Lecture Capture: Reflections on Pedagogy vs. Perception

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I have been sitting on this piece of writing for a while now. Partially due to time factors but mostly due to how these thoughts might be interpreted, or rather mis-interpreted, given the current HE sector trends. I originally intended this piece to help inform close colleagues from different disciplinary contexts about the pedagogy underpinning lecture capture technologies, but it occurred that this was a conversation that was worth having in a wider forum.

There is a wide selection of papers that look at student perception of lecture capture but evaluation strategies rarely include front-line teaching staffs' opinions (Sim, 2018). I use the qualifier 'front-line' because where staff are concerned, lecture capture seems to form a nexus around which teachers and managers differ in opinion. These opinions seem to depend on individual drivers of success and excellence. I should state up front that I am lecture capture neutral, meaning that I think of it as a tool and, as with all tools, if you use it well, it works, and if you do not, it does not. I thought it was time to share my views in the hope that colleagues can use these points to better inform their use of this divisive learning technology.

Early Adopters and Historical Context

As with many other relatively recent educational technologies (such as, virtual reality, audience response technology, iPads in classrooms, etc.), there is usually a glut of novelty-based early adoption (typically within the first 3 years) followed by a more carefully considered pedagogic application, based on the contextual educational merit(s) (Luttenberger et al, 2018). A past example of this within the HE sector would be the explosion of tablets (in particular, Apple branded tablets) used in a range of teaching applications initially without a solid educational literature base informing their use. This resultedin a litany of misconceptions and poor practice that only in the last five years has been recognised as such, with positive movement towards a more pedagogically informed application (Dhir et al, 2013). It was with this trend in mind, I re-considered lecture capture.

Even as recently as 2011, colleagues in the sector were espousing the benefits and agonising over the drawbacks of lecture capture, and it was not until a generally accepted definition was crystalised that the 'benefits' were tempered. The definition clarified that lecture capture does not and need not mean recording the entire contents of a lecture. For me, this is a central point of clarity and fundamentally a point of misconception in the sector (Dziuban, 2018). In my opinion, it is this idea that an entire lecture needs to be recorded to qualify as having been 'lecture captured' that has polarised the HE sector to this degree as managers and teachers struggle to use a single, well-understood definition of this learning technology (Witten, 2016).

Part of my anxiety as a professional teacher around blanket adoption of lecture capture (i.e. the opt-out model) is that it may leave staff open to unwelcome personal and professional criticism and also presents a temptation to use lecture capture with a performance review filter mind-set (Bond and Grussendorf, 2013). It should be noted that these anxieties are projected rather than actually founded in current HE practice, but this train of thought does open up the lecture capture system itself to similar critique, especially around rigorous questioning as to whom is actually qualified to comment on what a 'good' lecture entails (Crawford, 2014). Additionally, we must then determine the point at which perception moves too far away from the current quality enhancement ethos of peer supportive teaching to a quality assurance ethos of peer review of teaching.There seems to be no 'right' answer to this conundrum because of the rapid changes we are currently experiencing in HE, meaning that, within the sector, each institute is setting their own student and staff expectations on lecture capture whilst simultaneously looking around to see how their competitors are doing it (King *et al*, 2017).

One of the most interesting risks to be managed around lecture capture that encompasses the points made so far is its impact (intended and unintended) on the quality of 'live' face-to-face teaching. The excerpt below articulates this point very well:

'Presentation of printed material or artwork in lectures and notes is usually permissible, but technically video recording of the same lecture is not a print reproduction under copyright law, rather it is a 'broadcast'. This does not present a problem for producing lecture notes and audio - only lectures. Nor is it a problem where the visual content has been authored by lecturers, however, most lecturers legitimately use clip art and textbook publishers' materials, which they are increasingly reluctant to include in capture presentations. Few lecturers have the skills or resources to produce all their own art, and uncertainty over the status of video capture of copyright art plus high student demand for lecture capture is prompting some lecturers to deliberately downgrade their teaching materials to avoid inadvertent copyright beaches. Although overcoming self-consciousness is part of every lecturers' professional skill set, lecture capture adds an additional layer of self-monitoring (and possibly unnecessary self-censorship, if the video may be used outside the initial delivery for which it was intended) which can impact lecturer's well-being and alter their teaching style. These issues have significant implications for both teaching quality and course development budgets.' (Excerpt taken from Williams et al, 2013)

One of the main things I like to draw attention to in any discussion of lecture capture is how similar it is to equivalent discussions from 2007 on the use of podcasting to support learning (Copley, 2007). The articulated benefits of podcasts more than a decade ago were the same as many of the currently espoused benefits of lecture capture, including the ever-present 'students want it' argument. Ten years later,podcasts are now simply one tool among many rather than the cure-all they were promised to be and their use is now in a more measured and pedagogically informed way after the early adopter flurry died down (Schreiber *et al*, 2010). To

further emphasise this, I would draw attention to the work of Davis *et al* in 2009 which shows many of the same promises of an 'educational magic bullet' in offering lecture capture as a solution to issues that may or may not exist in learners and notably, also heavily relies on the 'students like it' angle just as Copley did in 2007 to convince the reader of the value of podcast technology (David et al, 2009).

An Unanticipated Pedagogic Risk

There is one further risk to be managed for some higher education institutes and within them, many of their courses. Uniform lecture capture adoption may put a disproportionate and unintended emphasis on the importance of lectures within a given course. With many courses that are philosophically built around (and indeed, marketed as) learner self-directedness, choosing one mode of teaching in preference to the others (such as small group seminars, laboratory work, workshops etc.) may create an over-emphasis on lecture content within blended self-directed higher education courses (Meseguer-Martinez *et al*, 2017).

Limited Value Added

A recent paper on lecture capture in the British Journal of Educational Technology (BJET) is a 'must read' paper for colleagues interested in the evolving pedagogy of lecture capture and this work culminates in a central key point that we should all be mindful of (Witten, 2016). For the first time, this work and the commensurate literature review allow for the generation of a pedagogic visualisation of lecture capture in context with other learning technologies. Interestingly, what the author observed was that lecture capture had the lowest value / volume ratio of any of the other technologies looked at by quite a long margin. It would be ill-advised to ignore this key work as it is one of the first heralds of the lecture capture early adopter flurry coming to an end and informed pedagogic practice taking centre stage. Indeed, very recent work from the University of Exeter has started to explore the actual impacts of lecture capture on student learning and the results are surprisingly minimal (http://people.exeter.ac.uk/cc371/RePEc/dpapers/DP1706.pdf).

To draw this reflection to a close, I would offer some of my own perspectives on ways we might consider using this tool when engaging with lecture capture technology in a pedagogically-informative manner:

- Institutes, faculties and, indeed, schools should continue to adopt and adapt their own definitions of lecture capture with the central onus on the teacher to manage the expectations of their students, ensuring openness and clarity – a good example of this happening elsewhere in the sector can be seen here: http://eprints.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/3639/.
- We might consider moving away from satisfaction-based drivers for adopting lecture capture technologies and instead enlist our early adopter colleagues to conduct literature-informed pedagogic research thereby contributing to evidence-informed use whilst they explore innovating with it.
- We should be open to embracing a wider definition of lecture capture within the sector which subsumes other capture technologies, such as podcasting, screen capture and video-based guided study (Crawford, 2016). I think this

would ameliorate much of the anxiety around perception that a whole lecture needs to be captured to engage with 'lecture capture'.

- We might then be able to use our newly-defined and agreed upon understanding to open the creative floodgates and apply it in a rich variety of creative contexts. One example of this was work started in 2011 by Smith and Sodano, who used lecture capture to improve student presentation skills *via* self-assessment and their results showed convincing impacts on student confidence and reflection skill development (Smith and Sodano, 2011).

I would urge those who want to try lecture capture to first discuss their educational needs with colleagues and learning technology experts. By doing so, they will be considering the pedagogic place for it within their own teaching and thus be making an informed decision about its application, just as they would for any other teaching decision that affects our learners (Witten, 2016).

It is an interesting time within the HE sector when a single educational technology has the ability to impact learner and staff confidence to this degree and, looking forward, we need to ensure that our application of it comes from a positon of informed pedagogic practice.

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