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REAL LEARNING IN A VIRTUAL WORLD

HUMAN CAPITAL REPORT



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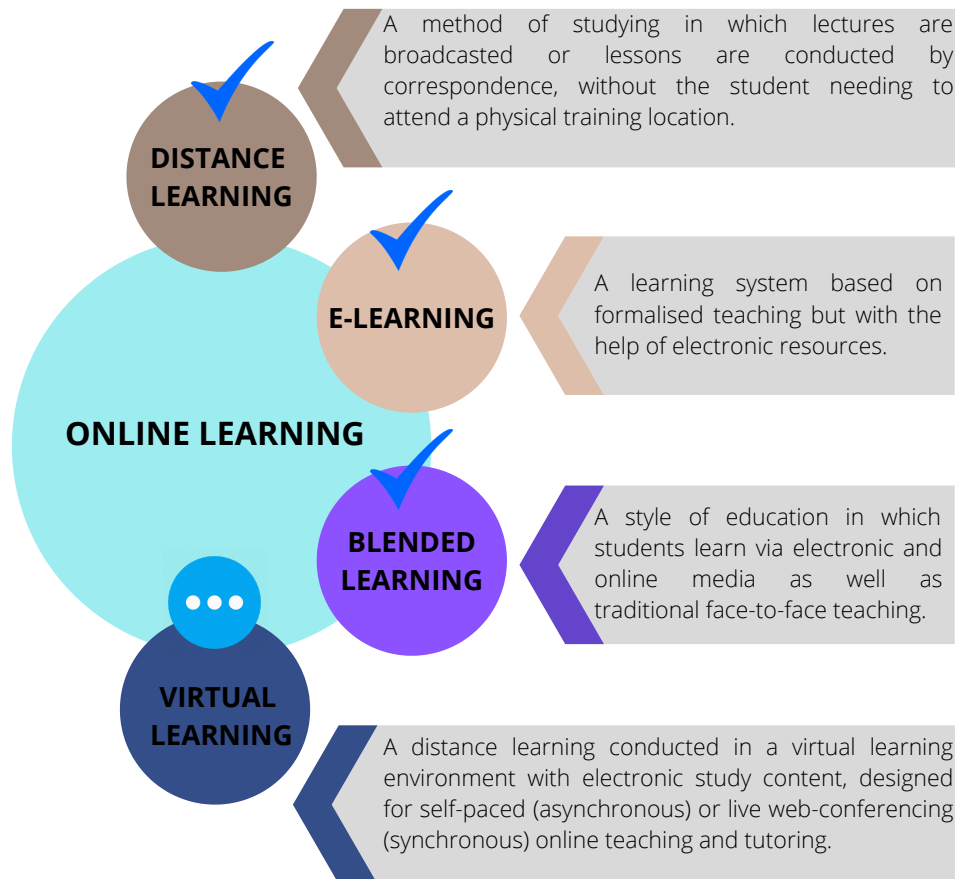
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Embracing the New Normal

A general observation reveals that as a result of the pandemic, many trainers / instructors have resorted to delivering their training / teaching sessions online. This sudden shift has shed more light on the **various facets of online training** which include **distance learning, e-learning, virtual learning, and blended learning**. The following is a diagram containing definitions for each of these facets:



Most of these facets have already been covered through HRDF's various online learning initiatives. However, virtual learning is yet to be fully explored, particularly in terms of virtual learning technologies, **Virtual Reality (VR)**. Though it is not entirely a new topic, VR adoption among Malaysians - especially within the field of employee training or learning - has been relatively slow. But the fundamental questions remain: **what is VR, and is it entirely necessary?**

This article is intended to help employers understand VR and decide whether VR is right for their particular learning needs, and help chart a path towards the successful adoption of this technology.

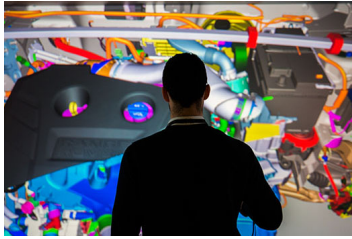
Virtual Reality (VR) is an artificial environment which is experienced through sensory stimuli (such as sights and sounds) provided by a computer. For example, trainees who have never been to an offshore rig may find it hard to imagine what it is like to be there. While images and videos are helpful, they are not as effective as being physically present at any given training session. However, through VR, trainees will have the opportunity to 'visit' the offshore rig, view the equipment and facilities used, as well as immerse themselves in the overall drilling experience - without the need to be physically present at the rig.

QUICK TAKEAWAYS AND HIGHLIGHTS

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To paint a better picture, here are several examples of VR usage in training:

Automotive Training



VR allows engineers and designers to experiment easily with the look and build of a vehicle before commissioning expensive prototypes. They use VR to hold early design and engineering reviews to check the visual design and object obscuration of the vehicle.

Healthcare Training



VR allows healthcare professionals to prepare themselves for working on real bodies and VR has been used as pain relief for burn injuries.



VR can be used as a treatment for mental health issues, with Virtual Reality Exposure Therapy thought to be particularly effective in the treatment of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and anxiety.



VR also allows radiographers to be able to experience a Coronary Computed Tomography Angiography (CCTA) set-up without holding up the room or patient list.

Customer Service Training



VR allows employees to practice dealing with difficult customers and challenging situations in a safe environment, where they can build up their skills and confidence.

Presentation Skills Training



VR allows employees to practice presentation in various virtual environments, upload their presentation slides, receive AI-powered feedback, as well as track progress within the VR app. Managers can also track learner completion and progress, and easily measure ROI more.

Marketing and Sales Training



VR allows salespeople to see how the company produces their products. With salespeople having a clearer understanding of the production process, it helps build more trust with their clients. VR can also help connect salespeople in different locations to meet and conduct meetings and training sessions.

Many business skills require practice for the sake of comprehension and mastery, and VR provides employees with a safe space to practice and learn from their experiences.

Diversity and inclusion training has become a focus area for many companies over the last couple of years, thus it naturally follows that there are VR simulations that replicate these scenarios too.

Exploring the Viability of VR Within the Training Landscape

As mentioned earlier, though the COVID-19 pandemic has caused business disruption and decelerated employee training, the online learning trend has experienced a sudden spike. HRDF statistics prove that there has been a 96% increase in the number of employees trained using online platforms in year 2020.

However, online learning is not a 'one-size-fits-all' solution, and oftentimes, learning or training which requires technical, hands-on exposure and immersive experiences gets excluded from the equation.

According to HRDF data in year 2020, 93% of practical/hands-on training cannot be carried out online without assistance from VR or Augmented Reality (AR). Thus, VR and AR are much needed tools in the delivery of online learning for various sectors.

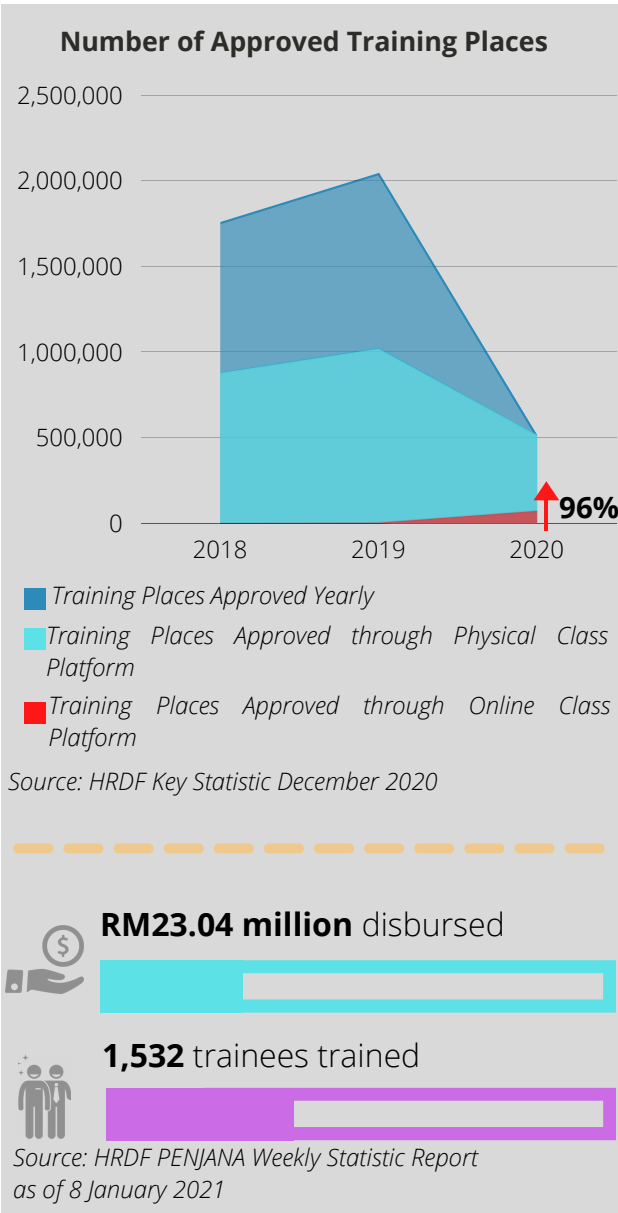
Nevertheless, HRDF is committed to continually seek feedback from all stakeholders and further explore the advent of virtual training technologies, including VR and AR, for the betterment of our training landscape. We seek to facilitate and empower the industry with training which befits them, particularly during these trying times.

HRDF also realises the potential of VR & AR technology in training employees and has actively invested in this notion. As of 8 January 2021, RM23.04 million has been disbursed and 1,532 individuals have been trained to spearhead the use of VR and AR technologies under IR 4.0 pillars across key industries.

Conclusion

As a result of COVID-19 and the need for physical distancing, virtual training has become a much-needed alternative.

HRDF registered employers have experienced a recent growth in interest to attend online training to boost their productivity, but there is still insufficient information on the adoption of virtual training technologies (such as VR) within the Malaysian training landscape.



QUICK TAKEAWAYS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Various industries may be keen to embrace virtual training. However, issues such as lack of e-content and inadequate infrastructure coupled with the problem of expensive digital devices has resulted in a relatively low adoption rate.

Nevertheless, below are some of the schemes offered by HRDF to assist the industry in addressing the above issue:

1 Computer Based Training (CBT)

To enable employers to purchase / develop training software to retrain and upgrade the knowledge and skills of their workforce, especially for employers who are unable to release their employees to attend training outside company premises

2 Training Facilities & Renovation (ALAT)

To encourage more in-house retraining and skills upgrading of employees by subsidising the purchase of training aids for the purpose of setting up, renovating or enhancing training rooms

3 Information Technology (IT)

To encourage employers to further retrain their employees in the field of Information Technology whereby financial assistance will be provided to them for the purchase of desktops/laptops, webcams and internet connection