



BECOMING A **VIRTUAL LEARNER** IN THE DEFENSE ACQUISITION COMMUNITY

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THE YEAR 2020 HAS BROUGHT DRAMATIC AND UNANTICIPATED CHANGE TO THE DEFENSE Acquisition Community and to the Defense Acquisition University (DAU). We have experienced the disruptive global coronavirus pandemic along with other high-profile news, including police brutality, racial protests, and election-year politics.

Surprisingly, the Defense Acquisition Community has managed a rapid change to doing its business virtually as the workforce becomes the “work from home” force. DAU training and support to the workforce also have transitioned to the virtual environment, but not without some strain and adaptation issues.

Let’s take a look at the issues in adapting what had been a gradual and deliberate DAU transition away from residential (classroom) training to the immediate pivot to online platforms and virtual training. While our response has been rapid, significant issues remain for DAU to not just survive but “thrive” in the virtual environment.

Production-Line Education

In his 2018 book *Lessons for the 21st Century*, historian Yuval Harari states: “The Industrial Revolution has bequeathed us the production-line theory of education. In the middle of town there is a large concrete building divided into many identical rooms, each room equipped with rows of desks and chairs. At the sound of the bell, you go to one of these rooms together with thirty other kids who were all born the same year as you. Every hour a different grown-up walks in and starts talking. The grown-ups are all paid by the government. ... It is easy to laugh at this model, and almost everybody agrees that no matter its past achievements, it is now bankrupt. But so far we haven’t created a viable alternative.”

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