

Creating a User-Generated Learning Environment through Flipping Classroom: An Experiential Pedagogy

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Participatory learning improves students' learning and understanding of the concepts taught in a course. It can prove to be very effective in developing communication skills, higher order cognitive skills and inculcate problem solving ability among students. This kind of teaching learning environment calls for a paradigm shift, that is, to move from the teacher-centered approach to the student-centered approach. For better active learning, flipping the classroom is one of the techniques which can be employed.

“Flipping the classroom” means that students gain first exposure to the new material outside the classroom, usually via reading papers or watching lecture videos, or listening to audio and then use the class time to do the assimilation of that knowledge through problem solving activities, discussion, brainstorming or debates. Eric Mazur and Carl Weiman have published evidence that flipping the classroom and applying peer instruction techniques can result in ‘significant learning gains’ when compared to traditional instruction (Deslauriers et al., 2011). Similar results of students gain in learning through flipping classroom in arts discipline have been worked and validated in the Monash University Peer Instruction in the Humanities Project (Butchart et al, 2009).

Walvoord and Anderson describe examples of how this approach has been implemented in history, physics, and biology classes, suggesting its broad applicability (cited in Linda and Smith).

My work over the years has brought me into thinking heavily about the change of the role of learners from receiver to participant in the whole teaching learning process of a subject. Besides, I acknowledge the drastic shift in the learning aptitude of students due to an easy exposure and accessibility of technology and internet. I therefore, have been experimenting with, blogs, online forums and task based approach activities for collaborative learning from time to time. The flexibility and students' active participation were the key features which motivated me to try this pedagogy in my classroom.

The present study therefore, is an attempt to integrate flipped classroom environment in teaching of Cross Cultural Skills course which is a humanities elective course being offered to the first degree engineering students at Birla Institute of Technology and Science, Pilani. Before the semester, during summer break I planned and worked out my teaching methodology and assessment for the course. In the first class after introducing the course, I discussed the

teaching methodology and assessment with my students (58) enrolled for the course. I taught most of the topics of Cross Cultural Skills by flipping the classroom in the First semester 2015-16.

Knowing this not being an easy regular technique, I decided to use it keeping in view the nature of the course and level of understanding of the students. Unlike regular flipped classroom I did not record my lectures but used the huge resource of YouTube videos and other video lectures available at other universities' websites as source. I feel video is a powerful tool in today's classroom. For example, Khan Academy is one such resource in a teacher's arsenal. Since nowadays, students are very much visual learners and with the quick spread of broadband internet access, this particular source should be used for the academic advantage both by teacher and students. I utilized a blended learning approach where students were asked to watch the video lectures and to read a couple of research papers related to the topic to be discussed in the next class. These were sent to them through LMS Nalanda. A *guided inquiry approach* was used at the beginning of the class which was followed by quiz or case studies for focused discussion or a task related to the topic was given to be completed in the class hour. This gave the students an opportunity to learn and conceptualize the concept even before they came to the class. They could go through the videos and papers at their own convenience of space and time but after coming to the class they were to have richer

discussions and practice the concepts with problems, so that they think critically and discuss the areas of problem with greater details with the help of peer feedback and teachers' insightful guidance.

Flipping saved time for deeper understanding and discussions and provided me with an opportunity to reach every student on one hand and engage students in independent learning process on the other hand. To ensure that students do the preparation necessary for productive class time, Walvoord and Anderson propose an *assignment based model* in which students produce work writing, problems, etc.) prior to class. This type of *inverted teaching* was done for teaching the topic, Intercultural Conflicts and Marketing. Students became interested in the topic because they learnt how culture affects marketing across cultures and lack of cultural sensitivity leads to conflicts and resulting into crumbling of many a business. They were asked to read a few papers and reading material sent through LMS Nalanda and also to work out on an application oriented question. This prior reading and working created an experience and also triggered questions and arguments which shaped the classroom session more interactive and experiential. This is in line with John Dewey's where he believes that the *nature of experiences* is of fundamental importance and concern in education and training. It is I's responsibility to *structure and organize a series of experiences* which positively influence each individual's potential future experiences.

The ensuing part of the concept note discusses how an entire topic was dealt with by using flipped classroom setting. For the first topic *Intercultural Communication: an overview* I sent to my students threeresearch papers on Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context; An exploratory study of Hofstede's cross-cultural dimensions in construction projects by Low Sui Pheng and Shi Yuquan; The Effects of Cross-Cultural Training on Expatriate Assignments by Hsiu-ChingKo& Mu-Li Yang; and also sent three video links <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hiOO8L031PY>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eV04Msn-1GY>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EcrFudqIGr4> through Nalanda.I also sent them the expected learning objectives and points of discussion for the next class. This way lectures became homework and class time was used for collaborative student experiential exercises. I initiated the discussion in the classroom regarding their understanding of the need for intercultural communication, the role of culture in international business and dimensions of culture affecting the businesses. During 20 minutes discussion there were arguments, examples and views. I conducted a quiz for 5 marks based on the videos and research papers for 10 minutes. After collecting the quiz papers I encouraged them to discuss the answers. Though the questions were multiple choice type but were application oriented which demanded a lot of deliberation for reaching the right answer. For last the 10 minutes the Euro Disney case was discussed which

failed due to lack of sensitivity of French and European Culture and imposition of the American way in Disneyland Paris. As a follow up, I gave them one take-home written assignment for 5 marks. I asked the students to identify business cases where cultural problems might have been the contributing factor to its failure, discuss and analyze it in the form of maximum 5 pages journal. They were also asked to provide the credit to the source of their case and also to quote the references if used any.

Observations and Reflections

The transformation activity through the flipped classroom experiment went on really well. Students really used the knowledge gained from the given sources even before reaching the classroom and also actively participated, discussed, analyzed, applied it to have the hands on experience. However, I felt that more time need to be given to students to work onproblems in class. To work more one on one with students more time is needed as compared to teaching in the non-flipped classroom. For this, if one more teacher is given to co-teach, the flipped classroom could be an effective means to have more time for one on one student-teacher interactions and helped in scaffolding deeper understanding of the concepts. Besides, planning a flipped lesson demands two times more time than the regular non -flipped classroom in order to identify the right and suitable videos, video questions, supplementary handout, and then plan the lesson to build upon the video effectively.

Conclusion

With the growth of open education resources like Youtube, vodacasts, online journals, blogs etc flipped classroom pedagogy proves to be a learner-oriented classroom setting as it provides space for learning with interest, discussion and authentic learning experience. In terms of Bloom's revised taxonomy (2001), this means that students are doing the lower levels of cognitive work, that is, gaining knowledge and comprehension outside the classroom, and focusing on the higher forms of cognitive work that is, application, analysis, synthesis, and/or evaluation during class, where they have the support of their peers and instructor. However, as with any other pedagogical theory, the flipped classroom is not without criticism because a few teachers may find problems who value spontaneity during lecture. It can also be argued that a larger time investment is required, at least initially, for implementing the flipped classroom which is a difficult proposition in the syllabus-bound university teaching.

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