

Faculty Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning

Responses to "Lecturing As Learning," by Daryl Hale, 10/1/96, continued

groups (read: lots of FTE), do not have to produce products to be evaluated after class, do not require a lot of attention after the first time they are developed, and keep the professor in control in terms of what is taught/learned and in terms of ensuring that the "right" amount and type of material will be "covered."

The moral of the story is that we need to keep the lecture in its place. One of the best courses I took as an undergraduate was taught by a 4-yawner. He knew he couldn't lecture and rarely did. The lecture is one method to engage student learning. Decisions about a teaching method for a particular day, week or month of a particular course or a particular part of a course should be flexible. We should not put ourselves in positions where the lecture becomes the only practical method we can use (e.g., by creating large classes, by bolting the desks to the floor, or by defining outcomes in terms of facts that have to be transmitted).

Bruce Henderson, Psychology

Lecturing as a Quasi Teaching Method

There is a dynamic interaction between the teaching method and the learning process. And, judgments about the method of teaching cannot be made independent of the knowledge of the learner's entering skills. In his essay on "Lecturing as Learning," what Hale does not consider is that the times have changed; no longer can the college classroom be seen as a venue for each professor to deliver lectures to only those students who have "gotten tuned in." He has failed to understand the change in the nature of the contemporary learner's frame of mind, and how the craft of teaching, in the 21st century, will be practiced to meet their needs.

Given the number of media methods for representing and communicating knowledge and subject matter, to say nothing about the variety of teaching methods, is it realistic to think that lecturing is a strong pedagogical technique today? Or, more compelling, given the heterogeneous character of our students, i.e., nontraditional students, "special learners," transfer students, and the tolerant policies regarding the entering cognitive skills of freshmen, is not the selection of the lecture method ill-advised and, incongruent with the high-tech learner's mode of acquisition? No longer do we have a homogeneous group of students whose singular focus is on the acquisition of knowledge, for knowledge sake. Instead we must now teach to different learners, work with students with varying personal needs, work with students at risk for academic failure, and teach students strategies for self-guidance and self-help. The shift in teaching methods must be toward pragmatic learners that confront the instructor, the relevance of knowledge and in different contexts. Thus, the key to teaching is not the method we use "to prepare the student," as Hale maintains, but rather, determining in what way "the student prepared for teaching."

William Chovan, Psychology