



Exploring WhatsApp as an Effective Tool for Team-based Learning & Some Valuable Considerations for Educators

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INTRODUCTION

- 2020 – Covid 19's sudden arrival put a spin in the way how teaching and learning was done which, was now mitigated through use of technology (Di Pietro, Biagi, Costa, Karpiński, & Mazza, 2020).
- Many studies have highlighted that one mobile technology that is popularly used by students at the university level is the WhatsApp application.

AIMS

- To observe whether students gained group work and communication skills via WhatsApp closed group to echo the nature of their future work and workplace environment that will be primarily team work based.
- To share practical knowledge and recommendations to fellow educators on WhatsApp mobile platform as a learning tool.

LITERATURE REVIEW



TECHNICAL

- Free of charge (Bonsu, 2021)
- Easily available and downloadable (Gon & Rawekar, 2017)
- Straightforward & Simple (Gon & Rawekar, 2017)

PEDAGOGICAL

- Provides interactions between teacher and students (Ahmed, 2019; Chai & Basri, 2020)
- Encourage collaboration, share learning resources, obtain study content/material rapidly, and enhance learner-teacher engagement (Bonsu et al., 2021)
- Easily accessible (Karen & Joanna, 2020), used anytime and anywhere (Wahyuni et al., 2020)

OVERALL OUTCOMES OF USE IN TEAM-BASED LEARNING

- Good way to keep the entire team updated about the group assessment and necessary deadlines.
- Facilitated the formation of an information-sharing platform, for/as:
 - Referencing plans/previous discussions
 - Detailing progress of the group assessment
 - Keeping track of member's progress and contribution
 - Reminders and notice of meeting (online)
 - Delegation of work
- Helped them understand the group assessment better by clarifying uncertain information with their members immediately.
- Able to communicate with their group members after class hours to discuss group assessment and to-do tasks.

HOW USEFUL WAS FOR CLOSED GROUP DISCUSSION ?

- Creates a sense of belonging which encouraged students to contribute and complete the group assessment productively.
- Allowed students to interact with the group members that they don't commonly interact with physically in the classroom (pre-pandemic).
- Students were not overshadowed by more extroverted classmates unlike in the traditional classroom setting.
- Students felt comfortable having the lecturer in the closed group discussion which, helps to regulate and clarify the content of the discussion (Bonsu, 2021).
- Encouragement and feedback given by the lecturer motivated the students to complete the group assessment (Jaggars et al, 2013).
- The asynchronous feature created frustration in some as a few members kept giving delayed feedback & joined late for the discussions.

CHALLENGES FOR EDUCATORS

- Educators must allocate their quality time beyond their regular class hours.
- Educators may feel overwhelmed with incoming messages from numerous closed groups.
- Educators may need to be online constantly.

STUDENT INTERVIEWS

"...but in other times, I feel more comfortable to talk to others through Whatsapp. For example, some girls I've never spoken to in class, I feel more confident to talk to them or ask questions through Whatsapp." (MRPA)

"INSTEAD OF STORING IDEAS ON OUR MINDS AND WAITING FOR A FACE-TO-FACE DISCUSSION, WHATSAPP SERVES AS AN INVALUABLE IDEA REPOSITORY AND FORUM FOR SPONTANEOUS AND CONTINUOUS DISCUSSION. AS A CONSEQUENCE, WE ARE ABLE TO ENHANCE AND IMPROVE THESE IDEAS, RESULTING IN BENEFICIAL AND TANGIBLE ACTIONS. LASTLY, WE USE WHATSAPP TO REMIND OURSELVES AND EACH OTHER ON ANY IMPORTANT INFORMATION AND DEADLINES." (SC)

"The results were as expected; meaning we had spontaneous and almost daily exchanges. WhatsApp allows us to communicate despite of distance that separate us. It also allowed us to send free messages. Among its advantages, WhatsApp indicates whether our contact is currently online, (i.e. if it is currently using the application), if he/she is recently logged (date of last seen) and if a sent message has been received and seen." (KML)

"The Whatsapp group did not allow me to learn more about a specific subject. However, useful reminders or alerts from friends make it easier to be reached through Whatsapp." (N)

"Advantage using whatsapp was: the points that we discussed was in record especially the screenshots. Sharing of the posters, flyers etcetera was all there saved in the media gallery." (SMH)

"KEEPING EACH OTHER UPDATED BUILT A SENSE OF TRUST AND CONNECTION AMONGST US THAT WAS BASED ON AN INTERDEPENDENT WORK FLOW. THE ENTIRE CONVERSATION WAS MONITORED THROUGHOUT BY OUR LECTURER, WHO OCCASIONALLY GAVE INSIGHT AT TIMES OF NECESSITY." (E)

EVIDENCES

Considerations overlapping as strategies for educators that may ensure WhatsApp platform benefitting them as a learning tool :

- Setting up of policies (do's and don'ts as basic guidelines);
- Monitoring of discussion (especially knowing when is it appropriate to give feedback, withhold comments and when to interfere in the discussion thread);
- Giving prompt feedback (knowing how soon and how much formative feedback to be given, yet getting students to learn independently);
- Setting restrictions (this primarily to address cyberbullying tendencies and creating awareness of legal implications, data privacy and security aspects);
- Educator's personality (the human touch required in the digital environment);
- Staying updated (innovation changes on , inclusion of other learning tools such as game-based apps, learning about durability of information stored primarily on third-party servers).

RECOMMENDATIONS

CONCLUSION

WhatsApp's simple, and accessible yet, multi-tasking features when explored and used appropriately can be immensely useful and advancing for team-based experiences.

However, if educators intend to encourage deep learning, then WhatsApp may not be the most suitable platform for that purpose and should seek other types of tech-based learning tools.