

Chapter 2

Defining Flipped Classrooms

2.1 General

The term ‘Flipped Classroom’ does not carry a technical meaning and is not used uniformly. We have conducted a literature review with the ultimate goal to develop a terminological and conceptual framework for this book as set out in the following sections.

2.2 Literature Review

2.2.1 *Flipped Classrooms*

There is no universal definition of the term ‘Flipped Classroom’.¹ However, it appears that academics agree that a flipped classroom generally provides pre-recorded lectures (video or audio) followed by in-class activities. Students view the videos outside the classroom before or after coming to class where the freed time can be devoted to interactive modules such as Q&A sessions, discussions, exercises or other learning activities.² Since Flipped Classrooms ‘invert’ activities inside the classroom with activities outside the classroom, they are sometimes also referred to as ‘inverted’ classrooms.³

The origins of Flipped Classrooms can be traced back to 2007 when two high school chemistry teachers in Colorado, Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams, became concerned with students who often missed classes to attend ‘competitions,

¹CADQ, p. 1, quoting Schell who reckons that under the Flipped Classroom model, ‘there is no prescribed set of rules to follow or approach to fit’.

²Compare Educause, p. 1; CADQ, p. 1; Lihosit/Larrington, p. 1; Davis/Neary/Vaughn, p. 13; Slomanson, p. 95; Upchurch, p. 1; Wood.

³Lemmer, p. 463.

games or other events'.⁴ They began to record lectures, demonstrations and slide presentations which they then posted on YouTube for students to access.⁵

Since then Flipped Classrooms have evolved into a number of variations all with video lectures as their key feature. Sometimes the video lectures include embedded questions prepared by the instructor and students are required to read background materials or participate in online quizzes before coming to class.⁶ Some Flipped Classroom models use audio recording instead of video recording.⁷

2.2.2 Blended Learning and Hybrid Learning

The Flipped Classroom model shares similar features with another increasingly popular learning mode, i.e. 'blended learning', which is also called 'hybrid learning'. Flipped Classrooms and blended learning are similar in that they share on-and off-campus components.⁸ According to Beck, 'the terms "hybrid" and "blended" have typically been used interchangeably' and both approaches feature traditional face-to-face and internet-based elements.⁹ Similar to Flipped Classrooms, there is no universal understanding or definition of 'blended learning'.¹⁰ Means et al. in carrying out a study on online learning for the U.S. Department of Education distinguish between 'blended learning' and 'pure online learning'. They point out that 'blended learning' includes 'face-to-face instruction to provide learning enhancement'.¹¹

Means et al's definition also clarifies the key difference between Flipped Classrooms or 'blended learning' on the one hand and purely online teaching models such as Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) which are becoming very popular across the world.¹² In the Flipped Classroom and 'blended learning' modes, video or audio lectures are often uploaded to the internet to facilitate viewing. This is of course normally also the case in purely online teaching models. However, under a purely online teaching model learning is conducted entirely off-site. In contrast, Flipped Classrooms and 'blended learning' modes combine both in-class and out-of-class learning. Video lectures are added for the purpose of 'enhancing' or 'supplementing' in-class learning.¹³ In contrast, face-to-face learning is unavailable under a purely online teaching setting.

⁴Hamdan/McKnight/Afstrom, p. 3.

⁵*Ibid.*

⁶Davis/Neary/Vaughn, p. 13.

⁷CADQ, p. 2; Educase, p. 1.

⁸Hess, p. 56.

⁹Beck, p. 274, footnote 1.

¹⁰Polding, p. 3.

¹¹Means/Toyama/Murphy/Bakia/Jones, p. 9.

¹²Compare Slomanson, p. 94.

¹³Hess, p. 55.

Graham in his effort to define ‘blended learning’ clarifies that ‘blended learning’ is not about combining instructional methods or media, as defining ‘blended learning’ by these two ways would include almost all learning systems and ‘water down’ the essence of this concept.¹⁴ According to his working definition ‘blended learning systems combine face-to-face instruction with computer-mediated instruction.’¹⁵ He clarifies that ‘blended learning’ has combined two historically separated teaching and learning systems, i.e. ‘traditional face-to-face learning systems and distributed learning systems’ with the emphasis on the ‘role of computer-based technologies in blended learning’.¹⁶

Macdonald’s survey of ‘blended learning’ at universities in the U.K. revealed that most respondents describe ‘blended learning’ by its two most common components, i.e. ‘asynchronous forums and face-to-face contact’.¹⁷ Instead of using video/audio lecture formats, the asynchronous forms are used for tutor-mediated learning or peer support, by means of tools such as email, telephone, real-time chat and whiteboards.¹⁸ Face-to-face contact takes the form of tutorials, seminars, demonstrations in labs or lectures. In some cases, video-conferencing might be used to replace lectures.¹⁹

Ireland agrees that there is no universal definition for ‘blended learning’. She proposes that ‘broadly speaking, blended learning can be used to refer to any teaching method that blends online and offline elements.’²⁰ The way Ireland designed her ‘blended learning’ activities resembles Flipped Classrooms. She used podcasts to substitute about half of the face-to-face in-class time.²¹ Seminars were chosen for the face-to-face components to provide opportunity for students to practice oral and aural skills and to engage in problem-solving techniques.²²

While a clear distinction between the Flipped Classroom concept and ‘blended learning’ models is not attempted by most authors it appears that ‘blended learning’ models are often understood as being more flexible in the choice of technological tools than Flipped Classrooms. For example, Field and Jones have not used only video lectures but also engaged in a wide range of other activities to blend their courses. Examples are multiple choice tests, short answers, mini-research questions,

¹⁴Graham, p. 4.

¹⁵*Ibid*, p. 5.

¹⁶*Ibid*.

¹⁷Macdonald, p. 33.

¹⁸*Ibid*.

¹⁹*Ibid*. pp. 33–34.

²⁰Ireland, p. 140.

²¹*Ibid*, pp. 140–141.

²²*Ibid*, p. 141.

full length essay and problem questions.²³ In contrast, the ‘blended learning’ model adopted by Catley only included classroom coursework and online quizzes.²⁴

As one of the few authors who has actually attempted to distinguish between Flipped Classrooms and ‘blended learning’, Hess focused on whether the online instruction is additional to or replaces the face-to-face classes. According to his definition, in Flipped Classrooms students can acquire content online via short video lectures.²⁵ ‘The subsequent class session focuses on application, problem solving, analysis, and other active methods to deepen student learning’.²⁶ For Hess Flipped Classrooms do not replace face-to-face teaching with online instruction.²⁷ Instead, it is the goal of Flipped Classrooms to free up in-class time for interactive learning activities of different types.²⁸ In contrast, in a ‘blended learning’ model the online learning activity replaces some of the in-class time.²⁹

Video lectures are sometimes used as a teaching tool without branding it as Flipped Classrooms or as ‘blended learning’. McKellar and Maharg used video lectures when teaching Civil and Criminal Procedure in the Diploma in Legal Practice at the Glasgow Graduate School of Law, Strathclyde University.³⁰ The video lectures and face-to-face tutorials were combined as part of an integrated course of study.³¹

To sum up, our literature review shows that there is no unified terminological and conceptual understanding of Flipped Classrooms and ‘blended learning’. Both models take a variety of formats. The term ‘blended learning’ appears to stand for models across a wide spectrum and may or may not include video lectures. Flipped Classrooms are normally seen as blending e-learning with classroom learning. From this viewpoint Flipped Classrooms could be categorized as one branch of ‘blended learning’.³²

2.2.3 Podcasting

Podcasting has become a very popular choice of technology to distribute digital media files (in video or audio format) for playback on portable media players.³³

²³See Field/Jones, p. 384.

²⁴Catley, p. 4 under ‘Initial thoughts about e-learning’; p. 6 under ‘Stage 2: Introducing WebCT-based quizzes’.

²⁵Hess, p. 56.

²⁶*Ibid.*

²⁷*Ibid.*

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹*Ibid.*

³⁰McKellar/Maharg, p. 44.

³¹Compare *ibid.*, pp. 43–45.

³²Compare Lemmer, p. 466.

³³Brittain/Glowaki/Van Ittersum/Johnson, p. 25.

Podcasting has become increasingly popular in universities. Duke University ‘passed out free iPods to its entire freshman class in the fall of 2004’.³⁴ Yale, MIT, Purdue, Stanford and UC Berkeley have as well used video and audio lectures.³⁵ According to Lonn and Teasley podcasting was a choice mostly for universities that had taken a forward looking advanced approach in using modern technology.³⁶ Rather than replacing lectures with online materials students used podcasts as review materials to prepare for quizzes and exams.³⁷ Lonn and Teasley point out that there is disagreement regarding the effect of podcasting on learning. ‘For example, students in business and dentistry reported that using podcasts helped them revise their notes more effectively than using the textbook...Several studies have shown that podcasting has a similar effect on student learning as other review materials.’³⁸ Another study found that ‘students only benefited from podcasts if they took notes, listened to the podcast several times, and generally behaved similarly to the way they already do during lecture sessions.’³⁹

To sum up, podcasting is an e-learning tool used as additional learning resource. Podcasting is not aimed to replace in-class lectures and from this viewpoint podcasting does not compete with, i.e. is not in the same category like Flipped Classrooms or ‘blended learning’.

2.3 Definition Adopted for This Book

There is no unified understanding/definition of the concept of Flipped Classrooms (and the connected concept of ‘blended learning’) in legal education. Our cursory research suggests that the same is true in other areas. It goes without saying that these terminological and conceptual uncertainties make comparisons and informed discussions unnecessarily difficult. For this book it was therefore crucial to adopt a definition which is in line with the common conceptual understanding of Flipped Classrooms. For this book the term ‘Flipped Classroom(s)’ shall therefore stand for any teaching model which replaces in-class lecture modules with video or audio lectures with the goal to use the freed in-class time for interactivity.

³⁴Lonn/Teasley, pp. 88–89.

³⁵*Ibid.*

³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 91.

³⁷*Ibid.*

³⁸*Ibid.*, p. 89.

³⁹*Ibid.*



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