

POWERPOINT® LECTURES: HOW DO THE FIRST YEAR GRADUATE STUDENTS PERCEIVE IT?

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Even though PowerPoint® was initially developed for business purposes, it diffused rapidly in to the scientific environment and became an expedient utility in both teaching and learning in graduate studies in universities. It is essential to evaluate the students' perception on using it as an aid for lectures as it enables improving less positively perceived areas. First year undergraduates' preliminary exposure to PowerPoint lectures, is at the University. Thus, the study was carried out with the objectives of identifying the students' attitudes on learning from PowerPoint lectures and their preference on slide formats. Participants were the first year undergraduate students (n=102) covering different subject streams. A pre-tested, structured questionnaire was used as the research tool with the emphasis on the perception on PowerPoint Lectures and effective formatting of the slides. Ratings were done based on a 5 point Likert scale. Results revealed that over 90% of the lectures are aided with PowerPoint, and the students' perception on the aspect was positive regarding PowerPoint being interesting, ease of following, highlighting key points, using visual elements and repeating the slide content (with median values of 2.33, 2.72, 2.06, 1.72, 1.61, respectively). However, the PowerPoint facilitates only the short term memory and it is necessary to provide them a hard copy for long term benefit. As a whole, the students preferred PowerPoint lectures over traditional chalk-board methods of teaching. The preference on the lecturer repeating the slide was quite amusing, but it may be due to the audiences' novelty with this method of learning and discussing the slide without proper reference to the slide content might confuse them. Although this positive feedback is promising for the future learning process, it is true, only if the slide formatting is done with proper planning. Students preferred more pictures and light coloured backgrounds to match with the room condition. Large font sizes were preferred as that reduces the amount of information in one slide. Full sentence outline was preferred for key facts. Finally, this research reveals that the learning process can be made a success by effectively using PowerPoint as an aid in teaching.