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POWERPOINT PRESENTATION AS THE MOST CHALLENGING AND ENGAGING METHOD OF TEACHING

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Abstract. PowerPoint presentation enhances instruction and engages students into the issues under discussion. Nevertheless, as with any technology its success depends on the creativity, time and thought investment of the teacher.

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David Birne once said: "PowerPoint may not be of any use for you in a presentation, but it may liberate you in another way, an artistic way. Who knows." This program, which originated in the world of business, has become a commonplace instrument for educational purposes and the opinions about it have been highly supportive.

It is a great alternative to "chalk and talk" lecture routine of the past. This new delivery of material is relatively fresh and flexible for instructors. They should learn to use PowerPoint efficiently as it is the most challenging and engaging method of teaching any subject available nowadays.

Still there are some objections to its use, especially among the older and the less technology-oriented. They point to a few risk factors which make them resist its application. These risks include equipment failure, file corruption caused by magnetic or physical damage or even incompatible media. Nevertheless, good reasons to use PowerPoint outweigh these concerns

These reasons to incorporate PowerPoint presentation into lecture classes are numerous, but the major ones include:

- PowerPoint is an application program found in Microsoft Office. That is why there is no need to buy new software, as it has been included in Microsoft Office program.

- PowerPoint presentation can enhance and improve comprehension and recall for all students.

- PowerPoint helps to enhance the clarity and avoid the common use of excessive text.

- PowerPoint supports multimedia, such as video, audio, images, and animation (keeping in mind that our students are visuals).

- The electronic file format allows modification for/by students. A new slide can be added promptly if specifying is required or it is necessary to include some contribution from a student.

- PowerPoint file allows immediate editing in practically no time.

- PowerPoint is especially useful when providing course material online.

- It interacts with web sites and online information

- Finally, PowerPoint saves time and energy, once the presentation has been created, it is easy to update or modify it for other courses. Consequently, when used and designed appropriately PowerPoint provides effective ways to perfect instruction endlessly.

Preparation is a key to successful PowerPoint presentation. Most commonly, after the lecture is ready it is high time to prepare slides. Plan your presentation structure carefully. Generally, it should cover no more than five key topic areas. It is a rather time consuming stage that is why give yourself plenty of time for design and information arrangement. There are some recommendations to follow regarding the slide content, emphasizing content, typeface selection, point size, clip art and graphics, animation and sound, final check.

Slide content should be succinct but clear. Avoid text-dense slides, just use more slides instead. Replace long and dull sentences by brief points. Avoid placing more than six or seven lines of text on one slide. Use eye-catching and meaningful slide titles to grab students' attention. The headlines should be intriguing like in newspapers and journals with implications.

Don't forget to simplify the tables or graphs to be used on your slides. As human wisdom goes, one picture can be worth a thousand words. Enhance your presentation with graphics or clip art but use them purposefully, so that they support the content. Irrelevant graphics and images are obstacles to student comprehension. Besides, avoid too much animation and transitions. Excessive movement can interfere with the key message. One had better use only simple screen transitions as a more preferable alternative.

In order to add real life spice one can use photographs providing these photographs are relevant to the content and illustrative. Pictures used for decorative purposes dilute attention. As for incorporation of any sound or music, you should practice caution and when in doubt, do without.

As for slide text design, it is more appropriate to select a light background with dark typeface or a dark background with a light typeface, which are easy to read in a spacious classroom. Do not forget that dark classroom may interfere with note taking, and sometimes provokes taking a nap, that is why leave classroom lights on. Avoid using too many colors or shifting colors. It is a distraction for students. Psychologists also recommend keeping from red and green combinations for emphasis. Introduce notes (lines of the text) one at a time, as this facilitates focus on the current item.

Give some thought to the choice of fonts. In order to make text or headline easy to read you should refrain from ornamental or specialty fonts such as Algerian or MS Gothic and sacrifice them to Arial or a Serif font such as Times New Roman, for instance, which are more favorable on presentation slide. Do not use more than two text colors in a presentation unless you have a reason for it. Besides, try to stick to maximum 2 typeface styles per a slide. Consistency and avoidance of everything that is "too much" should become a leitmotiv for your choice. Make the comfort for students your priority.

Size of typeface is of some significance as well. Make sure that it large enough to read from any pointe in the room. In particular, headings should be no less than 32-36 point fonts. The underlying text should be no less than 28- 32- point font.

Errors are more obvious when they are projected. Final check includes editing all the slides, spelling checks, grammar checks and checks for excessive wording that blurs the messages, logical order of material, and total impression of the presentation. Power-Point Slide Sorter View is especially helpful to final checks. The preview pane on the left of the screen when editing the PowerPoint in "Normal" view comes handy.

Eventually, never forget a contingency plan, namely, in case of technical failure or any problem with classroom technology, print out Power Point presentation slides,

saved in PDF and use them as handouts. Check student technology compatibility with PowerPoint material put on the web (especially, when you deliver a lecture online).

PowerPoint should provide basic notions, major concepts and impressive images but it can never ever replace you as the lecturer or presenter. That is why the main challenge is still engaging students into material understudy with PowerPoint presentation.

Prepare some questions (especially an opening question) to stir the audience and involve them into active search for answers, into reflecting on the issue into its depth. It can be like group opinion poll. Encourage them to stand on their ground and dispute and strive to be argumentative. Then, "Bang!" take out the slide with expert opinion.

Brainstorming based on questionable ideas can encourage recalling of previous material. Then move on to their personal conclusions, add them on the Live Slide, if they are worth it. PowerPoint provides another form of interaction. The instructor can project students' comments on write-on slides for the whole student group to see. When the presentation is over, the new material can be saved to the original file. It can raise contributors' self-esteem and provoke analytical thinking. In the end of your PowerPoint presentation sum up all information in the form of abstracts, or invite students to do this job, which is much better.

In addition, here are some practical tips for teachers:

- One should not read from the slide, as it looks like incompetence, as if you don't know the material. Use your homemade notes.

- Use a blank screen during discussion sessions, brainstorming or opinion polls and later on, press the key again to return to the Live Slide.

- For emphasizing the information, one should use either a pen icon as one of the tools or a laser pointer, or highlighter.

In conclusion, it should be mentioned, that as soon as teachers make a relatively short-term investment of time and effort into Power Point presentation at the beginning, they are sure to gain plenty of long-term benefits such as new quality of their instruction and opportunity to maintain and update them for their further use.

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