

The New University Model

Flipped, Adaptive, Digital and
Active Learning (FADAL)

A
FUTURE
PERSPECTIVE

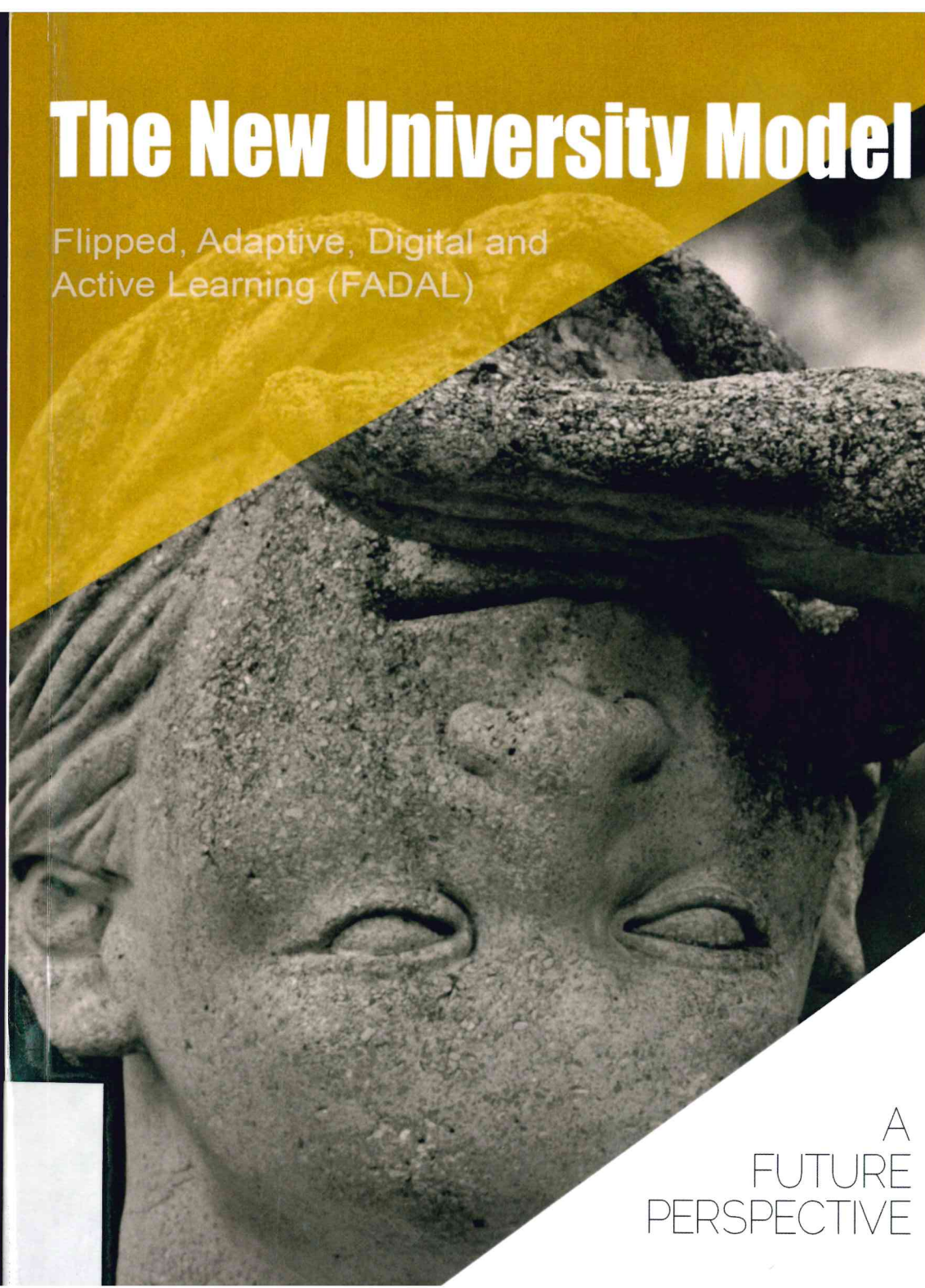


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Foreword

When I developed Peer Instruction and first flipped my classroom back in 1991, I never imagined a revolution was about to happen in education. I was simply trying to solve a problem in my own classroom — I discovered that the students in my class at Harvard were relying on memorization and rote problem solving rather than developing critical thinking skills and deep understanding. I decided to throw the information transfer out of the classroom and developed an active form of learning called Peer Instruction, which has been shown to greatly increase learning gains across a wide range of disciplines and educational settings, from elementary to post-secondary education.

Looking back, I was hardly the first one to “flip” learning. As any scholar of antiquity knows, lectures did not exist at the school of Athens. Education involved discourse, not merely transfer of information. With the founding of the European model of the university, discourse and active engagement were thrown out of the classroom and lecture became the predominant form of “education” — an “inverse flip,” if you want! Perhaps the first incarnation of flipped learning dates back to the late 19th century when Harvard Law school transformed legal education by introducing the case method. This method later spread to Business Schools.

In the past decades, Flipped Learning has been widely adopted across the globe and there are likely to be as many ideas of what Flipped Learning entails as there are people talking about it. Some think that just having students watch prerecorded videos constitutes Flipped Learning. The big question, however, is what happens inside the classroom, and what the roles of both the teacher and the students are in the learning process. Over the past year, 100 experienced Flipped Learning educators from 49 countries collaborated to identify a coherent set of global best practices. The practices were articulated and adopted as global standards for implementing Flipped Learning at many different levels by the Academy of Active Learning arts and Sciences (see aalasinternational.org). This book is based on those standards.

In this book, Muhammed Şahin and Caroline Fell Kurban present a new university model — one with Flipped, Adaptive, Digital and Active Learning at its core. The model involves a comprehensive learning design that engenders deep and lifelong learning across the entire higher-education landscape. As the authors show, it's not enough just to flip the learning. One needs to rethink assessment, consider student motivation, learning spaces, and the role of technology in support of pedagogy. Finally, we must be as scholarly about our approaches to education as we are in our disciplinary fields. The book is a must-read for any innovative educator or higher-education administrator.

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Preface

MEF University in Istanbul, Turkey, opened in 2014 as the world's first and only fully flipped university, and, since then, has steadily grown in size, diversity of courses, and reputation. Ever since MEF opened, instructors have been designing and teaching courses using the Flipped Learning approach to provide students with the relevant skills they will need in their future careers. However, it soon emerged that we were not entirely fulfilling this aim. Students did not always engage with the materials online before class and were not always active participants while in class. When we asked why, our students voiced that, while satisfied with the Flipped Learning instruction, their main concern was passing the exam at the end of the course. It became clear we may have thought we had flipped our courses and were providing student-centered, Active Learning, but this was not the message our students were receiving. They were still traditionally approaching our courses, seeing the aim as gaining knowledge to be recalled in a final exam on which they would be graded.

It was not surprising that the students were thinking this way; we may have flipped instruction, but we hadn't flipped assessment. This meant we were signaling that the value of learning was in the final exam, not in the learning

process. It became clear that the value of our Flipped Learning approach was being diminished, as we had not embedded the Flipped Learning philosophy through all three channels of effective learning: *curriculum*, *assessment*, and *instruction*. Hence, we needed to revisit our learning design. We also realized that even though we had started to provide authentic learning experiences for our students in class, these were not being replicated in how they were being assessed. This meant no value (indicated by grades) was placed on these experiences and no clear link was made for students between what they were doing in exams and what they would be doing in their future careers. In addition, during the first four years of MEF being open, new technologies, in the form of digital platforms with Adaptive Learning capabilities, were starting to emerge that showed considerable potential. Now, learners could be supported through personalized learning paths and individualized assessments.

Moreover, during the first four years that MEF was open, there were no set, recognized standards for Flipped Learning. This meant that each instructor had a different vision of Flipped Learning, and this led to our students all experiencing different versions of Flipped Learning. MEF University and MEF students had hired Flipped Learning and existing technologies to do a job, but they were not fulfilling the job they had been hired to do.

As we evaluated why, we realized that while contemporary changes have been made to instruction in higher education, the traditional element of assessment, entrenched in past practices and existing accreditation schemes, still remained. In addition, new technologies with Adaptive Learning capabilities were starting to disrupt

traditional learning and assessments. To move forward, we saw that we would need to deconstruct the existing model of assessment, and then redesign it in line with the present-day needs of our students. Moreover, we saw the learning technologies that were in their infancy when MEF opened had now advanced to a point where they were going to change the educational landscape.

It has now been five years since MEF's first students enrolled. Our first cohort graduated in the summer of 2018, an occasion for great celebration. In those five years, MEF has grown steadily, continually reaffirming its vision to educate innovative and entrepreneurial global leaders to shape the future. This process has not been without challenges and setbacks. However, at every turn, we have stopped and identified the root cause of problems, rather than attributing them to normal growing pains and covering them with proverbial bandages. It is through this process that our New University Model began to emerge – one built on Flipped, Adaptive, Digital and Active Learning (FADAL). This book shares our journey and our model for a contemporary university education.