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A Living Lecture for Lifelong Learning

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A Living Lecture for Lifelong Learning

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The author is seeking to improve the lecture, by adding numerous techniques with it to engage the learners more actively in the learning process, supporting it with the theories of large group meetings and andragogy, and naming it 'a living lecture for lifelong learning'. The process of the living lecture for lifelong learning is described as follows. Before the presentation/lecture, which the leader has prepared on a predetermined topic prior to the time of its audible delivery, the audience may be divided into four teams and be asked to serve as listening teams. Each team respectively, listens to a five to seven minute lecture for things to be clarified, disagreed with (rebuttal), elaborated, and practically applied. After the lecture the teams generate one or more points or questions they want to raise following which one spokesperson from each group in turn presents one point at a time which they want addressed and the speaker responds until all items are discussed or time runs out. The presenter (teacher, trainer, or facilitator) takes a lead part in all of the proceedings as a manager of the interaction. This session will demonstrate the 'best practice' process of a living lecture for lifelong learning.

Introduction

The lecture goes way back in history as a means to deliver volumes of information and has almost acquired a hallowed distinction of importance. Nonetheless, the results have been questionable as to how much of that information is retained and internalized by the audience. It has been continually cussed or discussed; perceived as dull, boring, and a waste of time. In recent times some (Eitington, 1996; Henschke, 2009) have suggested that one needs to have as wide a variety of techniques as is possible to use with the lecture that will help adults to actively learn.

The author has developed a variation of the lecture, has adapted and connected numerous techniques to it, and named it 'living lecture for lifelong learning', which may possibly increase learners' active participation in learning. The process of a living lecture for lifelong learning is described as follows. Before a presentation, which the leader has prepared on a pre-determined topic, the audience is divided into four teams and they are asked to serve as listening teams. Each team respectively, listens to the five to seven minute lecture for things to be clarified, disagreed with (rebuttal), elaborated, and practically applied. After the lecture each team generates one or more points or questions they want to raise. Following this a spokesperson from each group in turn presents one point at a time which they want addressed and the speaker responds until all items are discussed or time runs out. The presenter (teacher, trainer, or facilitator) takes the lead part in all of the proceedings as a manager of the process.

Importance of this best practice to the field of adult, continuing, community, and extension education

When this learning activity is used, especially in large meetings with numerous participants in adult, continuing, community, and extension education gatherings (conferences, meetings, workshops, classrooms, etc.), the people may be broken out into smaller groups of four or five persons. Thus, active participation and pro-active learning is designed into the session proceedings, with the active involvement of all who are present. The handout material that will be provided may be generalized, but also adapted and fitted to the personal and professional situation of each participant's setting, and to

each one of the groups included in this conference. This activity may be used back home by the participants in their professional settings to enhance the learning with the constituencies they serve.

Of major importance is that when one uses this process with folks back home, he/she needs to think through why it is to be used, how it may need to be adapted or changed (perhaps very little, or maybe a lot) in order for the group it will be used with to derive the most benefit. Otherwise, there is a danger and risk that if the educational purpose for using it is not well planned and thought through for the new group, it may be viewed by the new group as just a 'canned' process.

A theoretical context for using the living lecture

I ask myself three guiding questions when considering the choice of any adult learning method or technique (including the lecture) that I may think about using in an adult learning experience where I am in charge. I seek to answer these questions with an educationally sound answer. The questions follow. How does my selection and use of this method or technique fit into my understanding of the way adults learn, change or grow (what is my learning theory)? What position does this method or technique hold in the context of the learning goals or objectives toward which I am working in this adult learning / teaching situation (what is my learning design for this experience)? What immediate and observable learning needs does this adult learning technique or method meet at this time with these participants (what is the specific relevance now)? It may be well for each of us and, incidentally, an improvement for our field when we as professionals are preparing for and conducting learning experiences, to ask and answer for ourselves each of these questions (Henschke, 1975. 1992).

One element that I think is so crucial in the context of using the lecture to involve learners actively in the learning process is the issue of engagement. I recently heard that in most lectures there are 73 % of the people who are not engaged. This means that only 27 % are engaged. This just won't do. If we are to use the lecture to maximum benefit, the engagement needs to be at least 73 % if not much higher. We need to be trying for 95 % or above.

Articulating the learning theory(ies) which inform and support the technique

Many theories may support this activity. However, I have chosen two major theories to inform the technique and the learning activity of the living lecture for lifelong learning: **The theory of large meetings** and, **the theory of andragogy – the art and science of helping adults learn**. It seems important that one has an adult learning theory that guides her/his practice. It is the author's considered opinion that it is best for all concerned that the educator has a learning theory (or theories) that guide her/his practice.

The first and basic component of **the theory of large meetings** is that its educative quality is directly a function of the quantity and quality of interaction in the meeting (Knowles, 1970). This means that the more and better the interaction among the various elements of the large meeting, the greater the learning is likely to be. The second component of the theory of large meetings is that there are three fields in which interaction can be fostered: 1) the platform itself, 2) the audience, and, 3) the relationship between the platform and audience. Moving in sequence from beginning with interaction on the platform (lecture, film, audio visual presentation, blackboard, flip chart), then with interaction between the platform and the audience (debate, dialogue, interview, panel discussion, dramatic presentation, demonstration, skit, audience reaction or watchdog teams), and finally with interaction among the members of the audience (which increases the interaction between the platform and audience—pairs, triads, buzz groups, and discussion groups) raises the level of interaction and hence the quantity and quality of learning with each step. This highest level may be promoted in several ways, the living lecture for lifelong learning being one the activities that may achieve this, and it is the activity I have chosen for 'best practice'. Detailed explanation of this process will come later in this paper.

My theory about how adults learn is very much in line with Knowles' (1995, 1996) **theory of andragogy – the art and science of helping adults learn**. It has six assumptions and eight process elements. The six assumptions are as follows.

1. Concept of the learner – As adults, we have a deep psychological need to be self-directing—to be perceived by others and treated by others as able to take responsibility for ourselves.
2. Role of the learner's experience – Adults possess a greater volume and a different quality of experience than youths. It means that adults are themselves the richest learning resource for one another for many kinds of learning.
3. Readiness to learn – when adults experience a need to know or be able to do something to perform more effectively in some aspect of their lives — marriage, the birth of children, the loss of a job, divorce, the death of a friend or relative, or a change of residence.
4. Orientation to learning – adults enter an educational activity with a life-, task-, or problem-centered orientation to learning. Hence, their learning is for immediate, not postponed, application.
5. Motivation to learn in adults – much more internally oriented (self-esteem, confidence, recognition by others) than externally oriented (chance for promotion, change of technology).
6. Why learn something – Adults have a need to know a reason that makes sense to them, as to why they should learn some particular thing, rather than because the teacher said so.

The eight process elements are as follows. These need to be sequential or as part of a continuous cycle.

1. Preparing the learners for the program – Learners become informed on the contents of this experience, generally how it will be conducted, and the general process of each segment building upon the previous element.
2. Setting the climate – A climate conducive to learning is a prerequisite for effective learning. Two aspects of climate are important: physical and psychological. Physical climate needs to be comfortable, bright, colorful, and exciting. The psychological climate for learning needs to be infused very deeply with support, mutual respect, pleasure/fun, humanness, openness, authenticity, mutual trust, collaboration, and critical thinking.
3. Involving learners in mutual planning – Learners sharing the responsibility for planning learning activities with the facilitator. Research indicates that learners will be committed to a decision or activity to the extent they have had a say in constructing what is to be done.
4. Diagnosing their own learning needs — Learners can share in small groups what they perceive their needs and interests to be regarding the acquisition of knowledge, understanding, skill, attitude, value and interest (KUSAVI) in this learning experience. The needs include such things as growth like movement toward: wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth, honesty, reality, and self-sufficiency. This makes for a well- rounded, comprehensive, total person involvement in determining their most crucial needs.
5. Translating the learning needs into objectives – Participants now face the task of translating the learning needs into learning objectives—positive statements of directions of growth – KUSAVI regarding expanding their horizons in things like autonomy, activity, objectivity, enlightenment, large abilities, many responsibilities, broad interests, altruism, self-acceptance, integrated self-identity, focus on principles, deep concerns, originality, tolerance for ambiguity, and rationality.
6. Designing a pattern of learning experiences – This plan (mutually designed by the leaders and the participants) will include identifying the resources most relevant to addressing each objective and the most effective strategies for utilizing these resources.
7. Helping adult learners manage and carry out their learning plans – Learning contracts are among the most effective ways to help learners structure and conduct their learning.
8. Evaluating the extent to which the learners have achieved their objectives –Finding out what is really happening inside the learners and how differently they are performing in life.

When these two theories (**the theory of large meetings** and, **the theory of andragogy – the art and science of helping adults learn**) are merged in practice, especially through the living lecture, they become a beneficial pair. Thus, it may be possible to identify the living lecture for lifelong learning as a ‘best practice’.

Identifying the techniques used for actively engaging the learners

The techniques used for actively engaging the learners are as follows: the presenter prepares the lecture on a pre-determined topic. Before the lecture is presented, the audience (large, relatively large, medium sized, or smaller) will be given a handout or a packet of materials centered on the topic that will be presented in the lecture. After the handouts are distributed, the total group of participants may be divided and asked to serve as ‘listening teams’ according to the section of the room they are sitting in – one section to listen to the lecture for points they wish to have clarified (the clarification team), a second section listen to the lecture for points with which they disagree or take issue (the rebuttal team), the third section to listen to the lecture for points requiring elaboration (the elaboration team), and a fourth section to listen to the lecture for problems of practical application they wish the speaker to address (the application team). Next, the short five to seven minute lecture is presented. Then, each team gets into a buzz (discussion) group to determine what issues or questions they wish to have raised with the lecturer. A spokesperson from each team articulates their issue or question to the presenter. The presenter responds to each item in turn, and when all have been addressed or time runs out, the presenter will wrap-up and summarize the session. In addition, newsprint easel and markers, printed materials, and a power point may be added to the techniques and devices. Moreover, the presenter may open up the session and call for some members of the audience, out of their own experience, to respond to any of the questions or issues raised, adding to how the presenter responded. (Knowles, 1970, 1980; Henschke, 1975).

Why the author thinks it qualifies as a best practice

The author was not the originator of this adult education “best practice.” There is no doubt that Knowles (1970) contributed to it, not only by his texts, but with his spoken word and lectures. Savicevic (2008, p. 375) called Knowles “a ‘masovik’, i.e. a lecturer on mass events in 10,000 visitor stadiums, as if he was inspired by an ancient agonistic spirituality!” This kind of spirituality could be described as: tough, gung-ho, sporting, contending, grappling, challenging, vying, surpassing – all reflections of the very positive way that Knowles was committed to and conducted his work in adult education. He used this teaching learning technique during our doctoral program at Boston University. It ‘caught-on’ with the author. Consequently, Knowles’ contribution to the dissemination of the living lecture ideas is huge. My involvement in the living lecture for lifelong learning has been quite modest by comparison. However, the author has adapted and used this activity successfully with numerous audiences of eight to 275 participants, from 1971 to the present:

- With a Rotary Club in rural Missouri, when presenting a vision of the adult education program that would be implemented in that region; at national, regional, and state adult education conferences, to illustrate it as a useful learning / teaching technique;
- Demonstrated over the Internet in an online course with graduate adult education students at the University of Missouri-St. Louis on the topic of *Methods and Techniques for Improving Instruction in Adult Education*;
- With 100 conference participants at the Arabian Society for Human Resource Management in Egypt, where the topic was “*Staying Ahead of the Curve of Human Capital Management*”;
- On Instructional Television with 80 Doctoral students and professors in the North Dakota State University on the topic of, *Dynamic Adult Learning, Malcolm S. Knowles, and Andragogy*;

- At a 'Brown Bag' University of Missouri-St. Louis faculty development session on the topic *How to Work with Adult Learners to help them Learn*;
- With University of Missouri-St. Louis nursing faculty on the topic *Understanding the Theory of Large Group Meetings and How the Lecture May Be Used to Great Benefit*;
- In A Professional Development Session with St. Louis, MO, K-12 school teachers on the topic of *Increasing the Active Involvement of our Students in Learning*;
- Professional Development Conference for University Professors, Presented for 60 Professors from various subject matter disciplines at the University of Missouri – Columbia on the topic of *The Interactive Lecture and Improving Adult Learning Environments*;
- Conducting a Course for 275 Personnel of SESI – The Educational Division of the Brazilian Government Section for Education within Industries and Other Corporate Entities, Belem and Castanial, Para, Brazil on the topics of *Program and Curriculum Development for Adult Learners in Corporate Human Resource Development*, and, *Increasing the Educational Value of Helping Adults Learn in Large Group Meeting*;
- Course for 180 Undergraduate and Graduate Students at the University of Amazonia [UNAMA], Main Campus, Belem, Para, Brazil on the topic of *Engaging Adults in Active Learning for Their Own benefit and Others through Helping them Learn Actively in Large Group Meetings by Means of a Dynamic, Living, Interactive Lecture*;
- With Community Leaders, Educators and Citizens of Feldkirch, Austria, on the topic of *Implementing Self-Directed Learning in a Public Forum*;
- For 100 Kentucky Faculty in Adult/Higher Education and the State Department, on the topic of *Developing an Understanding Use of Andragogy with Adult Learners – the Art and Science of Helping Adults Learn*;
- For 55 Graduate and Undergraduate Faculty with their Students at the University of Amazonia, Belem, Para, Brazil, on the topic of *Facilitating the Learning of Adults*;
- Workshop for 24 Health Educators with the Barros Barreto Hospital Educational Division, Universidade Federal do Para, Brazil, on the topic of *Helping Adults Learn in Health Care Education*;
- Professional development for 78 Undergraduate Students and Faculty in Language Learning, Universidade Federal do Para (UFPA), on the topic of *Teaching Foreign Languages*;
- For 30 Teachers of English at the Bi-National Center, Belem, Para, Brazil, on the topic of *Teaching the English Language to Brazilian Nationals*;
- 150 Adult Education Professionals in the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) with the Bureaus of Adult Education & Adult Education Associations, Wuhan, Guangzhao, and Panyu, of the topic of *History, Current Situation & Future Trends of Adult Education in the United States, with Implications for the Future Trends of Adult Education World Wide*;
- 200 Adult Education Professionals with the , " International Conference on Lifelong Learning, Beijing, China: Beijing Adult Education Association, and Beijing Normal University -- Divisions of International Comparative Education & Lifelong Learning, and Hong Kong: Caritas Adult & Higher Education Service, on the topic of *Moving a University or College Toward a Lifelong Learning Orientation*;
- A video conference workshop session during the September, 2010 International Literacy Day, 100 Faculty and Doctoral Students at the Faculty of Education, Chulalongkorn University (CU), Bangkok, Thailand, on the topic of *Lifelong Learning for Older Adult Learners*;
- A video conference workshop session, June, 2011, sponsored by the newly formed Department of Lifelong Education, (formerly the Division of Non-Formal Education) Faculty of Education, CU, Bangkok, Thailand, engaging 100 Faculty and Doctoral Students from CU and seven additional universities in Bangkok, Thailand, on the topic of *Developing and Implementing the University Academic Discipline of Lifelong Education*.

The author published on this topic (1975, 2009). In addition, many colleagues have used this process. Two Professors at Lindenwood University, St. Charles Missouri, who have used the living lecture are Drs. Susan Isenberg and Fletcher Glancy. at a 2011 International Conference in Greece, that session was given the Conference Award for being the Best Theoretical paper.

Conclusion

Each time the author has used this activity, he has reflected (action research) on how it was received, what could have been improved, and what were the most cogent elements that resulted from it. In addition, The living lecture will be demonstrated in this session of the conference, using the four listening teams, having questions and issues raised that are to be addressed, with the author responding to the questions and issues, providing a power point and handouts supporting the session. Beyond this, the author will be delivering the keynote session at the beginning of this 2011 Midwest Research-to-Practice Conference. He will be using the interactive, living lecture structure to do this, and the topic is on “Nation Building through Adult Education and Andragogy.” Thus, the overall experience of the Living Lecture for Lifelong Learning, with its gradual improvement over the years affirmed it in the mind of the author as a ‘best practice’.

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