

Teaching Tips

A Forum for discussion and tips for advancing teaching and learning at Mona

Instructional Development
Unit UWI, Mona



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Special points of interest:

- The Teaching Tips Newsletter is a publication of the Instructional Development Unit (IDU) at the UWI, Mona.
- The Newsletter is published once per month and provides tips for improving teaching and learning in higher education. It is available online (<http://myspot.mona.uwi.edu/idu/>) as well as in the office of the IDU.
- If you have an area that you would like to explore using this medium, do not hesitate to contact us at the IDU.

Welcome to the New Academic Year

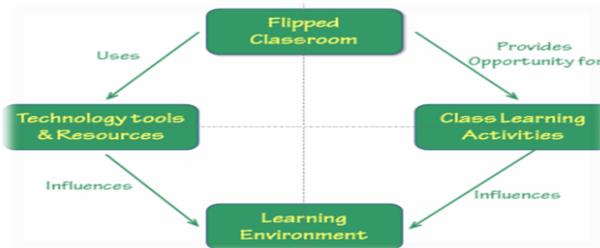


It's a new semester and the IDU welcomes all new and returning faculty members to the start of the new academic year. This new academic year is pregnant with expectations and we trust that you all had a wonderful summer break and you are returning with renewed zeal, ready to engage in learner centred teaching and doing all in your power to advance learning in your classroom. We at the IDU stand ready to serve you and support you in your quest to teach in learner centred ways. Please be reminded that the IDU is the first and foremost safe space on campus that all lecturers can come to discuss their concerns about teaching and learning, overall career development, faculty review preparation and scholarly teaching endeavours including the scholarship of teaching and learning.

Flipping the Classroom

Emergent Trend

Over the last few years, one of the biggest trends in the classroom is the act of flipping the classroom. The flipped classroom translates to a classroom in which typical lectures and work assigned for out-of-the-classroom, homework, readings, short out-of-class activities etc., are reversed. It is a pedagogical model that creates greater opportunities for student engagement in the classroom. Hence, students are expected to learn aspects of the content for a course at home or outside the formal classroom space of the brick and mortar/ block and steel universities and colleges. Lectures are provided for the students using videos, perhaps as a DVD or as a podcast. It might even be uploaded to the Learning Management System for instance in our case to OurVLE or by using other media. In one popular model, students view short lectures of five to seven minutes. In some cases, prerecorded lectures are supplemented with online quizzes to test what the students have learned. So, in a sense, they now do more work in class. Lectures are done before students come to class and thus frees up the learners to benefit from the expert teacher assistance in the classroom, as subject content matter is navigated. Greater opportunities are afforded for individualized instruction, working with the teacher and of course with other students.



Real Opportunity for Active and Engaged Learning

The concept of the flipped classroom is supported by some of the major understandings of teaching and learning in higher education and especially those that have undergirded the paradigm shift in higher education. It is supported by active learning, student engagement in the classroom, deep learning, student-centred teaching and learning etc. It can add enormous value to teaching and learning in the university or college classroom since class time can now be repurposed into a workshop. This provides time for interaction with the teacher, peers, and the content in more meaningful ways. Students can make inquiries about the lecture or assignments, engage in hands-on activities and of course demonstrate aspects of their developing knowledge and competencies as they apply skills. The lecturer or university teacher can serve as a real facilitator of learning, offering counsel, answering questions, encouraging students as they inquire about aspects of content and of course serve as a coach and guide by the side.

Growing Number of Institutions Using this Pedagogical Arrangement

There are growing numbers of institutions of higher education now using this model. Oftentimes, short tutorials or lectures are provided and these allow students to get in touch with the content and learn the content at their own pace. At the Penn State University in the USA, a professor has experimented with a blended and flipped class in an accounting course of over 1300 students. The in-class time is used for discussion, a featured guest speaker or hands-on activities, solving problems or other such exercises. Class activities are supported with the help of student assistants. At Harvard University, a physics professor has used the flipped classroom model and has developed a correlative site, Learning Catalytics. This site has been configured to provide instructors with free interactive software and it creates the opportunities for students to discuss, apply and get feedback from what they heard in the lecture.

Greater Student Control in the Flipped Classroom

Many students enter the traditional lectures and try to make copious notes. They try to write down all that the lecturers are saying or what they perceive to be the salient points. In cases where PowerPoint slides are provided, they might read these and believe they have the most important content. However, they oftentimes miss important aspects of the lectures. In the flipped classroom, the use of the prerecorded video puts the student in control of the content. They can watch this video at their convenience, stop and repeat parts of the lecture, fast forward and rewind at their pleasure. Of course, this ability might be particularly helpful to some students with accessibility concerns. Later on, when class time is devoted to applying concepts, clarifying ideas, enlarging perspectives and overall advancing learning, this kind of pedagogical arrangement might be more helpful to all. Lecturers can also use this time to determine where there are gaps in students' thinking or where there are ill-formulated concepts and offer corrective approaches. Opportunities for collaborative engagements are also afforded. The flipped model also offers enormous opportunities for the encouragement of more social interaction among students.

Concerns

Of course, the flipped model is not the much sought after, golden pedagogical model of higher education. It can be wrongly applied. Clearly it would require more time for recording of videos and some skeptics have queried its suitability for some subject areas. There are concerns about students' willingness to change their approaches to learning since many were socialized to be passive learners. Some lecturers have argued that our students have been socialized into learning by means of the lecture and the lecturer giving the information. Following this logic, the important question is: will they prepare for classes by doing assigned readings. Will they prepare for classes by watching the videos etc? Some students might be concerned about the value of such classes and will not attend. In fact, how will it work for students who do not have easy access to computers and internet at home if the videos are to be uploaded to the learning management system? There might even be concerns about how their tuition is being applied.

Blog with us

The IDU blog is up and running. Blog with us regularly at: <http://uwiidumona.blogspot.com/>

20 years of the IDU

This academic year, the IDU is celebrating 20 years of service to the UWI Mona Campus and we are grateful for the opportunity to serve as the hub of teaching and learning innovation on the campus. Look out for our celebratory activities and participate meaningfully.



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ANNIVERSARY**

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