



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF AZERBAIJAN

Azerbaijan Ministry of Education's Intervention in Secondary Professional and Higher Education



Background

Azerbaijan, a country with a population of 10 million, has in total 211,716 full-time students and 20,514 educators teaching in 56 secondary professional education and 52 higher education institutions. As the country was hit with COVID-19 pandemic, a national quarantine was announced on March 3 that resulted in closure of all educational institutions.

While around 40,089 full-time students in higher education institutions were completing their final year and involved in independent coursework, the remaining 171,627 students and 20,514 educators were in need of distance education. Only two out of 52 universities and no secondary professional education institutions possessed solid distance learning arrangements that included a relevant software solution, trained faculty, and digital content.

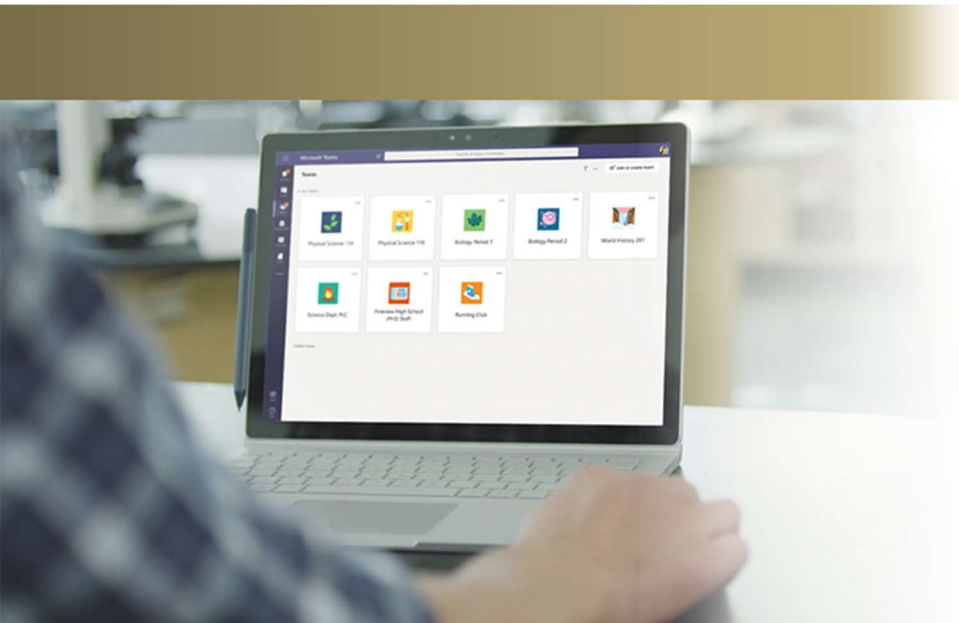


Free online collaboration and learning management system

To mitigate the challenge of social distancing and its effects on education, Ministry of Education launched an initiative to provide educational institutions with a free online collaboration and learning management system beginning March 12. Ministry of Education and its long-term partner, Microsoft joint forces to offer the educational institutions Microsoft Teams solution, its deployment, users registration, technical support, and methodological backing. A dedicated entity under the Ministry of Education, the Bureau on ICT for Education, established a team for implementation and rapid expansion of the project.

The Ministry of Education supported Microsoft Teams registration for each institution, deployed student/teacher registration and class creation, supplied technical staff with necessary guidance, and developed teacher training materials in Azerbaijani. Educational institutions could benefit from all of these services including Microsoft Teams platform free of charge. Microsoft Teams platform helped to continue the implementation of coursework during the lockdown period and organize effective, secure, and remote educational process.





Benefits

Microsoft Teams platform provides a wide range of functionalities: schedule lessons and online lectures using a calendar, share course materials (i.e., syllabus, lectures, assignments), record and store large volumes of learning materials, submit group work and post grades, organize teacher-student interaction, create discussions, etc. The main advantage of the system is its limited access for people apart institution, which ensures secure e-learning environment. The Ministry of Education looks into proctoring and online examination function to be integrated into the platform.

Any major delay in the education process could result in potential necessity to allocate substantial additional resources from the Government. As a result of the Ministry of Education's timely intervention, 39 secondary professional education and higher education institutions currently possess platforms for distance education. Thirty-five of them are using Microsoft Teams. Over 110,000 students and teachers are among active users. The services offered by the Ministry of Education enabled these institutions to deliver courses and share knowledge without delay and plan year-end assessment in accordance with the national curriculum.
