

VIRTUAL REALITY FOR HOLISTIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

Virtual reality (VR) technology has the potential to revolutionize education by providing a more immersive and interactive learning experience. This technology can be used to create virtual environments that simulate real-world situations, allowing students to engage with the material in a more holistic and meaningful way. VR can also be used to create interactive simulations that allow students to apply their knowledge and skills in a safe and controlled environment. By using VR in education, students can learn at their own pace, in a way that is tailored to their individual needs and learning styles. Additionally, VR can facilitate collaboration and teamwork, as well as provide students with access to resources that may not be available in traditional classroom settings. Overall, VR has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of education and improve student engagement and learning outcomes.

Introduction

Virtual reality (VR) can be defined as a realistic computer-generated environment that immerses the user in a simulated reality through sensory stimulus. Virtual reality can be derived from the meanings of 'virtual' and 'reality'. Virtual refers to something almost tangible, while reality is what we experience as human beings. Therefore, the phrase 'virtual reality' essentially conveys the notion of 'near-reality'. We were taught in school that we have five senses: taste, touch, smell, sight and hearing. Apart from our five traditional senses, we possess many more. We have a sense of balance, for instance. Our brain can take in sensory inputs from the environment and process them to ensure a constant supply of information. Our senses are the only way to understand our reality. Our brains process the sensory information we receive and create a collective experience of what is real. This amalgamation of sensory details and sense-making by our brains constitutes our perception of reality. Consequently, we may experience a version of reality which doesn't exist but appears genuine from our viewpoint.

Virtual reality can help provide a more immersive and interactive learning experience for students, which can lead to a more holistic education. For example, VR can be used to create simulations of real-world scenarios and environments, allowing students to explore and learn about subjects through hands-on and in an engaging way. Additionally, VR can be used to create virtual field trips, allowing students to visit places that they may not be able to visit in person. This can help to increase student engagement and understanding of the material being taught. Furthermore, VR can also be used to create interactive learning activities, such as games and quizzes, which can help to make learning more fun and engaging.

Virtual reality for Holistic Education

Holistic education is an approach to education that focuses on the development of the whole person, rather than just focusing on academic achievement. It aims for the fullest possible human development enabling a person to become the very best or finest that they can be and develop fully 'those capacities that together make up a human being' (Forbes, 2003). This approach emphasizes the importance of developing the student's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Holistic education is student-centered and emphasizes the importance of the individual student's unique needs and interests.

Some key elements of holistic education include:

- 1) Developing Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- 2) Promoting Emotional development
- 3) Encouraging Social development
- 4) Emphasizing the importance of ethical and Moral development

This approach aims to create well-rounded and balanced individuals who are able to think critically, communicate effectively, and lead fulfilling lives. It also aims to create a learning environment that is inclusive, supportive and empowering.

VR for Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is the ability to analyse and evaluate information in order to make well-reasoned decisions. It involves the use of logic and reasoning to identify the strengths and weaknesses of arguments, and to separate facts from opinions. Virtual Reality (VR) has the potential to enhance critical thinking skills by immersing users in simulated environments that simulate real-world scenarios. Problem Based Learning assisted by Augmented Reality books improve students' critical thinking skills (Saphira and Prahani, 2022). By placing users in simulations that require them to solve problems and make decisions, VR can help users develop their critical thinking skills in a number of ways:

- 1) **Problem-solving:** VR allows users to practice solving problems in a safe and controlled environment. This can help users develop their ability to analyze information, identify patterns, and make logical decisions.
- 2) **Decision-making:** VR can also help users practice making decisions by simulating real-world scenarios. This can help users develop their ability to weigh the pros and cons of different options and make well-informed decisions.
- 3) **Perspective-taking:** VR can also help users develop their ability to see things from different perspectives. This can help users think more critically about their own beliefs and assumptions and consider alternative viewpoints.
- 4) **Experimentation:** VR allows users to experiment with different options and see the outcomes, providing them with the possibility to learn from their mistakes and make better decisions.

Some examples of VR apps that can help develop critical thinking skills include

- 1) "Keep Talking and Nobody Explodes" - a cooperative game that requires players to work together to defuse a virtual bomb
- 2) "The Lab" - a collection of mini-games and experiments that require players to think critically and solve puzzles
- 3) "Tilt Brush" - a painting app that allows users to create 3D art in a virtual environment
- 4) "Cosmoscope" - A VR app that allows users to explore and understand complex scientific concepts in an interactive way.

VR for Emotional Development

Emotional development refers to the way in which a person learns to understand and express their emotions, as well as how they respond to the emotions of others. It is a complex process that occurs throughout a person's lifespan. Virtual reality (VR) can be used to support emotional development by providing immersive experiences that allow individuals to practice regulating their emotions and interacting with others in simulated social situations. For example, VR therapy has been used to help individuals with autism improve their social skills and emotional regulation. Additionally, VR can be used to expose individuals to situations that may trigger certain emotions, such as anxiety or fear, in a controlled environment, allowing them to learn to manage these emotions more effectively. A study, conducted by researchers at the University of Wollongong in Australia, found that VR can be used to teach empathy and understanding of different cultures. The study used VR simulations to transport students to different parts of the world, allowing them to experience the culture and way of life of people living in those areas. The students reported feeling more empathetic and understanding of the people they had encountered in the VR simulations, and they also showed a greater interest in learning about other cultures.

Some examples of VR apps that can help develop emotional development skills include

- 1) "Be Another Lab" - a VR experience that allows users to "swap" bodies with someone else, in order to understand and empathize with their experiences
- 2) "The Empathy Experience" - a VR app that allows users to experience life from the perspective of different people, including refugees, people with disabilities, and people living in poverty
- 3) "The Body VR" - a VR app that allows users to explore and understand the human body and its functions in an interactive way
- 4) "VR Therapy" - a VR app that allows users to experience different therapeutic scenarios and techniques in order to develop emotional regulation and coping strategies

VR for Social Development

Social development refers to the process of learning and adapting to social norms, customs and behaviours. It encompasses the development of social skills, such as communication, empathy, and collaboration that are essential for interacting and building relationships with others. The Centre for Innovative Applications of Internet and Multimedia Technologies (AIMTech Centre) at City University of Hong Kong developed a VR-enabled training program to examine its efficacy on emotional and social skills with six VR scenarios depicting the daily lives of typical children in Hong Kong and found that VR seems to be a promising asset to traditional training and therapy (Yuan and Shing IP, 2018). The study used VR simulations to help the children practice social interactions in a controlled and safe environment. The children who participated in the study showed significant improvements in their social skills, as well as in their ability to understand and interpret social cues. Virtual Reality (VR) has the potential to enhance social development by allowing users to interact with others in simulated environments. By placing users in virtual environments where they can interact with other users, VR can help them develop their social skills in a number of ways:

- 1) **Communication:** VR allows users to practice communicating with others in a safe and controlled environment. This can help users develop their ability to express themselves effectively and understand the perspectives of others.
- 2) **Empathy:** VR can also help users develop empathy by allowing them to experience life from the perspective of different people. This can help users understand and relate to the experiences of others, which is an important aspect of social development.
- 3) **Collaboration:** VR can also help users develop collaboration skills by allowing them to work with others in virtual environments. This can help users learn how to work together effectively, which is essential for social development.
- 4) **Social interactions:** VR allows users to interact with others in virtual environments, providing them with opportunities to practice social interactions in a safe and controlled environment.

Some examples of VR apps that can help develop social development skills include

- 1) "AltspaceVR" - a social VR platform that allows users to interact with others in a variety of virtual environments, such as virtual lounges, classrooms, and events
- 2) "Rec Room" - a social VR game that allows users to play games and participate in activities with other players
- 3) "Engage" - a VR platform that allows users to attend virtual events, such as conferences and trade shows, and interact with others in a virtual setting
- 4) "Spatial" - a VR collaboration tool that allows users to meet and work together in a virtual environment.

VR for Moral Development

Moral development refers to the process of learning and understanding moral and ethical principles, and how to apply them in decision making. It encompasses the development of moral reasoning, empathy and the ability to understand the perspectives of others. . In role playing and simulation, role play enhances empathy than simulation to the students through virtual reality (Olsen and Oertel, 2020). Virtual Reality (VR) has the potential to enhance moral development by allowing users to experience and interact with simulated ethical and moral dilemmas in a safe and controlled environment. By placing users in virtual environments where they can make decisions and experience the consequences, VR can help them develop their moral reasoning and decision-making skills in a number of ways:

Empathy: VR can help users develop empathy by allowing them to experience life from the perspective of different people and cultures. This can help users understand and relate to the experiences of others, which is an important aspect of moral development. **Moral reasoning:** VR can also help users develop their moral reasoning by allowing them to consider the consequences of their actions and make well-informed decisions. **Cultural understanding:** VR can also help users develop an understanding of different cultures and historical events, fostering cultural sensitivity and understanding, which are important aspects of moral development. **Ethical scenarios:** VR can allow users to experience and solve different ethical scenarios, such as medical, business, and personal ones, helping them to develop their understanding of moral principles and how to apply them in real-life situations.

Some examples of VR apps that can help develop moral development include

- 1) "The Machine to be Another" - A VR experience that allows users to "swap" bodies with someone else, in order to understand and empathize with their experiences and cultures
- 2) "The VR Museum of Fine Art" - A VR app that allows users to explore and appreciate art from different cultures and time periods, fostering cultural sensitivity and understanding
- 3) "The VR Holocaust Experience" - A VR app that allows users to learn about the Holocaust and understand the impact of discrimination and genocide on individuals and society
- 4) "Ethical Dilemma" - A VR app that allows users to experience and solve different ethical scenarios, such as medical, business, and personal ones.

Conclusion

Virtual reality (VR) can be used as a tool to support holistic education. Holistic education is an approach to education that focuses on the development of the whole person, rather than just focusing on academic achievement. This approach emphasizes the importance of developing the student's physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. Additionally, VR technology can be used to create simulations of real-world scenarios and environments, allowing students to explore and learn about subjects in a more hands-on and interactive way. This can help to increase student engagement and understanding of the material being taught. In summary, VR technology can be used as a tool to support holistic education by providing an immersive and interactive learning experience, and by helping to develop a wide range of skills and attributes that are important for the overall well-being of the student. It's important to note that VR is still a relatively new technology, and more research is needed to fully understand its impact on holistic education. VR can provide a unique platform for holistic education by allowing students to experience different environments, cultures, and perspectives, which can foster empathy and global citizenship.

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