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Using the Flipped Classroom Model in the History Course: A Learning Experience

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Abstract: The flipped classroom model is an educational model in which students study at their homes and reinforce their knowledge in the classroom with exercises and activities. This model is currently being used by many Turkish schools, especially the ones that give information technologies education. In this study, it is aimed to understand the learning experience by using this model in history lessons in higher education. For research purposes, 5 weeks long program was modified according to the Flipped Classroom (FC) model. This program was implemented and the views and opinions of the participants were collected with a semi-structured questionnaire. The study group is comprised of students that took Ataturk's Principles and the History of the Turkish Revolution (APHTR) Course during the 2016-2017 fall period at Gazi University in Turkey. Phenomenological analysis was used for data analysis. The results show that the most of the participants see many opportunities in this model. These include the permanent learning, entertaining lessons, interaction, functionality, and high motivation. But the model also poses challenges. Those challenges are problems regarding the long educational videos, wrong content, technical problems, and activities. The participants recommended videos to include more animation and to be shorter, and activities to be improved.

Keywords: *History course, flipped classroom, teaching history, technology, activities.*

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Introduction

The literature describes the flipped teaching or flipped classroom model as a model in which students study at their homes and reinforce what they learned in the classroom through exercises and activities. The Flipped Learning Network Community describes flipped learning "the simplest definition is the school work at home and homework at school". Since it extensively uses "technology" and provides "time and space flexibility", some researchers also called it "technologically supported flexible learning model" (Kardas & Yesilyaprak, 2015). In Turkey, the FC model is being used by some private schools and universities. Some foundation and private schools even use this model in all courses. MEF University is one such school. They explain their preference with the following words;

> Students don't ponder about researching or finding resources as in the past. Today students ponder about issues such as equality, social justice, leadership, innovation, the effect of technology on pedagogy, and the changing world. It has to be admitted that it is impossible to prepare the X and Y generations to the future using 900 years old educational methods. These generations grow together with the technology and are adapted to the ever-changing technological environment. In short, they can't be contained in the tradition. So, we have to integrate digital technologies into our lives as well as into our education system (MEF, 2017:3).

The last two decades proved that the role of the internet and technology in education must constantly increase. The proliferation of online educational sources is a proof. Educational web sites such as Khan Academy, Wikipedia, Udacity, Codeacademy, Linda.com, and Skillsofts have millions of subscribers (Reidsema, Kavanagh, Hadgraft, & Smith, 2017) and they offer thousands of videos prepared by the professionals. For example, Linda.com contains many videos on topics such as economy, computer technologies, and web design. Besides, there are videos on personal development such as photography and drawing. It is an open education source for people all around the world with its 6234 videos. The motto of Khan Academy, as declared on its homepage, is "World-class education for everyone, everywhere". It aims

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to support all primary and secondary school students. They also have videos in Turkish and helped Turkish students and teachers a lot. There are also Turkish educational websites such as eba.gov.tr, vitaminegitim.com, udemy.com, and videbu.com. Some are supported by the state and some by the private sector.

The FC model heavily relies on online sources. In this model, subjects that are traditionally presented to the students in the classroom are transferred to home, and the homework is transferred to the classroom. Thus, traditional homework is enriched through the guidance of the teacher (Demiralay & Karatas, 2014). The rationale behind the model is that in order to maximize the yield of a lecture, its contents should be studied beforehand. So that, students can spend more time reinforcing.

Students are expected to study the subject before the lesson. They watch relevant videos online, take notes and prepare their questions. They sent their questions to their teacher before the lesson through e-mail. In the first session, the instructor reads the questions aloud. Then students try to answer these questions through group study. The instructor gives guidance to all groups. In the second session, the instructor evaluates their answers. The instructor can ask questions in order to evaluate their grasp on the subject and initiate new group studies by formulating new questions (MEF, 2017). The model aims to encourage students to learn by themselves. They are expected to learn self- and peer-assessment, and to internalize what they learned. The FC model differs from the traditional model with the active participation of students. Students are expected to pass the first two steps of Bloom's taxonomy, namely remembering and understanding, by themselves. After the lesson, teacher assigns new works to the students in order to lead them to the higher steps of this taxonomy. In short, students pass the first and simple steps at home by themselves so that they will have more time to concentrate on the harder steps of learning in the classroom under the guidance of their teachers (Kara, 2016). There are many studies on the implementation of this model in various courses (Akkoyunlu & Gunduz 2015; Demiralay & Karatas, 2014; Gaughan, 2014; Kara, 2016; Kardas& Yesilyaprak 2015; Temizyurek & Unlu, 2015; Turan, 2015; Turan & Goktas, 2015, Ucar & Bozkurt, 2018).

The FC model is striking as it informs the students on the subject before the lesson. History lessons also have a very intense content and generally pre-reading is required before coming to class. Thus, this model can be easily implemented to a history course. Although there are many international and national studies on the implementation of this model from language teaching to science education, there are very few studies on its implementation to the history education. In order to try using this model in history lessons, a 2-credit course; Ataturk's Principles and History of the Turkish Revolution Course is chosen, which is mandatory course for all students at Gazi University. Ataturk's Principles and History of the Turkish Revolution (APHTR) Course has a 14 weeks long program and its code is TAR101. The content of the course is the meaning and importance of the revolution, the status of the Ottoman State during the 19th century, the First World War, the peace treaties, Turkish National Struggle and developments after the struggle. This course is mandatory in all higher education institutions in Turkey. It aims to create a historical awareness by connecting the events of the past with the current political, social, and economic developments in Turkey. It aims to create a sensitivity in the Turkish citizens towards the political and social developments which may be threatening to the permanence of the Republic. There are recent researches about APHTR course (Akbaba, Kaymakci, Birbudak, & Kilcan, 2016; Erol-Sahin, 2019, Oztas & Kilic, 2017). The researches state that traditional methods were used for teaching this lesson but students need changes. It is believed history lessons can be more interactive, more enjoyable and more efficient. New generation history lessons should be tried instead of old style history lessons for the students who have mastered technology in the changing world. In this regard, the problem statement of the study is: " What are the views of students towards the FC model and activities during the APHTR course". Thus, in the present study it was aimed to analyze the students' experiences of our FC program which lasted 5 weeks. Based on the answers given to this question, the opportunities and challenges of the model are discussed.

Methodology

Method

This study adopted the phenomenological design, a qualitative research method. This design focuses on interpreting the actual experience (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). Phenomenology attempts to describe the experiences of individuals and the essence of their experiences in order to reveal the common meanings underlying the phenomenon (Onat-Kocabiyik, 2016). Phenomenological designs deal with a small number of people who question the meanings they infer from their experiences regarding a phenomenon or concept (Cresswell, 2013). This study uses a phenomenological design because a different learning environment is offered to the participants and various activities are presented during the course and examined the experience. Besides, the researcher personally participated, observed and experienced the process together with the participants.

Study group

The convenience sampling method is used to determine the study group. The convenience sampling method was preferred because of the speed and practicality it provided (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). 18 junior students are recruited

from a state university in Ankara, Turkey. They were all attending to the APHTR Course. All participants are recruited with their informed consent.

Procedure

The researcher created a 5-week long course plan for the instructor and the participating students, sent messages to the departments, asked for volunteers and personally recruited the students. All students are informed through the internet. They were given information regarding the definition of the FC model and course plan. The researcher created a special communication platform based on the requests of the volunteers. Considering that all students have smartphones and internet access, the researcher created a WhatsApp group and an e-mail group.

The implementation is restricted to 5 weeks and 10 hours. In the first lesson, the researcher explained the concept of the flipped classroom in detail. For this, the researcher gave an interactive presentation and explained what they should do in the following weeks. Then the researcher explained some of the key concepts and important subjects of the course. Participants freely asked their questions and the researcher answered them all. The presentation and materials are shared via the e-mail group.

At the second week, the researcher informed the participants about the planned activity. Some of the videos were prepared by the other instructors. In addition, participants watched a special video prepared by the researcher. The subject of the second week was the status of the Ottoman State in the late 19th early 20th centuries. The subject covers the reasons that led to the fall of the Ottoman State with a special focus to the local, regional and global developments of the period. The researcher asked students to watch the whole video carefully and note their questions before the lecture. Lecture was given in the seminar saloon and students sat in the U form. The researcher guided the lecture and asked “Was Ottoman State still great in the 19th century?”. Students are given 5 minutes to answer the question. Then they were given a pamphlet. It contained a quote from Muqaddimah by Ibn Khaldun on the constitution of the state. Based on this quote, Students tried to analyze the problems of the Ottoman State. Then they were separated into groups. Groups were given identities of traditionalist Muslims, modernist Muslims and non-Muslims. They gave a name to their group and wrote it to the pamphlet. Then they were given a second pamphlet. This one contained information on the reformist movements in the Ottoman State. Students answered the question on the paper and discussed their conclusions afterward. Then they presented their group ideas to the other groups through ten-minute long presentations. Since they studied the subject prior to the lesson, they could answer rapidly. The activity lasted 90 minutes. At the end of the lesson, group presentations are shortly evaluated and important points are reminded.

In the third week, the researcher sent videos to the students just like the previous weeks. They were advised to watch videos thoroughly. At the beginning of the lesson, they were asked to define the concept of propaganda. After a brief discussion, propaganda posters published before and during the First World War by the warring countries are presented on the smartboard. The researcher guided the students to perform a simple document analysis and asked questions such as “What are the meanings of the symbol used in this poster? Can you interpret the expressions of the persons in the poster? What is the feeling this poster inspired you? Can you guess the origin country of this poster?”. The researcher showed 12 war posters and discussed with students over these posters for 15 minutes. Then the researcher opened a world map on the smartboard and marked the point-zero of the war. The researcher explained to them how the war spread to the world. Two volunteers marked the “time-place-event” pattern on the map by following the instructions given by their friends. Another volunteer listed the major actors and their mutual relations on a different board. Using these clues, they analyzed the formation of blocks and the general and special causes of the war. At the end of the class, they were asked to answer a question: “What would happen if the Ottoman State joined the war on the side of Central Powers instead of Entente Powers.” They were given 10 minutes to write down their answers. This hypothetical question forced them to speculate. They were asked to send their written answers to the e-mail group the next day. The researcher gave descriptive feedbacks and evaluated them according to a predefined criterion. Evaluations are uploaded to the system.

In the fourth week, the researcher sent the lesson content over the system. The subject of the fourth week was the treaties signed after the First World War and the predicament of the Ottoman State. Video of the week was on the Armistice of Mondros. In the first five minutes of the lesson, the predicament of the Ottoman State after the War is discussed. Then, students are divided into groups. They were given papers describing their designated roles in closed boxes. They were either statesmen, soldiers, villagers, men of the cloth, or intellectuals. They were also given papers summarizing the development following the armistice. These papers included information regarding invasions, feelings of the people, and the emergence of various groups. Groups are asked to think about these events. This activity was aiming to develop the problem-solving abilities of the students. Besides, they were asked to tell their feelings about the events based on their assigned roles. They were given 20 minutes; after which they gave short presentations. They explained their groups’ feelings and plans for the future.

The last week was the evaluation week. A different method is chosen to evaluate the views of the participants. The researcher used an App called Kahoot. Kahoot is a platform which enables generating multiple-choice quizzes in a game-like format. In this App, contesters see the question simultaneously for a very brief time, then they have to

answer in a very limited time. Kahoot gives higher scores to the ones who give quick and right answers and motivates them with music and background pictures. The researcher prepared a 20-questions quiz based on the subjects covered in the course. Participants played the game and liked it.

After this final activity, the researcher asked the opinions of the participants on the flipped classroom method and the 5-week implementation. They filled an evaluation form.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, data was collected using a semi-structured interview form, one of the most useful tools for qualitative researches (Sonmez & Alacapinar, 2011). In the interview form it is asked 3 open-ended questions. Questions are given below:

1. What were the opportunities provided by the flipped classroom method during the APHTR course?
2. What were the challenges of the flipped classroom method during the APHTR course?
3. What are your comments and critics about your 5 weeks long experience?

Questions are prepared according to the recommendations of three experts, two of them were academicians from history education department and one of them was a social sciences education department.

Analyzing of Data

Phenomenology analyses data qualitatively. The aim of the analysis is to reveal the meaning behind the experience. Hence the content analysis conceptualizes the data and tries to reveal themes that may describe the phenomenon. Presentation is descriptive and often includes direct quotations. The model also includes the explanation and interpretation of the revealed themes and patterns (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). Data is analyzed using the triangulation method. This method requires two or more analysts. All analysts examine the same data and their results are compared (Patton, 2014). Therefore, the questionnaires are given to two different analysts. Codes, categories, and themes are extracted independently by the analysts. Overlapping and differentiating categories and themes are identified. Then the researcher took the opinions of a history education specialist and an educational sciences specialist on these categories and themes. Final categories and themes are determined by the researcher.

Results

Opportunities described by the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Opportunities provided by the Flipped Classroom model

Themes		Frequency
Permanent Learning	Efficiency	4
	Research and Analysis	3
	Informative	2
	Reiterative	2
	Instructive- Reinforcing	1
Entertaining Lessons	Entertaining	8
	Not Boring	2
Interaction	Teacher-student interaction	4
	Self-expression	2
	Group interaction	2
Functionality	Useful	3
	Effective	2
Motivation	Fancy	3
	Desirable	2

Table 1 shows that answers can be categorized under 5 categories, namely permanent learning, entertaining lessons, interaction, functionality, and motivation. Some remarks from relevant categories are given below:

- Permanent learning:

P4-M: “What we did in the classroom helped me to learn better. Videos and activities encouraged us to speculate and envision. Therefore, I think lessons were much catchier and motivating”.

P7-M: “I learned by watching and talking on it in the classroom. I believe this to be advantageous”.

P9-F: "This interactive model, in which students are more involved, is much more useful and effective than a model in which instructor tirades and students ask questions…"

P11-F: "It motivates students to listen. Subjects become catchier. Even the students who don't like the subject became more interested. The course runs more fluent. We didn't get bored".

- Entertaining lessons;

P17-M: "…easier to understand, far from boring" …

P10-F: "…I think this method makes lessons much more pleasant. I found the activity on the First World War especially interesting".

P11-F: "This is the most fun I have ever experienced in a history course. Thank you for your work".

- Interaction;

P7-M: "…I believe it is very important to be in contact with our instructor both before and during lessons. Our instructor responded both to our e-mails and works. We asked the parts that we didn't understand during the lessons. I can express myself better in this kind of lessons".

P8-F: "Creating groups and working together was fun".

- Functionality;

P1-M: "…everybody participated and that made lessons efficient. That was beautiful. I think, having information before the lesson, and articles and supplements sent to us were very useful".

P5-F: "Before lessons, we watched videos and during the lessons, we saw photographs and documents. We performed activities and shared knowledge. I think it worked".

- Motivation;

P11-F: "…this method carried us away from the regular monotonous lessons. The lesson becomes easier to focus on and interesting. This prepared me better for the following lessons".

P17-M: "I always liked history courses, but these activities motivated me more. I had the chance to look at different articles and books".

P8-F: "In teamwork, we supported each other and it was very beautiful. The game called Kahoot was an exciting and motivating activity".

These are examples from the opinions of the participants about the opportunities provided by the FC model. Although there were 18 participants, participants identified 40 different themes. Examples are selected from the most frequent themes. In addition, all responses of the participants are recorded and available to access.

Negative Opinions of the Participants are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Challenges of the Flipped Classroom model

Themes		**Frequency**
Video Lectures	Long and boring videos	4
	Monotonous narration	1
	Very dense information content	1
Technical Problems	Computer problems	2
	Internet problems	2
Activities	Childish activities	1
	Takes too much time	1
	Intense and tiring	1

Table 2 shows that negative answers can be categorized under 3 categories, namely; video lectures, technical problems, and activities. Some remarks from the relevant categories are given below:

- Video lectures;

P2-M: "Videos we have to watch before the lesson was way too long. There were too many topics. Frankly, I can't say I watched them all"

P3-F: "Videos were on the subjects I already know. They didn't catch my interest".

P6-M: "… maybe more animations and imagery could make them more fluid and east to watch. Frankly, they were long and monotonous".

P13-M: "Although it didn't raise my interest, I watched it. There are way more interesting videos on online platforms such as YouTube. I suppose some of those could be recommended to us".

- Technical problems;

P7-M: "I failed to download the videos to my computer. So, I couldn't watch them at home. Hence, I came early and watched. But I think that's a problem since some of us don't have internet access at home" …

P18-F: "In some weeks, I couldn't reach some of the videos. I experienced Internet connection problems. Besides I was forced to borrow a laptop or tried to watch on the phone since I don't have a computer".

P15-M: "Long videos swallowed my Internet quota up. I wish we had a limitless internet connection at school and home".

- Activities;

P1-M: "Activities involved too much writing, interpreting, drama and such. Kind of tiring".

P13-M: "… activities looked a little bit childish to me. Activities could be more informative at the university level".

P16-M: "I'm not used to activities like role-playing. I couldn't participate comfortably".

These are some examples from the opinions of the participants about the challenges raised by the implementation of the FC model to the course. Only 13 participants expressed negative opinions. The remaining five either didn't express anything negative or left the relevant questions unanswered.

Critics and Recommendations of the Participants are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Critics and Recommendations

Themes		**Frequency**
Video Content	Should be shorter	3
	Should be more interesting	2
	Add maps/ animations/ photos etc.	2
Activities	Should be shorter	1
	Content should be reviewed	1
	Physical conditions-technical capabilities	1

Some of the participants (4) wrote answers such as "everything was fine", "thank you", and "it was good" to the question regarding their criticism and recommendations. Some (2) wrote that there is nothing to say. Written critics and recommendations are focused on two issues. Most criticized the length of the videos. The others criticized the content of the videos, for being boring or technical problems.

- Video Content:

P2-M: "My recommendation: I think if videos were a little shorter and concise, it would be better for us. The long videos and poor informational content were negative for me.

P6-M: "…first, thanks for asking our opinion. My experience shows that using more voice, music, and animation in such videos makes them more interesting. If videos were such, they could be more interesting".

P13-M: "Dear teacher. Thanks for the effort you put on those videos. If only you have had sent interactive videos like the ones you showed in the first presentation, I think that would be much better. I think shorter and more concise videos could be produced.

- Activities;

P1-M: "My critic and recommendation; lessons were fun. But they lasted much more than we imagined. Group studies, presentation preparation and presenting it, all were time-consuming. Activities can be much shorter.

P13-M: "… my recommendation; some activities, especially the role-playing activities should be geared to our level".

P15-M: "My recommendation is to provide special classrooms and computers to the students. I don't think we can perform the activities that we did in here in a traditional classroom."

An analysis of the recommendations of participants shows that they focus on increasing the quality of the videos. The others mostly recommended me to improve the quality of activities and decrease the length of lessons.

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the implementation of the FC Model in the APHTR course. After a five-week implementation, students shared their experiences and recommendations. Results showed that the opportunities are permanent learning, entertaining lessons, interaction, functionality, and high motivation. Our results are in accord with the results obtained by Lo and Hew (2017), Rotellar and Cain (2016), Sahin, Cavlazoglu, and Zeytuncu (2015) and Johnson (2013) stated that students find the FC model fun and informative. Sung (2015) and Gencer, Gurbulak and Adıguzel (2014) showed that FC model facilitates learning and increases the student-instructor interaction. Winarno, Muthu and Ling (2018) showed that all students reported positive feedbacks on the multimedia learning. They especially find it usefulness, rich in content and easy to navigate. Active methods also received positive feedbacks. O'Flaherty, Phillips, Karanicolas, Snelling and Winning (2015) states that outcomes of implementing a successful flipped class approach should consider effective student learning that facilitates critical thinking. Driscoll and Patty (2017) claims that FC has opportunities for personalized, inquiry-based learning, aim to foster creativity and higher-order thinking by tapping into students' intrinsic motivations. Most of the studies show that this model catches the interest of students. 21st century demands innovation, critical thinking, problem-solving, communication and cooperation abilities. All these abilities are encouraged by this model (Kong, 2014). Our study also showed that students both had fun and found opportunities to practice different cognitive abilities. Students liked being active in the classroom in contrast to classical education in which the instructor talks and students listens passively.

Our second question was on the challenges of this model. Results showed that problems are focused on the videos, technical issues, and activities. The majority of the students complained about the length of the videos. This result is in accordance with the results obtained by Kettle (2013), Schultz, Duffield, Rasmussen and Wageman (2014), Zainuddin and Attaran (2016), Erdogan and Akbaba (2018). Results showed that the instructional videos were too long. Besides some students experienced technical problems. Students who were staying in dormitories had no internet access and had a hard time reaching the videos.

The last question was the critics and recommendations of the participants. Written critics and recommendations are focused on the length of the videos, the content of the videos. This results are in accordance with the results obtained by Davies, Dean and Ball (2013). Also the results of the study of Zainuddin and Attaran (2016) states that Malaysian students suggest flipped videos should become more engaging and shorter, and should be situated within an authentic context.

This study included a small student sample and lasted only 10 hours. But it proved that the FC model can be used in history courses. The basic principle of the flipped classroom model, that is students studying at home and performing reinforcing activities at the classroom, proved to be useful and effective. This learning model transforms the instructor from a person who is responsible for giving the lesson to a person who guides his/her students. Also, students are transformed from passive into active learners. This implementation facilitated the process by making textbooks and notes accessible to students and by providing an online connection with the instructor. This model not only provides opportunities but also poses some challenges. It gives extra responsibilities to the instructor. Getting prepared to the lesson, shooting videos, and planning activities may take a toll on instructors. Besides it cannot be applied easily in crowded classrooms. In addition, every student should have a tablet, cellphone or computer for it to be successful. Students should also have access to good internet access. We didn't experience great problems in that regard, since this study was on a small group and university provided a decent internet access. But it is very unlikely to use it in big scale. This study proved that it can be used in small classrooms with technological capabilities. The researcher believes that models like this may be used in all courses in the near future and may become more prevalent.

Suggestions

The following suggestions are made within the scope of the research results:

- FC model should be used in history classes in universities with internet access.
- Instructors are advised to prepare short and effective videos.
- FC model can be applied in a different study universe and the results can be compared for future research.

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