In 2010 I, along with four mathematics lecturers from different higher education institutions in Ireland, set about practicing/implementing John Mason’s Discipline of Noticing (2002) in order to reflect on, and improve, teaching practice. As a result of this project, for three years from 2011-12 to 2013-14, I kept “brief-but-vivid” accounts on my lectures for a first year Maths for Business module in University College Dublin, Ireland. An average of 250 students were assigned to my module and I “delivered” three lectures per week for twelve weeks.

While any given brief-but-vivid account may be interesting in its own right, reading the first set of accounts from 2011-12 in one sitting right before I started teaching the module again, proved quite disturbing for me as certain themes became apparent – poor attendance was irritating me; students being disruptive when they did come to class was distracting; and I was frustrated at the futility of trying to really help students in such a large-group setting. But this disrupted my thinking and caused me to question what use the large lecture actually has to play in today’s digital world. In particular, I started to question one of my most deep-rooted beliefs in relation to university learning – that students must attend lectures.

In CETL-MSOR 2014, I presented on how I had introduced over sixty short videos to complement/substitute for lectures in the Maths for Business module in 2013-14. In this talk I will present an analysis of three years of brief-but-vivid accounts from teaching in a large lecture setting, and how my practice has changed (for better or worse!) as a result of this reflection.

Is the large lecture a thing of the past then? Or is it that it needs to evolve to if it is avoid extinction? I suspect the latter but let us discuss!