

The Flipped Classroom – A Case in OUM Business School

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Abstract

The flipped classroom is a strategic direction for a new learning and teaching environment. It is a teaching method where traditional lectures and homework are reversed. This method provides online pre-recorded lectures and exercises in class and has been widely practiced. The flipped classroom provides benefits to the learners in an active learning environment. It provides more responsibility to the learners in the learning process instead of lecturers. The flipped classroom improves the instructional delivery and enhances student performance where the learners are not only passively receiving one-dimensional information. The number of educational institutions using this flipped model in their courses is growing including OUM.

Keywords: Flipped classroom, active learning

Introduction

One of the key success factors in determining the success of an e-learning program is engaging learners actively which requires learners to have a high degree of self motivation (Ali, 2009). The flipped classroom is an example of a successful e-learning programme. Flipping the classroom has transformed our teaching practice. We no longer stand in front of our learners and talk at them for thirty to sixty minutes at a time. This radical change has allowed us to take on a different role with our learners. The flipped classroom has not only changed our classrooms, but many teachers from around the world have adopted the model. Flipped classrooms are shifting the way teachers provide instruction by inverting traditional teaching methods to engage learners in the learning process. Using technology, lectures are moved out of the classroom and delivered online as a means to free up class time for interaction and collaboration.

Literature Review

According to The Daily Riff July 2011, a flipped classroom is a way to increase interaction and personalised contact time between learners and teachers. It is an environment where learners take responsibility for their own learning where the teacher is not the "sage on the stage", but the "guide on the side". A flipped classroom is not about learners working without structure, working in isolation or spending the entire class staring at a computer screen. It is a blending of direct instruction with constructivist learning and not an online course. When most people hear about the flipped class all they think about are the videos but the flipped classroom is not replacing teachers with videos. A flipped classroom is where learners, who are absent due to illness or extra-curricular activities such as athletics or field-trips, do not get left behind. In addition, it is also a class where content is permanently archived for review or remediation and where all learners are engaged in their learning. It is a place where all learners can get personalised education.

According to Jeremy (2011), the flipped classroom inverts traditional teaching methods - delivering instructions online outside of class and moving 'homework' into the classroom. Flipped classrooms use technology to invert the traditional teaching environment by delivering lectures online as homework and opening up the class period for interactive learning (Tucker, 2012).

The flipped classroom is also defined as a reversed teaching model that delivers instruction at home through interactive, teacher-created videos and moves "homework" to the classroom. Moving lectures outside of the classroom allows teachers to spend more one to one time with each student.

Learners have the opportunity to ask questions and work through problems with the guidance of their teachers and the support of their peers - creating a collaborative learning environment (The Nation, 2013).

The flipped classroom flips where homework and lectures take place. Lessons and lectures are watched at home, while homework assignments are done in class. Teachers send their knowledge home to learners as a 5-10 minute video. This frees up class time for learners to work on homework, projects, and other assignments with the help of their teachers and peers.

The idea of the flipped classroom was initially introduced due to the number of students missing classes. Another reason for the flipped classroom was the different rate of learning amongst students where some students are fast learners while others are slow. Some students might miss important pieces of information from class even though they were present for the class. Another reason is the learners were not completing homework fully or correctly at home because they had forgotten the important content learnt during lectures.

In the flipped classroom was first introduced in 2007, when Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams; teachers at Woodland Park High School in Woodland Park, Colorado discovered some software that would record their lectures, including voice and any annotations, and then converted the recording into a video file that could be easily distributed online (Bergmann and Sams, 2012). They stopped giving the lectures and began to record their live lessons using screen capture software. They posted their lectures online and allowed their learners access to these materials. Bergman and Sams were asked to share to teachers around the country about their methods. The teachers began using online videos podcast to teach learners outside class, reversing class time for collaborative work and concept exercises. Their idea is now known as the flipped classroom.

According to Tucker (2012), flipped classrooms use technology to invert the traditional teaching to online delivering lectures. Through this method, teachers record their lessons using simple video capture software, post them to the internet and assign the recordings for online viewing prior to class. Learners learn new material at home using videos or other tools provided by teachers. In class, they focus on what would have traditionally been homework.

In a flipped classroom setting, teachers make lessons available to learners to be accessed whenever and wherever it is convenient for the student, at home, in class, during study hall, on the bus to a game, or even from a hospital bed. Teachers can deliver this instruction by recording and narrating screen casts of work they do on their computers, creating videos of themselves teaching, or curating video lessons from trusted Internet sites. Learners can watch the videos or screen casts as many times as they need to, enabling them to be more productive learners in the classroom. Since direct instruction is delivered outside the group learning space, teachers can then use in-class time to actively engage learners in the learning process and provide them with individualised support (Flipped Learning Network, 2013).

The teaching with 'one-to-many' method focuses more on facilitation and moderation than lecturing, though lecturing is still important. By delivering the lecture beforehand, scheduled class time is made available for collaborative activities. This shift allows instructors to transition out of their role of “sage on the stage” and become facilitators, or “guides on the side” thereby allowing learners to move away from being passive listeners and becoming active participants in the learning process (King, 1993).

Although the process has changed, significant teaching and learning opportunities still can be gained through facilitating active learning, engaging learners, guiding learning, correcting misunderstandings and providing timely feedback using a variety of pedagogical strategies, and there is a greater focus on concept exploration, meaning making and demonstration or application of knowledge in the face-to-face setting.

Advantages of the Flipped Classroom

According to (King, 1993), the flipped classroom allow learners to move away from being passive listeners and becoming active participants in the learning process where teachers record their lessons using simple video capture software, post them to the internet and assign the recordings for online viewing prior to class.

In addition, according to research done by Sezer, 2011 compared to those in traditional lecture-based classes, learners in active learning environments show improved retention and better conceptual understanding of learned material. These results are attributed to the contrasting roles of passive and active learners in the educational process. While passive learners exist solely as receivers, active learners are full participants in the process, allowing them to add to their retentive capabilities through continued self-reinforcement (Petress, 2008). This supports the idea by Dewey (Smith, 2007) who iterated that education must involve engagement for exploration, thinking and reflection.

Among the advantages of flipped classroom include:

(a) *Improved Student–Teacher Interaction*

The practice of flipped classroom promotes better student–teacher interaction. For example, Bergmann and Sams (2012) pointed out that when teachers are not standing in front of the classroom talking *at* learners, they can circulate and talk *with* learners. If teachers use inverted classrooms this way, they are likely to better understand and respond to learners' emotional and learning needs. Learners are able to become active participants in the learning process through learning activities delivered during the class by having lectures out of the classroom. With added class time for collaborative activities, social interaction is promoted amongst the learners and the learners and the teacher.

(b) *Real-Time Feedback*

Flipped classrooms also claims that increased student–teacher interactions give teachers more opportunities to provide feedback to learners. For example, a small pilot study funded by the Gates Foundation observed that during a five-week summer school program in which learners received instruction through the Khan Academy website along with support from a teacher, the teacher spent significantly more one-on-one time with learners than she had in her traditional classroom; thus, she was able to provide more feedback and immediately correct student misperceptions (Greenberg, Medlock, & Stephens, 2011).

(c) *Student Engagement*

Another benefit of flipped classrooms is that "they speak the language of today's learners" (Bergmann & Sams, 2012, p. 20), who are accustomed to turning to the web and social media for information and interaction. There may also be another, deeper, reason learners find video lectures more engaging:

(d) *Self-Paced Learning*

As noted earlier, putting lectures online enables learners to pace their own learning according to their needs. Learners are able to learn at the pace that best suits them because lectures are available all the time. They also can stop and rewind explanations of concepts that they find difficult and are able to refer back to past lectures to review previous content. This improves their capability to absorb knowledge and promotes a higher level of understanding of the subject matter.

(e) *More Meaningful Homework*

Another purported benefit of flipped classrooms is that they alter the nature of homework by having learners practice and apply their learning in the classroom, under the watchful eye of the teacher (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Greenberg, Medlock, & Stephens, 2011). The flipped classroom also provides the opportunities for learners to discuss with their peers if they have any problems with their homework and assignment.

By taking the lecture portion of the classroom home with them, learners are able to utilise their teachers' one-on-one attention more successfully in the classroom. Learners sit through lecture, gather questions, and prepare themselves for the day with the teacher to tackle "homework". Because the actual exercises are done in the classroom rather than at home with this model, learners have their teacher available for questions when they face any problems.

(f) High motivation

Different learners learn in different ways, therefore by delivering instruction in multiple forms, the likelihood for engagement and retention is improved. By offering instruction in multiple forms, learners are more likely to remain motivated throughout the learning process.

(g) Flexible time, Flexible place, Flexible device

By covering lecture material at home and from a video-based platform, learners can privately view the material. This allows them to approach things at their own pace without worry of peers noticing them moving slower or faster. Learners can stop, pause, rewind, and fast forward material so that they can examine things in their own way. Learners do not have to worry about being absent and missing content due to face-to-face lecturing if the lessons are being taught too fast or learners are bored with the content of the lectures. Learners may forget previous material and have no way to re-access it.

Disadvantages of the Flipped Classroom

As with everything, there are also disadvantages of using the flipped classroom, mainly increased cost and time involved. Teachers have to prepare the videos beforehand and there might be cost involved in distribution or the material available.

The Flipped Classroom in OUM Business School

In OUM Business School, the flipped classroom is being practiced by combining the university's systematic instructional design through e-learning methodologies known as MyVLE. MyVLE stands for My Virtual Learning Environment and the traditional face-to-face classroom

In OUM Business School, most of our classes have moved to the flipped classroom where lecturers use iLectures which are posted online. Lecturers prerecord videos, audio or both, then upload them on the MyVle platform. Learners may go to a certain designated site to view the lecture online at a time which is convenient for them. There are certain advantages to i-lectures. Learners may access online lectures posted on their designated websites anywhere in the world, at any time they wish, as long as they have an internet connection. They can also be repeated for the sake of note taking.

The videos have been designed to attract learners' attention and engage them in the learning process. The videos prepared by OUMBS lectures include including animated graphics, real-life case examples and also exercises. This is in line with Ulrich's (2008) observation that dynamic elements should be used in learning resources and these would include animations or interactive simulations which replace static pictures in the original course content. The team producing the video even went out to shoot some sections outside to make the presentations more interesting to the learners. The faculty staff also contributed by "acting" in some scenes! This is important, as in e-learning, the content should emerge based on learners' interest and the nature of group interaction (Susilo, 2008).

Another tool that can be accessed by the learners is iRadio which is a regional radio station in OUM that broadcasts to OUM learners. The station is one of e-resources learners orientated stations that were licensed by the OUM authority. Lastly, e-Resources is a mobile Learning which OUM recognizes m-learning as an exciting form of learning that uses mobile technologies to enhance the learning experience. Mobile devices along with the internet can help us to engage and motivate

learners, anytime and anywhere. The formulation of the m-Learning project at OUM is geared to improve the extent of integration in its current blended mode of learning.

The face-to-face classes have been revamped with training given to all academicians on how to engage learners through creativity and innovation. This training has been extended to external tutors and is now being implemented throughout OUM Business School. Face-to-face classes now include role plays, debates, in class exercises, management games and many other interactive activities which promote learner engagement and stimulate higher order and critical thinking. With the lectures being presented on-line beforehand, learners now have the advantage of using the classroom as a interactive learning environment.

Conclusion

The idea of the flipped classroom has been spreading through the education community. The concept is not complicated, but it is most definitely a departure from traditional teaching. In the flipped classroom, the roles and expectations of learners and teachers change, where; learners take more responsibility for their own learning and study core content either individually or in groups before class and then apply knowledge and skills to a range of activities using higher order thinking. Where OUMBS is concerned, the flipped classroom is an advantage to its adult learners – moving them forward to a new age and a new learning environment.

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