Understanding the Myths & Realities Associated with Flipped, Hybrid, and Blended Learning Models

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The Importance of Establishing Common Understanding of Online Learning Terms

When educators talk about online learning I often hear a number of misconceptions. It is important for educational leaders to have a clear understanding of what the terminology surrounding online learning actually means.

In this white paper we will be examining traditional learning, blended learning, flipped learning, hybrid and online learning models. In each section we will:

✓ Define each learning model
✓ Describe what it looks like in practice
✓ Identify educational benefits
✓ Share common myths around these models
Face-to-Face Instruction

Face-to-Face Instruction Defined

Face-to-face (f2f) instruction primarily occurs synchronously (live) and in a physical classroom. Typically students are required to attend five days a week.

What Traditional Face-to-Face Instruction Typically Looks Like in Practice

In most traditional classrooms the instruction is organized around the teacher. The teacher is seen as the content expert and the student is primarily the recipient of teacher provided instruction. The teacher sets the day-to-day pace. Communication patterns are primarily linear and directed by the teacher. Students are expected to complete the same instructional pathway. Student support is school based and primarily provided by teacher during the school day.

Educational Benefits of Teacher Centered Classrooms

While teacher centered classrooms have been around since the 1800s, it is no longer considered an effective model for today’s digital learners. The educational benefits in the 1800s was that it provided an efficient way to accommodate large number of farmers ad immigrants that were arriving in American cities. However, this model of instruction is not preparing our students for the 21st century workforce where students will need to compete on a global market.

Myth #1 All face-to-face classrooms are teacher centered

While many classrooms today are teacher centered, not all classrooms are organized in this way. Some classrooms are more constructivist and take a more student centered approach.

See https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6IDPGUSQNes&feature=player_embedded for an example of one such classroom.

As you watch this video keep the following questions in mind:

What is the role of the teacher?
What is the role of the student?
What are the instructional strategies that would be difficult to replicate in a virtual learning environment?
Blended Learning

Blended Learning Defined

Blended learning is a mixture of face-to-face and asynchronous learning.

What Blended Learning Looks Like in Practice

In blended learning students typically physically attend their brick and mortar school five days a week and do online work outside of school (or asynchronously).

Educational Benefits of Blended Learning

In a meta-analysis study conducted by the US Department of Education, studies on student achievement on traditional classrooms, blended learning classrooms, and classes conducted 100% online were compared. The results revealed that students in blended learning environments performed the best\(^1\) (US Department of Education, 2010).

Another benefit of blended learning is that digital content can be more flexible, dynamic and current than that of traditional textbooks.

Blended learning can provide the best of interactive face-to-face instruction with personalized online strategies to provide the best of both worlds for students.

A Word About Access...

In order for blended learning to succeed, access to the Internet out of school is very important. Schools need to consider how they can provide access (i.e. checking out devices for students who need access, or providing extended hours for students to use computers at school) for all students.

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\(^1\) Researchers of the study caution that factors such as terms of time spent, curriculum and pedagogy were likely to be contributing factors to the study outcomes.
Myth #2 In blended learning students complete an online course by working primarily asynchronously at school and at home

Some educators believe that blended learning is when you put your entire course into a learning management system and students work on it 100% asynchronously. Students may physically come to class but they are actually working individually on the online course during class time. This model ignores some of the positive benefits of face-to-face interactions that can occur in a classroom.

Flipped Learning

Flipped Learning Defined

Flipped learning is when teachers do not use face-to-face time to deliver direct instruction. Instead direct instruction is delivered asynchronously.

What Flipped Learning Looks Like in Practice

The most common way people think about flipped learning is flipping of homework and in class lectures. Teacher lectures are recorded and students watch these at home and class time is used to complete homework in school.

A good example of this is in the online video [http://youtu.be/2H4RkudFzlc](http://youtu.be/2H4RkudFzlc).

At eClass4learning we define flipped learning not only as the flipping of time and space of teacher lectures, but also a flipping of pedagogical practices in which the teacher shifts their role in the classroom from disseminating information to checking for understanding and helping students meet learning targets.

Educational Benefits of Flipped Learning

One of the advantages of flipped learning is that students do not have to try and capture what the speaker has said in real time where they risk missing significant points because they are trying to transcribe the instructor’s words. By recording lectures students can stop, reflect upon what is being said. “the use of video and other pre-recorded media puts lectures under the control of the students: they can watch, rewind, and fast-forward as needed. This ability may be of particular value to students with accessibility concerns, especially where captions are provided for those with hearing impairments. Lectures that can be viewed more than once may also help those for whom English is not their first language”(Educause, 2012).
The teacher role during class time changes dramatically in a true flipped learning classroom. Instead of spending the majority of their time delivering direct instruction, teachers now spend their time checking for understanding and helping students stay on track.

See how the teacher role has changed in this video of a teacher piloting using videos from Kahn Academy to individualize instruction [http://www.portical.org/tv/](http://www.portical.org/tv/).

**Myth #3: The video component is the most critical piece to flipped learning**

Two important findings of the US Department of Ed (2010) study worth noting are:

*Elements such as video or online quizzes do not appear to influence the amount that students learn in online classes.* The research does not support the use of some frequently recommended online learning practices. Inclusion of more media in an online application does not appear to enhance learning. The practice of providing online quizzes does not seem to be more effective than other tactics such as assigning homework.

*Online learning can be enhanced by giving learners control of their interactions with media and prompting learner reflection.* Studies indicate that manipulations that trigger learner activity or learner reflection and self-monitoring of understanding are effective when students pursue online learning as individuals.

The take-away from these two findings is that the video is not the critical component. It is the inclusion of activities that demand that students reflect on what they have just seen.

Shana Oliver (Lanley, 2011), the school's academic facilitator, of Cochrane Collegiate Academy, in Charlotte, North Carolina feels that there should be limited lecture time in a class period. After 12-15 minutes of lecturing, you should engage your students in some type of activity, even if it's for only a few minutes.

In her experience, students can maintain their attention span only for the number of minutes equal to their age plus two or three, so the lecture must be chunked. When that amount of time has elapsed, teachers must stop and have students do something different. Once students have completed a two- or three-minute activity, the teacher can go back to lecturing for another chunk of time.

For example a student can talk to their neighbor, draw a picture, write a few sentences that summarize or describe the lecture, finish an example problem, or get in a discussion with their group.

**Myth #4: In flipped learning environments teachers are the only ones to make videos**

Teachers are not the only ones who can create content in a flipped classroom. In order to improve student engagement in our classrooms we need to create cultures of explanation. Today's learners are experiential learners who learn by discovery rather than being “told.” They like to interact with content to explore and draw their own conclusions. They also like playing different roles in their learning, either as a student, or even as instructor or facilitator or supporter of others, and switch between them (Hart, 2008). We need to create classrooms where students are the ones who have to defend and explain their ideas as opposed to regurgitate facts.
A great example of this is a voice thread created by students explaining a math problem http://voicethread.com/share/197947/.

Hybrid Learning

Hybrid Learning Defined

Hybrid learning is when students attend a physical classroom less than 5 days a week and work online at other times.

What Hybrid Learning Looks Like in Practice

In hybrid learning environments, students have flexible physical classroom and/or location attendance requirements.

Educational Benefits of Flipped Learning

In short hybrid learning= more choices for the learner. This type of learning is more real world and what learners are likely to encounter in college and their jobs.

Myth #5 Blended, hybrid and online learning are less work than traditional face-to-face instruction

Many instructors, institutions, and institutions mistakenly believe that online instruction is easy. The following table shows a comparison of the amount of time a teacher may take to teach a face-to-face course verses an online course(Palloff & Pratt, 2007, p. 74)^2.

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^2 Time involved with online classes is related to a number of variables such as the number of students enrolled in the class, the level of comfort with technology on the part of both the instructor and the students, the encountering of technical difficulties, the degree to which discussion is an expected part of class activity, and the types of activities in which students are engaged.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructor Activity</th>
<th>Face-to-Face Class</th>
<th>Online Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preparation</td>
<td>2 hrs. per week to: Review assigned reading, review lecture materials, Review preparation of in-class activities</td>
<td>2 hrs. per week to: Review assigned readings, Prepare discussion questions and “lecture” material in the form of a paragraph or two.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class Time</td>
<td>2 ½ hours per week of assigned class time</td>
<td>2 hours daily to: Read student posts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow-up</td>
<td>2 to 3 hours per week for: Individual contact with students, Reading student assignments</td>
<td>2 to 3 hours per week for: Individual contact with students via email, phone, webinars, Readings for assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for the week</td>
<td>6 ½ to 7 hours per week</td>
<td>18 to 19 hours per week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Online Learning

Online Learning Defined

Online learning is learning at a distance. In a 100% online course students do not meet face-to-face.

What Online Learning Looks Like in Practice

Online learning has tremendous implications for personalizing learning. Student has more control over their own learning can determine their own pace.

Myth #6: Online Learning is Linear

Online learning when done correctly is not a linear process. Much of the learning is done through a community of practice and knowledge and expertise is distributed among the group. So a participant may post to a discussion and log-in a few days later and several days later with posts that broaden the discussion, cause the learner to consider things in new ways or are in conflict with what the learner originally thought causing them to grapple with new ideas or work on defending their original thoughts. Definitely not a linear process.

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In online learning students often work at their own paces. An online course may be competency based in which students are pre-assessed and can test out of sections of the course. In a course we helped develop in Alaska, students who test out of sections serve as mentors for classmates.

If a course is an outcome based course, students may have choices in how they demonstrate proficiency and may take assessments or continually improve work until it meets specified outcomes.

New tools in learning management systems, such as the conditionals in Moodle 2+ allow you to create individual learning paths for students. So for example if a student scored a certain amount on a quiz certain activities appear for that learner.

Another powerful feature is the ability to group students. For example you could have students at one reading level only view materials based on their lexile level.

In these types of learning environments, the teacher role dramatically changes. The online course is not just a repository of resources that students need to view and read and then take assessments on. Instead the teacher is constantly checking for understanding and helping students meet learning targets.

**Myth #7 Students in online courses work in isolation**

We are living in a social age. Today's learners want to incorporate social and collaborative approaches in all aspects of their life including learning (Hart, 2008). Online courses that utilize the best practices in online learning are socially constructed. Often students in online courses designed this way report that they have had more social interactions with their peers than they do in traditional face-to-face courses. Because teachers are not tied up providing direct instruction during physical classrooms, online learning options can actually serve as a means to increase interaction and personalized contact time between students and teachers.

**Planning Your Implementation**

Here are some key questions to ask yourself when planning your implementation(Adams & Freeman, 2003):

- How often will the group meet face-to-face?
- When and how often will the instructor be actively present online?
- Is participation synchronous/asynchronous or both?

**Best Practices for Online Learning Environments:**

- Not all students can be successful in a 100% online course. Pre-assess students on their personal learning styles to determine if an online course is a good fit.

- Post strategies on how to be a good online student in the course (i.e. time management strategies, etc.) to help students succeed in these types of environments.

- Assume students know nothing about proper online communication and teach netiquette and set standards for this early in the course.
✓ How often are participants expected to be online?
✓ What are the technical requirements of the home computers?
✓ To share files: Where will they be posted? What size limitations exist? What file formats are compatible?
✓ Do real time interactions need to be captured? How?
✓ How will I track and assess participation?
✓ Is the online environment easy to get to? Easy to participate in? Easy to navigate in?

References


