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The impact of a flipped classroom approach on student learning experience

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1. Introduction

The ‘flipped classroom’ is a pedagogical model in which a traditional learning environment and its activities are reformed, or at least rearranged. For example, in a Western university setting the usual lecture and follow-up learning exercises may be reversed, with instructional lecture material delivered online prior to class time, and in-class time used for more active group learning tasks than those undertaken in a traditional lecture. As with all new curricula, the rationale for flipped approaches is improved students’ learning, but in these straitened times the promise of more efficient use of resources is also likely to be invoked, along with the potential benefit from exploiting new technology.

In this article we report on our evaluation of a particular flipped classroom experiment, focusing on the satisfaction and observations of both the students and the course coordinator (CC). We framed our evaluation on Author’s (2006) model for improving student learning (MISL), which comprises five key scaffolds (supports or structures) for enabling and enhancing student learning, which are described in detail in the literature review section below. In addition to the scaffolds, we assumed that ‘confidence’, ‘motivation’ and ‘engagement’ would be key drivers (and dependent variables) for the students’ learning experience, so the hypothesis for this study had two related components: 1) students engaged in the flipped approach will express high levels of satisfaction with each of the five elements of MISL; and 2) students’ satisfaction will be associated with high levels of confidence, motivation and engagement in their learning. Thus, the main thrust of our research was quantitative in nature; however, we did add two qualitative components (described in the methodology section below). Our efforts to integrate these ‘mixed methods’, we believe, is an important part of the story of our research.

The structure of our article takes a conventional form: we commence with a quite extensive review of relevant literature, follow with a description of methodology and methods, research results, discussion, and conclusion.

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