

Book Review: Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom

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Book Review: Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom

Editors: Julee B. Waldrop and Melody A. Bowdon (New York: Routledge, 2016, 166 pages)

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Despite the fact that flipped classrooms have attracted much attention over the past few years, it is still difficult to find abundant qualitative and quantitative evidence to illustrate how the flipped approach can be used for college-level teaching outcomes. Fourteen authors contributed to *Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom*, which is the story of the remarkable adoption and growth of flipped classrooms in the U.S. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). This book was one of a series of *Best Practice in Online Teaching and Learning*, edited by Julee B. Waldrop, a Clinical Professor in the School of Nursing at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Melody A. Bowdon, an Executive Director of the Karen L. Smith Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning and Professor of Writing and Rhetoric at the University of Central Florida.

The book contains 166 pages of detailed examples in the use of the flipped teaching method, not only for the sciences but also for the fields of social science, math, and health. The various contributors share their unique views to help readers comprehend the experience of flipped teaching from the perspective of both faculty and students at different levels of undergraduate and graduate studies. The last chapter (Chapter 11), entitled *Conclusion: Reflecting on the Flipping Experience*, in which Melody A. Bowdon, Lissa Pompos Mansfield, and Julee B. Waldrop emphasise the integration of the concepts introduced in Chapters 2-10 is particularly interesting, since it contains the authors' reflections, exposing their various viewpoints.

Chapter 1, which is written by Erin Saitta, Brett Morrison, Julee B. Waldrop, and Melody A. Bowdon, gives an overall introduction and is tightly structured around the main theme of major theories related to flipped classrooms. In Chapter 2, Cherie Yestrebsky evaluates the learners' achievement in two large *Chemistry Fundamentals II* classes at the University of Central Florida—traditional (n=320) vs. the flipped method of teaching (n=415). Most readers will find this chapter useful, since the research results indicate that the flipped approach did not appear to benefit students with low final grades (i.e., those awarded a D or F grade); however, high achievers (i.e., those who were awarded an A or B grade) achieved better learning outcomes through flipped teaching in this difficult course. In Chapter 3, Robert Talbert provides a detailed example of how he uses course materials and guide practice to help students to take greater responsibility for their calculus at Grand Valley State University.

In Chapter 4, Julee B. Waldrop uses surveys and focus groups to investigate students' responses to a flip graduate-level nursing course at the University of Central Florida, while Daniel Murphree discusses

a flipped history class at the University of Central Florida in Chapter 5. Clarissa Thompson and April Martin compare students' learning outcomes and perceptions of two large introductory psychology courses at the University of Oklahoma (traditional face-to face vs. flipped method) in Chapter 6, and subsequently, Michael S. Garver describes how he integrated individual and team clicker competitions in his Central Michigan University flipped marketing classes in order to enhance students' engagement in Chapter 7.

A course in economics is the setting for Chapter 8, in which the Metropolitan State University of Denver's Katherine M. Sauer arms her readers with a range of teaching strategies. Most students liked the videos, but they still disliked note-taking and text-reading by the end of the semester. In Chapter 9, Russell Carpenter discusses a number of issues related to how he deployed a flipped approach into his course entitled *Introduction to Applied Creative Thinking* at Eastern Kentucky University. He suggests that flipping the classroom increases student engagement and provides a learning context that is challenging and productive. Finally, in Chapter 10, Stacey Pigg and Brett Morrison pay particular attention to a unique case study of students' perception of the flipped classroom across History and Spanish courses.

Chapters 2-9 begin with a concise table containing a description of each flipped course, and this is followed by a brief explanation of the course format, enrolment, and institutional context. All the chapters cover and conclude with further suggestions for implementation. Although these elements are fundamental, most readers will find them useful as a reference for the design of their curriculum and research. The researchers in this book utilise surveys, test scores, online discussions, interviews, blog reflections, and observations to collect their data. Various research designs, including experimental research, case study, and action study, were used in these flipped classroom studies. The authors suggest that this practice produces a number of positive impacts in terms of learners' motivation, engagement, interaction, and achievement. It is interesting to note that some of the studies suggest that educators may consider flipping a small portion of the course first (viz., don't try to flip an entire class at once) in order to make an impact on students' learning. Overall, most readers will find these chapters useful, since they contain a well-balanced view by addressing the benefits and potential improvements of flipped classrooms, as well as the challenges and concerns. While the detail in the book is much appreciated, it is believed that the chapters could be enhanced by the provision of more discussions on how to use technology to encourage more collaboration between students outside the classroom.

This book is also well-grounded in both *theory* and *practice* since several educational technology resources and learning portals are described in detail. This publication is intended to be highly practical for both novice and experienced faculty to help them to improve their flipped teaching strategies through the use of simple, familiar, and accessible instructional technologies. As a consequence, educators who are searching for a new pedagogical approach in various academic disciplines will appreciate the blend of new-fangled pedagogical theories and evidences in the book.

If this book could be subject to any criticism, it would be that, although it contains a systematic assessment of the flipped classroom approach, its emphasis is limited to local preliminary findings in the United States. It is unfortunate that more attention was not given to international practices, providing a mixture of how and why flipped classrooms were developed in the West and the East. Since we live in an interconnected world, this would have helped readers to better understand current

educational endeavours and the potential of flipped teaching to meet the local, regional, and global needs; for example, how a flipped classroom provides an “alternative option” for those with diversified cultural backgrounds who desire to participate as learners, educators, and practitioners. The United States has been a major destination for international students, with approximately one million enrolled in HEIs across the country in the 2015-2016 school year. This represented 5.2% of all students enrolled in HEIs nationwide, and remarkably, with about 12% of international students were enrolled in places such as the District of Columbia and the state of Massachusetts (Redden, 2016). Thus, it was felt that the internationalisation of higher education and the flipped classroom could have received greater coverage. Apart from these minor constraints, *Best Practices for Flipping the College Classroom* is a noteworthy contribution to the field and is likely to inspire early adopters in terms of further exploration and implementation.

References

Redden, E. (2016, November 14). International student numbers top 1 million [Blog post]. *Inside Higher Ed*. Retrieved from <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2016/11/14/annual-open-doors-report-documents-continued-growth-international-students-us-and-us>

