Flipping the Classroom in Introductory Apparel Studies

Amber Chatelain, Eastern Kentucky University

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Postsecondary instructors are consistently seeking methods to effectively instruct students in the classroom and engage them in the learning process. One of the most recent trending instructional strategies designed to promote student engagement is the flipped classroom approach to teaching. While definitions vary, the flipped classroom "is a pedagogical model in which the typical lecture and homework elements of a course are reversed… Short video lectures are viewed by students at home before the class session, while in-class time is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions" (EDUCAUSE, 2012, p. 1). Rather than the delivery of traditional lectures by faculty, the primary purpose of the flipped classroom is to devote more in-class time to interaction with students, application of course materials, and engaging students in meaningful content (King, 1993; Ouda & Ahmed, 2016). Students are responsible for self-directed learning, accessing and learning course materials prior to coming to class and applying that knowledge in class (Ouda & Ahmed, 2016). Using this instructional modality, faculty are allowed the opportunity to assess student knowledge in real-time, facilitate inquiry-based student learning, and provide personalized feedback to students in a one-on-one setting (Wiley & Gardner, 2013).

In the Fall 2015 semester, I taught an introductory apparel (IA) course at a mid-sized southern university. The course introduces students to concepts in our industry- the history of retailing, fashion theories, consumer behavior, textiles, product development, global sourcing, branding, etc.- in a brief and very limited way. I taught the class utilizing my typical mix of instructor techniques- lecture, class and peer-to-peer discussion, short in-class activities, exams, and a couple major projects. Overall, the class was well-received, but end of the semester student feedback indicated a major flaw- a lack of hands-on activities for application coupled with too much lecture. Student comments included, "Less lecture, do more hands on," "[Students] should do more creative projects in the future," "This course could be more hands on to actually apply what we are learning," and "Needs more hands on involvement throughout the course instead of mostly lectures."

After receiving course feedback, I began to research teaching techniques, attempting to find methods in which to enhance the curriculum and integrate meaningful projects, activities, and assignments, while additionally effectively delivering course materials in a limited time frame. After researching the flipped classroom approach, I decided this would be the ideal pedagogical model for IA as it would create an interactive in-class learning environment focused on critical and creative thinking and application of materials; promote peer-to-peer learning and discussion; and encourage students to assume responsibility for their own learning.

During the Fall 2016 semester, I taught IA using the flipped approach. Pre-recorded lectures I created that summer were put onto the university's online platform, and students were

required to listen to and take notes on the lecture prior to coming to class. Class time was devoted to an application of materials through the integration of more discussion activities, assignments, and creative hands-on projects. From the faculty perspective, I appreciated the time in class to actually apply course materials, reinforcing the skills necessary in our industry and covered in lectures. The students, however, had a different perspective. End of the semester course feedback indicated that overall, while they enjoyed the hands-on activities and projects, many students did not like the flipped classroom approach of online lectures they were required to watch; many preferred the traditional in-class lectures. Student comments included, "[I disliked] group work every day," "I didn't like the online PowerPoints and lectures," "I didn't like out of class lectures," and "[I disliked] the lectures online."

Once again, I changed my instructional approach to IA in the Fall 2017 semester. This time, I chose to leave my pre-recorded lectures online and available to students, yet deliver traditional in-class lectures and flip *some* of the course materials and topics. For example, I delivered a traditional in-class lecture on consumer behavior, but had students listen to the online lecture on textiles so we could complete an in-class design project. End of the semester student feedback on the course was overwhelmingly positive. Student comments included, "I really enjoyed [the professor's] PowerPoints where she provided audio clips of her lectures. I also really enjoyed all the assignments we did. Very hands on, and overall enjoyable course," "Being able to review the PowerPoint slides [online] helped me learn," and "All the hands on projects [helped me learn]."

The experiences of my flipped classroom approach are inconsistent with much of the literature on the flipped classroom, as when I flipped my entire course, the overall quality of the course was viewed negatively instead of positively. In the flipped classroom students are responsible for self-directed learning, accessing and learning course materials prior to coming to class (Ouda & Ahmed, 2016). However, I found many of my students came to class unprepared, failing to listen to the pre-recorded lectures prior to class, and thus the entire model of the flipped classroom fell apart. There was no way to reinforce the concepts in class they were supposed to have learned outside of class, if they failed to learn those concepts to begin with.

Brame (2013) indicates there are four key elements of the flipped classroom- the second element is to provide students with an incentive to prepare for class. He notes that in all the research studies he read on the flipped classroom, "students completed a task associated with their preparation… and that task was associated with points" (p. 1). When I flipped my entire class in the Fall 2016 semester, I instructed students to listen to the online PowerPoint prior to coming to class, but failed to create measures that incentivized or required them to do so. Perhaps, linking points to class preparation (i.e.- listening to the online lectures) may have improved the overall quality of the course.

From an instructional standpoint, creating an entirely flipped classroom was incredibly time-consuming, which is consistent with faculty perceptions on the flipped classroom. This change required me to voice-record all of my PowerPoint lectures, and carefully examine course content to develop new in-class activities and assignments for every single class. Creating course lesson plans consisting of non-lecture materials was particularly challenging, and required

a tremendous amount of research, planning, and creativity. During class time students would, for example, read a case study and respond to questions; engage in group work to solve a proposed retailing problem; or debate ethical industry issues using a guided format. While we were often engaged in deep learning, upon reflection of the in-class content, I recognized that perhaps not all the content was truly purposeful or meaningful, and that, for some topics, a lecture would have likely been a better instructional method. Therefore, flipping some class periods offers a balance to both teaching methods, allowing the instructor to choose which lessons to flip, and which lessons to lecture on. Faculty should always choose instructional strategies that work best for their students and course learning objectives.

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