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Flipped Classroom – Zeit für deinen Unterricht

Praxisbeispiele, Erfahrungen und Handlungsempfehlungen

Abstract

The »Flipped Classroom« method is put to a practical test

The »Flipped Classroom« is a method that allows student needs to be addressed on an individual basis in heterogeneous learning groups. Why? Because the independent acquisition of (digitally provided) lesson contents takes place at home, allowing more time for in-depth study, practice, application and reflection in the classroom. The publication »Flipped Classroom – Zeit für deinen Unterricht« (Flipped Classroom – Time for Your Teaching) introduces the instructional concept and describes the results of their implementation. In addition to findings from the »Flip your class!« pilot project in three Berlin schools, the volume also documents the experiences of teachers from across Germany who have worked with this approach for some time, and offers practical recommendations.

Project summary

Initial situation

The concept gained attention with the publication of the »Flip Your Classroom« book by Bergmann and Sams (2012). The two teachers had experimented with the use of preparatory videos at Woodland Park High School, in the process developing the Flipped Classroom method. Similar developments took place in parallel in the higher education sector, initially known there under the concept of the »Inverted Classroom.« Since that time, the Flipped Classroom or Inverted Classroom method has been further developed by numerous educators at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, and has been extensively discussed. However, the adaptation of the method to different grade levels, subjects and lesson contents had not yet been comprehensively examined. This was the focus of the »Flip Your Class!« project.

The »Flip Your Class!« project

The »Flip Your Class!« project was carried out jointly by the Bertelsmann Stiftung, the Heidelberg University of Education and the sofatutor.com online learning platform. The goal was to test, adapt and further develop the Flipped Classroom method

in conjunction with teachers at various kinds of schools working at different grade levels and in different subject areas, and in the process develop usage scenarios and examples of good practice. The study was particularly designed to address the aspect of individualized student support, while examining the role that digital media can play in this context. The project was implemented using a design-research approach, in which Flipped Classroom scenarios were iteratively designed, tested and evaluated.

Assessments and recommendations

The »Flipped Classroom – Zeit für deinen Unterricht« publication documents the results of the pilot project and presents the method using examples, reports on practical experiences, and design tips. However, the intention is not to claim that this is a »supermethod.« No method is in principle better than other methods – the context in which it is used always matters. This context is determined by the grade level, the subject being taught, the lesson content, the skills to be learned, the students' capabilities and willingness to engage with the subject, and the teacher's methodological preferences and personality, just to name a few of the important factors. This means that the Flipped Classroom method may fit within one particular context, but in other circumstances it may not.

In addition, it is important to keep in mind that the »explanation at home, practice in the classroom« model on which the method is based is appropriate only for certain subjects. For other subjects, the model is probably entirely didactically unsuited. In some cases, for example, the learning process should not begin with explanation, but rather with a collective, self-guided process of discovery on the part of the students themselves. This does not mean the students cannot prepare; however, this may involve some preparatory task other than working through a video. Moreover, for certain lesson content, preparation at home may not be appropriate at all. For this reason, the flipping of a classroom lesson should not be transferred without thought to any context. Rather, for each specific set of lesson contents and the associated skills to be learned, instructors should consider whether an explanation should be provided at the beginning of the learning process or not; whether students can prepare in some way at home, and if so, how; and what activities in what order will lead with the greatest probability to the intended learning goal. Thus, Flipped Classroom should not lead to a mono-methodological approach. However, the method can serve as continual reminder and motivation for teachers to systematically integrate preparation of classroom-lesson content into the normal course of their teaching units, while designing the in-class time itself in a more student-oriented way.

In addition, the observations and survey results from the »Flip Your Class!« project offer numerous indications that the method's success depends very highly on how it is used. Because the Flipped Classroom method places high demands on students' ability to work independently, instructors must proceed with considerable caution, thinking through and designing the implementation both methodically and thoroughly.

In this sense, simply preparing the video homework is no guarantee of success. For example, teachers must know how they will handle unprepared students in the subsequent classroom lesson. Moreover, the fact that children and young people routinely use digital devices in their free time does not mean they can use digital media in a learning context without problems. It has been shown on numerous occasions that students' technical knowledge is not sufficient to solve problems such as mistyped hyperlinks on their own. In addition, it should be noted that the Flipped Classroom method places great demands on independent learning. This poses the risk that weaker students in particular will be disadvantaged. Therefore, it is imperative that the children and young people be provided with comprehensive guidance and support in the work with the videos and the preparatory tasks, in order that they can engage with the material both actively and sustainably. The Flipped Classroom method thus not only provides advantages for dealing with heterogeneity in the classroom (e.g., more time for personal attention during the lesson), but also poses new challenges particularly for weaker students. Furthermore, the project clearly showed that the advantages of the Flipped Classroom method were not automatically obvious to the students. They primarily see the videos as being useful for reviewing a subject after a lesson, or for preparing before a test. Teachers should thus make the reasons for the use of the method clear from the beginning, while also reiterating this information repeatedly over the course of a flipped teaching unit.

Additionally, a smoothly functioning technical infrastructure at the school, along with corresponding technical devices at students' homes, is a necessary but in no way sufficient condition for a successful flipped classroom. This must be taken into account when planning a teaching unit of this kind, and if necessary, technical alternatives must be considered in advance.

Teachers implementing the method for the first time will probably have to overcome technical or methodological difficulties of some kind. In this regard, the experiences of teachers who are already familiar with the method, have implemented it for some time and can thus provide a certain amount of guidance can be very helpful. To this end, the design patterns and field reports in the second part of the »Flipped Classroom – Zeit für deinen Unterricht« book can serve as support for teachers introducing their own flipped classroom scenarios, as well as inspiration for further development.

Source

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