How can Microsoft Teams application help education during Covid-19?

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The COVID-19 outbreak has fundamentally altered the way work and learning takes place all over the world. The trends had been in existent before the coronavirus outbreak, but the containment measures adopted to curb its spread has aggravated the drastic shift to remote learning and work. Microsoft Corporation is one of the tech organizations that have taken center stage in helping the world to cope with the disruption to regular business as occasioned by the pandemic. When students and their teachers, just like teams across all other industries, were struggling to connect amidst unprecedented challenges, Microsoft intervened by working on an app to support learning and healthcare institutions, government entities, and enterprises of all sizes as their digital-first responders. The app refers to an enterprise-level collaboration tool that enables chatting, sharing of files, and it also allows meeting in a secure, centralized location that will create a virtual classroom with enhanced features that optimizes students' learning outcomes.

Teachers can use the Microsoft Teams' built-in meeting features to convene classroom meetings and initiate collaboration on virtual whiteboards. The features also enable the sharing of documents. Teams if the best all-in-one application for creating a virtual collaborative classroom because it allows teachers to converge assignments, video calls, conversations, files, and notes together (Microsoft Asia News Center. 2020). Microsoft Corporation is aggressive in developing the Teams for Education app; thus, users get regular developments that improve its features to optimize the user experience (Tholfsen, 2020). The Teams app facilitates the connection of learners and educators in the virtual space and collaboration between the teachers and the students.

It is also achievable to foster an inclusive classroom by using the Teams app. Once teachers understand the right tools and technologies to use, it becomes effortless to improve student access to learning and to foster the inclusion of all learners with different abilities (Alicata, 2020). The app has built-in capabilities such as the Immersive Reader, Live Captions,

message translation that helps learners, including slow learners, to understand what the teacher is talking about (Moorhead, 2020a). In sum, the app design makes it a non-stigmatizing platform that enhances inclusive learning for students.

Teachers can rely on the built-in rubrics feature in the app to help them achieve good teaching practice, essential in remote learning. Built-in rubrics are part of the Teams Assignment feature, and it guides teachers in grading assignment grading (Moorhead, 2020b). Grading using the built-in rubric is encouraged because it encourages assignment transparency for students. Additionally, it allows teachers to provide students with more elaborate and meaningful feedback (Moorhead, 2020c). A comprehensive feedback mechanism is essential to students because they help them to learn and improve their work. Additionally, they provide teachers with a consistent and transparent mechanism for grading learners (Moorhead, 2020d). Summarily, teachers can count on the rubric feature in the app to help them ascertain academic transparency when dealing with students remotely, and it can also help students to follow their teachers' feedback for improved lesson outcome easily.

Teachers can use features that work alongside Class Teams such as the Professional Learning Community and Staff Teams to enhance easy communication and collaboration during remote learning. A combination of the three features creates a one-stop-shop that can help educators to save time, become more organized, and collaborate more effectively to make virtual learning a pleasant experience for students (Buchal & Songsore, 2019). Similarly, teachers can capitalize on the use of OneNote Class Notebooks, a multidimensional note-taking tool within the Teams app. The tool can be used for multiple purposes for different lessons and activities. It enables teachers to create a personal workplace for each student, and other things like a content library for handouts and a collaboration space for online class lessons and creative activities (Martin and Tapp, 2019). Teachers also have the freedom to embed different sorts of interactive apps, content, and lessons on the OneNote page. It is pretty cumbersome to work

with paper notes and handouts in remote learning; thus, the advent of the Teams app and its digital notebook features is an efficient way of completing the task.

Teams app has video-conferencing features that enable it to hold lessons on virtual space and also to record a series of tutorial-like lecture episodes to be used by students in the future. The Teams calendar feature is vital for scheduling meetings. It also identifies each student in a video session by name, thereby enabling the teacher to call their names even if they are not familiar with them (Spencer, 2020). Once a teacher can easily identify their students, they can call them out to spark a conversation that allows them to recognize the student's grasp of the concept content. The app also has a section where administrators post notices and memos and invite other education professionals when they need additional resources (Spataro, 2020a). OneDrive is enjoined to the app; thus, students can access it conveniently as a storage space for their assignments and lessons (Spataro, 2020b). Microsoft encourages teachers to use the Teams app in collaboration with the additional features of the Microsoft Office 365 app to continually keep students engaged in virtual learning when they can no longer be part of a brick and mortar learning environment setup.

The virtual learning in the Teams app is an adaptation of a virtual school administration block, teachers staff lounge, and learners' classroom converged together for the convenience of student's learning in the middle of a pandemic. The disruption to work, learning, and healthcare during the pandemic period will shape future engagements (Buchal and Songsore, 2019). Not only will people seek to work and learn from home, but they will also want to learn in any environmental setting in which they find themselves (Alicata, 2020). Besides, the app's feature that allows it to ensure students interact with their teachers means the learning outcomes of students will be optimum because all the features of physical classrooms are addressed.

In conclusion, the expanded features of the app come at a good when the education industry in the whole world was scrambling to set up a manageable and secure virtual learning system. It

is among the technological advancements that have enabled the world to mitigate and cope with the effect of a pandemic by reducing the effect it had on learning. The hybrid system of education is now a proven reality and may remain to be an option post the pandemic for some learning circumstances. Teams and Office 365 feature enhancement demonstrates Microsoft Corporation's commitment to helping the world to mitigate the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic by leveraging technological advancements to circumvent crowd-gathering restrictions. The Microsoft Teams' app is an innovative tool that will help teachers and students worldwide continue with education programs with success.

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