the depth of insights compared to primary data collection methods such as interviews or observations. As a result, the findings are based on existing literature and may not fully capture current on-the-ground

realities. Second, the study focuses on a limited number of previous studies (20 articles), which may not represent the entire body of research on higher education transformation in Malaysia and Indonesia. Although efforts were made to select relevant and recent sources, some important perspectives may have been excluded. Third, the comparative analysis is limited to two countries, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. While the results provide valuable insights, they may not fully apply to other regions with different socio-economic and educational conditions. Fourth, the study adopts a qualitative approach, which emphasizes depth and interpretation rather than statistical generalization. Therefore, the findings should be understood as exploratory and interpretative rather than definitive.

### 5.5 Suggestions for Future Research

Based on the limitations, several suggestions for future research are proposed: Future studies should incorporate primary data collection methods, such as interviews, surveys, or case studies, to provide deeper and more contextualized insights into higher education transformation. Researchers are encouraged to expand the scope of analysis by including more countries within Southeast Asia or other regions to enhance comparative understanding and generalizability. Further research should explore specific domains in greater depth, such as digital transformation, governance, or quality assurance, to provide more detailed and focused analysis. Longitudinal studies are recommended to examine how higher education transformation evolves and to assess the long-term impact of policies and reforms. Future research should also investigate collaborative models between Malaysia and Indonesia, particularly in areas such as joint research, academic mobility, and regional policy integration.

### REFERENCES

- Altbach, P. G., & de Wit, H. (2023). Internationalization in higher education: Global trends and recommendations. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 27(1), 3–18.
- Amalia, V. R., & Asbari, M. (2023). Merdeka Belajar: Solusi awal transformasi pendidikan Indonesia. *Jurnal Informasi dan Sistem Manajemen*, 2(5), 62–67.
- Amini, M., Ravindran, L., & Lee, K. F. (2024). Adapting education shifts in Malaysia after COVID-19: A comprehensive review of flexible assessments, lifelong learning initiatives, and diversified learning trajectories. *Asian Journal of Assessment in Teaching and Learning*, 14(1), 1–14.
- Andrea, J., Sakinah, F., Gistituati, N., & Hadiyanto. (2024). Merdeka Belajar as a transformation paradigm in Indonesian education. *Jurnal Pendidikan Dasar*, 9(1), 45–56.
- Badu, S. Q., Djafri, N., & Nasution, W. R. (2024). Transformation of national education through the independent curriculum. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 2(1), 15–27.
- Becker, G. S. (1993). *Human capital: A theoretical and empirical analysis with special reference to education* (3rd ed.). University of Chicago Press.
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 9(2), 27–40.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2021). *Thematic analysis: A practical guide*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research*

- design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Denzin, N. K. (2017). *The research act: A theoretical introduction to sociological methods* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Fitriana, S., Hendrilia, Y., Judijanto, L., Sulaeman, S., & Anwar, R. N. (2025). Transformation of higher education policy: Comparative analysis of Kampus Merdeka and the new direction policy. *TOFEDU: The Future of Education Journal*, 4(5), 1278–1284.
- Flick, U. (2022). *An introduction to qualitative research* (7th ed.). Sage.
- Fullan, M. (2023). *The new meaning of educational change* (6th ed.). Teachers College Press.
- Gunarto, M., & Hurriyati, R. (2020). Creating experience value in higher education: The role of student engagement. *Journal of Education Research and Evaluation*, 4(2), 120–130.
- Hamzah, S. (2024). Higher education transformation in Malaysia: Challenges and opportunities in the era of Industrial Revolution 4.0 (IR 4.0). *Perspektif Jurnal Sains Sosial dan Kemanusiaan*, 16(2), 127–136. <https://doi.org/10.37134/perspektif.vol16.2.11.2024>
- Harvey, L., & Stensaker, B. (2023). Quality culture: Understandings, boundaries, and linkages. *European Journal of Education*, 58(1), 10–25.
- Jamaluddin, F., Jamaluddin, A. H., Jamaluddin, F., & Jamaluddin, F. (2025). Malaysia's AI-driven education landscape: Policies, challenges, and future directions. *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2509.21858>
- Jamil, M. R. M., Idris, N., & Zalli, M. M. (2024). Transforming inclusive digital pedagogy in Malaysian tertiary TVET: Adapting to a new educational landscape. *Journal of Technical Education and Training*, 16(2), 161–170.
- Katsamakas, E., Pavlov, O. V., & Saklad, R. (2024). Artificial intelligence and the transformation of higher education institutions. *arXiv*. <https://arxiv.org/abs/2402.08143>
- Komari, K., Fitriyanti, R., Susanto, H. W., Siminto, S., & Amin, A. (2023). Transformation of higher education in Indonesia: Pursuing quality, accessibility, and relevance in the era of globalization. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning*.
- Lei, D. (2025). Evaluating higher education transformation in Malaysia: A case study of institutional challenges and opportunities. *International Conference on Fundamental and Applied Research*.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Sage.
- Maghfira, S., Darisman, E. K., & Mardhika, R. (2025). The impact of the Merdeka Belajar approach on student learning experience and engagement. *Sriwijaya Journal of Sport*, 4(3), 288–297.
- Marginson, S. (2024). Global trends in higher education systems. *Higher Education Quarterly*, 78(2), 145–162.
- Muthu, C., Liang, C. S., & Hui, W. (2023). Digital transformation in higher education institutions: Challenges and opportunities in Malaysia. *INTI Journal*, 2023(1), 45–55.
- Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 16(1), 1–13.

- Pranita, D., Musthofa, B. M., Kusumastuti, H., & Haidlir, B. M. (2025). Transforming vocational higher education on the path toward Golden Indonesia 2045. *Vocational Technology Education Journal*, 2(1). <https://doi.org/10.54844/vte.2024.0806>
- Pratiwi, W. R. (2025). Transforming education with Merdeka Belajar curriculum: Challenges and opportunities. *English Franca: Academic Journal of English Language and Education*, 9(1), 75–90.
- Putri, S. A., Asbari, M., & Hapizi, M. Z. (2023). Evaluating the implementation of the Merdeka Belajar policy in higher education. *Jurnal Informasi dan Sistem Manajemen*, 3(2), 39–46.
- Ruhimat, M. D. C., Rahyasih, Y., Gorni, R. L., & Shodikin, R. (2024). Supporting transformation of Indonesian higher education quality assurance: The advanced socialization of Merdeka Belajar policy. *Jurnal Ilmu Pendidikan*, 30(2), 155–168.
- Saptadi, N. T. S., Alwi, M., & Novianti, W. (2024). *Revolusi pendidikan: Merdeka Belajar Kampus Merdeka (MBKM)*. Sada Kurnia Pustaka.
- Shard, S., Kumar, D., & Koul, S. (2024). Digital transformation in higher education: Impacts on teaching, learning, and institutional performance. *Human Systems Management*, 43(4), 567–580.
- Sibawaihi, S., Suyatno, S., Suyadi, S., & Fernandes, V. (2024). Transforming Islamic higher education institutions in Indonesia from “institutes/colleges” into “universities”: Globalization or glocalization? *Journal of Studies in International Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/08920206241268506>
- Tan, E. (2023). Human capital development and higher education transformation in Southeast Asia. *Asian Education Review*, 15(2), 89–105.
- Tham, S. Y., & Chong, P. Y. (2023). Transforming Malaysia’s higher education: Policy, progress, and challenges. *Asian Economic Policy Review*, 18(1), 88–104.
- World Bank. (2023). *Enhancing higher education for employability in Southeast Asia*. World Bank Publications.
- Wu, S., Firdaus, R. B., Wang, Y., & Kamsi, N. S. (2026). Mapping higher education research in Malaysia: A bibliometric analysis. *SAGE Open*, 16(1), 1–15.