EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES CENTRE IITD

Towards better teaching experience...

EFFECTIVE LECTURES

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- THE ART OF QUESTIONING
- LECTURE TIME BLUES
- TEACHING A NEW COURSE
- WORKING TOWARDS IMPROVEMENT

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Dear Colleague,

It is heartening to note that Educational Technology Services Centre (ETSC) plans to bring out a series of resource booklets on **Effective Lectures, Effective Tutorials, Enhancing Laboratory Instruction, Using AV Aids in Classrooms** and **Developing Teaching Portfolios** for distribution to faculty. All these topics are of direct relevance to us as teachers and I am sure each one of us will find them interesting with some useful tips for ready implementation.

The first resource booklet **Effective Lectures** containing useful information presented in a comprehensive and highly readable format, is being released now. Hope you will enjoy reading it and will give your feedback to ETSC for brining in further improvements in the subsequent booklets.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(V.S.Raju)

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES CENTRE

Dear Colleague,

Here is a resource booklet on Lecturing *Effectively*, a humble offering by **Educational Technology Services Centre**. Every teacher dreams of teaching a small group of motivated students – happily engaged in discussing, interacting and establishing close rapport with the students. But the fact is that bulk of our teaching is done in the lecture mode and whatever supplements technology may offer, lectures are here to stay.
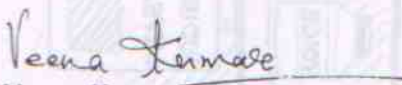
Strange as it may seem, *Lecturing Effectively* has been the subject of serious research.* Some consider lecturing as a science; others contend it is an art. Obviously, it is both and by the same virtue, the *lecturer* is both an educator and a performer; and ideally speaking, a *lecture*, should both instruct and delight. Achieving these objectives within the constraints of our imperfect world is by no means easy. The task is becoming even more challenging as the classes are becoming larger and even larger. It is time some serious thought is given to this key activity of our profession.

Becoming a good lecturer requires conscious effort. It is a demanding, sometimes daunting but ultimately a rewarding experience. In this booklet observations and suggestions of many educational technologists have been reviewed and compiled. Hopefully, you will find some useful tips for ready application.

ETSC looks forward to being a partner in your endeavour for enhancing your teaching acumen. Please give us your feedback. ETSC proposes to bring out similar resource booklets on – *Effective Tutorials, Using AV aids in Classroom, Developing Your Teaching Portfolio etc.*, If sufficient interest is generated. ETSC will be pleased to organize **discussion sessions** for us to talk about teaching at IITD.

I would like to acknowledge support of Ms. Ritu Chaudhry for typing, Mr. S.S. Chauhan for graphics and Nischal Jain (M.Des. Student) for the cartoon.

Happy reading!

Veena Kumar
(Veena Kumar)

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*Effort is being made to procure some of the important papers on the subject . In fact, the folder has been designed so that additional photocopies/printed matter can be stored.
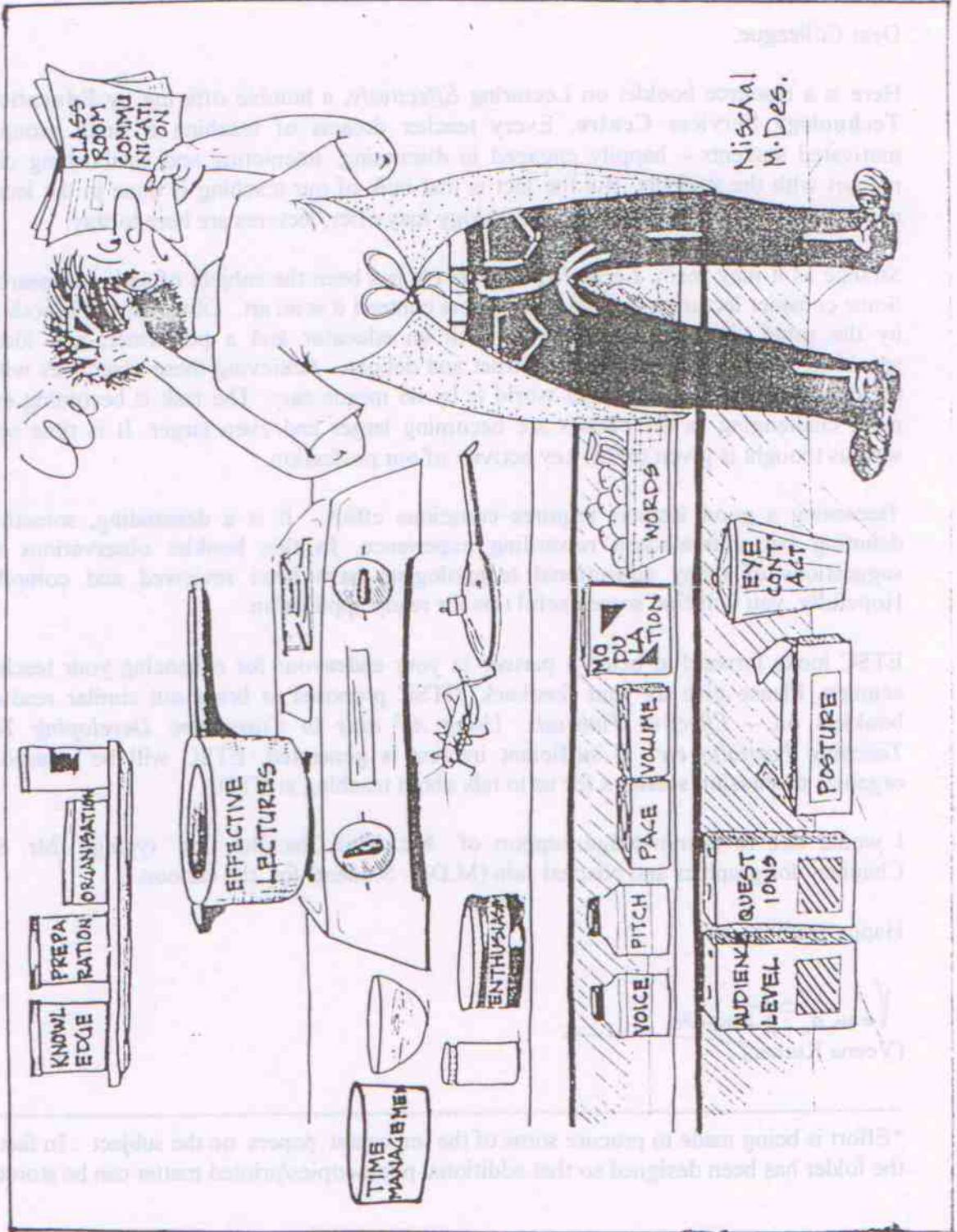
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THE LECTURE MODE IS HERE TO STAY

Whatever the pedagogical and technological advances may promise the world, let us accept the fact that the lecture mode is here to stay as the mainstay of our profession. Lecture mode has its own advantages such as :

a) Time, cost and energy efficiency
b) Up-to-date information.
b) Summaries of materials / view points from a variety of experts and printed sources.
c) A pattern for organisation of material which helps the students to read more effectively

Styles of lecturing vary across disciplines and from individual to individual. There is no single, best model. In time, one evolves one's own style guided by native good sense and personal experience of what works for a given discipline, with a given set of students.

Substantial amount of research has been done on this particular mode of teaching and some of the conclusions are worth contemplating upon. A little awareness and planning can sharpen our skills and make the task more enjoyable for the learner and more rewarding for the teacher.

SOME DETERRENTS

Like any other profession, teaching also has its set of deterrents which lead to underachievement. Some universal ones are listed below.

- Very large classes
- Lack of adequate/desired facilities
- Difference in students' and teacher's expectations.
- Lack of accountability
- Lack of visible rewards
- Preoccupation with completing the course work.
- Heterogeneity of Learner group.
- Monotony of daily routine

To these, one may add individual and situational deterrents. In any case, it is important to identify them, face them and make a conscious effort to overcome them.

SOME PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES

To be a good lecturer one needs to be sensitive to **three** key pedagogical issues –

a) Learners process information differently.
b) Learners have limited attention span. &
c) Learners need to be constantly motivated.

a) **How Students Process Information** - According to the well accepted concept forwarded by Craik and Lockart, there are two different modes for processing information. Some students *Surface Process* the information provided, assimilating only key words and facts. Other students need to see implications of what is being said and try to relate it to real life experience. They learn more actively and do *Deep Processing* of the information being provided.

The important point to be noted is *that there is need for both types of processing.* More experienced students can probably vary their strategies depending upon the demands of situation but the new, inexperienced learner, should be guided more closely. First, the learners need to be made aware of their own style of learning and develop the competency for changing strategies.

An important related issue is students' capability for **notes taking**. Contrary to what we might like to believe, most students are ill equipped in this skill. They are unable to sift information at the pace at which it is delivered. The teachers must guide the students when to take down notes and when to listen attentively. The fact is that to an average student, the most important task of attending a class is being able to take down everything a teacher says. That is the reason why students rarely ask questions, at least intelligent, searching ones.

It is therefore, strongly recommended that the teacher should spend sometime, preferably in the very first meeting about his/her requirement of notes taking. One tutorial class may be devoted to this activity. Random checking can be done to evaluate the degree to which they have been able to assimilate, translate and summarize the information provided.

* References in this document would help the reader to search more material on this issue .

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b) **The attention span** : Studies show that attention fluctuates. It is high at the outset but after 15-20 minutes there is a marked decline followed by a peak just before the lecture ends.

THE ATTENTION SPAN

Passage of Time
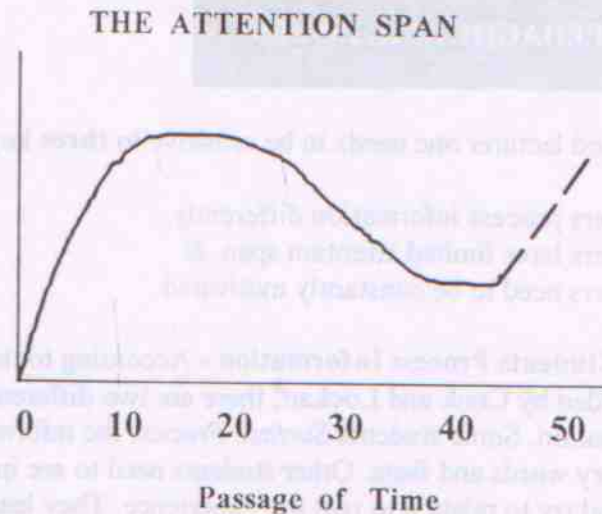
The teacher should make the most of these *peak times* by scheduling dicussion about the most important points of the lecture. The down time, on the other hand, should be improved by:

- introducing **change of activities** demanding a shift from passive listening to active response. This can be done by:
  - i) varying the pace;
  - ii) showing a visual;
  - iii) asking the students to write something;
  - iv) using humour to enliven the atmosphere;
  - v) raising questions; or
  - vi) using a buzz-group activity

- **breaking up the session into several little units.** Each unit could then have its own attention-promoting little activity. This effectively creates more high-attention periods and promotes deep processing.

A good way to make the most of the second rise in attention span is to summarize the key points at the end of the lecture.

d) Sustaining Student Motivation

This is the most challenging task a teacher is faced with. Of course, the six foolproof words are – **" This will be on the test"**. We know that there is a tendency not to do anything unless it 'counts" and the anonymity lent by a large class often lures students towards mediocrity. The teacher needs to carefully workout strategies to generate

motivation. Then, there are some common assumptions associated with the profession such as :

- If the content is interesting it will be sufficient to capture students' attention.
- Students in general are good listeners and will let you know *if and when* they do not understand.
- Students are adequately equipped for following lectures (e.g. note-taking skills, necessary background knowledge and vocabulary).
- Students are eager to participate (e.g. analyzing a text, solving a problem).
- It is impossible to involve students in interactive learning in large-group teaching situations.

The fact is that each one of these assumptions is a myth and a challenge to be reckoned with. Some of the following ways have been found to be very effective for sustaining student motivation:

- *Make students partners in the teaching-learning process*: Explain the objectives of the course and how the workload is to be shared.

- *Be sensitive about students' needs* : Show that you are aware of their needs and value their feedback. You will need to establish your credibility by taking action wherever appropriate. Also share with them the strategies you will be adopting for teaching and evaluating the course. It is a good idea to announce your **office hours**: timings when you will be available for individual consultation right in the beginning of the course.

- *Provide extrinsic motivation* : By giving occasional spot quizzes, or surprise tests. Studies show that teachers who follow this practice generally have students learning actively in *ready* mode.

- *Allow for some quiet time :* It is important to make periodic pauses, lasting perhaps no more than a minute. This gives the students the opportunities for concentrating on clarifying and organising their thoughts without worrying about keeping pace with the delivery of the lecture. However, to make the most of this time, silent thinking must be insisted upon and chatting firmly discouraged.

PREPARING THE BLUE PRINT

The importance of preparing *blue prints* in any activity is obvious. Before beginning, it is crucial to determine the specific objective(s) of each lecture. What do you want your students to learn? What are the key concepts and issues that need to be addressed? What essential skills the students will be acquiring after receiving the information?

Having defined the objectives, make sure that *these are clearly communicated to the students*. Three key areas where careful planning is required are :

- **Knowledge base** - It is impossible to deliver a good lecture without the right knowledge base – content which is well chosen and well structured. The next important point is to ascertain at what level to pitch the lecture. Logically, the lecture should be pitched at the average level of the class which is not always easy to determine. An early diagnostic test or brief questionnaire will enable you to ascertain their level and to discover what students already know. The short test/questionnaire will also help you to identify students who do not have adequate background knowledge and need special help.

- **Clarity** - You need to worry about clarity both in organization and delivery of the lecture. Ensure that the lecture moves in a logical manner and the movement is clearly understood by the students. Also, it is important to ensure that you can be heard and that what you show can be seen by all students. It is generally better to use simple and explicit language, though sometimes - e.g. to provoke students to think and ask questions - you may choose to be vague or ambiguous over certain points. Pace the delivery so that it can be followed by the average student in your class.

- **Generating Interest** – This is a very important component for the success of the lecture. Remember, the surest way to kill interest is to read or dictate a lecture, interest can be enhanced by :

  - Adopting different approaches and openings in your lecture.
  - Making effective use of audio-visual aids.
  - Encouraging student involvement, and
  - Introducing variety in pace of delivery and intonation.

STRUCTURING THE CONTENT

To get the best of the lecture, the content should be selected and structured *with not the course but the learner in mind.* Two types of structuring is required – first, at the **macro level** – the entire course needs to be structured to suit the given objectives, available time and the given set of learners. This involves identification of teaching points and the time required to cover them. It is worth making a detailed chart indicating the topic against each class meeting. This may, (and often does) change drastically but a rough planning before the commencement of course is highly recommended.

Second, at the **micro level** - each lecture needs to be worked on. There should be clear planning regarding specific objectives, list of activities and possible questions etc. to be covered in each lecture. Special activities/exercises can then be incorporated for generating interest and sustaining attention can be worked out.

Educational technologists would like to remind you that a very important consideration is the instructional design you choose for your course. Different subjects/topics need to be structured differently. Some subjects/topics are best organized in a linear or hierarchical fashion in which one concept builds upon the preceding one.

Other subjects/topics are better organized in the manner of a spiral or helix in which the path from one level to the next is not linear but where every new point passes through the previous one.