Chapter 95
Understanding Flipped Instructions and How They Work In the Real World

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ABSTRACT

From Colorado's Pike's Peak into a number of schools, the popularity of flipped classes is on the rise. Based on a two-tier approach to teaching and learning, students review instructor-recommended media or other content in the first tier before face-to-face class meetings, while the second tier has face-to-face classes repurposed to for interactive or hands-on learning experiences. Through this arrangement, hitherto face-to-face class meetings become avenues for content-knowledge application, or concept mastery. Given that, flipped classes have attracted both excitement and skepticisms, this chapter attempts put things into perspective by streamlining the components, implementation, and the evidence of efficacy of flipped classes. The chapter examines concerns that flipped classes likely burden instructors and students especially those in rural and urban areas who may lack the resources needed to benefit from this strategy. The chapter further prescribes resources and procedures that could be useful to individuals interested in flipped classrooms.

INTRODUCTION

Many commentators on flipped classes have traced the recent origins of the concept to the foothills of Colorado's Pike's Peak. The popularity of this concept has been widely credited to two chemistry teachers from Woodland Park High school who chanced on the idea in their quest to reach out to students who missed classes mostly as a result of their association with the school's sports team, or due to other emergencies. Their concept, which revolved around recording their classes and making them available in video formats to absentee students so that they did not miss out on lectures, soon became popular with students beyond their target group. These recorded video lectures soon became popular among students who were present in class, but later felt the need to address gaps in their understandings of particular

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lectures (Bergmann & Sams, 2012; Hawks, 2014). This chapter elaborates on the above by examining some of the differences that characterize flipped classes based on its components. This chapter also presents research conclusions that attempt to verify the veracity of flipped classes as a viable teaching approach that holds promises for increased students' achievement. The chapter acknowledges that, for flipped classes to reach their full potential certain challenges must be addressed. The chapter identifies some of these challenges together with recommendations from practitioners and professionals on how these challenges could best be surmounted. The chapter concludes with recommendations on resources that can support the flip effort.

WHAT IS A FLIPPED CLASSROOM?

Stemming from the above, Hawks (2014) assumes a broader outlook on flipped class sessions. She defines the concept as a pedagogical model the first part of which primarily relies on short asynchronous video lectures, reading assignments, practice problems, and other instructor recommended digital technology-based resources to engage students outside of the classroom. In Hawks' (2014) view, the second part of the concept relies on the use of active, interactive, group-based, and other problem-solving activities in classrooms in place of traditional direct lectures. According to her, the in-class session can help instructors to identify respective knowledge gaps in students that may require their attention. Similarly, Forsey, Low and Glance (2013) perceive that, out of class students' resources in flipped classes should consist of both short video-lectures and readings as a way of preparing for future face-to-face meetings in the forms of workshops, and other active engagements where students can get assistance to practically apply knowledge from prescribed short videos or other relevant readings. Forsey, Low and Glance (2013) aver that, applying the knowledge from the pre-recorded videos may also take the form of symposia, where students make presentations on their learned experiences from the prescribed videos and readings.

In contrast with the above, Bishop and Verleger (2013) appear to be much more radical in their view of what should constitute flipped classrooms. They maintain that, video lectures should be at the center of all flipped instructions. They refuse to recognize as flipped instructions, instances that rely on other prescriptions such as reading assignments and other non-video contents prescribed for students in preparations for in-class discussions and other activities. They posit that, flipped instructions should only have two key components namely: interactive group learning activities that take place in classrooms during scheduled class sessions and direct computer-based individual instructions through which video lectures are accessible to students outside of regular class hours. They consider this teaching and learning arrangement as being unique. This conclusion is based their belief that the approach enables instructors to deploy a combination of learning theories that would hitherto have been considered incompatible with each other in a single instructional session. Bishop and Verleger (2013) describe this combination as utilizing active and problem-based learning activities that draw heavily from the constructivist approach on one hand, and the traditional instructional lecture approach that draws largely upon behaviorist learning principles on the other.

The descriptions above hint that, there may be as many varieties of flipped approaches as there are commentators on the subject. There appears to be no consensus out there on any one way that exists for flipping instructions. The flexible nature of the approach reflects one of its many advantages. The flipped approach is flexible enough for users to add or subtract from its core components in accordance with their course disciplines, and what is required from them to produce the needed results (Hamdan