Conventional lectures vs the flipped classroom: Comparison of teaching models in undergraduate curriculum

Deepak Nallaswamy V*, Subha M2, Asha R1

1Department of Prosthodontics, Saveetha Dental College & Hospitals, SIMATS, Saveetha University, Chennai, India
2Department of Oral Medicine and Radiology, Saveetha Dental College & Hospitals, SIMATS, Saveetha University, Chennai, India

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**ABSTRACT**

Education has been in the forefront of a catalyzing change due to the advent of technology and newer ideologies that has revolutionized today’s classrooms. The educators are looking in to newer teaching models to produce successful graduates in the current era. Primary research on a new pedagogy technique known as ‘The flipped classroom’ has been positive and its implementation in the undergraduate dental curriculum has been the least explored in educational research. The aim of this study was to compare the academic performance of undergraduate dental students using conventional lectures and ‘The Flipped Classroom’ for the subject of Periodontics. This retrospective study was conducted in two groups of undergraduate students who belonged to two academic years: Group I 2016 (n=75); Group II 2017 (n=75). Group I students learned the subject of Periodontology with conventional lectures whereas, Group II students were taught with ‘The Flipped Classroom’ where subject videos were viewed prior to the class session and interactive in-class activities were employed. The academic performance (summative assessment) of the students was evaluated using a written examination conducted at the end of final year of their undergraduate course. The comparison of the summative assessment was performed using independent t-test. The academic performance of Group II students (140.03 ± 7.14) was better than Group I students (129.21 ± 11.43) and statistically significant with p-value 0.000. Our implementation of the flipped classroom for Periodontology topics showed a promising platform for technology in education and with a significant improvement in the student’s academic performance when compared to traditional lectures.

* Corresponding Author
Name: Deepak Nallaswamy V
Email: adiasdc@saveetha.com

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**INTRODUCTION**

The students of this millennial generation are under constant evolution similar to the technological advancement in their era. The educational reforms are taking advantage of the technology and the consumption habits to make learning more engaging and memorable (Prober CG 2012). The main drawbacks of conventional didactic lectures were that they lack mechanisms for ensuring intellectual engagement to the topic, student’s attention diminishes quickly and they are ill-suited to teach higher order skills like application and analysis (Bonwell C 1996; Huxham M 2005; Young M et al, 2009). So, the conventional mode of teaching cannot harness the student’s potential, especially in subjects like Periodontics where the didactic lectures are shown to have a limited potential to teach the subject (Lee C and Kim S-W 2018). Alternative pedagogy models such as the flipped classroom, the
blended learning, multiple interactive learning algorithms (MILA) have been on the rise to maintain the interest of today's digital generation in the classroom.

The novel pedagogy technique, 'The Flipped Classroom' was pioneered by two Colorado-based high school science teachers Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (Bergmann J and Sams A 2012). It is based on inverting the routine classroom where what is normally done in class is flipped or switched with what is normally done by students out of the class. So, the course content in the form of videos or other materials which is usually dealt within the classroom is given to the students to read at home and assimilate the knowledge. Following which, the students are subjected to teacher-guided discussions or problem-based learning within the classroom to critically analyze and actively engage with the course material. The class time which conventionally involves didactic lectures and direct instructions can be better utilized with engaging discussions and interactive learning activities.

The rise in the flipped classrooms has been observed in various health science fields, like medical and dental education, nursing, pharmacology, and public health (Crothers AJ et al., 2017 Njie-Carr VPS 2017; Mc Laughlin JE et al., 2014; Howard SW et al., 2017). A systematic review on the use of flipped classroom in medical education included nine studies and observed that the learning outcomes were similar to that of conventional lectures, but the student satisfaction was consistently greater in a flipped classroom (Chen F et al., 2017). Only one study assessed the effectiveness of a flipped classroom in learning periodontal diagnosis and treatment planning using pre- and post-session quizzes and surveys. It was concluded that flipped classrooms improved their quiz scores and it was well received by the students. So, in the dental arena, flipped classrooms have been implemented but there is limited data to support its effectiveness and that warrants a research focus in this lacuna. Thus, the aim of this study was to evaluate and compare the academic performance of undergraduate dental students in the subject of Periodontology with the use of traditional lectures and 'The Flipped Classroom' model.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This retrospective study was conducted in a single center i.e., Saveetha Dental College and Hospital, Tamil Nadu, India. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB NO). The subject of Periodontology was taught in the final year of the undergraduate dental curriculum and the students enrolled in two academic years were divided into two groups: Group I 2016 (n=75) and Group II 2017 (n=75). Group I students were taught the subject of Periodontology using conventional lectures and Group II students were digitally engaged using the 'The Flipped Classroom' model of teaching. The subject of Periodontology was split into three modules which covered from basics and pathogenesis of the periodontal disease to diagnosis, risk assessment, treatment planning and periodontal therapy. Each module consisted of five lecture classes covering the various topics and the duration of each class was 2 hours [Table 1]. The Group I students were taught these periodontology topics using the traditional model of lectures whereas, the Group II students were taught using the 'The Flipped Classroom' model. The Group I students were given the same course material as the other group, but they were not divided into groups for discussion or in-class activities, instead the content was delivered as a didactic lecture. This was followed by doubts session where the instructor clarified any misconceptions on the topic. Both the groups had the same contact hours for the

![Figure 1: Overview of the Flipped Classroom Model](image-url)
completion of the Periodontology module (Group I and II=30 hours).

The Flipped Classroom

The components of the flipped classroom such as the ‘at home’ assignments and in-class activities have been diagrammatically represented in [Figure 1].

At home

The course material included 7-minute lecture videos of the different Periodontology topics and iBooks, where the videos were embedded along with course content were made available for the students to download and view electronically in a 72-hour window period prior to the in-class session. The students were also asked to read the iBook of the particular lecture topic at home and also engage in multiple choice questions given at the end. The students were also instructed to review the course material prior to attending the class the following day.

In-class session

In the classroom, the first 20 minutes were engaged by playing the lecture videos again as a reinforcement and the students were divided into smaller groups (4-5 students). The instructor takes time to clarify any misunderstanding or misconception based on the week’s assigned reading and listening to videos. The in-class exercises were designed based on Peer-led learning, Critical thinking exercises, Jigsaw technique, Process Oriented Guided Inquiry Learning (POGIL), Case-based discussions and the appropriate exercises were chosen to the topic’s demand. The 2-hour class was split into 20-minute sessions and it was trailed by in-class activities. The students were actively engaged with various in-class exercises and the instructor was involved in the construction of knowledge on the respective Periodontology topic.

The academic performance (summative assessment) was gauged by a written examination conducted at the end of the academic year of the undergraduate dental program. The examination evaluates the theoretical knowledge with thirty multiple choice question, two essay questions and five short essays on Periodontology. The same examiner evaluated the summative assessment for both the groups of students.

Table 1: Overview of Periodontology Topics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LECTURE</th>
<th>CORE PERIODONTALOGY TOPIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 1</td>
<td>Basics and Pathogenesis of Periodontal Disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 1</td>
<td>Basic Tissues- Age Changes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 2</td>
<td>Defense Mechanisms- GCF, Saliva, Immunology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 3</td>
<td>Etiology - Plaque, Calculus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 4</td>
<td>Other Risk Factors- Systemic influence, TFO, iatrogenic factors and Habits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 5</td>
<td>Pathogenesis- Stage of gingivitis, Periodontal Pocket, Bone loss pattern</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 2</td>
<td>Diagnosis, Risk Assessment and Treatment Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 6</td>
<td>Classification- Acute gingival diseases, abscesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 7</td>
<td>Gingival enlargement and Desquamative gingivitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 8</td>
<td>Types of Periodontitis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 9</td>
<td>Clinical Diagnosis, Radiographic diagnosis, Advanced diagnostic aids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 10</td>
<td>Prognosis, Treatment planning and Host Modulation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MODULE 3</td>
<td>Periodontal therapy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 11</td>
<td>Phase I therapy- Scaling, Antimicrobial therapy, Occlusal therapy, Local drug delivery, and treatment in Medically compromised patients</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 12</td>
<td>Phase II- Surgical phase- General Principles, Curettage, Gingivectomy, Flap surgery, Mucogingival Surgery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecture 13</td>
<td>Osseous Surgery- Resective and Regenerative therapy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture 14</td>
<td>Interdisciplinary management- Endo-perio, Ortho-perio, Furcation management</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecture 15</td>
<td>Supportive Periodontal Therapy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Independent t-test for comparing summative assessment marks between two groups of undergraduate dental students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>Mean±SD</th>
<th>t-value</th>
<th>p-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summative Assessment</td>
<td>Group I</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>129.21±11.43</td>
<td>-6.94</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group II</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>140.03±7.14</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
groups. All analyses were conducted using statistical software (SPSS software, version 17). p<0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

RESULTS

The academic performance (summative assessment) of both the groups of students from different academic timelines were compared using the independent t-test. The marks obtained from the written examination for the subject of Periodontology was significantly higher for the Group II students who were taught using the ‘The Flipped Classroom’ when compared to the Group I students taught using conventional lectures (p-value 0.000) [Table 2].

DISCUSSION

This retrospective study was conducted among undergraduate dental students in the subject of Periodontology employing the traditional and flipped classroom models of teaching. It was observed that the student’s academic performance in the final exam was significantly better with the flipped classroom model. This result shows that technology has been a promising platform and its inculcation has significantly improved the efficient usage of student’s time and their satisfaction. The didactic time was considerably reduced with more in-class activities and case-based discussion which had a positive impact on the student’s performance in the final exam. A similar result was observed in a study conducted by Lee et al, who showed a significant improvement in the student’s performance in quizzes and their satisfaction in understanding the complex topic of Periodontal diagnosis and treatment planning (Lee C and Kim S-W 2018).

The students who get accustomed to conventional lectures may avoid the idea of a flipped classroom as the onus of learning is shifted to them (Roach T 2014). Their concerns include a rigorous workload, the uncertainty of success and potential classroom unsettledness (Lage M et al, 2000; Sharma N et al., 2015; Smith J 2013; Hughes H 2014). Even though there are many apprehensions, the flipped classroom has found its way in various disciplines and emerging as a game-changing teaching methodology in the field of education. For an equine science course, the students rated the flipped class experience to be 4.4 on a 5-point Likert scale whereas, for a neurology course, the students favored the flipped classroom for interaction and collaboration (Mortensen C J 2015; Jung H 2018). Though the scales for assessing student satisfaction were not employed in this study, the faculty feedback on student’s response in a flipped classroom was very enthusiastic.

The enrollment sizes should also be taken into consideration for course design. It should be taken into account that methods used in flipping smaller courses may not be feasible for larger classes, but certain studies maintain that the benefits of flipped classroom can be reaped for all course sizes (Mc Laughlin JE et al., 2013; Deslauriers L et al, 2011; Neville MW 2003). The use of team-based and group activities has been advocated for larger classrooms. It should be duly noted that in this study, the flipped classroom model also utilized group and team-based exercises to make the class more engaging and interesting. The various activities included Jigsaw, POGIL, Peer-led team-based learning, Critical thinking exercises and Case-based discussions.

The main strengths of this study were that four out of six-faculty taught the Periodontology course over the two academic timelines and the final exam was standardized with the same examiner for the summative assessment. Also, the difficulty level of the final exam question paper among the two groups could have been a potential confounding factor but this was alleviated because the University has a well-organized question bank with structured key points that was handed to the students at the beginning of their course. The limitations of the study include that it was carried out in one course (Periodontology) and in a single center. Future scope of research includes employing the flipped classroom model for various courses in the dental curriculum to gauge its effectiveness and student’s perception towards the teaching methodology.

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that there was a significant difference in the student’s academic performance (summative assessment) in the final Periodontology exam in favor of the ‘The Flipped Classroom’ model of teaching. As the classrooms of today continue to evolve and modernize, pedagogical techniques like the flipped classroom should be considered for lecture-style courses in the dental curriculum.

REFERENCES

Bergmann J, Sams A. Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day. ISTE. 2012.


