

Critical Essay

APPRECIATING THE LECTURE METHOD

Juan Rafael G. Macaranas
De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde, Philippines

To lecture or not to lecture can be a professional dilemma nowadays. In this piece, I argue that the lecture method remains an essential element in any pedagogical practice. The lecture method is valuable and practical in any teaching approach. It works best if supported or accompanied by more interactive techniques. To develop good lectures, one must know the philosophy, mission, and vision of the educational institution that the educator or teacher belongs to, one's educational or pedagogical philosophy, and care for the learners. Lectures could be made progressively dynamic through reflective teaching or practicing the teach-think-grow habit. In this regard, there is a need to appreciate the philosophies of education, redefine the lecture method, recreate methodology, and sustain a reflective practice. A teacher must always have the resolve to improve his or her pedagogical approach and continuously educate himself or herself and learn more.

It is a common experience to be upset or disappointed when one has to adjust to the teaching style or pedagogical approaches and requirements of one's institution. With the different educational approaches and philosophies that educational institutions subscribe to, a teacher is sometimes lost which of these approaches and philosophies he or she must follow. This can be especially daunting when one starts teaching in a new school and several other schools. Oftentimes, teachers who are good at their work have to leave a school after teaching for a term or a year because of poor evaluation. Of course, there are many other reasons or factors for one's dismissal. However, it would be unfortunate for a dedicated teacher to give up on his or her teaching vocation. Because behind each hurdle presents an opportunity to improve on one's craft. Each has a story to tell. While some involve unfortunate clashes with administrators, co-teachers, or the students, a common reason is a mere inability or refusal to adapt to the school's preferred pedagogical approach or method.

What would it take to succeed in any traditional or non-traditional school? Each school has its distinct approach to education. Some prefer learner-centered or transformative learning; some emphasize problem-based learning, individually guided approach, multiple intelligences theory approach, inclusive education approach, or outcome-based education, among the many approaches. Is there one good method of teaching that suits the many ways of learning? Can the lecture method be valuable in non-traditional schools? I maintain that the lecture method is still a good teaching method despite the prevalence of many other pedagogical

approaches. In this paper I discuss how the lecture method can be appreciated by being creative, interactive, and engaging in the classroom.

Appreciating Philosophies of Education

Every teacher has a teaching practice. Moreover, behind each practice is a philosophy, which could be a philosophy by choice or by force of habit. One's philosophy colors what one sees in the school while appreciating the institution's rationale and vision mission. At one point, a teacher must think about one's teaching practices. Thinking here could mean reflecting on what works and seeking answers about what matters more to one's work or duty as a teacher. Thinking may lead to clarifying what educational philosophy to embrace. Being conscious of one's practice, thinking about one's work as a teacher, and growing in work is a way of doing philosophy. This is my practical philosophy of teaching that I apply and endorse to colleagues and fellow educators. In one of my papers (Macaranas, 2018, 163), I stated that "My advocacy is teachers' continuing professional growth, the practice, and beliefs of which must be constantly fine-tuned with the school's philosophy. One must purposely get out of the comfort zone to get a more philosophical view."

Philosophy of education is the theory of philosophic thought that defines our views about the learner, the teacher, and the school. Philosophy of education points out that educational practices can help refine philosophical ideas. Being aware of the many philosophies of education is important in examining one's teaching practice and developing one's teaching philosophy. More importantly, a solid understanding of the fundamental philosophies of education deepens the appreciation of each learner. In my experience as a teacher, I also examine the learning "philosophy" of my students in my quest to better respond to them.

The role of philosophy in teaching is so important for every teacher to learn. Philosophy supplies the educational principles that can be used as a guide in setting up one's pedagogical objectives in the classroom. It influences the selection and arrangement of materials, design of the course or syllabus, teaching methods, and the examination of one's teaching practice. One's education can shape one's philosophy, as one's philosophy can influence one's appreciation of teaching practice. To be an effective teacher, one makes it a point to understand the students and the school. The teacher must implement and mirror the school's philosophy of education and bring out the best in the students.

Necessarily, one must fully grasp one's philosophy before attempting to appreciate the philosophy of the school. As the Latin adage goes, *nemo dat quod non habet*, meaning, no one gives what one does not have. There are many different philosophies of education: idealism, realism, pragmatism, existentialism, behaviorism, constructivism, etc. Every teacher subscribes to a primary philosophy of education with perhaps two or more secondary philosophies of education. Employing an eclectic philosophy, where one embraces two or more philosophies depending on the context and situation, could help one become adaptable.

In learning to appreciate the educational philosophy of the institution or school, one may establish harmony or integration of one's philosophy with that of the school.

Otherwise, there might be dissonance where conflicts may arise later in teaching. Indeed, different educational philosophies are founded on different principles, as every teacher has an educational philosophy with a unique teaching style. The challenge is for a teacher to learn to be open and flexible to adapt to any institutional philosophy.

Redefining the Lecture Method

Perhaps no other teaching method is more widely used and criticized than the lecture method. The pure (traditional) lecture method is typically discouraged by educators who adhere to learner-centered, creative, or innovative education. A lecture is a discourse read or delivered before an audience or class, especially for instruction. The picture of an all-knowing teacher looking at the students as mere receptacles of knowledge typifies traditional lectures.

DiYanni & Borst (2020, 99) presented a historical-philosophical perspective of the lecture method:

The lecture (from the Latin *lectura*, which means “reading, a text to read”) has a long and distinguished history. From the origins of the university in medieval Europe, lectures were the primary mode of instruction. Even earlier, during the Athenian golden age, Aristotle and Plato lectured, and Aristotle’s lectures were preserved by his students; today, we still read his lectures on Poetics, Politics, and Nicomachean Ethics. The lecture persists in university education worldwide as the primary mode of instruction—across disciplines, programs, and schools, spanning centuries, countries, and continents.

In recent times, the lecture method has been criticized for allowing very little exchange of ideas between the teacher and the students. Other common descriptions and comments about the lecture as a method include, among others: “Spoon-feeding”; “I talk, you listen”; “Much talk to the uninterested”; “Someone is talking, and many people are listening”; “Sit down, relax, and happy sleeping.” University students still favor lectures, but some students dislike them because they are boring. Some teachers hate it, but other educators embrace it as their only teaching method. During a typical lecture, an instructor stands before the class and presents information to students. Lecturing can go on for any amount of time on any topic.

During the first year of my teaching, I experienced several disadvantages of using the pure lecture method: presenting too much information, lack of student participation, little check on understanding, and encouraging student passivity. As a product of the pure traditional lecture method, lectures defined my whole schooling experience in high school and college seminaries and graduate studies. Thus, as a teacher, I gave lectures too.

However, due to the negative feedback, I started to rethink my lectures. I recognized the advantages of lectures that could not be achieved by using other approaches. I could impart knowledge and ideas quickly and cover the lessons that

need to be taught in the classroom, making it a cost-effective curriculum delivery. Moreover, auditory learners find lectures appealing. With the right delivery, lectures could remain as effective direct sharing of knowledge and information that initiate student interest in the topic. When followed by an interactive method, generating insights flow naturally, thus facilitating student learning. Indeed, initial inputs are critical and essential in rousing interest and tapping into the potential of students to engage in critical thinking.

To increase learning accessibility, I prepared and delivered more casual or relaxed lectures. It begins with a mindset. The goal is to achieve the learning objectives by combining lectures with other teaching methods that could be mediated by the best available technology, knowledge, and skills of the teacher. The lecture is the main content delivery process, followed by active learning engagement. It is driven by the desire to motivate learning participation and expand on the students' initial desire to learn. The students must be provided with initial information (content), direction, and guidance they need, then establish interactive and dynamic teaching relationships with them to promote active, cooperative, and collaborative learning in the classroom.

DiYanni & Borst (2020, 102-107) named some lecture variations that include interactive lecture, lecture as entertainment, lecture as a story, and lecture as a solution to a problem. Teachers need to try such variations. They also discussed tips or principles of lecturing (107-108) that I practice. For them, the initial step involves creating room for thinking. At the onset, the lecture must already identify some problems that they can relate to and raise initial questions. Their second tip, to "present your lecture in language suitable for and understandable by the student audience," corresponds to my effort to deliver casual lectures. Their third point of ensuring lecture effectiveness by organizing the lecture applies to all types of lectures. Indeed, the final point of gaining, drawing, and maintaining students' attention and interest is the ultimate test of a good lecture.

Recreating Methodology

The teaching methodology is the heart of the learning process. The heart regulates the words, actions, and facial expressions that come out in the class lecture. The class is alive according to its beat. Most teachers' lectures are aided by PowerPoint presentations and other visuals in face-to-face classes. However, each lecture is purposefully prepared and delivered with creativity and innovation in approach, modified as needed. The teacher must simultaneously serve as an authority figure, facilitator, and demonstrator of learning to make each meeting a memorable moment. The key elements are captured in the EMAP and CARE, acronyms I made to make them easy to remember (Macaranas, 2017, 231).

EMAP defines the total lesson plan, mapped from start to end. The content should be top of mind while keeping the process dynamic and interactive. The key tasks and elements are spelled out here:

Establishing clear learning objectives.

Methodology is the pedagogical craft in action.

Assessment checks teaching effectiveness and learning outcome.
Processing deepens and synthesizes the lessons.

I deliver the lecture with *CARE* to stimulate and habituate critical thinking among the students.

Content-oriented. Lectures must contain only the information essentials.
Attention-seeking to keep students awake and hooked.
Real-life experiences shared demonstrate reflective inquiry.
Enthusiastic engagement with open space for learners to think or speak.

CARE is the responsibility of an interactive and dynamic teacher. The teacher must engage the students actively. In order to achieve the learning objectives, it is necessary to apply a mixture of teaching methods with the use of the best available technology, knowledge, and skills of the teacher. Student learning deepens when participatory activities follow the lecture; the timing, length, and frequency depend on the learner's profile. Activities that ensure active learning include role-playing, case analysis, think-pair-and-share, small group sharing, board work exercises, reflection writing, short/film strip analysis, and recitation. They can also be used in processing student learning. After the lecture, the teacher serves as a facilitator.

The learner is the center of the educative process. Thus, while the lecture is the primary content delivery technique, learners must be kept active and engaged throughout the process. The lecture itself must reflect the teacher's knowledge and experience on the topic's relevance to the learners. After the lecture, the students must have space to expand and explore the topic discussed actively. The students take turns talking. The teacher ensures healthy dialogue with the teacher and among learners.

Teachers must emphasize care with their students. Caring is when someone shows kindness and concern for others. Teachers must care for every student by teaching well and demonstrating caring, loving, and compassionate dialogues. The Socratic method, when practiced with EMAP and CARE, ensures an interactive and dynamic learning experience. Beyond promoting class interaction in the community of inquiry, it can habituate critical thinking with care, compassion, and love. We have to be strict but caring teachers. After all, teaching is not just a profession but a calling or vocation.

Doing Reflective Practice

For a teacher to develop engaging lectures, one must develop a reflective practice. I describe it as a teach-think-grow practice. Teaching demands so much inner resources that one must learn to nurture oneself. Creativity must be fed and nurtured. Ongoing education is both the goal and the process; as John Dewey would always say: Education is not preparation for life but life itself. We learn while living. Teachers must keep on updating and re-examining what they do; in another essay, I (Macaranas 2021, 119) stated,

We have to keep up with the changing times. Old habits must be shed off to remain relevant and helpful. There is a need to reset and restructure our mindset. We need to welcome the new realities but at the same time go back to the basics; among them is learning to be resilient. We need to be creative and innovative to assess our education and make it more accessible. We need to re-examine our education to have a new view, perspective, breadth of knowledge, wisdom, and understanding of education.

Reflective practice deepens and actualizes one's educational philosophy. In my case, I embrace my institution's education philosophy emphasizing innovation, inclusion, and creativity. I follow the process-oriented type of learning, enjoining teachers to discover, recognize, and develop their uniqueness as individuals by exploring creative methodologies.

I subscribe to what D'Olimpio (2018) calls critical thinking with compassion. She also refers to it as critical perspectivism. In her words, "In order to be engaged in a critically perspective manner, one must be educated to be critical, compassionate and collaborative in one's approach to learning, receiving and transmitting information" (2018, 2). For a pragmatic teacher, one must continue to aspire for Ozmon & Craver's (2003, 153-154) description of a good teacher:

The pragmatist model of the teacher calls for an exceptionally competent person - one who possesses breadth and depth of knowledge, understands current conditions that affect the lives of students, knows how to organize and direct student investigations, understand psychological development and learning theory, provide a supportive environment in which students can learn, and possesses a refined understanding of school and community resources that are available for teaching and learning.

Continual Learning and Growth

Teachers must continue to teach-think-grow. They must be facilitators who awaken and enable continuous learning in themselves and their students. "Everyone has to grapple with educational change, digital technologies, pandemic pedagogies, online teaching platforms, among others. It presents a daunting hurdle for every learner, teacher, administrator, and all other school sectors" (Macaranas, 2021, 115). The habit of reflective practice enables one to quickly adapt one's teaching style, even to a digital platform.

Teachers must continuously re-appropriate and harmonize their teaching style, methodology, and approaches with the school's thrust and pedagogical objectives and their students' expectations and views about learning. The classroom must be a venue for critical engagement and exchanges in teaching and learning. The lectures must not just be repetitions of past lectures or lectures of others. They must not be mere transferring of notes of one lecturer to the notes of the students. The lectures must enable students to critically think well with love, care, and compassion.

Truly, the lectures must be supplemented with other teaching methodologies, re-appropriated as practiced. Lecturing is about students and helping them enter the joy of the subject or topic. The art of teaching is in the craft of assisting and encouraging self-discovery and learning. “Teachers must instill a love of learning on the part of the students by sharing their own passion for learning with them. In the end, it is not only the students who learn; both continue to learn and grow” (Aguas 2018, 20).

REFERENCES

- Aguas, Jove Jim. 2018. Teaching: a Dialogical Relation for Continual Learning and Growth. In *Proceedings of the XXIII World Congress of Philosophy: Philosophy of Education*. Vol. 50: 15-20. doi.org/10.5840/wcp232018501010.
- DiYanni, Robert., & Borst, Anton. 2020. *The craft of college teaching: a practical guide*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- D'Olimpio, Laura. 2018. *Media and moral education: A philosophy of critical engagement*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.
- Macaranas, Juan Rafael G. 2021. Education: Re-examined in time of pandemic. *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 22 (1): 115-120. doi.org/10.46992/pijp.22.1.c.1.
- Macaranas, Juan Rafael G. 2018. Growth in learner-centered pedagogy. *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy*, 19 (2): 163-172. doi.org/10.46992/pijp.
- Macaranas, Juan Rafael G. 2017. Teaching logic: An examination of a classroom practice. *Philosophia: International Journal of Philosophy* 18 (2): 222-240.
- Ozmon, Howard A, & Craver, Samuel M. 2003. *Philosophical foundations of education* (7th ed.). Pearson/Merrill Prentice Hall.