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In Defence of the Lecture

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Abstract: In response to the lecture format coming under 'attack' and being replaced by online materials and smaller tutorials, this paper attempts to offer not only a defence but also to assert that the potential value of the lecture is difficult to replicate through other learning formats. Some of the criticisms against lectures will be challenged, in particular that they are monological and promote a banking concept to learning. To make this argument, Freire's 'banking concept' and Vygotsky's notion of 'inner speech' shall be referenced and it shall be claimed that listening is a virtue. There is a review of some of the unique features of lectures and it shall be argued that the sort of thinking, appropriate for higher education, can be encouraged by the lecturer as 'expert thinking aloud', embodying what it means to know, to think and to action one's academic freedom as a curriculum worker.

Introduction

The lecture is under 'attack' from various critics who claim that it is traditional, monological, and teacher-centred. Consequently lectures have now been officially removed from the University of Adelaide. Those who lack an informed and philosophical understanding of learning and especially of *education* frequently make superficial criticisms of lectures and are quick to approve their replacement with online digital provisions and smaller sized workshops. In this paper I wish to challenge some of the criticisms that have been made against lectures, in particular that they are monological and prevent dialogical activity. To make this argument I shall be drawing upon Freire's banking concept and Vygotsky's notion of 'inner speech' and shall claim that listening is a virtue to be encouraged in our students. In addition I will review some of the unique features which are offered via the lecture format and shall argue that some of these are very valuable for education and difficult to replicate via other forms. Consequently I shall make the case that the lecture, as a format for provoking deep, existential and educative thinking, is irreplaceable.

The Lecture under Attack

Traditional lectures in higher education, and in particular, in teacher education, have been under attack from a number of directions. Significantly, the vice-chancellor of the University of Adelaide, Warren Bebbington, announced recently that "lectures are obsolete" and are being replaced at that university by online materials and small group work (Dawson, 2015; Dodd, 2015). Perhaps in support of this shift from lectures to online materials, has been the assumption made by a number of researchers (e.g. Oakley et al., 2011; Prensky,

2001; and Salopek, 2003) that generation Y are digital natives and therefore they require or 'need' to learn other than through 'listening passively' for an hour. We witness across a variety of subject domains (e.g. Cendan, Silver and Ben-David, 2011) many references to lectures being understood as simply a means for the dissemination of 'information' – often assumed to be equivalent to 'knowledge' – being deposited or 'banked' (to use Freire's term) into students and therefore needing to be replaced with more dialogical and collaborative experiences.

Adding to these criticisms are some academics whose expertise lie in 'teacher education' and who have published in this journal. For example Chigeza and Halbert (2014, p. 135) have described the lecture as a "didactic learning space" unable to accommodate "discursive and reflective engagement" for pre-service teachers. Garbett and Ovens (2012, p. 46) surmise that lectures have basically been understood as a "transmission style" of "telling students the key information" and ought to be superseded by peer-teaching. Edwards and Bone (2012, p. 5) report on practices in which "the [traditional] lecture was repositioned as an opportunity for participating in collaborative discussion".

There can be no doubt that some lectures can be didactic, sermonizing about the do's and don'ts of behaviours, where reams of information are read aloud but which have little impact on students other than inducing them into a stupefying trance. Much of the criticism of lectures often comes from those who wish to *manage* learning but who unfortunately lack a philosophy of education to justify their own preferred provisions for learning. Typically we often witness 'information' being conflated with 'knowledge' and 'meaning' (e.g. Siemens, 2005). This conflation has been observed some time ago by Bruner (1990, pp. 1-5) who lamented that the cognitive revolution has become so "technicalized" that references to the "*construction* of meaning" have been replaced by the more dehumanizing notion of "*processing* of information". Dewey (1989, p. 177) warned us that "information is an undigested burden unless it is understood" and that such understanding is only possible through "constant reflection" – i.e. *thinking*.

While apparently unproblematic for so many enthusiastic supporters of digital learning, for those of us working in teacher education we are acutely aware that 'being informed' is quite different to 'being educated' as this latter notion transcends attempts to fill heads with facts and refers to a quality of independent mind that is characterised by constant reflection. In higher education, academics who specialise in *education* draw attention to the fact that not all 'learning' is equal. Some sorts of learning are educationally significant and other sorts can be miseducative and even indoctrinatory. If 'learning' was of only one sort then having students navigate their way through Google might be all that is required. However, educators offer much more than the experiences available with Google and its in-built commercial interests and influence, and the lecture format is one potential means for providing for *educative* experiences rather than just information gathering.

Since his 2008 article titled 'Is Google making us stupid?' Nicholas Carr (2011, p. 6) has reported that various "media aren't just channels of information" but profoundly "they also shape the process of thought." His writings seem to reflect the arguments of Postman (1992, p. 117) regarding what he terms 'technopoly' which accompanies the problematic belief that "technological innovation is synonymous with human progress". Over eighty years ago Dewey (1989, p. 88) too warned us that if emphasis was given to 'information' rather than to free, interested and critical thinking – which ought to be the emphasis of *education* – then we would produce reductive and narrow conceptions of learning and how to

provide for it. Dreyfus (2009) acknowledges that some sorts of learning can indeed be facilitated by technologies, but he recognises that the more profound sorts of learning involves students being engaged with other persons and ideas such that the emotive and interrelational aspects of their being are necessarily involved.

In this paper I suggest that as teacher educators we don't want to be too quick to dismiss the lecture format. There was a time when "lectures replaced tutorials" (Fallis, 2001, p. 33) and indeed many current students continue to willingly attend lectures even when lecture notes and recordings are provided online, and so I wish to explore some of the unique aspects which are associated with the lecture which are difficult to replicate. However, I will not be arguing that lectures, nor any other format, are the ideal approach for teacher education as this would be to make the attempt to reduce educative teaching and learning to mere techniques and strategies or even 'best practices'. For an example into 'improving' the lecture experiences see Waugh and Waugh (1999). Dewey (1985, p. 176-7) has warned us that pedagogical theory is brought into disrepute when it is identified with "recipes and models to be followed", and so understanding lecturing as an art with potential educative value rather than a technique, will be the position adopted in this paper.

The Myth of the Monologue

I wish to demonstrate that it is a myth to assume that the speaking of the lecturer is the only voice present during a lecture, and I shall draw upon Vygotsky's notion of inner speech to do so. Traditional lectures are often portrayed as monologues, transmitting information from the lecturer to silent students, and are therefore regarded not to be as effective as collaborative participation of students. The classic reference often used to support this view is Paulo Freire's 'banking concept' and his notion of narration sickness (e.g. Maphosa & Kalenga, 2012) – both of which he discusses in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. In this work of Critical Pedagogy he argues that the banking concept represents the act of teachers depositing their narratives which are to be passively consumed by students. However, it is important to recognise the particular type of narration that Freire had in mind. He explains,

The teacher talks about reality as if it were motionless, static, compartmentalized, and predictable. Or else he expounds on a topic completely alien to the existential experience of the students. His task is to "fill" the students with the contents of his narration... The outstanding characteristic of this narrative education, then, is the sonority of words, not their transforming power... The student records, memorizes, and repeats these phrases... (Freire, 2000, p. 71)

Here Freire specifically identifies important characteristics of this narration sickness which drive the banking concept. It doesn't so much involve a didactic monologue as is used to describe some lectures, but instead he is referring to the manner that reality is presented, showing particular concern for inert, static ideas which are presented as unproblematic 'facts' and which have an existence of their own without any connection to the personal experiences of human persons – especially the students. What is of significance here is *not* that the voice of the teacher is the *only* voice present in the environment, but rather that the students *do have a passive voice* which does not challenge or engage with the authority of the 'reality' which is being narrated. As Barnett (1994, p. 42) explains, the "banker's epistemology" does not allow opportunity to have the knowledge transformed in and by the minds of the knowers.

Students are not required to bring their insight to interrogate or evaluate the ‘knowledge’. Hence through this ‘banking’ process *information* in the guise of ‘knowledge’ is reproduced through memorization and repetition without any transformation in the personhood or ‘being’ of the students themselves nor does it allow for the information which is narrated to them to be challenged, problematized or changed.

It needs to be recognised that the process of passively accepting and memorizing information which is ‘banked’ nevertheless does require some cognitive activity. Dewey (1989, p. 157) identified that memorization needs to be ‘taught’ – it doesn’t just happen ‘naturally’ while one’s consciousness is not ‘switched on’. This is why Dewey argues that through education students *don’t* learn to think but *do* learn to think well. Even during the depositing of the teacher’s narrative, students *do* think – but only passively and *not* well in an *educative* sense. So while lecturers are speaking, students are thinking – but not necessarily thinking well in an educative sense.

Karl Popper (1992, p. 52) has argued that “[t]here is no such thing as passive experience... no such thing as a perception except in the context of interests and expectations, and hence of regularities or ‘laws’.” Similar to the functioning of deductive reasoning as being predominant over induction, we deduce the meanings of stimuli, such as the sounds spoken by lecturers, by making them conform to what we already expect to hear and which we already know or at least will accept because the ideas ‘fit’ into our framework for understanding ourselves and the world. This ‘framework’ by which all of our conceptual ideas hang together, is sometimes referred to as a schema or as a paradigm.

There is a disposition in all of us for already ‘knowing’ what a speaker might be trying to communicate in a lecture. William James referred to this disposition as ‘sameness’, Dewey described it as an ‘attitude of anticipation’, and Vygotsky as ‘predication’. This makes the learning of *new* and novel ideas particularly challenging for teacher education because in addition to the internal dynamics of sameness/anticipation/predication many students come into initial teacher education programs confident that they *already know* what good teaching involves and consequently often lack an interest to learn (Lortie, 2002).

Belenky et al. (1997, p. 215) have observed many teachers play their part in Freire’s banking concept – often reluctantly – explaining that,

The students are permitted to see the product of his [i.e. the teacher’s] thinking, but the process of gestation is hidden from view. The lecture appears as if by magic... It would seem to them an act of vandalism to “rip into” an object that is, as Freire might say, so clearly the teacher’s private property.

Consequently Belenky et al. describe students (and indeed the adult women of their studies) who participate in this banking concept, as having a tendency for being blindly obedient to authoritative voices and for accepting as absolute. Through their research these authors employed William Perry’s (1999) scheme of intellectual and ethical development developed in 1970 which broadly has three main stages. The first is labelled dualistic thinking and is present in the students of Freire’s banking concept. That is, knowledge is understood in terms of it being right/wrong, good/bad, us/them, and importantly ‘authority’ and the ‘absolute’ are undifferentiated from each other. Hence the student simply needs to passively ‘receive the truth’ but this ‘passive reception still involves *thinking* – hence Perry’s label of ‘dualistic thinking’. Importantly, having a presumption that absolute truth and knowledge do exist modifies the perception of the person so that s/he has no inclination to challenge the information provided by authorities and so the internal thinking of one

operating at this stage can be likened to a sort of ‘pigeonholing’ or classifying of ‘facts’ as they are encountered

The second stage described as plurality, indicates that students appreciate the need for legitimacy. That is, they don’t accept knowledge as absolute but rather understand that it is contestable and even ‘relative’ to particular contexts and theoretical positions. The third and more advanced stage of Perry’s scheme is described as involving choice, responsibility and commitment where one takes one’s place among competing understandings and values. Perry based some of the theory of his scheme upon pragmatism, existentialism and also the perspective of Polanyi where for students there is an “ultimate welding of epistemological and moral issues in the act of Commitment” (Perry, 1970, p. 226). Therefore this involves students taking an active, responsible and critically thoughtful stance on issues of knowing, valuing and action.

Barnett (1994, p. 123) usefully pushes Perry’s scheme further. He acknowledges that the third stage involves the student formulating and articulating her personal understanding amid countervailing positions but Barnett (1994, p. 123) then argues that for a “genuinely higher education” the student’s “existential realization” is accompanied with an appreciation that evidence and methodologies are all challengeable as “too are the semantic and syntactical rules, the permitted logical moves in the forms of communication”. He argues elsewhere (Barnett, 1990, p. 89) that the student’s realisation that ideology is ever present in various structures of knowledge is important to then appreciate what Habermas has outlined through critical discourse, that all forms of communicated ‘knowledge’ also embody some ideological position. Hence it is imperative that students appreciate that knowledge is not to be assumed as absolute or even ‘objective’ as is sometimes portrayed via printed and digitized texts, but it is always *human* knowledge which is being communicated by someone for some purpose(s). This requires that a critical awareness be always ‘turned on’ when learning new things. Consequently as students are engaging with information and ideas, they ought to be encouraged to listen in such a way that they constantly scrutinize and challenge the speaker’s assertions which should not be assumed to be ‘true’ in a manner that leads to the passive way-of-being to which Freire warned.

How this might be enhanced through lectures will be examined later, but suffice at this point to note that although an observer can identify that phonetic sounds are transmitted from the speaker to the listeners, there is more than a singular voice present. We recognise that syntax, involving phonetic sounds and meanings, plays a significant role in the interpretation of such sounds. Linguists such as Chomsky (2006, p. 103-4) point out that in addition to the intrinsic sound-meaning association which is determined by grammar, interpretations of sounds more usually draw upon other sources of information such as “memory, time, and organization of perceptual strategies” – as per a ‘paradigm’ as described above by Kuhn. Vygotsky (1986, p. 222) too argued that it is the grammar and syntax of meanings which lie behind the meanings of word usage. So when listeners are interpreting and giving sense to the speech sounds emanating from the lecturer they are not only decoding the grammatical structure of the spoken language to unpack *its* meaning, as per a simplistic linear and closed system activity only involving receiving, decoding and storing (or ignoring or rejecting), but also they are constantly referring to their own paradigm of current conceptual understandings as a conversation or inner dialogue with oneself. As Heidegger (1968, p. 178) argued, with “every interpretation [there] is a dialogue”.

Inner Speech

Some of this internal activity is described by Vygotsky as inner speech or *endophasy*. This refers to the predominance of the schema of understanding of the individual over and above the actual words which are being received and any meanings assumed to be inherent in them. In the introduction to Vygotsky's *Thought and Language*, the editor Kozulin (1986, p. xxxvii) sums up a succinct description of Vygotsky's 'inner speech' as "the predominance of sense over meaning, of sentence over word, and of context over sentence." According to Vygotsky himself (*ibid.*, p. 236), there is a "tendency toward predication... [and] we must assume it to be the basic form of syntax of inner speech." So rather than passively listening to and 'accepting' a speech, there is a continual activity going on inside of people where "[t]he relation of thought to word is not a thing but a process, a continual movement back and forth from thought to word and from word to thought" (*ibid.*, p. 218). This description is reflective of what we understand by the hermeneutical circle in which the interpreter is involved with continual back-and-forth dialogue with the text being read and interpreted.

Teachers and lecturers, through direct instruction and giving explanations, might be able to give simple and factual information along the lines of procedural knowledge, but there is little power for determining/giving/making meaning in the actual message itself when it comes to conceptual knowledge. It is this latter sort that ought to concern those of us working in *higher* education. Most of the power of conceptual learning lies with the listeners who do the actual interpretation and meaning-making. This has been usefully recognised by Mackay (1998) who has used the metaphor of a hypodermic syringe to argue that 'injecting' meanings into others through our messages is a myth. Importantly he recognises that people, as listeners, are not receptacles, but rather are a "pulsating bundle of attitudes, values, prejudices, experiences, feelings, thoughts... even when they are listening" (*ibid.*, p. 11). So even when students in a lecture theatre appear on the exterior to be passively receiving messages from the lecturer, the reality is they are very busy on the 'inside', often making evaluations regarding the potential value of the lecture that is being provided for them.

In addition to the dialogical activity between interpreter and text, there is simultaneously a dialogue occurring *within* the interpreter herself. Buber (1947, p. 27) too recognised our continual "inner" dialogue which he regarded as the "real speech" because it calls each individual to answer for herself and therefore develop a greater awareness as to how the speech of others and the surrounding environment are actively being evaluated regarding what meaningfulness they have to her. This would have us conclude that to believe that only the speech present in a lecture is that of the monological lecturer is a myth. There is an inner dialectical activity taking place within each individual who is present in the room. This is in contrast to some of the claims being made that active student participation in an outward sense is *necessary* in order to have the presence of participation and dialogue.

This same reference to Vygotsky above about the relation between thoughts and words being a process, has also been commented on by Stenhouse (1967, pp. 32-33) who concluded that,

If the language learned in the classroom is not made an instrument of thought, then instead of liberating it will tend to stereotype experience. 'Inert ideas' tend to dominate us: fruitful ideas, whose relevance to our purpose is realized, tend to liberate us.

Here we see that if a lecture is to offer an *educational* experience, then the speaking of the lecturer ought to be an instrument for stimulating the sort of *thinking* that is fitting for an ‘educated person’. Stenhouse’s reference to ‘inert ideas’ are reflected in Whitehead’s (1957) warning that such ideas are harmful (not just neutral) because they actively dull learning through a pigeonholing approach to thinking for which Heidegger (1968, p. 171) laments that it causes us to “form opinions too quickly” instead of enduring the *way* of thinking and reflecting and Dewey (1988a, p. 30) argues, is the lazy way for avoiding thoughtful interpretation. Dewey would actually include ‘knowledge’ as being an inert idea because it can swamp thinking. This happens when students as per Freire’s banking concept, assume knowledge to be factual and objective and therefore unable to be challenged. However, this does not mean we ought to have students avoid becoming rigorously knowledgeable.

The Virtue of Listening

The capacity for attentive listening is necessary for lectures and does not appear to be required by other formats of learning. The art of listening appears to be readily valued in the corporate world (e.g. Branson, 2014) while those working in the field of education prefer to down-play the potential for listening and instead focus on students being noisy, expressing, collaborating and discussing in dialogues as per the references at the beginning of this paper. However silent listening is also very valuable for educative learning – as even identified by Freire. Roberts (2010, p. 112-113) reports that Freire encourages “active *engagement* with the ideas that lie at the heart of a dialogue. This may be *silent engagement*” and that “Freire, too, sees the ability to listen – carefully, respectfully, critically” is important for both students and teachers in order to truly *hear* what others are saying.

We therefore need to be careful not to assume that busily talking – even when in the context of collaborative dialogue – is equated to deep learning. It is contended here that listening is a virtue because it is intimately connected with *thinking*. Thinking, which is able to be critical, sustained and reflective (especially in an existential sense) is associated with what it means to be an educated person who *cares* as well as who ‘knows’. When considering the value of *education*, the role of academic teachers is not primarily to pass on information or even knowledge but rather as Blake et al., (1998, p. 142) argue “to teach students how to think, and how to think in the way appropriate to their discipline or chosen vocation.”

Listening to a lecture is difficult and has led Suzanne Rice (2010) to argue that good listening can be understood to be a virtue. Reviewing Aristotle she concludes that the virtue of thinking and the virtue of personal character are very much related with each other. It is the case, as Fairfield (2009, P. 214) puts so succinctly, that “the ethical and the intellectual are ultimately inseparable” and is demonstrated through several schemes of human development such as Perry’s (1999) ‘Forms of ethical *and* intellectual development’. The more moral-like virtues (e.g. patience and caring) accompany the more intellectual-like virtues (e.g. discrimination and astuteness), and all of these work together to enable one to become a virtuous listener and a virtuous learner.

One’s character, including one’s knowledge, capacity to think critically, desires and aspirations are enhanced by education through the formation of appropriate habits. This has been recognised by R. S. Peters (1966, p. 37) who argued that through education, students,

when they have become knowledgeable, also simultaneously come to *care*. Educative learning does not just involve the acquisition of information, procedural knowledge or the training in certain skills which are required for vocational qualifications, but it also involves the development of the person in a moral and holistic sense, often reflected in conceptions of 'character'. Indeed Dewey (1977, p. 267) claims that "the ultimate purpose of *all* education is character-forming" and yet this dimension of education is conspicuously missing from corporatized universities and the various approaches to learning which they espouse.

The skill or art of listening is difficult to develop. Fromm (1994, pp. 192-3) has explained that in order for one to be able to listen well one must concentrate in a single-minded fashion (much like Dewey's notion of wholeheartedness), in an empathetic manner where seeking to understand is likened to practicing a loving concern. This is similarly reflected through Vygotsky's (1986, p. 237) reference to Tolstoy's *Anna Karina* where we read "No one heard clearly what he said, but Kitty understood him. She understood because her mind incessantly watched for his needs." Here we are introduced to the importance of having a focussed *interest* in another and what s/he is saying. Such an interest according to Wilson (1971, p. 51) is likened to love in the sense that we devote ourselves to giving our careful attention towards some entity which we value. Indeed Fromm has argued that we love what we try to understand. He draws attention to the meaning of *Eros* to explain that it means having an interest in the world... not only in people, but also the interest in nature, the interest in reality, the pleasure in thinking, all artistic interest" (Fromm, 1994, p. 21). It is not so much the memories, minds or data-banks of students which are to be developed but it is their *interests* which are the 'things' to be educated (Dewey; 2008; Pring, 2004, p. 87). We don't just teach to the existing interests of students but we educate their interests to grow in particular directions. Students become *more* interested through their education. One way to encourage the educative transformation of personal interests is for the lecturer to demonstrate and justify her own interests in action via the lecture format. This can be partly be achieved through spontaneous references to recent policy changes and political commentaries which may have been reported in the media of the day, but they can be also demonstrated via well-developed arguments.

Interestingly Fromm (1964, p. 67) describes the opposite of having this sort of interested *Eros* to be typical of narcissism because this condition is characterised by "a lack of genuine interest in the outside world". The narcissistic person is cut off from having a healthy intersubjective access to reality and lives in a mostly subjective world – unable or at least unwilling to listen to others. A failure to listen to others, to participate in an intersubjective world, diminishes one's capacity to appreciate reality from beyond one's limited subjectivity. Similarly to Dewey, Fromm (1964, p. 80) argues that through educational formation there is great value in listening to others, engaging with their ideas and embodying a scientific disposition to test such ideas which demonstrates "critical thought, experimentation, proof...[and] the attitude of doubting".

This active testing of ideas requires careful and critical thought and it can lead to further development in conceptual understandings. This is quite different to acquiring simple information as explained by Vygotsky (1986, p. 100) who explained that, "memorizing words and connecting them with objects does not in itself lead to concept formation; for the process to begin, a problem must arise that cannot be solved otherwise than through the formation of new concepts." He argues further that,

The process of concept formation, like any other higher form of intellectual activity, is not a quantitative overgrowth of the lower associative activity, but a qualitatively new type. ... The quantitative growth of the associative connections would never lead to higher intellectual activity. (ibid., p. 109)

He explains that concepts cannot be readily 'absorbed' into the mind of a person but they need to be grappled with and thought about. This is because when a new concept is formed inevitably it leads to the adjustment in many other concepts which are understood by the individual. It is contended here that the lecture format is able to offer a significant contribution to this sort of higher intellectual activity, through focussed and interested listening. In order to explore this further, some unique aspects of the lecture need to be first identified.

Some Unique Aspects of Lectures

In order to better understand the potential of lectures to offer important educative value, it is necessary to recognise some of the distinctiveness of the lecture experience compared to other learning formats such as online materials, smaller tutorials and podcasts. This section shall provide some of this through the following comparisons.

Comparison with online materials

A significant difference between the lecture and online materials is that the lecturer *embodies* the *human* aspect of knowledge. Early in his career Dewey (1969, p. 147) valued the lecture format because it could challenge "the superstition that the text-book is the sum and end of learning" and which tends to encourage "those vicious methods of rote study". Here Dewey identifies the 'things' to be found in text (either hard copy or electronic) as consisting of the conclusions of inquiries and hence they tend to present knowledge as having an existence outside of human involvement and are to be acquired and consumed. However, understanding epistemology through the embodied lecturer can help students appreciate that knowledge, facts and information are not objective absolutes but are contingent upon particular theoretical, empirical and political contexts. This is why Dewey disliked the term 'knowledge' because it portrayed something as complete, finished and isolated. He much preferred the phrase 'warranted assertions' because through this all claims to knowledge are understood to be human endeavours and as such students are invited to examine the justifications offered and perhaps to challenge them because they are not 'objective'.

According to Blake *et al.* (1998, p. 135), in contrast to text the lecturer is more able "to make public her own doubts, questions, prevarications, countervailing intuitions, disappointments, commitments" to try and "promote critique amongst the students by example, the example of the committed expert thinking aloud." This view has been similarly articulated by Whitehead (1957, p. 37) who argued that "it should be the chief aim of a university professor to exhibit himself in his own true character – that is, as an ignorant man [sic] thinking, actively utilising his small share of knowledge." Embodied *knowing* and the contingent nature of epistemology in this way can be more impactful upon students compared with text and can challenge the passive way of thinking which Freire describes in his banking concept.

As experts ‘thinking aloud’ and sharing their ignorance and intentions, lecturers embody the human element in *knowing* which demonstrates its contested nature. This is especially important for the discipline of education. Students in teacher education programs must come to appreciate the epistemological nature of their future work. As Barnett (1994, p. 46) observes, “lecturers are epistemologists” and “knowledge-mongers” and so students ought to “feel the field as a way of going on, as a continuing process, with existential commitment and momentum” rather than as a “static corpus”. Teachers do not ‘deliver’ impersonal knowledge which is objective, factual and ideologically neutral. All supposed ‘facts’ do not exist as isolated observations but are intrinsic to frameworks, schemes and paradigms of human interpretations. Popper (1992, p. 139), as a philosopher of science, has made clear that “there are no uninterpreted visual sense data... whatever is ‘given’ to us is already interpreted, decoded” and therefore students ought to appreciate the presence of the *human* element in all ‘knowledge’. The nature of epistemology can become lost if students are primarily exposed to the impersonal and objective products and materials which are found in print or online.

A second difference between the lecture format and online materials is that lectures provide the ideal opportunity for the embodied academic to present her thoughtful argument over a forty to fifty minute session relatively uninterrupted. Bite (or byte) sized packets of *information* might be ‘delivered’ more effectively online, but lectures are suited to providing the epistemological position or warrant – in a developed sense – of the human academic on a particular issue or topic. This is in keeping with Freire who, while against a banking concept nevertheless argued for the importance of a teacher being *an* authority. Importantly he didn’t want lecturers talking *at* students but argued instead that educators ought to be talking *with* students. Klinchloe (2008, p. 21) captures this important point very clearly for Critical Pedagogy by stating that “no teacher is worth her salt who is not able to confront students with a rigorous body of knowledge... teachers must model rigorous thinking and compelling ways of being a scholar for their students”. The ideas and information from the lecturer are not to be ‘deposited’ for students to ‘consume’. Rather the dialogical activity of ‘reflecting together’ is made possible with the sharing of a well-thought argument. This shouldn’t simply offer questions for students to ponder but should actively challenge various answers from several sources in order to help initiate students into becoming aware of the political and ideological intentions found in *all* knowledge sources. This is the sort of characteristic of lecturing which provides for the critical dialogue argued for by Freire and which ought to be especially present in the discipline of education.

A third difference demonstrated by lectures compared with digitized and online materials, is that these latter forms of communication requires students to interpret the meanings, either individually or with groups, without the added benefit of having the lecturer present to assist with this process. Interpreting from texts can be understood as hermeneutics. Gadamer, an expert in hermeneutics, claimed that having the “living voice” of a lecturer makes interpretation and meaning-making much easier for students. The advantage for having the lecturer’s ‘living voice’ is that animated expressions can be actioned to provide for important nuanced emphases at important points. Gadamer (1992, pp. 64-5) identifies that “the whole speech, gestures, and the like... *all* the circumstantial factors, so to speak, accompany the spoken word” with modulation and intonation, so that the interpreting – the learning – is made easier for students. This is enhanced of course in a ‘live’ lecture rather

than a recording, because the lecturer can check for signs – both verbal and non-verbal – regarding whether students appear to be understanding.

Comparison with Tutorials and Workshops

The academic, as a human person present in a lecture theatre *with* students, offers a unique opportunity that even the presence of a tutor in a smaller tutorial, seminar or workshop usually cannot replicate. This is because many tutors are sessional staff who have little influence on the design of the unit. In contrast, the academic overseeing the entire unit (which often consists of hundreds of enrolled students if it is a core education unit) who is giving a lecture is not just a ‘deliverer’ of someone else’s curriculum but she is the *designer* of it. Even when working as part of a larger team within a degree program, the academic lecturer chairing a unit is the embodied decision-maker who has exercised her own expert judgement to evaluate and discriminate which materials, theories, ideas, facts, experiences, etc., will be included and which will be excluded. The lecturer, as the main designer, embodies *academic freedom* to a far greater extent than tutors, simply due to the scale of decision-making involved in curriculum work. Being *with* the presence of such a designer and enactor of curriculum is considered here to be a valuable testimony for students of education who will be able to exercise some academic freedom in their future careers. As Rorty (1999, p. 125) argues, “the only point in having real live professors around... is that students need to have freedom enacted before their eyes by actual human beings.” While some tutors are terrific teachers, it is the lecturer-in-charge of the unit who is able to embody academic freedom to a greater degree.

Interestingly Dewey was not particularly attracted to the phrase ‘academic freedom’ because apparently he saw that ‘academic’ has little to do with ‘freedom’. He argued that “freedom of mind, freedom of thought, freedom of inquiry, freedom of discussion *is* education, and there is no education, no real education, without these elements of freedom” [my emphasis] (Dewey, 1988b, p. 332). Here he identifies that this element of freedom is a necessary component of *education* and that education is not possible if freedom is not involved. Therefore education-in-action can be demonstrated for students through the lecturer sharing, in a first-hand manner, how and why she has chosen what to include and identified as worth reading and studying at this particular time and why assessment tasks have been designed in a particular way. This sort of enacted freedom is more authentic than autonomous. Autonomy is largely rational while authenticity is both rational and existentially evaluative, manifested through personal educational aims, purposes and choices which are exercised to design the particular curriculum program. Consequently, allowing students to have face-to-face encounters with the designer, who authentically is exercising her (academic) freedom to enact her educational aims and purposes by choosing what a particular unit consists of, is a uniquely different experience to being taught by a tutor, who might be an excellent teacher. Being in the presence of a curriculum decision-maker in action who may well make spontaneous decisions to pursue goals outside of the institutional unit guide as per an emerging curriculum, is considered to have great benefit for students of education as they can come to appreciate that curricular knowledge can be identified as consisting of intentionality, ideology and personal preference. If students in teacher education programs are to feel empowered as curriculum workers who legitimately have some (academic) freedom to exercise and if they are to avoid succumbing to a technicist role

of merely ‘delivering’ a government-sanctioned syllabus, then this exposure provided by the lecture format is considered most valuable.

Comparison with Podcasts

It might appear that up to this point the podcast may also be able to share the same advantages as the ‘live’ lecture, although interestingly we observe, in spite of recordings, how popular ‘live’ musical and theatrical performances are, in a similar manner to how some students still choose to attend lectures while recordings are available. There are two important differences between live lectures and podcasts. The first of these is that the students are *present with* the lecturer. We can appreciate Buber’s (1947, p. 6) ‘I-Thou’ relation through Freire’s notion of talking *with* students which is able to offer “a genuine change from communication to communion, that is, in an embodiment of the word of dialogue” characterised by members genuinely listening to others and thinking about ideas. Lecturers are not simply communicating to students via the medium of a video or sound recording but are in communion with students as part of a community. Judith Butler (2005) has identified this aspect of the human ‘other’ to whom we are *with* in a community as establishing a relation that is not present when someone speaks *at* an audience. The articulated thinking of the lecturer is not just a performance to a camera just like an actress or ‘sage on a stage’ might do, but experiences a “more ethical relation” *with* the students such that “a certain humility” is called upon to avoid the sort of “intellectual self-sufficiency” which tends to exclude the other (Butler, 2005, pp. 21 & 68-9). Clearly there is an inescapable *interpersonal relation* between all the people who are present together in the lecture theatre that is not possible when recordings are listened to.

The nature of interpersonal relations in a lecture can be enhanced if the lecturer is willing to seek the facial expressions and body languages of students to determine if everyone is really *with* each other. This is not possible for podcasts. The ‘living’ physical presence of students *with* the lecturer as epitomized by Gadamer’s (1992) ‘living voice’ is considered here to be significantly important for assisting in the meaning-making, listening and reflections, because of the intimate embodied communication that can take place dialogically both verbally and non-verbally in the community.

Lecturing as a Pedagogy of Interruption

After reviewing some of the unique characteristics of the lecture, this final section will give consideration to how the educative value of lectures might be enhanced for teacher education. However, it must be recognised that lecturing, like teaching, is more of an art rather than a technique of best practices (Fairfield, 2009, p. 123). Good lectures cannot be simply reduced to good techniques. This has been recognised by Dewey (1969, p. 147) who stated, “I can only say that I have been wrestling with the problem [i.e. best method of lecturing] for some years, and have been regretfully forced to the conclusion that the best way a man can, is the best way for him to lecture.”

Arguing for the value of the lecture by drawing upon some of its unique features, involves referencing the pedagogy of interruption which Biesta (2010, p. 90) describes as an “encounter that might interrupt [the students] ‘normal’ ways of being and might provoke a

responsive and responsible response.” Such a pedagogy is not unique to education because Popper (1992, p. 124) has similarly claimed that “there is only one excuse for a lecture; to challenge. It is the only way in which speech can be better than print.” This intent to challenge is clearly found with educators such as Blake *et al.*, (1998, p. 136) who identify that “it takes a teacher to offer the right kind of provocation and upset to demonstrate other possibilities of knowing”. The interruption and challenges are to develop what Fairfield (2009, p. 26) describes as “the art of thinking” which is a hallmark of an educated person rather than someone who is simplistically ‘well informed’. A great deal of teacher education occurs through institutions of higher education and Barnett (1990, p. 149) argues that what makes higher education ‘higher’ is due to it involving a state of mind which is “over and above conventional recipe or factual learning”. This makes universities take on a “subversive” character (Chomsky, 2003. p. 181) because conventions are challenged. By ‘mind’ Barnett does not limit this to processing information or cognition but includes other holistic aspects such as one’s ‘will’ or ‘spirit’ to be curious (Barnett, 2007) where both the intellectual and moral are understood to operate in unison so that students might even come to have a will for, and desire for, what they ought to desire (Biesta, 2013).

This notion of one’s will and desire is present in meaning-making. That is, “a meaning for us, we *mean* (intend, purpose) what we do” (Dewey, 1985, p. 34) and so the thinking which produces meanings must have an existential aspect to it in the sense that it has *personal* meaning and value in the minds of each individual self. Bruner (1990, p. 9) has observed however, that these attributes of agency, including one’s will, intentionality and desires, tends to be “eschewed by right-minded cognitive scientists. It is like free will among the determinists” and therefore is often neglected in many psychological theories of learning”. It also needs to be recognised that an emphasis upon the will and desire of the existential individual self is not a promotion of subjectivism but is always *with* others and *for* others (Buber, 1947; Dewey, 1988c).

The ‘higher’ sorts of learning which ought to be occurring in lectures through listening, involves engaging with ideas as internal dialogues in the minds of students. Lecturers cannot communicate ideas as conceptual ‘ideas’ directly to students. Dewey (1985, p. 166) argued that,

no thought, no idea, can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another. When it is told, it is, to the one to whom it is told, another given fact, not an idea. The communication may stimulate the other person to realize the question for himself and to think out a like idea, or it may smother his intellectual interest and suppress his dawning effort at thought. But what he directly gets cannot be an idea.

Dewey is indicating that ‘ideas’ are unable to be transmitted even if a lecture involves explanations and direct instructions. Only ‘facts’ (as information) are able to be communicated in this way. Similarly Vygotsky (1986, p. 150) argued that “experience also shows us that direct teaching of concepts is impossible and fruitless” and both he and Dewey (1985, p. 23 & 170) stated that we can only ever educate “indirectly”, where *educative* learning is significantly different from the recipe sorts of thinking associated with *training*.

Freire wants students to engage with *ideas* and this involves making “probable consequences” or “anticipations” (Dewey, 1985., pp. 35 & 167) regarding potential implications so that for educated persons their actions may become ‘intelligent actions’. Dewey (1985, p. 170; 1989, p. 114) explained that educators should encourage students to create “good habits of thinking” where students can “test” their ideas, not just involving “a

sequence... but a *con*-sequence” of predicted and actual outcomes. This is the sort of thinking promoted by Freire (2000, p. 81) involving “problem-posing” where the problems were primarily those of the students and when assisted by the reflections of the educator, students experience a greater sense of consciousness emerging through the “unveiling of reality”. Both Freire and Dewey encouraged students to take *action* and not be mere ‘spectators’ of knowledge. Nevertheless there is place for active reflection upon ideas and their potential implications and consequences, and that this can be encouraged through the lecture format as the lecturer is able to ‘unveil more of reality’ to help stimulate student consciousness and critical thought.

Freire (2000, p. 79) argues that it is important to become conscious of one’s consciousness, and we can appreciate how the ‘thinking expert’ as lecturer can contribute to this. Freire refers to the Greek *logos* – meaning ‘word’ and ‘meaningful utterance’ and contains the notion of the speaker’s ‘reasoning’ – to indicate a greater sense of reality in which *all* knowledge has political and ideological purposes for which students ought to become conscious of. In reference to *logos* Dewey (1989, p. 303) too recognised its importance for understanding and identified that oral speech such as in lectures is regarded to be the main format for recognising this “intentional” aspect.

In a lecture the lecturer ought to be provoking as much intellectual engagement with ideas amongst the students as possible. This is why Biesta (2013, p. 31), reviewing the thinking of Dewey, concludes that “this is why communication is not about the transportation of information from point A to point B, but all about participation.” The participation of course, involves students grappling with, and thinking about where they stand in relation to various tenuous and often competing ideas. This internal dialogue is akin to Derrida’s deconstruction or what Caputo (1987, p. 3 & 37) describes as radical hermeneutics, where one attempts to “cope with the flux, tracing out a pattern in a world of slippage” and is assisted by lecturers and teachers who keep “the difficulty of life alive”. This, as has been indicated earlier, can be promoted if the lecturers share their own thinking about their own ignorance and genuine challenges.

One characteristic of the lecture which has not been discussed so far is that the students often experience a certain ‘aloneness’ because they are not able to actively chat and discuss for this limited period of time. This is argued here to be a strength of the lecture rather than a weakness because it accentuates the important existential theme of being individual who is alone in the crowd. Heidegger (1968; 2002) identifies that some solitude is essential for deeper thinking where one’s innermost being, including one’s ‘willing’ is enlightened through coming to understand and care for certain ideas. Transformation or ‘development’ of persons is an individual affair in the sense that the individual can only do this for herself. That is why Heidegger, drawing upon the existentialism of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, emphasises the importance of existential ‘aloneness’ for thinking.

Perry’s most advanced stage of intellectual and moral development through its notion of commitment amongst uncertainty, is existential in nature and is therefore something that is able to be enhanced through the individualising nature of the lecture environment. Barnett (2007, pp. 32-34) citing Heidegger’s description of the ‘unstable’ feelings of existence, accentuates the existential themes in university life by arguing that students there are “in a state of anxiety” (i.e. uncertain rather than mentally sick) where they must call upon their “critical stance” in order to create “their own interpretations, actions, judgements and arguments”. He is aligning the sorts of learning experiences he believes ought to be

happening in higher education with Perry's third stage, and clearly the potential of the lecture can have an important role to play. It is through 'being alone' during the short time of the lecture that students can undergo some focussed reflective thinking to evaluate the "epistemological validity" of their position (Barnett, 1990, p. 160) to participate in and develop further what Freire (1998, p. 35) refers to as "epistemological curiosity". This is considered by Freire to be essential for teacher preparation programs (ibid., p. 43) and can of course be further stimulated by the 'expert thinking aloud' via a lecture.

In contrast to popular calls for continuous dialogue and collaboration amongst students, it is argued here that there is value in being 'alone' existentially in the lecture theatre on occasions. This is reflected in Ayers (2004, p. 33) account that "all real education is and must always be self-education" and cannot be something *done to* other people. Only students can do this for themselves. In the lecture format students can be individualised in an existential sense and this can encourage deep, transformative thinking. Provocations such as 'how would *you* answer this?', 'where to *you* stand on this matter?' or 'what gives *you* the right to teach my children?' all offer opportunity for students to be confronted with their own conceptual and emotional understandings on particular matters. This is more possible in the lecture theatre than at home or on the crowded train where a student may be listening to a podcast and is surrounded by many distractions demanding her attention. The lecture environment can provide the sort of experience which does allow for focussed and prolonged reflective thinking – which can add momentum to follow-up discussions in tutorial groups.

Conclusion

In response to the lecture coming under 'attack', this paper has attempted to offer not only a defence but also to assert that the potential value of the lecture is difficult to replicate through any other learning format. It has been argued in this paper that the assumed monological character of the lecture, thought responsible for a 'banking' approach, is not in fact monological. It has been recognized that the embodied speaking and presence of the leading academic through the lecture format provides a unique experience for students. The expectations and paradigms which students bring with them, can be effectively interrupted and challenged. The lecture format can accentuate the existential 'aloneness' of students and foster prolonged, relatively silent thinking and grappling with ideas as internal dialogues. As the lecturer reflects and shares *with* the students as the 'expert thinking aloud' and what it means to know, to think and to action her academic freedom as a curriculum worker, the inner speech of the students can focus on deeper *thinking* which is most valuable for experiences in higher education.

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