

## **Teachers' Dilemma on Using 'Chalk and Board' or 'Projector and Screen': Which is Effective?**

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### **Abstract**

Present article comments on the dilemma in the mind of a teacher on using 'chalk and talk' and ICT enabled methods for teaching. It focuses on usage and misuse of both boards and projectors in the class. Under the name of ICT advancements, most of the teachers avoid using boards and tend to use PPTs in wrong ways. The article includes some of the live blogs posted by students/teachers globally and summarises their views on use/misuse of PPTs in the class and expectations of the students. Finally, the article ends with a proposal on judicious use of boards and projectors in the classroom.

**Key Words:** *Teaching methods, use of ICT, multimedia, chalk and board*

### **Use of Technology in Place of Chalk and Board**

"I can teach without using board in the class." "I rarely use chalk in my class." "My lectures with the help of PowerPoint are always impressive." "Do you teach language/literature or Maths/... to use so many chalks?" Such and many other statements are made by teachers during recent times. Some may be right in saying so; but in case of many others it's quite doubtful. Because, we are not using 'chalk and talk' method as it is now considered outdated one and because there are so many other teaching aids, use of power point being on top. However, if one goes in deep within oneself and asks a true reason behind using PPTs, one will realize the open secret about it; how it makes a teacher's task easiest on part of making/carrying notes, memorizing, writing on the board in legible way, etc.

### **Overemphasis of Multimedia**

Of course there are many advantages of use of multimedia in the classroom. But that use should not be overemphasized at the cost of use of boards. Though we have invented many wonders till the 21<sup>st</sup> century and though we are finding out the origin of the universe,  
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when we imagine a doctor we imagine him/her with stethoscope, a lawyer with coat, a writer/journalist with pen, likewise a teacher with chalk in hand and standing in front of board. This itself defines the place of chalk and board in ones learning. We still remember that our learning in schools/colleges was much depended on the white part made on the black background by the teachers. In other words, most of the things we learnt interestingly just because of writing of our teachers and neat and step by step arrangement of every single difficult thing on the board.

### **Is It Advantageous to Replace the Chalk and Board Completely? – Student Responses**

Replacing black board with green/white one and chalk with marker is acceptable. However, replacing them completely with only a screen and typed words/pictures is doubtfully acceptable. Use of advanced technology/multimedia in the class is of course rewarding. But this does not mean that the boards are to be replaced completely with white screens.

There are many teachers and researchers who are still supporting the ‘chalk and talk’ method. Even most of the students prefer lectures through chalkboard than through multimedia. Some of the blogs posted on a forum on the same topic are worth to record here:

#### **Student 1**

“I am a student and I much prefer lecturers who write on the board than the ones who use slides. Profs (*professors*) using slides generally go into loop mode where they have the objective of going through all the slides before the end of the class. As such, profs tend to go in a very fast pace.

Writing on the board brings some dynamism to the lectures. The lecturer tends to pace himself much better, and students are then more encouraged to ask questions as they go along.

In my experience I've seen lots of profs who just read the stuff from their slides without elaborating any further. The students then tend to fall asleep since they know the lectures are basically in the slides.

Also, I have the impression that profs using slides are lazier in their teaching, in the sense that they don't even review the slides they are about to present before the lectures.”

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## **Student 2**

“As a student I really agree with this. I would rather read my textbook than go to a class which uses slides. On the other hand, well-thought-out lectures that use the chalkboard are easier to follow because it forces the instructor to decide what is really important and what's not.”

(<http://academia.stackexchange.com/questions>)

## **Thoughtful Use of Chalk-Board**

The above blogs simply reflect the views of most of students who prefer thoughtful chalk-board based lesson than the lesson overloaded with most of unnecessary slides meant just to do the formality of syllabus completion in the class. They also rightly point out the way most of the teachers (mis) use slides/multimedia.

## **Misunderstandings about the Use of Boards**

### ***Writing on board is time consuming***

Exactly. However, one should remember that it is not expected to write everything on the board. If you have planned in advance and structured the board writing on the paper, it is not time consuming. Rather it is time saving on the part of students as they will comprehend most of that well organized writing.

### ***Only subjects like mathematics need much use of board***

Right again. But other subjects, including languages, can also be taught well with boards. Many teachers of other subjects are still satisfied with their teaching on board because they find it useful than using other advanced teaching aids.

### ***You must have good handwriting to write on boards***

Quite unacceptable. Of course, good handwriting is a jewel. However, avoiding boards by giving convenient reason about not having good handwriting is ridiculous. What is important is legibility of your writing than its beauty.

### ***When got engaged in writing on board there is a chaos in the class***

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It depends on teachers. Keeping students engaged when you are engaged in board writing is a skill which we as teachers must have. Better way is to engage students also during your board work by asking them to write with you or by throwing some referential/open ended questions related to the topic in hand.

### ***Structuring the matter on board is difficult***

In other words, we can structure and organize the matter well in advance on slides which is quite difficult to do live on the board in the class. Completely agree. However, if properly planned in advance, it is possible on boards as well.

### ***Teaching with board v/s teaching on board***

As overuse of multimedia has its wrong influences, so is with the overuse of boards. *Teachers* should teach with the help of board; not *the board and writing on it* itself. In simple words, teacher in class is the first great aid in students' learning. Rest all aids are secondary.

### **Techniques of Using Boards Effectively**

Here 'boards' include all-black, green, white boards. In fact, if considered the learning/comprehension pace of heterogeneous learners probably (black) board is still the major and appreciated choice. Following are some of the ways boards can be used effectively.

1. Board work should be planned in advance and well structured.
2. Sketch in your notes how you are going to use the board.
3. Always write the points that you are going to cover in that lecture at one side of the board and mark each when finished.
4. Divide the board in three/four parts and use your writing hand side first followed by rest.
5. Highlight important part by making it bold, using large word size, circle, underline, using other colours, etc.
6. When comparison part comes, put the elements to be compared simultaneously on the board to draw student's attention.
7. Don't block. Keep moving so that students can see the matter on the board.

8. Writing legibly is important than writing beautifully. Always check your board work from the back of the classroom.
9. The important points like topic headings, etc., are to be put at the top centre always.
10. Clean the previous board writing completely. Do not clean the only part which is sufficient for you.
11. Frequently ask students if you are legible.
12. Clean the board when you finish your lesson.

### **Benefits of Using Boards over Using Multimedia**

Our intention here is not at all to underestimate the positive usages/effects of use of slides and other multimedia in the classroom. Use of well-planned and neatly arranged power point is always helpful. It strengthens students learning. Moreover, if used effectively, clipart, images and pictures will enhance learning. Even the slides can be referred easily by the students whenever needed. However, there are many funny advantages posted by some teachers on the same blog mentioned earlier. For example:

#### **Teacher 1**

Advantages of using slides:

- Students get insufficient sleep, and a slideshow presentation allows them to catch up on their sleep hours somewhat.
- Slides decrease student-teacher interaction, and we are all introverts nowadays, so less interaction is a good thing!
- Slides make it less likely that a student will take notes in class, thus saving on ink.
- The presumption that slides or video will be posted disincentivizes students from attending class, thus allowing for smaller classrooms.
- Slides are good for ignorance, and as we all know, ignorance is bliss!

The benefits of boards over slides/ multimedia can very clearly be understood by reading following blog of another teacher:

#### **Teacher2**

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Board work is usually more engaging, and at least the classes I've taken and given, board-based classes kept the students (*and the instructor!*) mentally and verbally engaged in the material. Its naturally more exciting to watch an animated instructor write things out, check himself mentally for a moment, subconsciously sharpshoot him yourself as he moves along, etc. than to just listen to what may as well have been a recorded session flashing by on screen.

People who write on boards tend to *only* write the important bits on the board, and have prose handouts full of other details for reading and reference later. The constraints presented by working live on a board act as a magically precise editorial function which *forces* the instructor to either be concise or fail, and handouts retain every benefit of the slides but without exposing the instructor to the temptation of drifting into a passive or mentally absent teaching mode.

...People who write on boards usually have either rehearsed their material or know it intimately enough to pace through an essentially hands-on class as they go -- even (or especially) in the case of new research. This is as good as it gets for live instruction! And this leads me to the worst thing about slides...

The laziness permitted by slides is paradoxically compounded by the temptation to be verbose in the slides themselves. This is the worst form of detached instruction and often devolves to the point that the "instruction" consists of an underprepared instructor who feels prepared (he's got his slides, right!) essentially reading whatever is written on the slides to the class. In these cases equal time spent with a book in a quiet place benefits a student more than having sat through such a class. Such sessions can only satirically be referred to as classes.

Thus, irrelevant information on the slides may be harmful; whereas, teacher will avoid such writing on the board. Neglect of interaction with students during PowerPoint (PPT) presentation may make a lecture a monologue; whereas, using boards and simultaneously discussing/ explaining/questioning will make class interactive. The high speed of presentation may reduce participation of students; but when boards are used students are likely to

participate more. Too strict order of slides may limit the extemporaneous performance of instructor which will not happen during teaching with boards.

### **Need to Find a Golden Mean**

As mentioned earlier teacher is the most important aid in students' learning. The aids the teacher uses will depend on his/her teaching methodology, experience, objective behind the lesson, class type/size, feasibility of teaching aids, and so on. However, using PowerPoint (PPT) with "one size fits all approach" will not be a wise use of technology. Similarly, following "old is gold" proverb only and not advancing oneself in using multimedia will not give appropriate justice to the digitally advanced learners.

Any statement made about PPT, good or bad, can also be made about any other teaching aids including chalkboard. They are only tools. They are good or bad depending upon how well, or how poorly, they are used.

Using multimedia and boards simultaneously will definitely work. Using PPT not for whole lectures, using only important terms and not complete sentences/paragraphs, using visuals (clip art, pictures, videos, etc.) over text, using step by step animation for text/visuals instead of displaying the matter on a slide on single click, including quiz in between to make students think and react, and most importantly, considering students' pace of learning and preparing need based PPTs will be useful. Similarly, following the techniques discussed above for effective board work will also have rewarding results. A teacher who is addicted to use of slides for all purposes should really try, at least once, to plan and use board for a lesson entirely and see the difference.

### **To Conclude**

It will be useful to conclude this article with following interesting details. A teacher (Dr. Sridhar Rao P.N) had once asked his students to write down their opinion on how they prefer his classes should be held; plain lectures or by using PowerPoint slides. He had also requested them to give their feedback/recommendations. Following are the select interesting responses recorded on his homepage. (<http://www.microrao.com/powerpoint.htm#>)

### *Classes using PowerPoint slides*

#### *Disadvantages:*

- Matter is boring as it contains many points.
- It is lengthy and sometimes can't grasp what is on the screen.
- Not able to go through all the points on the slide and is one-way interaction.
- With PowerPoint class is boring and sleepy.
- Sometimes constantly looking at PowerPoint screen will strain the eyes.
- Can't concentrate on the topic, there is no interaction between student and teacher.
- It is slow and gets monotonous sometimes.
- Both the student and the teacher read the same thing.
- More theory makes class boring, readymade diagrams are difficult to follow.
- It is difficult to listen and see both at the same time as it causes little confusion.
- Can't correlate between what the professor speaks and what we see, we usually end up only reading on the screen and not really listening.
- Very small letters can't be seen from back.
- It never lets us imagine things what is being taught because I believe that imagination by ourselves helps us to activate long term memory. In PowerPoint only short term memory is activated. It never lets us to recollect things we read.
- Some time is wasted in setting up PowerPoint; teacher can't concentrate on all students.
- Our concentration is more on seeing the slides and noting down the points rather than listening.
- Explanation should not be mere reading of the slides.
- Temptations to do other things since it is quite dark.

### *Plain lectures without any multimedia presentations*

#### *Advantages:*

- Considering the fact that you have no bothering about the slides your complete concentration is upon the student, which keeps us conscious and oriented us to listen.
- It is more interactive, better communication, have eye-to-eye contact and more topics are covered in less time.
- We will be attentive the whole class.
- We can see you and listen to you properly.

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- We can understand at least what you say and teach. It is not boring.
- Repetition of points helps to recall, we can make notes.
- It is easy to remember what we write and listen.
- It is good to see the teacher and the board rather than the screen.
- When the teacher writes on board we can understand each and every point he teaches with full concentration.
- Diagrams drawn on board are easier to follow.
- Students can listen to the teacher as there is nothing to see.

It is not true that board and PowerPoint should not be used together. Both can be used as supplementary to each other and as teaching/learning tools for teachers/learners. As well as, we should use both the aids judiciously; some lectures on PPT and some with the board. However, PPT should not at all be used at the cost of chalk/marker and board.

### ***Recommendations/feedback***

- Only the pictures and videos be shown and not the description or text.
- Both are comfortable.
- Better to teach only some topics using PowerPoint, please use both techniques.
- PowerPoint classes should not be lengthy.
- Using PowerPoint is a good idea but limit it to showing pictures and videos.
- It is better if classes are held as lectures and at the end just glance everything with PowerPoint by showing some slides, pictures whichever are concerned to the topic.
- When you take class without PowerPoint, it is entirely your own and not from the CDs or something. Whenever you write something on board it leaves a very good impression over our mind.
- It will be helpful if both by writing on board and showing us the pictures simultaneously will help us a lot.
- Moving around the students is a good idea.
- PowerPoint can be good for a change but on regular class lectures are better.
- PowerPoint should be used for special topics only.
- Students end up listening and not learning anything without PowerPoint and with PowerPoint students see but don't learn.
- Both methods should be followed, half lecture and half PowerPoint.

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