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BEYOND TEACHING: THE EVOLVING ROLE OF LECTURERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Once upon a time, being a lecturer appeared to be a relatively straightforward profession. The lecturer entered the classroom, taught the lesson, expounded the subject, gave the students work to do, and tested their understanding. Knowledge flowed mainly one way: from lecturer to student. Well, the classrooms have changed. Today, students have access to information in seconds. Online courses, digital libraries, educational platforms and artificial intelligence have changed how people learn. A student can ask a question at midnight and get an answer in minutes. So, in a world where information is everywhere, what is the role of a lecturer?

Maybe the answer is not to be another information source. Maybe it's to assist learners in comprehending what to do with information. This might be one of the biggest changes in higher education. There is increasing expectation of lecturers to go beyond content delivery, to become facilitators, mentors and learning partners. The goal is not just to give answers but to get students to ask better questions. So, a good classroom is not necessarily the one where the lecturer talks the most. It might be the one that students have the most thoughts about.

When students are encouraged to analyze a case, defend an argument, question an assumption or relate theory to real-life situations, learning becomes more meaningful. They are not just memorizing knowledge; they are learning how to apply it. This is especially important in the modern era of artificial intelligence. AI has opened huge opportunities for education but has also raised legitimate concerns around academic integrity, originality and overreliance on technology. But we should not simply fear or reject technological change. Instead, educators have an opportunity to demonstrate to students how to use technology responsibly.

Artificial intelligence is able to generate information, but students need to learn how to assess if that information is accurate. AI can produce an answer, but it's up to students to decide if the answer is logical and appropriate. It can be helpful with ideas, but human judgment is still needed. In this environment the role of the lecturer is even more important. Technology can give us information, but education gives us context. Technology can have an answer, but education develops judgement. Technology may speed up a job, but education builds a sense of responsibility. But the role of the lecturer is more than technology.

Every semester, lecturers meet students with different personalities, abilities, ambitions and circumstances. In the classroom some students come in with confidence. Others sit silently in the back. Some are prompt to ask questions; others shy away from the task for fear of giving the wrong answer. A lecturer may never know what lies behind such silence.

Sometimes the student does not need another explanation of the subject matter. Sometimes, a student just needs to hear, "You can do this." Here teaching turns into mentoring. A lecturer can be a wonderful source of encouragement on a student's university journey. A few minutes of meaningful conversation,

constructive criticism or sincere recognition can impact a student's confidence far beyond the classroom. Of course, lecturers also must learn.

The expectation for students to be lifelong learners holds true for educators as well. Teaching methods change. Technology applies. Industries undergo transformation. Students' expectations are rising. New research is presented. An educator who does not keep learning is probably teaching yesterday's knowledge to tomorrow's workforce. Continual professional development is thus not simply a requirement. It's part of the responsibility of being an educator.

This is especially important in training students for employment. Universities cannot be isolated from industry and society. Students need to be given the chance to see how their knowledge is applied outside of campus. Industry engagement, internships, case studies, guest lectures, community projects and experiential learning can help bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world practice. And the lecturer has a vital role to play in constructing that bridge.

But amid all the change, one thing remains constant: the human connection in teaching. A digital platform can provide content. An AI system can tell you. A recorded lecture may be replayed. But educators can see promise in a student. Lecturers can challenge students who have gotten too comfortable. Lecturers can help to restore the confidence of the people losing it. And sometimes a lecturer sees possibilities in a student before the student sees them in themselves. Perhaps one of the greatest privileges of the profession.

Individual lectures, theories, or examination questions might be forgotten by students years after they graduate. But they may remember the lecturer who encouraged them to talk, believed in their ability or gave them confidence at a critical moment. And that is why content teaching should never be the lecturer's reduction. We teach knowledge, but we also develop curiosity. We measure performance, but we also generate confidence. We present theories, but we also help learners understand their relevance in the real world.

The lecturer of the future will need to be proficient academically, technologically aware and pedagogically creative. But perhaps more than anything, lecturers will need to stay human. Because education is ultimately about people.



Picture 1: Lecturers in action