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Reconceiving the Lecture: towards mutual unsettlement

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Centre for Higher
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The end of the lecture?

- The lecture – has had a bad press
- Ready information – and huge amounts
 - Available anytime, any place
 - To be perused by students (in a mixed cohort) in their own way
- Limited attention span
- Embodies single transmission –
 - Physical structure of auditorium – raked, fixed seats
- And a hierarchy within the pedagogy
- Learning, not teaching, is the order the day now.

Suspensions of a therapeutic pedagogy

- Concerns that students should not be discomfited
- That the student's feelings should be centre-stage
- More that the student's voice should be encouraged
- But the lecture seems to reduce the student voice

Suspensions of epistemic expertise

- The lecture – at least Mediaeval origins
- The lecturer was an authority
- The professor professed – ‘the sage on the stage’
 - Had something to say
 - (In the humanities, lectures notes became books.)
- Privileging disciplines
- Higher education – an initiation into a form of life
- The student - a never-ending position as a novice.
- ⁴ • Would end after your PhD if you were lucky!

So:

So:

- Pedagogically
- Psychologically
- Socially
- Technologically
- Conceptually (the idea of the university)

The lecture seems to be ready to be consigned to history

- a remnant of a past age.

And by the way

- The lecture theatre takes up lots of space
- Expensive real estate
- Often empty
- And locked
- Not cost-efficient on the space-use metrics
- *(Hardly surprising if that empty space raises eyebrows as the Estates Officer and Director of Operations do their jt rounds.)*

So onto small-group teaching?

- And so onto small-group teaching
- Flipped classrooms
- Student-centred learning
- Students in group projects
- (with the library changing into noisy places of interaction)
- And students active in experiential places and spaces (on and off campus)

Changing pedagogies, changing idea of higher education

- Higher education – not what one knows, but what one does
- Formation of human capital for a world demanding skills
- One can't learn communication skills sitting in a lecture-hall
- In an internet age, knowledge loses its importance
- More a matter of information skills ('research skills')
- And more a matter of gaining interior wherewithal
- From 'truth' to 'rounded human being' ('global citizens')

So close those lecture-rooms and lecture-theatres?

- Not just yet – or ever
- The value of the lecture
- But reconceived
- &/or to uncover that which was always there
- And to situate it in the C21.

The lecture – opposed positions: the traditionalists

- Discipline - subject
- Content
- Lecturer – students (enclosed set of social relations)
- Transmission – assimilation (the one to the many)
- Cognitive experience
- Student – subordinate (epistemologically/ pedagogically)

The progressives

- Student at centre
- Students as human ‘beings’ -
- ‘The student experience’
- Language of ‘feelings’, ‘emotions’, ‘authenticity’, ‘meaning’
- A good experience
 - Surveys on humour in the lecture
- Students to be ‘satisfied’
- Students as ‘co-producers’.

The idea of higher education

- So a sliding-scale between the traditionalists and the progressives
 - A referendum in the audience
 - ***But another tack***: what, centrally, is higher education?
- To stand back
- To understand
- To critique
- To re-examine
- To enter into a conversation
- To move into a new space – and spaciousness

The lecture – and the lecturer

The lecture:

- To offer an overview – synoptic
- To open a space – to wander
- To draw into a conversation
- To alert one to conflicts
- To display (super) complexity – and to handle it
- Barely to inform
 - – the informing: a set of coat-hooks

And the lecturer

- To inspire
- To stimulate
- To enthuse
- To engage
- To perform
- To provoke
- To unsettle – to discomfort
- And never ‘to satisfy’

The lecture as theatre

- A collective experience
- The smartphones turned off (??)
- Performance/ theatre
- A privileged place
- Personal experience?
 - Which have been the good lectures?
 - The good lecturers?

The lecture as a space of thought

- To enter into thought
- To think
- A collective place of thought
- Mutual thought
 - (the lecture – an example of thought, reflection, critique)
- To provoke
 - To get under the skin
- *Mutual* unsettlement

The widest context

- Global citizens
- Seeing connections
- Hearing the voices of others
- The lecture space
 - – a global space
 - - a public space

The lecture and IT

- Multimodality
- Lures and possibilities
- Interactivity
- Questions
- An interactive space
- Even checking for understanding
- New technologies can open the lecture's openness
- (OR close it – may become tyrannical; or entertainment)

Openendedness

- The lecture as dialogue
 - Socrates
 - Questions without firm answers
 - Questions with possibilities
 - (Higher education and critical thought
 - and critical being)
 - Stretching the members of the audience
- The lecture as *provocative venturing*
- The lecturer – exemplar of the examined life, the unsettled life

Personal journeying

- Being provoked
 - Can the student come out thinking:
 - ‘I never thought of that’ or ‘That made me think’
- Being invited to think
- Paths opening
- For one’s own explorations
- One’s own questioning
- One’s own mind

The lecture as an art

- The techniques of the (good) lecture
- Animation
- Speaking to all of the class
 - To the back row
- Displaying oneself
- Being clear as to the key point/ question
- Human – human engagement (eye contact)

A totality

- Not lecturer + audience
 - ('I gave a good lecture but no-one came')
- But a totality of lecturer, lecture, audience, auditorium, material, technology
- Set in wider contexts of discipline, profession, examinations, programme of studies, curriculum, learning
- And idea(s) of the university
- The lecturer is the conductor of ceremonies
- ²²• And a servant to this interactive space

Conclusions

- Ditch the idea of the lecture as a transmission of information
- In (a HE for) the C21, the lecture has to be re-invented
- A space of provocation
- Exemplar of handling (super)complexity
- A collective space of mutual unsettlement (as here!)
 - No right answers
 - – just questions (only temporary answers)
 - » Even about the very matter of ‘the lecture’
- The lecturer reveals her/ his unsettlement
- And capacities to live with that unsettlement
- The lecture a space of education in its fullest sense.



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