

Link Development Unlocks KSA Schools for 6.5 Million Students during COVID with Microsoft Azure and Teams



وزارة التعليم
Ministry of Education



Waking up to a world with COVID is the new norm for children around the globe. Many of these children lost, and are still losing, months of learning as a consequence of school closure. Thanks to good risk management and swift action by the Saudi Ministry of Education and its technology partners, Tatweer Education Holding, Microsoft KSA, and Link Development, over 6.5 million children in KSA have been able to access education using the communication power of Microsoft Teams over Madrasti eLearning platform.

Customer	Ministry of Education
Industry	Government
Country	Saudi Arabia
Technology	Microsoft Teams, Azure, Students Data Sync

Saudi Arabia: Education Rises above Strife

Facing rising COVID-19 numbers, the Ministry of Education, in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, put the safety of its constituents first, and ruled that schools would not open their doors to students at the start of the 2020/2021 academic year. In a literal race against time, K12 learning was taken out of the traditional physical classroom, and immersed into a digital space for over six and a half millions of students, parents and educators, with the help of Microsoft Teams.

Reimagining Learning

COVID-19 managed to bring the global economy to a standstill, forcing many industries down on their knees. Despite thousands of education institutions shutting down, learning, in and of itself, has actually been re-born in the wake of the COVID economy.

The Saudi government, like many leaderships around the world, was faced with the dilemma of whether to keep schools open or close them. Opening schools meant that learning could continue but at the risk of inflaming COVID numbers, straining the healthcare system, and undermining the workforce. Closing schools meant that generations of students would suffer delayed learning, which in turn would stunt the future workforce.

Supported by a strong and reliable partnership, the Saudi Ministry of Education made an ambitious decision to bring to life a virtual learning solution that would ensure millions of students would continue to learn despite the raging pandemic.

With the new academic year to begin in one month, undertaking such a task would be no small feat. In The learning environment would need to be easily and quickly deployable. It would need to be scalable to accommodate millions. It would need to be intuitive, requiring minimal training. It would need to be engaging and social, and act as a visual hub for all the tools that teachers and students would need to connect and collaborate from home. The right solution was available.

"Link Development team shared our sense of urgency and securely deployed 6.5 million accounts within a matrix of complex requirements on Teams in one month. A perfect job!"

– *Dr. Mohammed A. Al-Dhelaan, Chief Information Officer, Ministry of Education, Saudi Arabia*

"Madrasati", Empowered by Microsoft Teams

Four weeks till the new academic year, it was imperative that a fully functional easy-to-use platform would be live and running to avoid any further loss of learning. With live, face-to-face, remote lessons sitting at the heart of "Madrasati" or "My School" premises, Link Development shouldered the responsibility of a massive, nation-wide deployment of Microsoft Teams to make distance learning and communication a reality.

The Secret Behind Teams

The key to having a learning platform up and running in a matter of weeks was Microsoft Teams. An intuitive digital space, Microsoft Teams brings conversations, content, assignments, and apps all together in one place.

Nearly Seven Million Beneficiaries

Given the sheer magnitude of the data, going live in just 4 weeks was a daunting challenge. Nearly 7 million student, teacher, and parent accounts had to be vigilantly imported from the Noor SIS, created onto Madrasati, and mapped to their specific schools, classes and subjects. As a result, each student was able to log onto Madrasati and immediately jump into their personal digital space with their timetable, classes, and content, exactly as they would have in a physical school.

Single Sign-On

Microsoft Teams can be easily accessed through Madrasati single sign-on as part of a host of tools including e-mail and Office 365. This means that teachers and students can access Microsoft Teams in addition to OneNote, Word, Powerpoint, Excel, and so on from one place, thus creating an easy digital experience for everyone.

Privacy and Security

To ensure that each student has access to the right account, multi-factor authentication was a must. Upon logging in, a pin code is sent to the registered mobile number. The student must enter the pin code to complete the log on procedure.

Soaring Adoption Rates

Given the straightforward and intuitive style of Madrasati, 98% of students were able to log on and use the system with Microsoft Teams at its heart. Ninety-seven percent of all teachers were also able to log in. These are record figures for the adoption of a new platform.

The Benefits:

- eLearning brought to life in a one month
- Video and audio human connection and interaction
- Seamless engagement with students collectively and individually
- Strengthening the teacher-student relationship
- Less stress and pressure by having everything in one place
- Sharing of learning materials without need for duplication or re-work
- Greater opportunity to apply different learning models
- Fostering 21st Century learning skills with classroom collaboration
- 24h accessible e-learning content
- Easy onboarding
- Insights into academic performance
- Straightforward day-to-day school administration
- Data-informed decision-making

Technologies

- Microsoft Teams for Education
- Students Data Sync
- Microsoft Azure

Reliable Transition

To help students transition to the digital, Madrasati creates a virtual educational experience that simulates the physical school. Using Microsoft Teams, students can start their daily morning program and classes from 9 am to 3 pm.

Engaging Live Lessons

Video calls bring remote learning to a whole new level. For students, seeing the teacher and other classmates bursts the isolation bubble blown by COVID. For many teachers video has been a lifebuoy for them. Teachers can now see 49 students in one screen. They can even create subgroups within a class as well as create wider groups like a Maths club using the Rooms options in Teams.

Virtual Classroom Control

As in the physical world, teachers need to have control over their classroom. With Teams, teachers have the ability to mute all students or specific students during a class session. Additional features prevent students from starting meetings unattended and let teachers determine who can present in a meeting. The 'Raise Your Hand' feature allows students to ask and answer questions during live classes.

Collaborative Classrooms

With Teams, Madrasati provides the epitome of collaborative spaces in which teachers and students can share notes, content, and assignments. They can further collaborate using the virtual whiteboard and chat. The shared digital space brings to life a real world setting where people interact and engage together.

Learning Materials Shared Anytime Anywhere

Students across all year groups can download books and presentations, and access a plethora of education materials from Madrasati. They can experience learning through augmented reality technology, watch detailed explanation videos, and study 3D illustrations. Forty-five thousand digital assets can be accessed at any time, in any place from one hub. All the digital assets can be shared and discussed via Teams.

Administrative Monitoring and Daily Operations

As in a regular school, information updates occur regularly. For example, adding or changing a mobile number in a parental record is a simple and easy endeavor in Madrasati, as is changing and re-setting passwords, moving a student file from one school to another, and adding supplemental student data. School leaders can take appropriate decisions by accessing the visual dashboard, which displays timely information.

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Great teacher-to-student communication can reshape the entire learning experience. Microsoft Teams sits at the heart of Madrasati's e-learning platform. It brings all the education pieces together. Link Development team shared our sense of urgency and securely deployed about 6.5 million accounts within a matrix of complex requirements on Teams in one month. A perfect job! "

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