

Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to "Lecturing Revisited," by Daryl Hale, 2/1/97

I find myself in rather complete agreement with Daryl Hale's main point: there is more than one way to convey information to students. Admittedly, it is difficult to have good discussions with larger groups, but some mixture of dialogue does seem to bring the students back into the communication loop. In my classes, which are not all large, I like to punctuate lectures with activities and dialogue when questions arise, followed by Socratic questioning. While the students often fuss about the Socratic questioning ("Just give me the answer," they say), they seem to really get the ideas more firmly in mind if the Socratic questions connect them with their personal experiences. Consequently, I appreciate the fact that Daryl is encouraging me to include group discussions as a part of my repertoire of teaching techniques. This gives me confidence to expand my experimentation with better teaching methods.

Dan Pittillo, Biology

I'm glad Daryl came back with a second round of his Forum on lecturing. The points he makes really are important. Personally, I think it would be a crime to deprive our students of the opportunity to listen to someone who uses language as eloquently and richly as Daryl does, and for that reason alone he can lecture all he wants and it won't bother me. The really important thing, as Daryl says, is that each of us recognizes the strong and weak points in our individual teaching approaches so that we can improve on our weaknesses and exploit what captures our students' interest. We must be scrupulously honest in identifying what really works and what serves our subject the best so that we don't just fall back on what we personally enjoy doing or what is easy. And then, if we just keep our eye on the ball—which is to educate our students and ourselves—the method we choose will not matter because our quest for the result will drive us to get the job done the best way we know how.

Nory Prochaska, Math & Computer Science

Lectio, or Hale's versions of the lecture, are significant historical events. They are collateral products of a communication system in a relatively select environment of the past. Their roles have not changed in hundreds of years—it is essentially a one-way communication system that has as much value as a reporter does today, say like Peter Jennings—namely, to inform. It is, in short, a static concept without teachable aspects or properties. That is, (a) the locus of instruction rests in the hands of the professor, and, consistent with Dewey's theory (1916), (b) it treats each lesson as an independent whole, (c) it places the learner in a non-reflective state, and (d) "It does not put upon the learner the responsibility of finding the points of contact between it and other lessons on the same subject, or other subjects of study" (p.163, Democracy and Education). Lectio may have had a sense of purpose and "fit" well in medieval times, but as such it belongs there—in the archives. As my friend Nan would say, "Das ist alles."

William Chovan, Psychology