Research and Practice of Flipped Classroom in Marketing Courses in China

Hai-Xia ZHANG
Department of Management, Harbin Finance University, Harbin, Heilongjiang, China
E-mail: zhanghaixiagg@163.com
Corresponding author: zhanghaixia, 18646001819

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Abstract. As a new pedagogical approach and model, the "flipped classroom" is getting more and more heated, and its introduction has injected fresh blood into the practice of China's education. At the same time, it has brought profound thoughts to Chinese educational scholars. After probing into the connotations of the new teaching model, the author further analyzes the feasibility of employing the strategy in the imparting of marketing courses, plus a teaching model designed. The results show that, the flipped teaching has more students engaged in classroom and fosters hands-on ability in them. Yet it's still waiting for further analysis on its significance in improving examination scores and in tapping out the potentials of every student.

As is already pointed out in China's National Medium-and-Long-Term Plan for Education Reform and Development (2011-2020), the development of information-oriented education shall use innovative educational philosophy as pilot, quality education resources and informationalized learning environment as foundation and innovative teaching and learning as the main [1]. With the rapid development of information technology today, the popularity of online media is not only greatly granting people easier access to knowledge, but also fostering changes in learning models". As a competent teacher, with his ability stretching to its maximum, yet still with the classroom under control, to what degree could he said to be benefiting all the students at the same time?" With the question posed to flipped classroom, the new teaching model scales an Internet hit in the US. Earning more eyeballs globally, a new model tagged with the name of reform and innovation, the flipped classroom has stridden over the Pacific Ocean to China, setting off a storm of reform in classroom teaching. Flipped classroom has shaken the foundation of traditional teacher-centered pedagogy, elevating the classroom to a higher level, possibly bringing an end to traditional teacher-monopolized stage [2].

The Connotation of Flipped Classroom

Many researchers inside and outside of China have carried out a series of research on flipped classroom. In terms of definition on flipped classroom, the author here proposes an interpretation from the angle of content and the angle of process.

The Interpretation of Content in Flipped Classroom

The focus of flipped classroom is not on the "reversal" aspect but on the essence of "reform" in the class. It's not only to reverse the student-teacher relations but also to change the teaching philosophy and reset teaching goals. Therefore, the connotation of flipped classroom could be expounded from the following five perspectives. First, there is the flipping of teaching goals. Flipped classroom aims to grant all students access to teachings fitting their characters. Through the individualized corrective assistance, it's to help foster students' personality via timely and effective feedbacks. Second, there is the "flipping" of teaching ideals. Flipped teaching has switched from the knowledge-based to be problem-based. The teaching activity turns from as knowledge-based to be problem-based. It has switched from teaching determining learning to determining teaching by learning. The old-fashioned knowledge impartation has given place to ability development, so to give full play to the ideal of students-centered teaching. Third, there is the reversion of teaching
flows. Propped up by new technology, flipped classroom has become a breakthrough to the traditional teaching model. It has reversed the order of knowledge impartation and knowledge internalization and built a new model of pre-class impartation and in-class internalization. Fourth, there is the "flipping" of teaching factors. In a flipped classroom, teaching video, rather than the textbook, has become the influential factors in classroom impartation. Information technology has replaced the traditional paper books and plays a key role in classroom teaching. Fifth, there is the "flipping" of teaching models. Flipped classroom provides students with diversified learning styles, such as autonomous learning, inquiry-based learning and project-based learning and so on. The switching of teaching incurs changes learning methods, which can needle the class change from the teacher-monopolized stage to a stage of equal discussion amongst all present.

The Flow-Focused Interpretation of Flipped Classroom

The new practice originated from Robert Talbert, professor of Franklin College, building his architecture model for implementation of flipped teaching[3], which could be said to be a summing up of his lifelong years being taught by students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Watch teaching video</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Targeted pre-class exercises</td>
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<tr>
<td>A few quick assessments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem-solving to enhance internalization of knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>Summarization and feedbacks</td>
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Figure 1. Robert Talbert's flipped classroom structure.

Figure 1 tells us clearly, flipped classroom consists of two main stages, i.e., knowledge impartation and knowledge internalization. Students watch teaching video before class to complete knowledge imparting. And by applying the new knowledge to certain amount of exercise, students test their learning results. A quiz is given to student to collect doubts and confusions from them. Other kinds of activities, such as small group discussion, assignment and attentions to individuals, are to foster knowledge internalization in students. At the end of the class, it’s to sum up the content and impartment. The reversed pattern is to realize extra-curricular knowledge impartation and in-class internalization of knowledge, so to save more time for the one-on-one discussion to tackle difficult points, hence achieving better teaching effect[4]. The architecture of flipped classroom renders us clear steps to follow, which makes a point of having tasks finished before class and in class.

The Feasibility of Employing Flipped Teaching in Marketing Course

The Feasibility of Curriculum Content and Characteristics

In effect, the content restriction on flipping comes from the restriction of the discipline on the new teaching model. Some subjects are suitable for flipping, while some are not. Marketing courses are heavily laden with practice, such as marketing environment, market research and consumer buying behavior analysis. Only with a great amount of in-class practice, could they transform theory into practice successfully. Only by bridging up brains and fingers, can they unite learning with work. Only by emphasizing hands-on ability and vocational skills training, can teaching goals be achieved. Flipped classroom calls for high level of information literacy and self-teaching in students. Both the flipped classroom and marketing are to cultivate in students interpersonal ability, coordination and communication ability, team cooperation ability, adaptability, the ability to analyze and solve problems, the concept of lifelong learning and learning ability, team spirit and good quality of self-control.
The Feasibility of Student Types

By pre-class investigation, we find that students are sophomores majoring in marketing. They already have some ability of self-control and skills in computer. The in-class ring is built on a team of mutual trust, and by focusing on events or topics of common interest, each member share his thoughts and feelings with others. Regardless of age, cultural level, hobbies and living conditions, the on-campus marketing students are highly similar. And with this kind of "homogeneity", group members are more likely to play corresponding advantages. Therefore, this study argues that these students can complete a series of learning activities under the guidance of teachers in a flipped classroom.

The Theoretic Rationale of Employing Flipped Classroom in Marketing Courses

First, flipped classroom is more in compatibility with human cognitive rules. Educators give students more freedom as they put the process of knowledge impartment outside the classroom and let the students choose the most suitable way to accept the new knowledge. At the same time, they put the knowledge internalization process in classroom, so, it allows for more communication and exchange between classmates, students and teachers.—Such is the typical viewpoint of analyzing the function and effect of flipped classroom from the perspective of human cognition rules. Second, flipped classroom is conducive to building a new relationship between teachers and students. Be it content video or in-class interactions, they cater for student need, where students can watch the video at their own pace or post their questions, ideas, and they can talk over it with teachers or peers. Therefore, they have regained the initiative on learning - this is the representative viewpoint on function and effect of classroom from the perspective of new relationship between teachers and students. Finally, flipped classroom can promote effective utilization and research of teaching resources. By looking back to the development of flipped classroom, we find the backing of khan academy video indispensable. Then, with the rise of "MOOCs", flipped classroom further swims with the advantages and characteristics of online open courses. Besides the emphasis on "interaction, communication, feedback" and "online study community", online courses also pay special attention to widely surfing for all kinds of resources related to the teaching, their research and development and effective utilization.

Designing of Flipped Classroom in Marketing Courses in China

The reversing process of classroom is highly compatible with marketing practice. Both of the two are under the guidance of a teacher, involving a group of people with common needs or problems. Through discussion, games, role playing, brainstorming, individuals observe, study, experience, hint, imitate, and participate in communication, so they get encouraged in self-awareness, self-exploration, bettering relations and in adapting. They pre-empt and solve the problem, stimulate individual potentials, adopt new attitude and new behavior, so it's a kind of knowledge and skills. Therefore, through the literature research and analysis of international flipping cases, and by summing up home cases, this study builds up flipped classroom fitting the actual conditions of marketing for Chinese colleges and universities, as shown in figure 2. The teaching mode consists of the staple parts, such as the video preparation, the video-facilitated learning, classroom discussions and consolidation after class.
The Session of Video Preparation

Video preparation is mainly completed by teachers, with the PPT and audio podcast the content into micro-class videos, such as animations, online interactive games, etc. At the same time, e-courseware, three-dimensional teaching materials, lectures video, website techniques and item pool are prepared. Then, it's to select an on-line network for these courses, including digital learning platform and technology BBS, teaching community (QQ), WeChat interactive platform, and mobile learning platform, etc. Finally, the teaching resources are uploaded to the online support platform, with the learning tasks set up and online discussion built Q & A and other learning environment. As for video preparation, the teacher needs a finger to make video, clear logics, and more, interesting pictures and illustrations, so to attract students and flavor up their learning.

The Session of Video Learning

During the pre-class preparation, the teacher study teaching objectives and teaching plan, inform students of learning tasks, including the study content, goals, work, learning records, etc. Through online self-learning, students do the exercise and design their notes, so to accomplish the imparting of knowledge. There are no specific requirements as to the learning environment, the student can choose relaxing, comfortable, yet suitable learning environment. The speed of learning video is also self-monitored by students. In case of tough stuffs, students can find solution by data surfing. As for some other tough stuffs, they can also seek support from teachers at the teaching platform and from students at the learning community. As for knotty problems, they take them to class for solution of classmates or teachers. The process cultivates students ability to solve problems independently and get the confidence in learning. Teachers can invest the fragmented time in online Q & A or to answer questions raised by students at specifically saved times. Meanwhile, they collect data of student learning process.

The Session of Classroom Presentation and Discussion

In the classroom, the main task of classroom activities is to bolster the internalization of knowledge; its recommended to complete the class through the organized presentation, heuristic learning, problem exploration, collaborative learning and interactive communication. During this period, teachers monitor students to complete the task, and to give individualized guidance; student homework can be submitted online for peer reviews, teacher comments, so to reach a consensus. In the classroom, teachers draw to online learning phenomena and to lead in keys and knots. On the basis the new pedagogy, it's to guide students to exploratory research so as to develop their habits of profound contemplation, hence achieving a deepened and internalized understanding of knowledge. Classroom presentation mainly consists of problem determination, independent inquiry, collaborative learning and exchanges of results.

The first session: trouble shooting. Exploratory topics of classroom science main come off the following aspects, first of all, issues students encountered in pre-class learning; the second is issue in the homework; the third, the general issues encountered by students; the fourth, expanded topics.
Some problems are mainly put forth by students, but more is to be summarized and refined by teachers. The second session, independent enquiry study. Independent inquiry is one of the important parts of the class activities, it helps students complete knowledge internalization, and it also cultivates and improves students' ability to solve problems independently. In general, teachers could assign the independent inquiry commensurate to student levels. Teachers can also provide face-to-face counseling and communication in time. The third session, collaborative learning. Collaborative learning is an important part of the classroom activities, which is conducive to deepening students' understanding and comprehensive use of knowledge, so to cultivate their ability to solve practical problems. As for the content of collaborative learning, teachers generally choose relatively difficult problems for the assignments. Group collaborative learning is easy to become a mere formality, and students need to clarify the division of labor and cooperation within the team, and teachers need to strengthen the organization, monitor students and fully motivate the enthusiasm of the team members, so to ensure the effective completion of tasks. The fourth session, result exchanges. The results of independent inquiry or collaborative learning need to be exchanged in the classroom through the PPT, where solutions and results are shared amongst students for common improvement. The teacher renders more guidance on the PPT production and presentation, making every effort to improve students' comprehensive quality.

The Session of Post-Class Consolidation

The Post-class expansion is to stretch the ability of on basis of consensus achieved in the classroom, teachers upload training projects and make use of fragmented time to guide students in extracurricular improvement training for students, cultivating the ability of transferring knowledge and skills in students. Generally, the question is clearly summarized and reported after classroom discussion. The report states that the task progress, the problems encountered in the learning process and the solution, and with the expanded content attached to the report. The post-class expansion allows students to systematically review the knowledge to be grasped in each task, and through the task of expanding training, it further enhances student ability to put theoretical knowledge into solving practical problems, so to improve students' divergent thinking ability.

Major Challenges Flipped Classroom Facing in Marketing Courses.

The course of marketing course is divided into three parts: the pre-class part, classroom and the post-class part. Pre-class, we will focus on cultivating students' autonomous learning ability. The classroom will guide students to explore the deep thinking in inquiry, so to tap out the potentials of students by inspiring their initiatives. Post-class, it's to guide students to complete the transfer of knowledge and skills, to cultivate students' professionalism. So, there is more active classroom atmosphere and better hands-on ability in students. However, flipped classroom is also facing many challenges in practice.

Technical Problems

The routine uploading of all the marketing courses demands huge numbers of micro-videos. In the United States, because of the support of non-profit Khan Academy, interdisciplinary research and development of high quality teaching resources are not without a platform. While in China, there isn't a Chinese version of "Khan Academy" run by the private sector, and the lack of platform poses serious challenges. At present, colleges and universities can produce rough but ready videos, but common teachers are not skilled in "Khan Academy" recording screen software. Video sharing sites adopted by "Khan Academy", such as YouTube, are not of easy access to Chinese. So, better flipping effect demands for better software technology and network services.

Problems during the Teaching Process

At present, the most difficult lies not in technology but in the teaching process, namely, what kind of video and text to be given to the students before class, which is key to the success or failure of the "flipping". The teacher shall sum up student aptitude by knowing their cognitive level,
knowledge level and their mental characteristics, so to mete out reading guidance and intervention to different spectrum of intelligence. Video recording often lays particular stress on the foundation, but it needs a focus, the basics to the rank and file are "basics" to students of other levels. When recording videos, teachers shall focus on demonstration of the basics. They shall adopt the correct way of thinking explain the most crucial issues, to set good examples in demonstration, which is let students know the basic skills, direction from watching "basics introduction" video, so that students can employ proper skills in tackling exploratory problems. And this is most difficult to achieve.

Teachers' Capacity and Level

In the flipped teaching mode, students understand the new knowledge and content through the extracurricular content video, and then, by collaboration and exploration, teachers and students realize the internalization of knowledge, a step challenging the ability and horizon of teachers and students, as the following aspects. First of all, in the class, teachers should master the specialized software knowledge, learn to edit video recording, surf the Internet to collect, download and process valuable information, upload to it to class for students to learn, and it is bound to spend a lot of efforts. Second, to make students master new video knowledge efficiently in a short, teachers shall have a high level and a high quality to record the video. Again, once students watch the content video and have a bug, he seeks help on the network platform; teachers shall respond timely and accurately, so to solve the problem. The tremendous pressure of time and efficiency challenges teachers' mastery of professional knowledge. Finally, flipped classroom can lacerate classroom teaching entirety. Generally speaking, teaching content usually exists in form of concept, judgment, reasoning, hypothesis and predictions and other category systems[5]. Flipped classroom lacerates knowledge transfer and knowledge internalization, with the student grasping the explicit knowledge such as theorem formula yet letting away the tacit knowledge, such as thought and emotion.

Evaluation for Students

Domestic mainly evaluate students through examination, teachers and students are reluctant to put more time into the search for knowledge. In the class, students get to the root of the matter and pose a fierce debate. The mining of knowledge is understandable, but it's hard for teachers master the teaching rhythm to cater to the examination system. In colleges and universities, marketing exams have undergone reform, but still not up to the standard of flipped classroom, which is grouped of five or six people. Inside the team, division of labor, cooperation, "hitching" will directly influence the classroom effect. Therefore, the teacher should evaluate students' learning results from many angles, so to strike a balance between true formative evaluation and summative evaluation, quantitative evaluation and qualitative evaluation, relative evaluation and individual differences.

References


