Chapter 12
Promoting the use of Classroom Response Systems

Martin Charlesworth
University of Huddersfield, UK

ABSTRACT
This paper discusses the possible reasons why classroom response systems are little used by teachers, the benefits of using such a system for teaching, and how their greater use could be promoted. The primary source of research was a series of personal interviews with University academic staff and students. Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students commented both in their capacity as teachers using them in the classroom, and how they also used them as students. In addition data was collected from traditional undergraduate students. The research found that students enjoyed using classroom response systems and those who were typically a little shy were less inhibited to voice their opinions when they could contribute using a response system. The benefits to teachers were increased student engagement and the provision of a simple and quick means of student feedback which improves a teacher’s awareness of their learners understanding and progress. PGCE students were found to be very keen to integrate a response system into the classroom when they started teaching, but established teachers were found to be more hesitant, due to their lack of awareness of the pedagogical benefits and the tutor’s lack of understanding how to set up and use the system.

1. INTRODUCTION
Students are exposed to many different types of media and technology, many of which merely turn students into passive receivers of information. Student attention and engagement is paramount for successful learning and having a wide variety of tools at a teacher’s disposal can help increase a learner’s engagement, satisfaction and progression provided it is used appropriately and learners can appreciate the benefits of it.

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is a fast moving and continually evolving element of education. There are new innovations and technology being developed and they are all competing for tutor attention. This paper focuses
Promoting the use of Classroom Response Systems

on one specific type of educational technology, a Classroom Response System. There are many different types on the market but all are similar in that they allow tutors to pose questions to a class and receive responses from them via a handset or keypad that uses either wireless or infrared technology to communicate with a receiver unit. Most systems require dedicated software to be installed on the host computer and most can integrate with commercial presentation software or present information via their own interface.

The degree of sophistication and features available on the response handsets can vary. The Activote system (http://www.prometheanworld.com) produced by Promethean (Figure 1) is a chunky handset with large buttons that is ideal for primary school children to use.

It does have limitations, the lack of a display screen makes it difficult to know if you have responded or not, and it also means that the tutor cannot give feedback to the students. In addition the type of response you can give is limited as the only response keys available are the letters A to F, meaning that the tutor has to explain what response each button will mean. Other models such as the Qwizdom Q4 have a user display together with both true / false and multiple choice response keys, while the Qwizdom Q6 (http://www.qwizdom.co.uk) (Figure 2) also allows numerical or text inputs via an alphanumeric keypad similar to a mobile telephone.

Most classroom response systems allow the presenter to request immediate feedback from the class that can be viewed on screen by everyone, either as numerical values or charts, with the more sophisticated systems having both the facility to analyse response results instantly and allowing them to be saved for further statistical analysis at a later time. Some systems also allow individual scores to be added to personal records of achievement and class reports to be generated.

No matter what the benefits of a classroom response system are, it is a waste of resources and money if the system is not used. The reason could possibly be due to its potential users being unaware how to use it or set up such a system or a lack of knowledge about its pedagogical benefits.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

For many people, integrating computer assisted learning into education is important. Students state that it enables better access to resources and complements traditional face to face teaching according to Ramsden (2008). To some, it could be seen as a saviour that can be used to teach anything, but it must be accepted that ICT is not universally the best or only solution. It is a familiar medium to most students and learners are likely to have come across ICT technology in all aspects of life from telecommunications to entertainment.

A study by Schmid (2008) showed the benefits of using a response system with university undergraduates. When used with international students it was found to create active student participation and promote inclusion. Questions were posed at the beginning of the lesson to identify what the students already knew, and were designed to initiate debate.
Related Content

Pop Lyrics and Mobile Language Learning: Prospects and Challenges
[www.igi-global.com/article/pop-lyrics-and-mobile-language-learning/188411?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/pop-lyrics-and-mobile-language-learning/188411?camid=4v1a)

Through the Looking Glass: Immersive Interfaces for Participant Engagement in Blended E-Learning Environments
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/through-looking-glass/59814?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/through-looking-glass/59814?camid=4v1a)

Connecting the Educational and Fuzzy Worlds
[www.igi-global.com/chapter/connecting-the-educational-and-fuzzy-worlds/133464?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/chapter/connecting-the-educational-and-fuzzy-worlds/133464?camid=4v1a)

Using Smartphone Technology in Environmental Sustainability Education: The Case of the Maasai Mara Region in Kenya
[www.igi-global.com/article/using-smartphone-technology-in-environmental-sustainability-education/110135?camid=4v1a](www.igi-global.com/article/using-smartphone-technology-in-environmental-sustainability-education/110135?camid=4v1a)