

Flipped
3.0

FLR

FLIPPED LEARNING REVIEW

May 2018

Inside the
First Fully
Flipped
University



**7
THINGS**

THE MOST
INNOVATIVE
FLIPPED LEARNING
PRACTITIONERS DO
DIFFERENTLY

Dr. Muhammed ŞAHİN

the Stage for Teachable Moments

Lessons from the Rector of the First Fully Flipped Learning University

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LESSONS FROM THE RECTOR OF THE FIRST FULLY FLIPPED LEARNING UNIVERSITY

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MEF was the first fully flipped university in the world. Briefly behind how MEF was started?

Sahin: MEF Educational Institutions was founded in the 1970s by İbrahim Arıkan, an educator who founded MEF national and international K-12 schools in Istanbul and Izmir. In 2013, he founded MEF University. As an educator and entrepreneur, Arıkan was in a unique position to establish a university. He was aware that the current system was not well suited to the current needs of students and society and envisioned a totally new educational system. To find this approach, he brought me on board as founding rector. Having been rector of MEF University from 2008 to 2012, I had a strong background in innovations in education. During our discussions, it was clear that if he was going to establish a university, it needed to be unique and take a different approach to meet the needs of today's students. I vividly remember İbrahim emphatically declaring that if he could not find a better way of education, he would call a halt to his aspirations for opening a university.

Thinking about new teaching methods, I remembered the American Council on Education meeting in 2011 in Washington DC. One of the presenters, Clayton Christensen, a futurist from Harvard University, was discussing the pressing need to investigate how best to educate and prepare the instructors who would be teaching the next generation. Remembering Christensen's talk, it became ever clearer to me that MEF needed an educational system that was geared to the needs of Generation Y and Z students — the first generations to be born into an digital world. As I was reading around the subject, I found emerging articles on Flipped Learning, and this approach seemed to be the answer. I decided to investigate further.

As I investigated, I discovered the Flipped Learning approach had gradually developed from Professor Eric Mazur's Peer Instruction model, and had been trialed on university courses from mathematics to computer science, all of which saw increased student successes. Also in the news was Greg Green at Green School, where he introduced Flipped Learning, leading to failure rates dropping dramatically across the board. Inspired by Green to move the entire school over to the Flipped instruction model by 2011. Of course, I also read Aaron Sams' book, *The Flipped Classroom*, coined the phrase while also making the concept of a flipped classroom. Respected higher education publications such as the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, *Harvard Education Review*, and *Stanford Daily* were also starting to pick up on this trend. By this point, I was convinced that this was an effective approach, and I shared my findings with Arıkan.

He suggested I set up a focus group with professors from top universities in Istanbul, give a presentation on what MEF University wanted to establish, and present the Flipped Learning approach. He said, "Then in 2013, I did just this. However, 80% of the professors rejected the idea of Flipped Classroom, as it was a new system, they would no longer have an important role in teaching and learning. Undeterred by the

university.

Starting the first flipped university was a large risk. What was anxious about at the beginning?

Sahin: You are right. It was a large risk. And we had many apprehensions about how the flipped as it was a completely new concept in Turkey. We arranged a press conference for November 2 planned to reveal our vision of MEF being established as a fully flipped university. However, two He seemed nervous. He said many of his advisors were telling him he was taking a big risk with approach. They asked why he was aiming to be the first university in the world that would apply program. They thought this was a risk as the university was new, and there was no established wide flipped approach. They were also questioning why he chose me as the founding rector, lak this, Arıkan wanted to continue with the idea of the flipped classroom, but only if the term could few names were suggested, but none that were conclusive. That night, I couldn't sleep. No matter translate flipped classroom to Turkish it lost its original meaning.

The next day, I visited Arıkan and shared my thoughts. I told Arıkan I felt the translation diluted that if we used the translated version, we would not be able to claim we were establishing a university were going to lose the vision – and as Arıkan himself had stated, there was no point opening a different vision. During this meeting, I convinced Arıkan not to change the name of the flipped classroom agreeing to keep the term, it was Arıkan's turn for a sleepless night. He was concerned the educational criticize the system. I assured Arıkan I did not expect the educational correspondents to criticize he and I were well known as successful educators. I convinced Arıkan that because of our commitment in education, people would believe in us as a powerful new addition to tertiary education. They November 20th, the press conference took place. Fortunately, Arıkan's concerns did not materialize correct. We announced that MEF would be established as a fully flipped university, and the correction The day after the press conference, Arıkan called me at 9am and asked if I had seen the newspaper an overwhelmingly positive response. Our vision had been accepted and was being celebrated. dream was in place.

What hurdles did you have to surmount to fully flip a university?

Sahin: The first consideration was location. I recommended a small campus in the center of Istanbul learning not only from the university education but also from the culture and commerce of the city locate in the Ayazağa-Maslak business district. Next was classroom design. I presented Flipped

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A smart library was also designed for students to access digital materials 24/7, allowing them to control and personalize their learning. To support students and Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching, Caroline Fell Kurban as the inaugural director of Instructional Technologies Coordinator (and administrative on the technological infrastructure of Learning, opened an International Office in Finland, headed by Rantananen, and established the English Language

headed by Dr. John McKeown. Finally, the technological infrastructure was put in place. Blackboard management system to host the online component. An in-house recording studio was built for it create videos for their courses. The studio was designed by 1000 Volt, a post-production company. A post-production director and cameraman were also hired from the same company.

Where did you get the professors?

Sahin: Joining a start-up university takes a special kind of person. In the early stages of development, there is uncertainty, lack of institutional history, and many unknowns. Individuals who wish to join a start-up university must have flexibility, the ability to work with a vision but not direct instruction, be willing to work with no comfort with uncertainty, have excellent team working and communication skills and, most importantly, a legacy. These are the characteristics Arkan and I were looking for when starting to recruit for the university. It was to hire the deans. The role of a dean in a new university is critical. It is from their leadership that the culture is set. They must be in alignment with the university vision and dedicated to making that happen. If the university has a fossilized approach, this will lead to resistance, discontent, and act as an anchor against moving forward. The dean must lead by example, set a standard, and expect their team to live up to that standard. When I interviewed, I asked each of them to prepare a vision of what their faculty would look like when fully implemented. I was looking for deans who were passionate about the need for change in education, understood the flipped approach was required, and were willing to lead and develop others within their faculties to become leading educators. They also clearly shared the MEF vision for the establishment of a flipped university and stressed that for the university they would need to fully accept that vision and not try to convince me to change that vision. If they accepted the flipped approach, they could come and work with me; if not, then MEF University would not be a flipped university.

question concerning commitment to Flipped Learning. Two hundred prospective faculty applied and of these, 80% were non-Turkish and over 90% had PhDs from out of the country. When they had decided to apply to a start-up university in a foreign country, the response without fail was, “We are interested in your Flipped Learning approach.” By taking this approach, MEF was in a unique situation. All incoming faculty were enthusiastic to make it a success; this ultimately led to less resistance and change management.

Where did you get your students, and what was their initial

Sahin: With our faculty, we were looking for risk-takers who were looking for a new and innovative experience, and we had the same aim with our students. Advertisements were placed nationally and locally all over the country. The flipped classroom approach took pride of place in these campaigns. We chose us specifically because of the flipped approach. We wanted to attract students who were different. And this obviously worked. When MEF opened to students in September 2014, just nine months after its release, in its first year of enrollment, MEF University enrollment fill ratio scored third among all universities and second in Istanbul among 38 foundation universities. In addition, 73% of MEF students passed 10% of the centralized university examination in Turkey, making MEF the third in Turkey and second among foundation universities for quality of students. For a university with no proven track record, in its first year it was full to capacity with the brightest students in Turkey.

How were the professors and students trained in Flipped Learning?

Sahin: To help support students, instructors, and the institution in the implementation and development of Flipped Learning, the Center for Excellence in Learning and Teaching was established. The role of the center is to place the University at the forefront of innovative learning and teaching using 21st-century tools and approaches at the level, as well as to innovate and enhance the learning and teaching effectiveness of Flipped Learning in the world. To accomplish this mission, four specific target areas were identified: students, faculty, and the institution. For students, during orientation week, the CELT provides pedagogic information on Flipped Learning and its effectiveness at Flipped Learning. The center also provides a drop-in center, a mentorship program, and workshops. For faculty, a Flipped Learning instructional design handbook was written, an online course planning tool was run, and one-to-one flipped course planning meetings were held.

What are the practical differences in managing and growing a flipped learning university versus a traditional lecture-based university?

company.

In retrospect, what would you have done differently?

Sahin: Bringing MEF University to its current position has been a learning process. Every trial and failure, has brought us to where we are today. In particular, due to Flipped Learning being such a new concept in the world, when we first started out, we found that technologies, publishers, and other stakeholders were not asking for what we needed. They simply did not have what we needed. We wanted digital platforms – not just standard quizzes, learning management systems with the ability to track learning outcomes across courses. To overcome this, over the past four years, we have met regularly with publishers and technology providers to share our vision as it relates to our needs. Slowly, technology and companies are catching up, and a rich Flipped Learning experience is starting to emerge. So, in that respect, no, I don't believe there is anything I would have done differently. Every step of the way has been important.

You were the first university to adopt the FLGI Flipped Learning Training Standards. Why did you decide to embrace them?

Sahin: Over the past five years, Flipped Learning has gained in popularity globally. However, while Flipped Learning and how it has actually been implemented is broad and varied. While there are many successful practitioners, there are also cases where flipped has not been fully understood or implemented. Without global standards agreed, Flipped Learning runs the risk of losing its reputation and effectiveness through inconsistent implementation. Global standards for training will help to avoid this situation. By basing recommendations for training on research and best practices, while also keeping it culturally appropriate to the locale, Flipped Learning can be more effective to all. It is, for this reason, MEF embraced the FLGI flipped global standards for training.

You are clearly a visionary education leader. What do you see for the future of Flipped Learning in higher education?

Sahin: There are two key developments that I see taking place in the future of Flipped Learning. First, the way we assess our students has a steering effect on what they value. If a course relies on a mid-term and final exam, the message sent to students is that the exams are more important than the learning journey. This needs to change. At MEF, we are getting rid of traditional assessment and replacing it with authentic assessment that also incorporates soft skills, social responsibility, and links to local industry. We want our students to be assessed in the ways they will actually be required to work when they graduate.

philosophy. I am currently writing a book titled *Disrupting Assessment in Higher Education through* we share our underlying philosophies, strategies, and experiences of bringing Flipped 3.0 to fruit

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I am the Director of Global Development at the Flipped Learning Global Initiative community in 2005, working closely with national education organizations on continuous professional development. Over the last decade, I've led the development of the Association of Curriculum Developers (ASCD); the American Association of School Administrators (AASA); the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), the International Association of the National Associations for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association of School Nurses (NASN), the National Science Teachers Association (NSTA), the National Association of Public Teachers (NPTA), and the Association of School Business Officials (ASBO).

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Closing the Flipped Learning Understanding Gap
April 3, 2018

