

## **The Lecture Method is D-E-A-D**

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### **Abstract**

American education has changed dramatically in the last century. The contemporary learner needs a mode of content delivery which will embrace the modern culture, values, and needs of today's students. A demand for higher levels of interaction coupled with an integration of Technology now calls for a thorough review of traditional methods of academic delivery. Previous methods of teaching like lecturing are unequivocally dead. By following the acronym DEAD, four key components will be reviewed: the deficiency, exclusion, addition, and diminishing of the lecture method. This article is a review of the contemporary literature which seeks to point out the limitations of traditional educational approaches and supports the need for contemporary content delivery. Particular attention is given to the modern learner who is directly impacted by advanced technology, social media, collaborative learning, and flexible learning alternatives. Educators are challenged to review their own educational perspectives in order to meet the evolving needs of the contemporary learner.

*Keywords:* lecture, contemporary, online, self-directed learner, technology, education

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The lecture method is D-E-A-D in every sense of the word. How educators taught in the past will not work in 21<sup>st</sup> century classrooms. The technological integration which rules nearly every aspect of modern life has changed the way that learners interact with information and acquire knowledge (Bennett & Maton, 2010). Komives and Woodard (2003) delineated how the role of the educator has changed in America over time. According to Komives and Woodard, this evolving role changed over five basic periods of time: "The Founding Years (1636-1850), Diversification (1850-1900), Emergence of the Profession (1900- 1945), Expansion (1945-1985), and The Contemporary Scene (1985-present)" (pp. 65-70).

As is evident with time, the teaching profession has necessarily adjusted with shifts in modern culture which changed not only how students learned but their concerns and identity as well (Kaur, 2012). As such, it is the role of the instructor to discover and utilize new methods of content delivery which will reach students in a form that they understand and with which they are comfortable. This may include taking into consideration the values and themes which are important to modern students and which affect and rule their daily lives.

The Lecture Method is no longer beneficial, and in order to teach students in higher education, educators must comprehend why this approach to teaching is not the most effective pedagogy available to instructors (Roehl, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). Johnson, Adams, Becker,

Estrada, and Freeman (2014) examine key trends in technology adoption within the higher education classroom. Within the report are indicators of the increasing issues with the traditional lecture model, including trends towards collaboration and interaction that are not available with the traditional lecture method. Furthermore, the report touches on the idea of students as creators rather than consumers. The technological boom and the tools it has placed in the pockets of students have morphed students from individuals who absorb content from a lecturing professor into individuals who learn through creation and experience. The report also touches on the ubiquity of social media and its impact on how people interact, present ideas and information, and judge the quality of content (Johnson et al.). The changing student population and the technology and tools which they are using to interact with the world and obtain knowledge requires higher education instructors to push past the traditional lecture format and examine ways in which newer and technologically integrated forms of instruction can benefit learners (Roehl, et al., 2013).

To begin with, the lecture method is “D” Deficient in capturing students’ attention. Irvine, Code, and Richards argue that “21<sup>st</sup> century learners have expectations that are not met within the traditional model of mainstream higher education” (2013, p. 172). In addition, due to cutbacks in educational budgets, it is be difficult for universities to keep up with the expectations of new students. With the push of massive open online courses (MOOC) from University administrators, the supporting needs of learners who demand both personalization, and access to learning opportunities, universities are being distracted from a learner centered model of teaching (Irvine et al., 2013). Technological advances have also opened up older pedagogical methods by making them more accessible and feasible including classroom “flipping” and “problem based learning” (Roehl et al., 2013; Savery, 2006). New models leverage the ways in which technology make access to information traditionally delivered by the instructor in such a way that instruction takes place outside of the classroom and class time is devoted to problem solving, application, and correction (Berrett, 2012).

Research conducted by Irvine et al. (2013) shows that a multi-access learning model is a way for student and faculty needs to be met. Students should have different options in choosing their best classroom setting. Strictly face to face teaching will not work. Through face to face instruction, synchronous online instruction, asynchronous online instruction, and open learning of the MOOC, students can choose the best option for them to be successful.

Face-to-face (Tier 1) instruction is the traditional face-to-face classroom. It is synchronous and on campus. This type of instruction ranges from small seminars to computer labs to large classrooms and large lecture halls. The authors argue that this tier will be eventually become obsolete and universities need to create ways in which this tier can become more accessible (Irvine et al., 2013).

Access Synchronous Online (Tier 2) is a hybrid of a virtual classroom and a traditional classroom. Those students that are able to attend the class and those that need to come in virtually through their webcam cam (Irvine et al., 2013). Asynchronous Online (Tier 3) is strictly online access to a classroom. Mckinney, Dyck, and Luber (2009) suggest that students who just listen to the recordings of lectures online scored higher on their exams than those who listened face to face. To capture a higher level of learning from those Asynchronous Online students, design of learning should focus on student collaboration and co-construction of meaning (Irvine et al., 2013).

Multi-Access Open Learning and the MOOC (Tier 4) occurs when enrollment is opened to non-credit students to globalize the learning experience. This is a more community based type

of learning style that can open this market up to people with different applicable backgrounds to widen and strengthen discussions (Irvine et al., 2013). The results of the study revealed multi-access frameworks can help public serving institutions increase enrollments from an abundance of streams through multiple tiers of course access. In addition the authors argued that universities must continually create new models of learning in order to reach the newer generations (Irvine et al., 2013).

Next, the traditional lecture method “E” as in Excludes a majority of the 21st century students. This exclusion takes many forms from exclusion through general access which excludes students who are unable to attend a brick-and-mortar institution to incidental exclusion which can take place when instructors apply information to experiences which are not universal or accessible to all students. Deviations from the traditional lecture method can alleviate these issues to an extent by leveraging technology to increase accessibility and delivery, as well as by using collaboration to apply learned knowledge to a variety of experiences.

Marks (2013) conducted research to investigate the hybrid course delivery, examining two hybrid course methods. The first focused on addressing the challenges of traditional face to face delivery methods and the second on encouraging the development and mastery of 21st century skills (Marks). In addition, Marks states that the 21st century education poses challenges. She states that the skills and dispositions needed for success in the future are core subjects and 21<sup>st</sup> century themes, learning and innovation skills, information and technology skills, and life and career skills. Marks’ research concluded that the Hybrid system did not “meet a number of the challenges experienced in face-to-face methods” (p. 35), and therefore was more beneficial for the 21<sup>st</sup> century student.

Too often, teachers do not think about the big ideas that students should engage with and are engaged in on a daily basis. Educators must constantly reflect and asking themselves if their students are learning the material (Reed & Railsback, 2003). Creating an inclusive classroom has been demonstrated to help students learn (Katz, 2013). This inclusivity is also directed from the students to the professor. Carle (2009) conducted a study of college students’ evaluations of their professors in both online and face to format formats. Among other topics, this study focused on minority instructors and their teaching effectiveness in online formats. The conclusions indicated the students’ scores for effectiveness were higher in the online format which suggested “online classes may function more impartially” (Carle, p. 434). The study also acknowledged that instructors can improve their evaluation scores.

Inclusive environments include students from all walks of life and cultures. This can also be described as multicultural education. Nieto and Bode argue that there are seven basic characteristics of multicultural education. They explain, “multicultural education in antiracist education, multicultural education is basic education, multicultural education is important for all students, multicultural education is pervasive, multicultural education is education for social justice, multicultural education is a process, multicultural education is critical pedagogy” (2008, p. 346).

In addition, the lecture method is “A” as in Adds nothing to creating an engaging and supportive learning community in the classroom. Komives and Woodard (2003) argue that there is a need for student-faculty relationships to be warm and of quality. Instruction necessarily requires a warm, inviting, and appropriately rigorous environment in order to increase engagement, retention, and learning (Berrett, 2012). The traditional lecture method, while cost effective, does not lend itself to the development of an engaging learning community. Student engagement and perceptions of community and instructor’s attitude have an impact on learning

and retention (Roehl et al., 2013; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011). Vera and Louis Jones (2007) argue educators can show that they actually care for their student by getting to know the student on an individual level. From their favorite things to do to cultural characteristics, educators have the opportunity to get to know their students by just taking the time to ask. Variations on the traditional lecture method increase student-student interaction and student-instructor interaction, which in turn, increases student engagement and positive student perceptions over traditional lecture pedagogy (Roehl et al., 2013; Berrett, 2012; Smith & Cardaciotto, 2011).

While many challenges face the online instructor, none is more demanding than the need to provide a connected environment between the instructor and students. Boling, Hough, Krinsky, Saleem, and Stevens (2011) affirmed this significant factor in their research. Without engaging and interactive instruction, the majority of the students felt “disconnected with their instructors, the course content, and their fellow classmates” (Boling et al., p. 120). In some ways, that feeling of being connected is just as strong in the online format as it is in the face to face format of instruction.

Finally, the lecture method is “**D**” as in it **D**iminishes student engagement in class. Instead, the higher education educator must promote student engagement in class and create self-directed learners. Dixson (2010) proposed in her study that it was not necessarily the type of online activities which caused students to be more engaged in their online work, but the multiplicity of opportunities to engage with the instructor and other classmates. Dixson concluded her study by saying: “Clearly the path to student engagement, based on this data, is not about the type of activity/assignment but about multiple ways of creating meaningful communication between students and with their instructor – it’s all about connections” (p. 8).

The concept of self-directed learning is rather complex. It cannot be reduced to a simple definition.

In its broadest meaning, “self-directed learning” describes a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implement appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes. (Knowles, 1975, p. 18)

Self-directed learners take the initiative to pursue a learning experience and take the ownership and responsibility for obtaining their knowledge. Once they begin their own learning processes, the learner takes ownership of their learning experience and follows the methodology until learning is completed. Being a self-directed learner does not mean that the learner learns by being by themselves. Self-directed learners can learn on their own as well. At some point they have come to the realization that they need to learn (Costa & Kallick, 2008). These students become very aware of what they need in an online course of instruction. Rovai, Ponton, Derrick, and Davis (2006) found in their research online students were quick to negatively rate their professors when there was a clear lack of communication and engagement between the professors and themselves. By their own admission, the study was limited to a few participants and the findings may not be subject to projections. The study also suggested there may be differences in the definitions of teaching effectiveness between students enrolled in online classes and students enrolled in face to face classes.

According to Costa and Kallick (2008), self-directed learners contain specific traits that set them apart from other learners. They can self-manage themselves, self-motivate themselves, and when necessary, self-modify themselves as needed. These three dispositions must be

assessed to determine if they are being internalized and habituated over time. Costa and Kallick (2008) use triangulation to ensure that the assessment system is balanced and complete. Assessment triangulation consists of knowledge, performance, and demonstration.

### **Learning Models**

The modern self-directed learner is heavily influenced by accessibility to information through social media and technology (Johnson et al., 2014). In addition, the evolution of modern learners into creators rather than consumers makes variations on the traditional lecture where students are able to create solutions, develop arguments and methods, and build knowledge through experience and discussion, better suited to their learning and knowledge retention. By incorporating modern technology into the 21st century online classroom, knowledge retention and learning will occur. Zygouris-Coe (2013) argued the need for new flexible, learner-centric, technology-rich, and collaborative learning spaces for teacher preparation and raise questions for future learning models. The research revealed three effective models that can accomplish higher level learning. The first model is mobile technologies and learning. Zygouris-Coe stated that mobile learning is learner-center learning. It gives the student a change to determine how, where, when, and what they will study. Some of these mobile technologies are “handheld computers, MPS players, notebooks, mobile phones, tablets, and e-readers” (Zygouris-Coe, 2013, p. 22).

The second model is flipped classroom and blended learning. In this model, the lecture content is delivered online for students to study outside of the classroom and class time is to be used for discussions, application, and practice. In essence, homework has been moved inside the classroom and lecture has been moved inside the classroom, thus the roles have been “flipped” (Zygouris-Coe, 2013). Finally, the third model researched is massive open online courses. MOOCs are online courses that require interactive participation and open access via the World Wide Web. The key is they are not your average online course. These are designed on to house thousands of students. The reasoning for this is so that students can network in autonomous, open, and interactive ways which would create a mass community that has not really been developed yet with the standard online course (Zygouris-Coe, 2013).

With technology changing at such a fast rate, higher education educators must accept this fact and begin to change with it. Changing the mindset of the higher education faculty will be the hardest challenge by far in higher education. With collaboration and professional development for higher education educators we can change the future higher education classroom to become a more learner-centric, community centered environment (Zygouris-Coe, 2013).

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, in order to reach the twenty first century higher education student, educators must evolve with the times and the technology. Time changes everything and assuming teaching styles do not change is naive. If instructors do not make adjustments and modifications and implement new teaching pedagogy to engage higher education students, students will not prevail. The integration of different content delivery methods including classroom flipping and problem based learning, which focus on interaction over lecture may be the key to reaching

modern students, including millennials and digital natives in a manner that is likely to lead to higher levels of engagement and knowledge retention while reducing attrition.

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