

# Flipping law in open and distance learning: the Sri Lankan experience

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – Legal education, like any other discipline in higher education, necessitates in use of various teaching and learning pedagogies in order to provide a sustainable teaching and learning experience. This article aims to examine the feasibility of implementing flipped learning method as a pedagogy on legal students at the Open University of Sri Lanka, as well as the perceptions of students and lecturer on the teaching and learning process in a flipped class in preparation for future implementation.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A mixed research method was used. A survey and a semi-structured interview were used to collect student perceptions, and observations of the lecturer were used to document the lecturer's perception.

**Findings** – According to the information gathered from both qualitative and quantitative data, the flipped learning pedagogy enhances the prior learning and student-centered learning of open and distance learning (ODL) and offers a new perspective on the existing pedagogies used in legal education. This article also emphasizes that an equitable implementation of designing and delivering a flipped class will ensure the effectiveness in teaching and learning law in Sri Lanka through ODL.

**Originality/value** – Despite the fact that there is substantial academic literature on flipped pedagogy, including in legal education, this article will create an original contribution by incorporating reflections from Sri Lankan legal education as well as ODL.

**Keywords** Student-centered learning, Flipped learning pedagogy, Legal education, Open and distance learning, Sri Lanka

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Sustainability is believed as an instrument for transforming the world by strategic management of finite resources. This requires creating strategies that preserve long-term viability of people, planet and profit to ensure a sustainable future. The quality of education is one of the 17 sustainable development goals of United Nations. Quality education, being defined as a multifaceted aspect, also necessitates the contribution of teachers in ensuring learners' participation in learning. As British philosopher Bertrand Russell points out "*more important than the curriculum is the question of the methods of teaching and the spirit in which the teaching is given*". This requires a teacher to try out new teaching methods in order to

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facilitate learning by the learners. A teacher is expected to be able to explore various authentic methods of teaching and assessing learners, regardless of the mode of delivery or the nature of the subject, especially during a pandemic, when teaching at tertiary level in the digital age. In essence, a teacher is expected to be a facilitator rather than a provider of information. This means effecting a change from teacher-centered instruction to learner-centered teaching. In order to become acquainted with new effective teaching and learning methods, the author attended seminars, workshops and read numerous papers on pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning, thus gaining experience in teaching law using new pedagogical methods. This article attempts to share experience gained from teaching law using a flipped pedagogical approach, which the author believes is effective in an open and distance learning (ODL) mode. Regardless of the mode of academic delivery, the most important challenge in any classroom is to have student-centered learning. To successfully meet this challenge, different teaching and learning methods must be used, one of which is the flipped learning pedagogy. Flipped pedagogy is increasingly being used in the teaching and learning of various disciplines and modes. This study also attempts to investigate the perceptions of students and lecturers of a flipped class; what is significant about this study is that it intends to assess the feasibility and applicability of this method for teaching and learning of law in an ODL environment.

This research was carried out on students of Public International Law enrolled in the LL. B Degree Program at the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) for the academic year 2020/2021. Since 1980, the OUSL has provided academic services, through face-to-face settings known as “Day schools” and course materials. The use of advanced technology, including online learning, was first introduced at OUSL in 2003, owing to training provided by the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia. In addition, in 2008, the OUSL online courses were designed, delivered and monitored (Jayatileke, 2010). The OUSL emphasizes blended learning in conjunction with online academic delivery platforms such as Moodle-Learn OUSL and virtual library. The OUSL Centre for Educational Technology and Media (CETMe) assists teachers in incorporating information and communications technology (ICT) into course design and academic delivery. Academic staff at the OUSL are prepared to take on their roles and responsibilities at the OUSL through the Staff Development Centre (SDC) during their first few years of employment. The OUSL’s academic staff is thus trained to use technological innovations in course development and delivery. As a result, the LL. B Degree Program at OUSL is offered through blended learning, with Moodle platforms available for all 17 subjects included in the course curriculum.

Against this backdrop, the following objectives were pursued: to investigate the applicability of flipped pedagogy on law students at OUSL and to assess students’ and lecturer’s perceptions of the learning process after being taught in a flipped class in preparation for future implementation. This study sought to answer the following research questions in order to reflect the Sri Lankan experience of flipping law at ODL:

*RQ1.* Does flipped pedagogy align with the teaching of students through ODL?

*RQ2.* How would the use of flipped pedagogy complement the legal education?

*RQ3.* What are students’ and lecturer’s perceptions on flipping a law class at ODL?

There is substantial academic literature on the flipped learning method, which covers a wide range of educational experimental experiences from various fields of higher education, including law. This study will add to the literature on how this model has been used in ODL and will be a new contribution to the documentation of the use of flipped learning in legal education in Sri Lanka. This article is a record of the author’s experience using the flipped learning method in an LL. B Degree Program, International Law undergraduate course. [Section 1](#) introduces flipped learning pedagogy, while [Section 2](#) describes the research

method. [Section 3](#) discusses the relevance and applicability of flipped learning methodology in teaching and learning law at ODL in order to answer [RQ1](#) and [2](#). [Sections 4 and 5](#) describe the research method, implementation of flipped pedagogy and the outcomes based on students' and lecturer perceptions to answer [RQ3](#). While [Section 6](#) suggests that an equitable flipped class implementation will be an effective pedagogical approach for teaching law students in ODL, the paper concludes that flipped pedagogy as a form of blended learning enhances the existing element of prior learning in both distance learning and legal education and ensures active student-centered learning in flipping law in ODL.

## 2. Research method

Since this study involves both philosophical assumptions and methods of inquiry, the study was conducted using a mixed methods approach ([Cresswell and Plano Clark, 2011](#)). Data of this study were gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. As previously mentioned, the purpose of this paper is to examine into two purposes: the applicability of flipped pedagogy to law students at OUSL and to assess students' and lecturers' perceptions of the learning process after being taught in a flipped class in order to prepare for future implementation. A qualitative research approach was used to investigate the first purpose, which entailed analyzing a variety of secondary sources. Meanwhile, an online survey and semi-structured interview were utilized to investigate the students' perspectives, while the author, as the flipped class lecturer, recorded her perceptions using observations.

### 2.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed as a survey instrument with multiple-choice questions to examine students' primary perceptions and was distributed to students who attended the flipped lecture through Google Forms. The survey was completed by 59 of the 80 students who attended the flipped lecture. This sample size is consistent with Krejcie and Morgan's generalized scientific sample size decision model ([Uma and Roger, 2010](#)). The data from Google Forms are analyzed in Excel, and the results are visually shown using pie charts.

### 2.2 Semi-structured interview

A semi-structured interview was conducted to collect in-depth perceptions from participants to the flipped lecture in a systematic manner, in addition to the primary perceptions obtained through the questionnaire ([Warren, 2001](#)). Purposive sampling was employed to ask active and inactive participants to express their opinions during the flipped class. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the responses for a set of predetermined questions, and themes were identified from interview reflection extracts ([Alhojailan, 2012](#)).

### 2.3 Observation

The lecturer's perceptions were documented using observation as a research instrument. Thematic analysis was used to analyze lecturer observation through the use of zoom lecture recordings and to record reflections ([Marvasti, 2014](#)).

## 3. The applicability of flipped learning method in teaching and learning law through open and distance learning

### 3.1 Flipped learned method

The idea is that you "flip" the classroom on its head. Instead of using the class time in a traditional way – for lecturing at students – you let them get the lecture on their own time. They watch the lecture and then they come to class and they do the "homework" part in class ([Peter, 2014](#))

Revisiting Bloom's concept of "learning for mastery", Guskey emphasized that teachers should use classroom assessments not only for evaluation but also as learning tool to provide students with feedback on their progress (Guskey, 2007). To put this into practice, various teaching and learning pedagogies exist, including flipped pedagogy. The flipped classroom, according to Wolff and Chan, is a teaching model that replaces in-class lecture modules with video or audio lectures, with the goal of using the in-class time for interactivity (Wolff and Chan, 2016). The fundamental aspect of a flipped classroom is, it is as a pedagogical model which turns the learning process around placing the responsibility on the students (Castro and Aguirre, 2020) and moving basic content delivery outside the boundaries of the class time (Alexander, 2018). As a result, it is also known as a "Scale up" pedagogy which places emphasis on active and experimental learning (Burke, 2015). The flipped learning method first appeared in 2007. Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams designed and implemented this relatively new teaching pedagogy to deliver chemistry classes to students who missed the high school class by sharing their PPTs online (Hamdan *et al.*, 2013). Since then, various levels of education, including legal education in higher education, have adopted and tested this learning methodology. It was later commercialized by Salman Khan, the founder of Khan Academy (Harun and Hussin, 2011).

In a flipped learning model, students are expected to read the topic through working on materials given by the lecturer prior to the class (Burns *et al.*, 2017). These predesigned materials include recorded lecture, short videos of teacher speaking over PPTs, learning activities in Moodle such as quizzes, discussions, etc. (Debora and Dewald, 2015). There are guides available to design and deliver materials for the flipped learning method in order to meet the nature of the respective disciplines [1]. According to the flipped learning network, when implementing flipped classes, the following four pillars should be considered: a flexible environment, a shift in learning culture, intentional content and professional educator [2]. Simply put, a flipped classroom flips the traditional educational model by delivering content outside of class while spending class time on activities that would normally be considered "homework". Before the class meeting, students can access instructional material via videos, podcasts or online tutorials. Then, during class, the students complete activities that require them to apply what they have learned (Benjes-Small and Tucker, 2013). This ensures that, rather than assigning knowledge application as homework, the lecturer works through various types of interactive activities during class as a whole.

The flipped classroom has the advantage of being a new pedagogical teaching and learning approach that can assist students in developing critical thinking skills (Liu, 2019). If we categorize flipped classrooms according to Bloom's Taxonomy, they enable learners to achieve higher levels of understanding, application, analyzing, evaluating, adapting and creating. It is important to note that the flipped learning method has received both positive and negative feedback, such as – it only privileges the lecturer's point of view and ignores the students' point of view (Cheng *et al.*, 2014). However, a positive aspect of flipped learning is shown below.

### *3.2 Flipped learning method and open and distance learning*

Student centered learning maximizes rather than minimizes an instructor's ability by allowing instructors to employ a variety of teaching methods versus one single method. This approach to learning and teaching through the use of a variety of methods shifts the role of the instructor from giver of information to facilitator of learning (Crumly *et al.*, 2014)

To see the application of flipped learning in ODL, it is critical to first understand what distance learning and open distance learning are. As the name implies, ODL institutions primarily cater their academic delivery through distance mode, and it serves as a

contributing factor in “opening” educational qualifications without boundaries. The term “open learning” refers to the availability of entry, qualification, technology, pedagogy and curriculum (Selvaras, 2020). Distance education is a constantly evolving process. Desmond J Keegan distinguished distance education in 1980 by the following characteristics: quasi-permanent separation of teacher and learner in the learning process; influence of an educational organization in planning, designing and delivering of learning resources and opportunities; predominant use of technical media for delivery of learning content; provision of two-way communication between student and teacher, and student and student and quasi-permanent absence of learning groups (Keegan, 1980). Later in 2001, Jim Taylor classified distance learning into five generations: correspondence, multimedia, tele-learning, flexible learning and intelligent flexible learning (Taylor, 2001). It should be noted that the fifth generation of distance learning, also known as online learning, is presently in use.

There is also a trend to deliver distance learning in a blended learning mode, which is defined as a combination of different modes of delivery, specifically face-to-face classes combined with technology-enabled activities (Randy Garrison and Vaughan, 2008). It necessitates active learning, which is student-centered learning (Hess, 2013). Active learning shifts the emphasis of education from the teacher to the student (Burns *et al.*, 2017). Both “peer assisted” and “problem-based” learning approaches are used in active learning. Problem-based learning, on the other hand, is made up of the following components: learning is student-centered, learning occurs in small student groups, teachers are facilitators or guides, problems form the organizing focus and stimulus for learning, problems are a vehicle for the development of clinical problem-solving skills and new information is acquired through self-directed learning (Sankoff and Force, 2014). The characteristics of flipped learning are similar to those of blended learning and active learning. Since flipped learning necessitates the use of cutting-edge new technologies and techniques, it complements the nature and function of blended learning in ODL. Furthermore, as a relatively new type of blended learning method (Wolf and Chan, 2016), the flipped learning method strengthens the existing component of prior learning in ODL.

### 3.3 Flipped learning method and legal education

The digital revolution offers twenty-first century law professors the opportunity to return to the customized, engaged curricula exemplified by the revolutionary pedagogical methods of Dean Langdell and his colleagues (Warren Binford, 2013)

Legal education was pursued initially as legal training to meet the vocational requirements of the legal profession, not as an academic pursuit (Pistone and Hoettner, 2013). Law schools were established in 1784 to meet the academic performance standards of the legal profession (Pistone and Hoettner, 2013). This is regarded as modern legal education. To understand the origins of legal academic teaching methods, it is necessary to visit Harvard Law School’s framework for modern legal education, which has been in operation since 1817 (Pistone and Hoettner, 2013). In addition to traditional lectures, teaching methods of Harvard Law School include the Socratic method and the Langdellian model. For nearly two centuries, the majority of law schools around the world have used these methods to teach law (Schaffzin, 2016).

The Socratic method of teaching involves in-class discussion. To elicit responses, the teacher will ask questions from the learners to recall and narrate a case fact and proceed with challenging questions based on “what ifs”. According to Duviver, in the Socratic method, instead of passively listening to lectures and taking notes, students were expected to read real cases and derive principles of law for themselves through Socratic questioning. Thus, to the extent the Socratic method is a discussion, it would track with research that shows discussion methods are more effective than lectures for achieving the main goals of student reflection;

transfer of knowledge to new situations; development of problem-solving, thinking, attitude change and motivation for additional learning (Dillon, 1980). The Langdell teaching model was created and named after Christopher Langdell, the Dean of Harvard Law School in 1870. According to him, “law consists of certain principles or doctrines”. To have a mastery of these as to be able to apply them with constant facility and certainty to the ever-tangled human affairs is what constitutes a true lawyer (Pistone and Hoettner, 2013). To foster the Langdellian model, Langdell developed case method of learning the law and the Socratic method for teaching it (Jennison, 2013). In the case method, leading cases or case excerpts are assembled into a case book. Students are given a set of cases to read before each class. The professor then asks individual students to present their briefs on a specific case during class. The professor leads the students through a question-and-answer session to ensure that everyone in the class understands the ruling in each case and its significance to the body of law being studied (Duvivier, 2013).

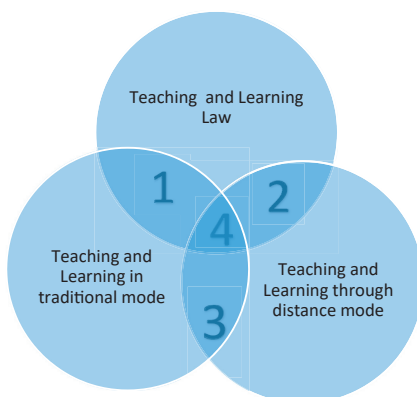
The preceding discussion may imply that legal education is based on the traditional learning pedagogy of teacher-centered learning. To some extent, it is traditional that the teacher imparts legal knowledge through the lecture by identifying, describing, analyzing and interpreting legal concepts and materials. There is, however, a paradigm shift. Due to the criticisms and challenges, traditional legal education was encouraged to give more weightage to student-centered learning beginning in 1990 (Hess, 2008). Thus, records from the recent past reveal that teachers from legal education impart legal knowledge through student-centered learning. Initiation of “Legal ED” is a good example [3].

The flipped learning method is well suited to the nature of law classes because it requires students to work on prelearning online activities and actively participate in class discussions. According to Mimoso and Anjos (2019), flipped law classrooms help to overcome criticism that traditional law classrooms are highly theoretical and frequently distorted in their application. Furthermore, because it is both conventional and unconventional, the flipped learning method contributes to contemporary legal education (Solomanson, 2014). It is conventional to the extent the teacher can be responsible for the prelearning material, and it is unconventional by letting the students to independently prepare prior to the class. This keeps both the aspects of traditional and modern aspects of legal education which can fully benefit the students. The benefit to be highlighted in the flipped learning method is that the cognitive levels and skills required for each year in a degree program can be achieved through this method. Instead of simply listening, taking notes and rarely participating in asking questions or answering questions, under this, students are encouraged to do reading – identifying, critically analyzing and interpreting on their own, and they can test the validity of their personal responses through the class discussion, moot court class, class presentation and group presentation. This provides a forum for teachers to test the use of ICT tools and aids in time management for lectures. Otherwise, due to the time required for traditional lectures, class discussions are omitted. This classroom time can be used to develop critical thinking skills and self-responsibility. It also facilitates the current trend in higher education of “learning by doing” and “learning by networking.” (Liu, 2019). In some ways, it is a modernized version of Socrates’ teaching method. With the use of technology, flipped learning will reform both previous teaching and learning methods. As a result, this is not a completely new legal pedagogy but rather an old wine in a new bottle. This explains why Brett says, “professors have flipped courses for decades. Law professors have long used the Socratic method in large lectures, which compels students to study the material before the class or risk buckling under a barrage of the professors’ questions” (Berrett, 2012).

Sections 3.1–3.3 demonstrate that flipped pedagogy combines student-centered teaching and learning with “ODL” and “teaching and learning law”. Similarly, as both require prior learning, flipping lectures enhance teaching and learning law in distance learning. As a result, flipped pedagogy can be implemented in ODL to promote student-centered learning and prior

learning. The table below illustrates how flipped pedagogy, as a form of blended learning, coincides with the teaching and learning process of law students through ODL (see Figure 1).

- 1- Teaching and learning Law in traditional mode    2- Teaching and learning Law in distance mode  
3- Blended learning    4- Teaching and learning law in blended learning



**Figure 1.**  
Author's conceptual  
framework on the  
applicability of flipped  
pedagogy in teaching  
and learning law  
through ODL

## 4. Implementation of flipped learned method

### 4.1 Background

The author believed that Public International Law from the third year (Level 5) of the LL. B Degree Program, as a compulsory course with abundant online resources, was an appropriate choice to test the flipped learned method. This research was conducted during the academic year 2020/21. There are 219 registered students for this subject from both the English (61) and Tamil (158) mediums, and the study was conducted among 80 students those who attended the flipped lecture from both the mediums. The author also believed that this study, which was conducted to learn the perception of using the flipped learn method on legal education, should include students pursuing the LL. B Degree Program in both their native language and an international language.

### 4.2 Phase I

Flipping a class puts the burden on the teacher to prepare preclass reading. It is critical to design the preclass reading with the nature of the subject, the title of the flipped class and the resources available keeping the students in mind. In a previous research conducted by the author on available resources of law students to access the technology at OUSL, it was found that there is a preference for mobile-friendly study sources (Selvaras, 2020). As a result, preclass reading was designed to work on a variety of digital devices. Students were informed in advance that the lecture on “Law of Treaties” will be delivered using the flipped learned method, and preclass reading materials for the class were provided. These preclass reading materials include power point presentations (PPTs) containing self-learning activities and required Articles from *Vienna Convention on Law of Treaties 1969* as primary reading.

#### 4.3 Phase II

Following Phase I, the flipped class proceeded as follows: The author provided a brief introduction to the main topic. Instead of delivering a lecture, knowledge delivery for subtopics was done through PPTs with various student activities. The PPT was an expanded version of the PPT that was provided as preclass learning material. Because the class was held via Zoom, relevant resources were shared using the Zoom screen sharing facility in accordance with the requirements of the class activity. These activities were designed to assess students' knowledge of identifying, applying, analyzing and interpreting legal resources. The author was mindful in not encouraging any group of students to dominate the interaction; hence, random students were chosen by the lecturer to take part in-class activities. Following the completion of the PPT, students were divided into groups using Zoom groups and asked to participate in a group activity before presenting their findings in the main session. The lecturer visited all groups and ensured that students were actively participating. Students were asked to apply their knowledge in a problem question based on the topic studied in the following segment of the class. The class concluded with a Q&A session and students exploring a video created by the teacher to provide the essence of the topic in 2 min.

However, feedback is required for any pedagogy to continue any teaching and learning method in order to determine whether it is appropriate for the target group. Thus, in [Sections 4 and 5](#), the author documented the feedback of the teaching and learning process of law at OUSL using flipped learning pedagogy.

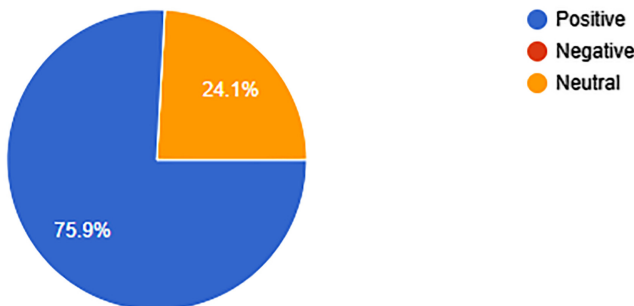
### 5. Outcomes based on perceptions of students and lecturer

#### 5.1 Students' perceptions

As aforementioned, a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview were used to gather student learning perceptions on flipping the law class at ODL.

**5.1.1 Findings of questionnaire.** The survey was designed and used to learn about students' primary perceptions of two constructs: their experience flipping the class and their desire to continue taking flipped classes in the future. The survey was conducted anonymously, with the assistance of a Google form. Eighty (80) students of Public International Law (from both English and Tamil mediums) participated in the flipped class, and 59 of them submitted survey responses.

**5.1.1.1 Experience of students from flipping the class.** According to survey results, the majority of respondents' benefited personally from class flipping. Seventy-six percent of survey respondents said they had a positive experience learning law using the flipped method. Only 24% of those questioned said the experience of flipping the class was neutral. However, no participant rated their experience negatively (see [Figure 2](#)).



**Figure 2.**  
Participants' view of  
class flipping

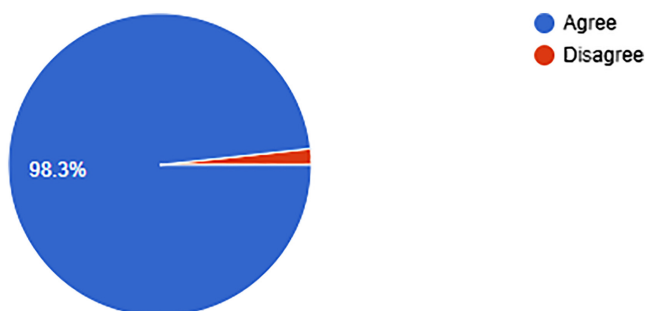
The idea of flipping the classroom inspired 98% of survey participants to pursue additional learning on this module, while only 2% of those surveyed disagree with this (see Figure 3).

In an effort to determine how much the flipped method was used as a student-centered pedagogy, 95% of the participants stated that they actively participated and engaged in the class, while only 5% of survey respondents disagree with this (see Figure 4).

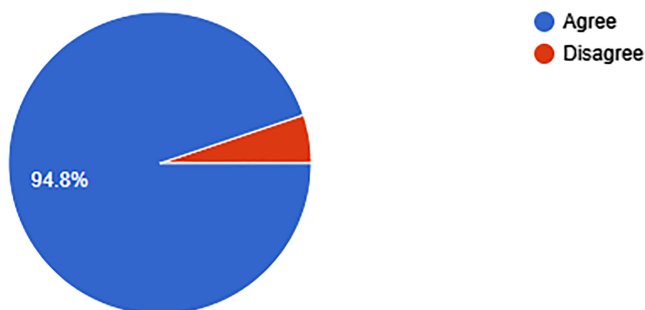
The overwhelming results show that the flipped learning method was useful to a greater number of participants.

5.1.1.2 Desire to follow the flipped classes in future. Using the flipped learning method, 91% of survey respondents expressed an interest in learning more law subjects. Meanwhile, no respondent stated that they do not want to try this method and implement it in their classes the following year. On the other hand, 9% of participants said that even though they tried this method, they will not do it again (see Figure 5).

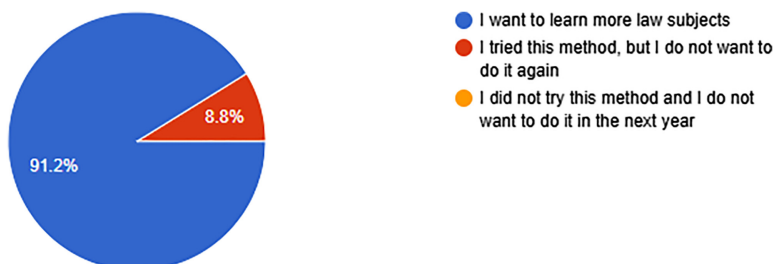
It is critical to understand the difficulties faced by the 9% of participants who do not want to try it again, as shown in Figure 4. Since this questionnaire was designed ahead of time to



**Figure 3.**  
Participants' view of pursuing additional learning on module



**Figure 4.**  
Participants' view of flipped method as student-centered



**Figure 5.**  
Participants' desire to follow future flipped classes

bring the challenges of the minority group of participants, those can be interlinked to understand the 9% of the participants. As a result, the survey's challenges include lack of ICT knowledge, poor ICT resources, an uneasy approach and preference for traditional teaching methods.

*5.1.2 Findings of semi-structured interviews.* In addition to the quantitative perception survey, qualitative information was gathered through semi-structured interviews with selected class participants, both active and inactive during flipped class. The findings are examined in the light of the opinions described for predetermined questions and themes generated through thematic analysis.

Predetermined questions	Generated themes
- What are the benefits of flipping a law lecture? - What are the advantages of flipping a lecture in ODL? - What were the challenges encountered in attending a flipped law lecture? - What were the challenges of attending a flipped lecture in ODL?	Perceived benefits from flipping the law lecture at ODL Challenges of attending a flipped law lecture in ODL
Would you like to learn law in future under flipping pedagogy? What are the recommendations would you suggest to enhance flipping law?	Preference for learning law under flipping pedagogy in future Suggestions for flipping law lectures in future

5.1.2.1 Perceived benefits from flipping the law lecture at ODL. The benefits of the flipped class were cited as active participation, teamwork, application of knowledge, opportunity to apply skills and hands-on experience with reading resources. As the same characteristics are described as desirable qualities of an ODL class, this demonstrates that flipping a class can be used as a tool for a successful ODL class. These students believe that using this pedagogy makes an ODL class as interactive as a face-to-face class and motivates them to meet the learning objectives at the end of the class and work on additional reading. For example, the majority of student feedback indicates that *“even though course materials for all subjects are pre-given at OUSL, pre-class reading material motivates us better in doing prior learning because they were simply brief with ICT”* and *“the pre-class reading material encouraged us to attempt interpreting the assigned Articles from the Vienna Convention of Law Treaties before class and provided an opportunity to check the validity of our interpretations during class discussion”*.

5.1.2.2 Challenges of attending a flipped law lecture in ODL. It was also observed that students who did not participate in the flipped class had a neutral attitude toward this teaching and learning pedagogy. Despite their interest in participating in the flipped class, they stated that the main reason for their lack of active participation was a lack of preparation or no preparation for the class. As “open” criteria of ODL allow all types of adults to pursue higher education, the workload of working adults has been identified as a significant barrier. A few students also mentioned that even with the help of preclass reading, it was difficult for them to interpret legal instruments and understand new concepts on their own. These students believe that using the traditional law lecture, a conceptual framework should be laid for each and every topic and that other teaching and learning pedagogies can be explored at the advanced learning level.

5.1.2.3 Preference for learning law under flipping pedagogy in future. One interview question focused on students' preferences for adopting teaching pedagogies such as flipping the class in the future rather than the usual lecture. It was found that the students are generally interested in teaching classes using various teaching strategies. This emphasizes

the significance of implementing various teaching pedagogies for various topics. However, students are concerned that the traditional method of explaining basic legal concepts should not be jeopardized. It is, in their words, *“explanation of basic concepts by lecturers is the core of learning law”*.

5.1.2.4 Suggestions for flipping law classes in future. Students believe that the time duration allotted to read the preclass reading and only providing primary reading as the reading for flipped class will motivate them to be better prepared for future flipped classes. Furthermore, students who expressed their perceptions suggested that the length of the video and the number of slides in pre-readings for a flipped class be kept to a minimum. Student feedback also included suggestions such as *“The teaching pedagogies combined to the topics should be informed at the time of registration with the course plan, so that we have adequate time for preparation”* and *“there should be a traditional lecture or a video presentation explaining basic concepts as a scaffolding to implement any learning method”*.

### 5.2 Lecturer's perception

This section documents the author's teaching perceptions when delivering a law lecture using flipped pedagogy. The qualitative analysis of lecturer observations produced categories of lecturer perceptions, which are described in the following paragraphs.

5.2.1 *Flipping the class ensures students at centre.* Knowledge delivery of OUSL is intended to use “Day school” as forums for discussion. However, traditional teaching and learning approaches continue to dominate legal education in OUSL. The traditional way of conducting a lecture (referred to as a “Day school”) of Public International Law is a face-to-face class with the use of technology such as PPT, audio, video and PDFs of international treaties, followed by a discussion or class activity at the end of the class. Even though the author attempted to conduct an interactive class, the students' lack of prior knowledge is a barrier to success. At various stages, the author attempted class activities such as presentations, groupwork and the requirement of mandatory reading prior to the lecture in order to understand the status of students and motivate them to learn. The same approach was used in the zoom classes, which took the form of face-to-face classes. There was always a conflict between imparting knowledge and implementing an active student-centered class. The reason was found to be a lack of interest in prior learning, which is required to turn an ODL class into a student-centered environment. It is to be noted that course development is the primary responsibility of a lecturer at OUSL, as it is at any other ODL institute, and course materials were distributed to students at the beginning of each course. In addition, law, as a discipline that is constantly evolving, encounters amendments to existing legal enactments and ruling decisions to existing case law, and these updates were provided as supplementary materials through the use of student learning management portals. However, as students rarely attend to day schools prepared, the lecturer must spend the majority of the day school time introducing and explaining the topics. Contrary, it was observed that a preclass reading PPT slide presentation containing an introduction and explanation to the topic, as well as self-learning activities, had a positive impact on completing the prior learning. It can be opined that teaching pedagogies such as flipping a class, for example, transform day school into an ideal ODL class. In general, the student population of ODL classes is overburdened. On the positive side, flipped class activities such as team work can make an overcrowded class more interactive. The use of teaching pedagogy in the classroom can be interpreted as a solution for making overcrowded classes more student-centered.

5.2.2 *Flipped learning as a contributing factor for self-learning and prior learning to achieve learning outcomes at ODL.* As discussed in the previous section, students' self-learning is prioritized in the mode of academic delivery and course curricula of ODL, but while course materials are provided for all subjects and students are expected to come prepared for lectures, students do not actively engage in prior learning in general. According to the author's perspective, flipped learning methodology can be viewed as a stimulus for

meaningful self-learning and prior learning. Similarly, the components of preclass reading and different class activities during flipped class can be used to achieve K-SAM model learning outcomes that are required to be adopted by Sri Lankan higher education qualifications to develop intellectual abilities; cognitive skills and soft skills for law students through ODL ([Sri Lanka Qualifications Framework, 2015](#)). Essentially, flipping a class would satisfy not only university administration, accrediting bodies, and other committees concerned with student performance but also lecturers and students.

*5.2.3 Lecturer's workload in ODL as a challenge.* In addition, the reflections attempt to document any difficulties that may arise when flipping a class in ODL. A lecturer's primary responsibilities in ODL are course development and course coordination. In this context, the workload involved in preparing prelearning materials for a flipped class is a challenge.

*5.2.4 Preparedness for flipping a law class in future.* During the flipping of the lecture, the lecturer observed that some of the students were underprepared for the class. This hampered those students' ability to perform in class and participate in class activities such as group projects and questioning. Since the majority of the students in the ODL class are working adults, there is a need to balance work life, personal life and class preparation. This was also mentioned in semi-structured interviews with students who did not actively participate in the flipped class. To address this, the teaching pedagogies that will be used in the classes, including the preclass reading for the flipped learning class, can be provided to students when the students register for the course.

## 6. Recommendation

Regardless of mode of delivery, all universities continue to deliver academics and examinations via distance or online mode during the pandemic. Even though this transformation occurred as a result of an emergency without the understanding and implementation of distance education criteria, an urgent need exists to apply distance learning teaching pedagogies to make the change effective and sustainable. It is said that as the classroom shift from in-person to virtual, the flipped learning method will be an excellent choice for carrying it out effectively ([Pakpahan, 2020](#)). As a result, it can be recommended that any university that is forced to operate on a distance grounds can consider adopting flipping pedagogy for effective academic delivery. In a developing country like Sri Lanka, successfully flipping a class is dependent on preclass reading material. Preclass material should be designed in such a way that students can view it from any electronic device, anywhere, and it should be easy to share among peers via social media apps. It should be emphasized that the use of technology in preparation of preclass reading material in ODL should be a bridge, not a barrier ([Selvaras, 2019a, b](#)). Such reading material should also be brief, written in simple language, and equipped with ICT. It should also be flipped in order to meet the learning outcomes and required skills for each subject. However, as stated in [Sections 2 and 5](#), law as a discipline necessitates a basic foundation in terms of imparting essential concepts and learning how to interpret legal instruments at various levels and topics of the LL.B Degree Programme. As a result, it is clear that traditional lectures play a significant role in teaching and learning law. Hence, this paper suggests the use of partial flipping lecture to achieve this balance. In such a partial flip, instructors still lecture as part of the course delivery during the class session, but active learning is also used extensively to achieve specific learning goals [\[4\]](#).

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, while the characteristics of flipping pedagogy are not novel to the teaching and learning methods used in law and ODL, employing flipping pedagogy enhances both the teaching and learning of law and the teaching and learning in ODL more effective. Also above discussed results of flipping law at OUSL is an evidence for readiness of students to learn law

in ODL environment adopting flipped learning as a pedagogy. In essence, use of flipping pedagogy favors both its feasibility and applicability in teaching and learning law in ODL. According to empirical data, students attended the flipped lecture find the learning environment motivating when new pedagogies, such as the flipped learning method, are implemented in the delivery of knowledge. However, the empirical data do not suggest that the flipping method encouraged students to attend the lectures or contributed to improved student exam performance. That necessitates a separate investigation. The qualitative findings indicate that the legal education environment is favorable for flipped learning pedagogy, and students welcome flipped classes while maintaining the conventional method of explaining basic legal concepts. Further, the perceptions of students' and lecturer figure that flipping a law class poses both positive outcomes and challenges. In order to overcome the challenges faced by students in future implementation, it is recommended to conduct a needs analysis of students to learn about focal factors of flipping a class at ODL such as available learning devices, video learning material length and preparation time. Because of this, it is prudent to design prelearning materials that are appropriate for the limited resources available to students, and implementation can be limited to selected modules. A successful flipped learning class requires integration of ICT. However, ODL does not include students who were born and raised in the digital age. Therefore, by prioritizing subject knowledge, ICT should be integrated in a flipped law lecture in a way that balances equity and equality to ensure legal education produces critical thinkers rather than mere listeners.

I hear and I forget, I see and I remember, I do and I understand – Chinese proverb

## Notes

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3. <http://legaledweb.com>
4. Centre for Research on Learning and Teaching, University of Michigan, <https://crlt.umich.edu/flipping-your-class-active-learning>

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