

RESPONDING TO CHALLENGES

DIGITAL COMPETENCY AMID COVID-19

The pandemic has pushed unprecedented growth in the field of digital learning and teaching



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THE importance of being agile and resilient to disruptions in responding to events like the Covid-19 pandemic has never been more urgent. The pandemic, like any other crisis, unfolded over a period and the end is still nowhere in sight.

Since then, segments of the public service have been utilising digital solutions to address a host of issues during the Movement Control Order (MCO) and the recovery period so that timely and accurate information and effective assistance can be continuously made available to the public.

The use of various social media platforms and apps such as the Telegram page of the National Security Council and the Health Ministry's Crisis Preparedness and Response Centre has been fully employed to provide daily public updates and disseminate information.

Apps such as MySejahtera have made it possible for the authorities to establish standard operating procedures for contact tracing and data collection.

All this is a realisation of the government's efforts through its Digital Government Competency and Capability Readiness initiative aimed at enhancing service delivery through digital solutions.

This pandemic has also provided the impetus for educational and other learning and development institutions to use technology to transform learning.

Online learning has become the new norm, allowing schools, colleges, and universities worldwide to circumvent the lockdowns and continue delivery of their programmes.

This transformative use of technology through digital solutions is also evident in the learning and development realms of public service.

For instance, despite the MCO, which began on March 18, the use of online platforms allowed 402 cadets attending the mandatory post-graduate Diploma in Public Management Programme at the National Institute of Public Administration (Intan) to continue the course involving various academic modules.

Initially, the trainers had to switch gears almost immediately to prepare and insti-

tute the online delivery of the content. The experiment with online and digital platforms, mainly Zoom and Google Meet, supplemented by Google Classroom, WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook and YouTube, has allowed the Institute to continue providing programmes to a broader group of people, even post-MCO.

Teaching and learning through online platforms have broken the mould of traditional classrooms that are confined to time and space. It allows learners to explore all possible learning avenues by taking advantage of the digital content provided by the Internet to offer teaching and learning experiences to learners anytime, anywhere. This form of learning has the potential to make both teachers and learners more than just providers and consumers of knowledge, respectively — they can now be mutual generators of knowledge.

This experience has brought about a positive change to the learning and development of an institution's digital ecology, with trainers embracing technology in ways inconceivable only a few years ago.

Trainers are much more adept at hosting class sessions and webinars, manoeuvring and using different platforms and their features to maximise learning and the sharing of knowledge.

They are also able to guide learners to take advantage of the slew of multi-mode content, including texts, images, diagrams, audio, video and others. This experience has undoubtedly enhanced the trainers' skillsets and allowed them to develop more valuable digital assets.

For the learners who are mostly millennials, they are great emissaries for this new way of learning. Being digital natives, the learners facilitate trainers to achieve their instructional goals and meet their learning aspirations. They contribute to enrich the learning and development experiences of others apart from acquiring digitally creative ideas for performing their tasks and projects with passion and clarity.

In addition, learners are given the opportunity to use different digital media to communicate, manage information, collaborate, and co-create knowledge in a flexible and autonomous manner.

This new environment has encouraged public service training institutions like Intan to broaden the scope of online programmes to ensure public service officers will remain at the cutting edge with fit-for-purpose skills in this volatile climate.

Despite the horror and sadness that Covid-19 has wreaked, it also led to adjustments in the way daily human life is conducted.

For one, the world of online teaching and learning in general and the digital competency and readiness of the public service, in particular, have been enhanced to ensure minimal disruption to service delivery and in caring for the needs of the people.

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Online learning breaks the mould of traditional classrooms by allowing teachers and students to become mutual generators of knowledge. PIC BY ROHANIS SHUKRI