

Applying Technology in the Workforce and Classroom during the COVID-19 Era

Phronie Jackson, PhD

University of the District of Columbia

doi: <https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.148.1>

ABSTRACT

Background: Nowadays, awareness, knowledge, and access to technology are necessary to succeed. There is a plethora of technologies that can be used to enhance learning and experiences in the academic setting.

Introduction: UDC provided the opportunity for staff and faculty to participate in two Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) Initiatives, MIE Teacher Academy and MIE Leadership Academy. A serendipitous outcome of these train-the-trainer initiatives was that they not only developed knowledge and skills to utilize technology but also developed soft skills and a community where staff and faculty-built camaraderie and a community to support each other in learning technology.

Method: A MIE Professional Learning Community (MIE PLC) was established. During the sessions administrators who participated in the Microsoft Innovative Educator Academy was able to network with faculty who participated in the Microsoft Innovative Educator Leadership Academy. The PLC was a time for participants to commune about best practices and practical uses of the application learned during the training.

Data: Three one-hour MIE PLC meetings were held. Several faculty and staff from a variety of colleges and departments participated and some volunteered to demonstrate specifically how they utilized the various applications.

Results: The MIE initiative created awareness of available, accessible, and impactful technology to our PLC.

Discussion: This initiative can be duplicated in future academic years and with multiple academic institutions.

Conclusion: These types of professional development initiatives are beneficial to all stakeholders of the university.

Keywords: Technology, Microsoft 365, HBCUs

1 Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic significantly disrupted every aspect of human life and has produced unprecedented hardship in education. In the Spring of 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic created challenges for professors of higher education on multiple levels not limited to teaching, scholarship, and service (Jackson, 2022). Moving into the Fall semester of 2020, educators passionate about teaching and learning sought resources that could support them in continuing to achieve excellence in their andragogy methods. One strategy was to pair innovative teaching with the use of Microsoft Applications and Microsoft 365.

In this COVID era, technology is necessary to succeed in higher education and the workforce. Although there is a multitude of technologies that can be used to enhance learning and experiences in the academic setting, which may result in improved workforce readiness, there are a plethora of barriers to technology not limited to awareness (Mohsenishad et al.,



© 2023 Copyright held by the author(s). Published by AIJR Publisher in "The Impact of Technology on Equity and Inclusion in a COVID World: Challenges for Education and Employment". Organized by the University of the District of Columbia, USA on February 11, 2022.

Proceedings DOI: [10.21467/proceedings.148](https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.148); Series: AIJR Proceedings; ISSN: 2582-3922; ISBN: 978-81-961472-2-8

2020), access (Ehrmann, 2021), knowledge (Sheron & Kaur, 2022), and application. According to (Escola et al., 2022), a solution that provided stakeholders of higher education the necessary capabilities to continue teaching and learning during the COVID pandemic restrictions was Microsoft 365 applications.

This paper gives the author's perspective on the impact of the University of the District of Columbia's (UDC) solution to overcome barriers related to technology during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. UDC offered the opportunity for its faculty and staff to gain knowledge and training on the APPS in Microsoft 365 platform. Specifically, the two Microsoft Innovative Educator (MIE) Initiatives were MIE Teacher Academy and MIE Leadership Academy. The objective of the initiative was to empower participants to (1) leverage technical tools for the classroom; and (2) train others respectively. Additionally, participants could continue enhancing their credentials through additional training and access to tools that could be utilized for a wide range of purposes. The evaluation can be furnished as a firsthand description since the author was selected to receive both trainings and participated in both initiatives.

As the result of MIE initiatives, the UDC's Center for Academic Learning (CAL) established a MIE Professional Learning Community (MIE PLC). Three one-hour MIE PLC meetings were held. Several faculty and staff from a variety of colleges and departments participated. Some volunteered to demonstrate specifically how they utilized the various applications. During the sessions administrators who participated in the Microsoft Innovative Educator Academy was able to network with faculty who participated in the Microsoft Innovative Educator Leadership Academy. The PLC was a time for participants to commune about best practices and practical uses of the application learned during the training.

2 Methodology

Qualitative research is applied when exploring the lived experience as with this study. The author contemplated various qualitative designs not limited to case studies, ethnography, and phenomenology. However, the general qualitative inquiry was selected, because of its flexibility. Additionally, in conjunction, a narrative design method was also utilized. Considering the purpose of the work, this is an appropriate methodology strategy, and it offers a significant underpinning to many of the existing qualitative methodologies in use today (McCall et al., 2021).

3 Results

According to CAL, in addition to establishing the MIE PLC, the following results were reported. The MIE Teacher Academy was a one-day training for eight hours. The MIE Leadership Academy was 3 days for one and a half hours each day. There were 12 MIE Workshops and Training Sessions. Sixty-four Unique Participants engaged in the MIE and 12 of the 64 were certified. Moreover, as a result of the MIE, UDC was able to increase the number of trainers in its MIE Firebird Educators program. This program provided Surface Pro Trainers for the UDC community. In addition to the implementation of these programs, information about this program was disseminated during the First-ever Tech Conference for HBCUs to Expand Access to Tech Careers. The application of knowledge gained from

participating in the MIE was applied to the teaching and learning experience during the second semester of emergency remote instruction as the result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 Conclusions

The MIE initiative created awareness and training of available, accessible, and impactful technology for our PLC. The impact of the initiative was felt far and wide not only did it demonstrate how to leverage digital tools to promote engagement and greater academic success and support students and teachers alike, but it also maximized the participant's potential, productivity, and personal well-being.

As described by (McCay-Peet & Toms, 2015), the serendipitous outcome of these train-the-trainer initiatives was that they did not only develop knowledge and skills to utilize and apply technology in higher education and the workplace but also developed soft skills and a community where staff and faculty built camaraderie and a community to support each other in learning technology. These types of professional development initiatives are beneficial to all stakeholders of UDC, especially the learners, and can be duplicated in future academic years and with multiple academic institutions.

5 Publisher's Note

AIJR remains neutral with regard to jurisdiction claims in institutional affiliations.

How to Cite

Jackson, P. (2023). Applying Technology in the Workforce and Classroom during the COVID-19 Era. *AIJR Proceedings*, 1-3. <https://doi.org/10.21467/proceedings.148.1>

References

- Ehrmann, S. C. (2021). Improving Quality, Access, Affordability: How three institutions are getting it done. *Liberal Education*, 107(2), 44–52. <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?p=AONE&sw=w&issn=00241822&v=2.1&it=r&id=GALE%7CA668626753&sid=googleScholar&linkaccess=fulltext>
- Escola, J., Lopes, N., Catarino, P., & Aires, A. P. (2022). Microsoft 365 as a Tool for Teaching During the Covid-19 Pandemic: Perceptions of Portuguese Teachers of Basic and Secondary Education. *Open Education Studies*, 4(1), 241–251. <https://doi.org/10.1515/EDU-2022-0015/MACHINEREADABLECITATION/RIS>
- Jackson, P. (2022). Covid-19 and Higher Education: A Case Study. *Proceedings of the 2nd Annual Faculty Senate Research Conference: Higher Education During Pandemics*, 88–92. <https://doi.org/10.21467/PROCEEDINGS.135.13>
- McCall, B., Shallcross, L., Wilson, M., Fuller, C., & Hayward, A. (2021). Storytelling as a Research Tool Used to Explore Insights and as an Intervention in Public Health: A Systematic Narrative Review. *International Journal of Public Health*, 66, 1604262–1604262. <https://doi.org/10.3389/IJPH.2021.1604262>
- McCay-Peet, L., & Toms, E. G. (2015). Investigating serendipity: How it unfolds and what may influence it. *Journal of the Association for Information Science and Technology*, 66(7), 1463–1476. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ASI.23273>
- Mohsenishad, M., Shirani, S., & Kia Heirati, J. (2020). Raising teachers' awareness of technology-enhanced language instruction through teacher education: Insights from Scaffolded dialogues. *Http://Www.Editorialmanager.Com/Cogentedu*, 7(1). <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1831686>
- Sheron, P., & Kaur, N. (2022). Role of Technology: Enhancing the Quality of Teaching. *International Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 16(1), 232–237. <https://www.ijeponline.org/index.php/journal/article/view/374>