

Turnin' It Upside Down: Using the Flipped Classroom to Advance Student Knowledge and Application in a Marketing Capstone Course

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Introduction

During this session, the author will present the unique approaches to employing the flipped classroom in a marketing strategy course. The marketing strategy course is the capstone course for marketing majors. The course seeks to integrate various marketing concepts (advertising strategy, branding, pricing, logistics, consumer behavior, retailing, social media, etc.). Given the diversity of topics and ever-changing landscape, new approaches to teaching are required. In the end, the flipped classroom strategy is appropriate for other marketing and business courses – undergraduate or graduate, as well as all disciplines.

Background and Literature Review

At the core of active learning is to develop a classroom setting that advances critical thinking, maximizes student interaction, and applies concepts within the real-world. Professors must create learning environments for students to accommodate a variety of different learning styles. If instructors can find creative ways to engage students, they will appreciate the marketing and other disciplines at deeper levels (Stephen, 2015). As such, the flipped classroom uniquely fits within this larger schema. Employing the flipped classroom pedagogical method includes the confluence of two dynamics: the expansion of available technology and a focus on problem-solving (Bishop & Verleger, 2013). As Lage et al. (2000) noted, “Inverting the classroom means that events that have traditionally taken place inside the classroom now take place outside the classroom and vice versa.”

As technology was introduced into the classroom and courses were offered in hybrid or online formats, the concept of learning both within and outside of the classroom was advanced. In fact, millennials no longer tolerate the traditional lecture format nearly to the extent of former generations of students (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). To that end, Bishop & Verleger, (2013) advanced a conceptual model that seeks to leverage these experiences and learning opportunities.

The flipped classroom pedagogical approach can be adapted to leverage students that learn through the following learning styles: peer-assisted (Topping & Ehly, 1998); cooperative (Foot & Howe, 1998); problem-based (Hmelo-Silver, 2004); and active learning (Prince, 2004). And it allows the instructor to design the course so that it appeals to these many different learning styles while still preserving control over the substance of the course (Lage, Platt, & Treglia, 2000).

Among professors, many observe that students often do not read all assigned readings. The flipped classroom may provide a remedy to that dynamic. In their research, DeGrazia et al. (2012) found that students engaged in the flipped classroom teaching model came to class much better prepared – with a greater percentage having read the required readings. Interestingly, and furthering the research regarding the efficacy of the flipped classroom, Moravec et al. (2010) found that flipped classroom students performed 21% better on exams, compared to students in a traditional lecture class.

The above research – as well as other works on this topic – support the notion that the flipped classroom advances learning, increases student engagement, and can provide superior outcomes.

Employing the Flipped Classroom

In the fall of 2016, the marketing strategy course was refreshed with new content and cases. At the same time, the course developer recognized that the marketing field content had continued to evolve, making it imperative to stay current and deliver cutting-edge materials to the students.

For the marketing strategy course, a set of narrated PowerPoint slides were developed for each week's series of topics. In-class delivery includes the traditional lectures and seminar discussions. However, as discussed previously, professors teaching the marketing strategy course sought new pedagogical techniques to advance student learning within the context of varied student backgrounds and experiences. Specifically, the flipped classroom provides an excellent opportunity to engage students with particular backgrounds and different career trajectories.

Specifically, the steps in delivering the flipped classroom include the following:

- Recording lectures for each of the chapters and/or topics.
- Provide a course management platform to house the narrated slides and course materials.
- Develop weekly discussion forums for each chapter or major topic.
- Allocate points in the course syllabus for participating in the discussion forums.

- Instruct students to watch the narrated slide files, review any related journal articles, and watch online video clips prior to the in-class session. In particular, the literature suggests that the use of online video clips help augment learning, demonstrating the use of financial theory and concepts in practice (Stephen, 2015).
- Require that students post a 1-3 paragraph summary of the week's topics, as well as uploading 2-5 discussion questions.
- Following the previous step, the professor reviews the summaries and organizes all of the questions to flow into the class discussion.
- Both the summaries and discussion questions are graded, based upon their demonstrated knowledge of the topics.

When the class meets in-person, the first chapter or major topic is reviewed very briefly. High points are discussed and/or examples are reviewed. The professor then moves to the previously-uploaded discussion questions and engages the class in an active discussion. In most instances, a deeper coverage of the topics ensues, now including the entire class versus the traditional lecture format which is traditionally driven by the professor. Further, this strategy permits more class time to be devoted to topics that are particularly troublesome for the students to comprehend or more directly related to their careers, as opposed to core concepts that are well understood by the class.

As soon as the first chapter or topic is covered and the professor assesses that students have an understanding of it, the class moves to the next chapter or topic, repeating the above process. Any assigned articles are also integrated into the active classroom discussion as well as key takeaways from the online video clips that the students reviewed in advance of the class.

Outcomes of the Flipped Classroom

Many students articulated difficulty in integrating the various marketing. Moreover, they stated that was difficult to understand when to apply these within dynamic marketing settings approach quantitatively-oriented courses with trepidation. It is the authors' experience that employing the flipped classroom technique removes much student anxiety around the course topics. Moreover, it requires that students embrace the topics. The professor is better able to encourage and engage student involvement during the discussions – something that is not as easy during a lecture-oriented delivery.

Most importantly, student performance evolved from viewing each case from a consumer perspective into a marketer's perspective. Students come into the classroom with stronger foundational knowledge and a heightened ability to approach and deal with the case issues. Student evaluations have supported the notion of improved outcomes and learning.

The author continues to explore and use other active learning and student-centered learning strategies. That said, employing the flipped classroom methodology to teach marketing

strategy has been a success. Cross-course evaluations from the undergraduate finance and MBA healthcare policy course have yielded similar results. In the end, the flipped classroom shows promise and application across business courses.

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Relevance to Marketing Educators, Researchers and Practitioners: Marketing professors are always seeking new and innovative approaches to leading the classroom. Advancing knowledge is paramount. The flipped classroom strategy allows students to demonstrate their marketing knowledge and apply with dynamic settings. The flipped classroom strategy also affords the instructor the ability to lead and/or observe classroom discussions – able to focus more on student performance than on moving along topics.

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