Flipped Learning: A Literature Survey on why the Approach is in Question

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ABSTRACT

The concept of 'Flipped Learning' came with a change in approach to teaching. Contrary to a traditional classroom, a flipped classroom is seen as student-centred. Initially FL began with supplying online learning materials with easy access for the students absent in the class. It has been effective in supplying all students with learning materials and thus, making them responsible for learning. Class time could be expanded and utilized for one to one interaction. Other advantages are also there. A learner-centred class not only engages learners with their flexibility in learning activity but also promotes collaboration among them.

It spite of a number of advantages, flipped classes are not liked by many of the learners, teachers and parents. Some of the flaws are quite obvious, such as, traditional mindset of learners, teachers and administrators, inadequate technology in low-income schools, learners' dislike and disinterestedness in active participation, larger workload for the teacher in managing students working on multiple assignments of varied standards, standardized testing, and so on.

The present paper is an attempt to provide observation-based detailed insight of how this innovative and technology-driven approach of learning and teaching outside of the classroom with teacher in the role of a facilitator is perceived by the stake-holders, consider pros and cons of this approach in this digitalized era and ultimately to find an answer to why the approach is in question.

Key terms: *Flipped Learning, Student-centred Learning Approach, Learners' Role and Responsibility, Teachers' Role and Responsibility, Perceptions of Stake-holders*

Introduction to Flipped Learning

In this era of innovation in education facilitated by recent advances, learners and educators have developed increasing tendency towards the use of educational technology. In place of traditional classrooms with teachers explaining each topic, and then assigning the homework, the academic world now prefers a carefully structured class beyond the classroom where the process can be turned into inquiry-based learning with more engagement of learners in the process. It saves valuable classroom time and offers one-on-one, customized assistance. In other words, opposite to the usual classroom paradigm, in flipped learning model, learning of course concepts takes place outside of the classroom and the class time is utilized for more active learning.

Herreid and Schiller (2013) defined it as switching of what students normally complete in class and at home. Lectures are recorded in advance and students are supposed to view and practice these lectures independently. It allows them to ask teachers specific questions when needed. Teachers also can better assess the understanding of the learners. However, Bergmann & Sams (2012); Herreid & Schiller (2013); and Berrett (2012) believe that simply an increase in home instruction and watching video lectures cannot be defined as flipped learning. They further say, "Students must spend face-to-face time with instructors to work on the content learned from the videos in order to be considered flipped learning."

The concept of flipped learning and integrating digital teaching-learning strategies in order to influence and improve the learners' behavior and learning outcome is the consequence of easy access to heaps of information via internet. It is not surprising at all to say that people are so accustomed to the virtual tools like internet that they are getting reliant on it for their everyday activity and so do the teachers today in their classrooms. Negative consequences are also observed when students are seen checking for social media updates most of the time, but these digital resources can inspire and guide also to a comprehensive understanding of how to comfortably navigate computer and internet resources. Bishop & Verleger (2013) write, "With the recent widespread availability of computers and internet access current educators are tasked with the endeavor of reassessing what is taught along with how that information is delivered."

The increased availability of technology has led to the development of a variety of strategies for utilizing computers as teaching tools, including the idea of a "flipped classroom" and has created a sense of urgency to integrate technology in the learning process. From the teachers' perspective too, a range of benefits can be observed, such as it enables them to utilize class time more efficiently and promotes higher student engagement.

Not only the concept but also the appearance of a flipped classroom is very different from a traditional classroom. There is action, chaos, talking, laughing, learning

and what not. Students can be seen sitting at tables or desks pushed together in non-traditional classroom manner and involved in various activities such as, accessing books, computers and others students for information; and still, collaborating with other students directly resulting in their learning.

In spite of all these ideas of learning, the approach is in question as students are increasingly complaining about inefficiency of the method. The paper is an observation-based in-depth study of various aspects related to this innovative approach of learning.

Why Flipped Learning

While there are plenty of concerns regarding the success of a flipped classroom, the benefits of the flipped classroom outnumber its shortcomings. In the traditional approach, also recognized as a teacher-centered classroom, the focus of teachers is limited to conveying information and assigning homework. Whether the knowledge is gained or not is the sole responsibility of learners. This may be effective for some of the learners, but most often it forces learners to become merely the recipients of information, not the active participants in the learning processes.

Flipped learning is a very effective, hands-on approach which actively engages the learners in order to improve their achievement. Increasingly growing technology and its infiltration in our classrooms by way of a flipped classroom paved the way for a more collaborative, student-centered learning environment. The use of technology further enriches the flipped learning process and promotes skills that are essential for 21st-century learning. Today's youth are much more familiar with technology and visual modes of communication, which are the types of strategies used to deliver information in a flipped classroom (Greenfield, 2009, Fulton, 2012).

Flipped learning is an attempt made with a purpose to enhance the learning of students. Rather than focusing simply on delivery of lectures, utilizing class-time to enhance the understanding of students is the target of flipped learning. It gives the learners the flexibility to learn from videos at their own pace and according to their own convenience. Since they are provided with video lectures in advance, class-time can be devoted to learning exercises, solving problems and discussions.

There are potential advantages which persuade us to adopt this style of learning. The learners can have more control on their learning as they are provided with the input to be owned by them at their own pace. Flipped learning promotes collaboration among the learners-learner and learner-teacher. One-on-one interaction builds their confidence. The content and the lessons are available to learners all the time. Even parents can have access to the material to check the quality of stuff.

Flipped learning from the Perspectives of Learners and Teachers

The flipped classroom benefits both learners

and teachers. It enables learners to have access to technology, engages them in rigorous content and diverse learning, provides them with the opportunity to collaborate with their peers and ultimately they can receive immediate feedback from experts. Listening to lectures with ease, solving problems and applying knowledge gained make them feel confident while asking questions in the classroom. Students typically learn at slightly different paces from one another so making lesson and lecture materials available online gave students the ability to re-visit material if needed (Keene, 2013). Even the student physically absent can have access to the materials and ensures their accountability.

Contrary to it, if we look at the challenges of this approach, the common observation is that the students are so used to "chalk and talk" that it allows them to have or take no responsibility for what is being learned. All responsibility lies on the teacher. They tend to focus on the assessment. If the assessment is still asking for facts instead of problem-solving and creation, they do not feel the flipped classes are benefiting them in terms of their results, which is their "takeaway" from education.

Flipped model cannot replace teachers. It can simply shift their role. The responsibility of a teacher shifts to identifying the needs of students and ensuring their active engagement. The model helps the teacher in a way that students come prepared in the class and so, on the basis of amount of learning he finds himself in a position to decide allocation of time to varieties of students- introvert, extrovert, struggling and great performers. It inspires teachers to become versatile while sharing the content of learning. Besides, transparency in subject matter helps teachers establish a rapport with parents.

Yet other groups of teachers are also there who are neither techno-savvy nor are they ready to change themselves. While many teachers might find the transition to a flipped approach manageable and worthwhile I did come across several arguments that teachers are oftentimes already struggling to stay on top of their current workloads and feel that finding the time to develop and implement new lessons and teaching approaches (as would be required when beginning to flip) represents a significant hurdle in their adoption of the method (Neyland, 2011). A teacher's comfort level with technology would also impact their willingness to embrace a flipped classroom (Ertmer, 2012)

Flipped Learning: Why not to be recommended? (Challenges of Flipped Learning)

For any new idea or discipline, criticism goes side by side. Flipped learning approach too is not an exception to it. Flipping learning is not the only means of interactive learning and learners' engagement and then get the desired results. Most of the learners face technical problems while adopting/using this method. It can also create a rift among learners as everyone cannot afford to have access to a computer and internet necessary to view the lectures. The use of computers

and internet access at home is typically a large component of a flipped classroom (Fulton, 2012). That puts students and schools with limited internet and computer access are at a disadvantage when attempting to implement a flipped classroom (Tomlinson, 2015).

One cannot assure the learners' participation in the learning process as the teachers cannot force them to watch videos. It is difficult on the part of the teacher to afford additional time and effort to enhance the subject matter, prepare the video lectures and motivate the learners.

Some teachers are not in favour of initiating the flipped learning as they believe that this approach falsely acknowledges students as self-motivated to learn. Since learners are at the liberty of learning at their own pace and as per their own choice, maintaining balance between slow and fast learners can be a great challenge for the teacher. Tests cannot be designed and conducted for them. Thus, like any other model of teaching and learning, flipped learning also has its flaws/ challenges.

It is highly-essential to hold every student accountable for the delivered video assignments in a flipped classroom and make them responsible for their learning which is a great challenge.

Why the approach is in question

The success of any approach lies in what the objective for the course is. One must not be too enthusiastic about flipped learning as it is important to understand that flipped learning doesn't mean automated learning. This approach is in question for several reasons. Every stakeholder has certain reservations about it. Many students resist the approach, either actively or passively, for one reason or the other. One of the biggest problems with flipped classrooms is that the teachers teaching them have not really changed their teaching methods to encourage that active approach and are trying to retrofit old teaching methods to a new situation. Many teachers who have experience with this model have now settled on a hybrid between flipped and traditional methods as the most effective learning experience for their students.

Students who expect the conventional mode of lecture-based teaching might find the sudden implementation of a new model disorientating. In addition, some teachers may find that the shift in their role from presenter to facilitator is challenging and requires the development of new competencies. Flipping requires very judicious planning of the difficulty of the material students need to learn on their own in preparation for class. In an era in which student satisfaction is so vital, we want our students to be 'mature' learners and take responsibility for their learning without training them to work with the way we are expecting.

Students cannot be abandoned simply by equipping them with a video presentation and expecting that they would learn from it on their own. Be it video lessons or not, students always need the teacher. It is

mainly because they are so used to the conventional method of teaching that they can't make sense of their lessons until they learn it directly from the teacher.

Flipping the classroom involves a great deal of teaching - we are teaching them to be learners, initially not fully independent learners, but learners nonetheless. Effectiveness of the approach is in learning by doing. It is true that some students simply don't want to be bothered with engaging activities. They just want to sit there, take notes and then that's it. It is very challenging to create a mind shift in students. They expect everything to be given to them on a silver platter.

In such situation, they believe it to be the teachers' duty to prepare them for a world in which they have to engage and participate actively and make them aware of their own responsibility for their learning process. We need to make clear to them not just what is being done but also why it is being done. When we explicitly inform the purpose of each activity and establish a clear connection to our learning outcomes we not only develop activities or lessons that are engaging but students are less resistant to complete the assignment because they understand the purpose.

Conclusion

Interactive engagement is central to teaching and learning. Flipped learning allows for individual learning styles. The teachers' role shifts towards that of facilitator and coach by empowering students to take control of their own learning. Its core objective is to move students away from passive learning and towards active learning where students engage in collaborative activity, peer learning and problem-based learning. The model offers a teaching strategy where the basic material for a course is presented outside of class, often through videos that the students can watch at their own pace, and time in the classroom is spent deepening their understanding of the subject through exercises, projects and guest speakers. The approach is wonderful because it is supposed to encourage self-directed learning and active learning.

The issue usually lies in the way it is carried out. Those who oppose the method, see teaching as simply 'telling' the information - but whether learning has taken place - that's for another day when the assessments takes place. Even when properly implemented, the flipped class may not suit the learning styles of some students. Some just prefer the purely passive learning from sitting in a lecture. For many other students, the flipped class can provide deeper learning with a combination of passive and active learning. Those who oppose, actually missing face to face, human-to-human communication along with the ability to discuss things, react in real time, and to view others' emotional commitment to their views. Some believe that for the amount of tuition the students pay, they deserve the full sage on the stage routine and nothing less. So, they feel that flipped lectures are basically robbery.

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ACTION RESEARCH PROJECTS

ELTAI is grateful to educationist Dr. S.S. Rajagopalan, for his generous donation of one lakh rupees for providing financial assistance to our members who undertake Action Research projects for the enhancement of learning of their students.

The project proposals submitted by the following members have been so far selected for grant of Rs.10,000 each.

1. K. Chandrasekaran: Writing skills (Essay writing)
2. Dr. Shravan Kumar: Listening Skills
3. Dr. K. C. Mishra: Speaking Skills
4. Dr. K.V. Madhavi: Writing Skills (Essay writing)
5. Dr. Zulaiha: Reading skills
6. Dr. Joycelin Shermila: Writing Skills (Essay writing)
7. Dr. Xavier Pradeepsingh: Flipped Classrom for Teaching of Sentence Structures
8. Dr. Sasi Kiran Speaking Skills

A few more under our consideration.

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