Chapter 15
Students Writing Their Own Lectures with a Wiki and the CSA

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ABSTRACT
This chapter examines why despite decades of research and overwhelming evidence questioning the pedagogical effectiveness of lecturing as a teaching and learning strategy, it remains the dominant pedagogical mode in most higher education institutions worldwide. The authors explore further why lectures are not the most appropriate teaching strategy in the current higher education climate for three main reasons: the way we now view ‘knowledge’; the information society in which we are currently immersed; and the diverse background and experience of today’s student population. The authors offer an alternative to the lecture which can achieve what a lecture aims to, but in a more student-centred way. Their alternative is informed by the contributing student approach, devised by Collis & Moonen (2001), whereby students collaboratively find, explore, share, and engage with the content which they would have otherwise received passively via a didactic lecture.

INTRODUCTION
For well over 50 years scholarly research has been questioning the effectiveness of lecturing. Despite this, it remains central to University teaching and learning practice. The resilience of lecturing to the ongoing criticism of it has left many scholars baffled and frustrated. As the rather exasperated title of Graham Gibbs’ essay, ‘Twenty Terrible Reasons for Lecturing,’ makes plain, the arguments often put in its defence are rarely edifying, let alone erudite. In his conclusions he says ‘I do believe there is far more lecturing going on than can reasonably be justified’ (Gibbs, 1981, p. 12). In this paper we argue that deposing lecturing as the mainstay of teaching and learning in Higher Education is now more imperative than ever. We suggest, however, that to counter the resilience of lecturing requires a variety of strategic approaches and propose one such approach. This suggests replacing what lecturing
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should do through the use of a Contributing Student Approach (CSA): effectively having students write their own lectures. We start by examining the lecture itself, and then outline how in an industry characterised by widening participation, in a postmodern and information rich world, it is now obsolete. We then go on to explore why there is still so much lecturing going on and how it might be strategically replaced. We then examine the risks and benefits of using a CSA in combination with a wiki and argue how this compares favourably with lecturing. We end by outlining how the roles of students and academics change with this approach, concluding that it has the potential to bring about widespread institutional change and, ultimately, challenge the ubiquity of lecturing.

BACKGROUND

What are Lectures?

As many critics of lecturing have observed, it constitutes the mainstay of teaching and learning in Higher Education even though few cite any empirical research to support this assertion, and if they do cite a source it is often simply to someone else making the same assertion (Bligh, 1998; Gibbs, 1981; Irving & Young, 2004; Laing, 1996; Laurillard cited in Phillips, 2005; Stephenson, Brown, & Griffin, 2008). This would suggest that it is such an obvious fact that there is little need to actually prove it. Despite this, it would seem then that in many, if not most, university courses lectures form the ‘bulk’ of the student diet. Most are delivered through oration with the lecturer doing most if not all of the talking and the main student activity being taking notes and, hopefully, listening. Recently the enthusiastic adoption of presentation software, such as PowerPoint and Keynote, has meant that students now often transcribe the lecturer’s words directly from a screen, the absurdity of does not escape them! One student taking part in some recent research on the attitudes and expectations of the next generation of learners entering Higher Education emphasises this sentiment:

*We have lectures where at the start you are given the slides, you are told that all the information is on Blackboard, and then you are sitting there for an hour while they read through the slides, and it is really frustrating. Why do I need to be here listening to somebody reading it when I can read it myself, and probably take it in a lot better?* (Sheard & Ahmed, 2007, p. 57)

In a web-based world where things like banking, shopping and news can be accessed at any time or place, the lecture stands in stark contrast: taking place in a rigidly synchronous setting, timetabled in a regular pattern, to last a specified length of time and requiring everyone to be in the same place at the same time. Lectures often function as the ‘spine’ of subjects onto which other learning strategies, such as seminars and tutorials, are attached. Some scholars have argued (and I suspect many academics would agree) that the continued prevalence of lecturing as a pedagogical strategy would seem to suggest that there must be some value in them. The research would, however, advocate otherwise.

At this point it is useful to consider what it is that lecturers think that they achieve by delivering them. The lecture has been around for a long time and, as a consequence, a considerable amount of research has been conducted on them to evaluate their effectiveness as a pedagogical strategy. The most influential study into the effectiveness of lecturing was conducted by Donald Bligh in *What’s the Use of Lectures?* First published in 1971, this much reprinted and highly influential work conducts an exhaustive literature review of decades of research into the effectiveness of lecturing. The most commonly cited reason for lecturing, and that which Bligh suggests it actually has the capacity to realise, is the imparting of information. He outlines other reasons commonly
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