Large Classroom Predicament Resolved: Tackk and Socrative in the Flipped Approach

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Abstract

Catering for students' needs and assessing their work are pedagogically fundamental issues. Teachers try to provide for different learning styles, to address differentiation and to regularly evaluate students' progress by formative assessments. However, large classrooms hinder proper teaching and giving timely feedback. Thus, overwhelmed teachers, who hardly find time to give detailed feedback, struggle to create interesting classrooms where students are involved and motivated. In order to help solving such problem, the flipped classroom approach is applied. Students are given material to study at home, and class time is employed for application and assessments. This helps teachers to dedicate more time for students' queries and practice. In this approach, Tackk is used for explanation and Socrative is used for e-formative assessments. Tackk is a website for designing material; it allows teachers to provide texts, photos and media in one canvas with one URL. Hence, one lesson material can cater for different learning styles. Students also are involved in the learning process, as materials are designed in an up-to-date method, due to using technology, which students prefer and are aware of. Socrative, in addition, is another website used by teachers to assess students' understanding and achievement. It motivates students and helps teachers provide instants grades and feedback. It also enables teachers to save grades, assess specific information and create engaging classrooms where students can use their cell phones to participate and receive real time responses. Students find using cell phones in learning to be enjoyable and motivating; moreover they benefit from the prompt and comprehensive feedback as well as the flexibility provided by the online quizzes. After trying the flipped approach with Tackk and Socrative, the delivered material becomes engaging and suitable to different learning styles; besides the assessments are easily and effectively done. In addition, students' feedback to this approach was encouraging as reflected in their eagerness to solve quizzes using mobile phones or tabs. Therefore, the flipped approach with Tackk and Socrative helps teachers and engage students in large classrooms.

Introducing the problem

Many researchers define large classrooms as the ones having more than 40 students [1]. Although large classrooms appear in many countries across the word, they have several pedagogical drawbacks. In large classrooms, teachers usually find difficulty in addressing a huge number of students and assessing them to ensure quality education [2], while students find trouble in concentrating and benefiting from class time among numerous classmates [3]. Teachers, in large classroom, try to be responsive to students' needs, address differentiation and monitor progress; however this turns to be very stressful and not always possible, as teachers find themselves overwhelmed, frustrated and always behind schedule. Students, on the other hand, feel disappointed as they do not make the best use of class time; sometimes their queries are left unanswered and the feedback received is not thorough enough. Consequently, they lose interest in class, become careless and demotivated. However, technology intervention offered logical and applicable solutions for such a complicated problem.

The Flipped Approach

Using the flipped classroom approach is a means for solving the predicament of large classrooms. In this approach, students understand and study the material outside classroom at their own pace, whilst the class time is saved for application, questions, and feedback [4]. Students gain huge benefits from this approach by learning at their convenience, as they can repeat certain parts, pause to write notes, or search for more information to deepen understanding [5]. Giving students the freedom to choose the time and place to study makes them more independent and relaxed which, in turn, affects the learning process positively [6]. Teachers, in the flipped approach, are stress-free as they do not exert effort explaining materials that students have already studied before class; they only focus on checking understanding through interesting activities, giving detailed feedback and assessing students' progress in an engaging way. Thus, teachers are no longer overwhelmed or behind schedule and this gives them time for creative ideas that motivates students.

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Using Tackk

If the material given outside class is not interesting or hard to understand, students will find it difficult to study on their own and may come to class unprepared which renders the flipped approach useless. Therefore, to ensure that the material provided is comprehensible and appealing for generation Y students, Tackk is used. Tackk is a user friendly website and an app that allows teachers to demonstrate lessons in a modern way that suits various learning styles. By the help of Tackk, teachers introduce texts, media, photos and exercises links easily in one canvas with one url. Tackk has a familiar interface like Facebook and Instegram which motivates students and allows interaction. Thence, Tackk helps teachers to cater for different learning styles and engages students.

Using Socrative

Socrative is a classroom response system (CRS) or a clicker system primarily utilized to assess understanding by using e-formative assessments. It is an easy to use website and an app, where teachers create questions and provide correct answers, then Socrative does the rest; it provides different versions of the same quiz by randomizing questions and answers, gives immediate feedback with grades, saves the quizzes and keeps students records. Teachers prefer using Socrative because it saves time and effort; via Socrative they no longer have to correct quizzes as this is done automatically. Socrative also helps teachers to monitor students' progress easily in large classrooms as the quizzes results are displayed either per class, per student or per question. Generation Y students find Socrative an interesting way of introducing e-formative assessments that makes them involved and motivated [7], as they like the idea of using smart phones in class [8].

Applying the Flipped Approach with Tackk and Socrative

In an attempt to solve the problem of large classrooms, the flipped approach with Tackk and Socrative is applied. In the flipped approach, it was believed that teachers only review the material to make it easier for students to study independently; however considering different learning styles, made teachers provide several links for materials to cater for students needs. As a result, students complained because of the various links provided that make them feel overwhelmed and confused. To avoid such predicament Tackk is introduced.

Tackk helps teachers create one canvas with all the material in one link within few minutes. Tackks created by teachers can be saved for future semesters, shared with other teachers or posted on different social networks for students to see without creating accounts. Being a website and an app, makes Tackk appealing for the students as it is ubiquitous. In addition, using such a familiar interface increases students' involvement. Using Tackk in the flipped approach helps in solving the predicament of large classrooms as it provides the material in an engaging way that suits different learning styles which makes it easy for students to study on their own without being restricted with time or place.

Formative assessments, in the flipped approach, are crucial in assessing students' progress and improving teaching and learning [9]. However, assessments in large classrooms cause problems for both teachers and students; teachers find difficulty in forming quizzes with different versions and correcting them, while students find troubles in receiving timely feedback. In order to avoid such predicament, e-formative assessments are introduced through Socrative.

Socrative does not only create quizzes, save them and give feedback with grades, but also enables teachers to know students' weakness points through various reports provided to modify the teaching methodology. Using Socrative, in large classrooms, relieves teachers from the burden of correcting quizzes for a huge number of students and allows students to receive timely thorough feedback.

Conclusion

The flipped classroom approach with Tackk and Socrative provides a successful solution for teachers and students in large classrooms. Students benefit from the flexibility offered in the flipped approach by becoming independent learners who make best use of class time even among numerous classmates. Adding Tackk and Socrative to the flipped approach help increase students' involvement and motivation in large classrooms. Teachers, on the other hand, feel more relaxed in the flipped approach by dedicating class time for application and making students reach higher cognitive levels. After adding Tackk and socrative to the flipped approach, teachers are no longer struggling to make their class interesting. Even with a huge number of students, teachers in this approach find time for answering students' queries and giving detailed feedback after being relieved from the burden of marking formative assessments. In addition, the flipped approach with Tackk and Socrative enable teachers to modify their teaching based on the information they gather from online formative assessments.

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