# Assessing a triad of digital technologies (backchannels, blogs and student response systems)

Dr David Hindley @drdavehindley

Department of Sport Science

# Some context



### Student feedback

Taught sessions could be more interactive



### PDCR

(Self-imposed) target for personal/professional development



### Constraints

Time poor, fear of failure



### Literature

Descriptive narratives of approaches and the potential pedagogical benefits



### Practice

What are the practical challenges of embedding new technologies in the classroom?

# My random thoughts

- It's all about the assessment
- I want to be entertained (lecturer as performer)
- Definitely *not* use Powerpoint
- Make it practical/hands-on (scavenger hunt, build stuff with lego)
- Physical activity (go for a run/walk)
- Offer accreditation
- FOMO/peer pressure
- Take the classroom outdoors
- Free prosecco and pizza*
- A sense of mystery
- Timetable appropriately
- Don't record it
- Attendance isn't an issue – I only want those who want to be there to turn up
- Actually it's better when some don't show up

"Our understanding of learning has expanded at a rate that has far outpaced our conceptions of teaching. A growing appreciation for the porous boundaries between the classroom and life experience, along with the power of social learning, authentic audiences, and integrative contexts, has created not only promising changes in learning but also *disruptive moments* in teaching" (Bass, 2012:1)

# Disrupting Ourselves: The problem of learning in Higher Education

# A triad of approaches

### Backchannels

Using social media to facilitate discussion

### Student Response Systems

Experimenting with quizzes and polls

### Blogging

An alternative genre of academic writing

Increased ubiquity of mobile devices

Potential role for social media as a facilitator and enhancer of learning is worth investigating

Mobile devices can be used as a bridge between formal and informal learning opportunities (Gikas & Grant, 2013)

Many scholars argue for the purposeful integration of social media as an educational tool

A number of affordances and drawbacks have been identified

Empirical evidence, however, has lagged in supporting the claim

'The jury is still out. In fact, the trial is just beginning …' (Tess, 2013:66)
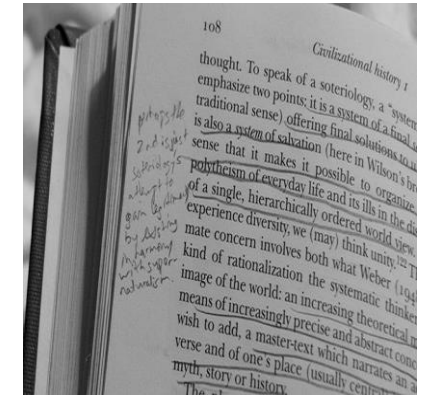
# Emergent themes from selected academic literature

# Backchannel

o  A backchannel is a line of communication created by people in an audience to connect with others inside or outside the room, with or without the knowledge of the speaker at the front of the room. Usually facilitated by internet technologies, it is spontaneous, self-directed, and limited in time to the duration of a live event. A backchannel can be constructive when it enhances and extends helpful information and relationships, and it can be destructive when it articulates and amplifies counterproductive emotions and sentiments (Atkinson 2010:17)
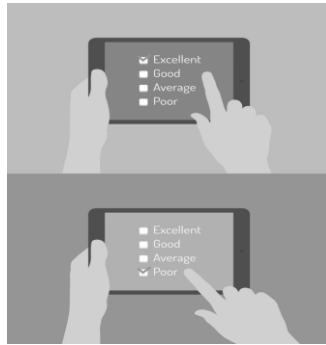
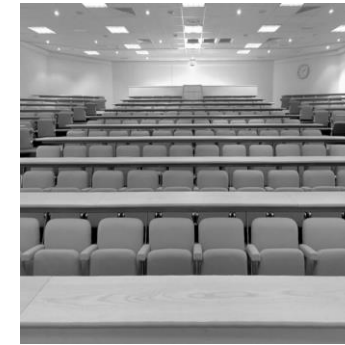# A parallel conversation (Atkinson, 2010)



Searchable set of notes

Easy to share links

Read and respond

Promotes interaction

Opening the classroom

Offering suggestions

# Fancy a go? ...

http://backchannelchat.com/chat/m4z89

Or go to http://backchannelchat.com/ and enter the code m4z89

# Some questions

- What do students expect from their lectures/seminars?
- What are the ground rules?
- Who is accountable?
- How do you prevent distraction, rudeness, and loss of control?
- How do you combat apathy?
- When is a backchannel appropriate, and when is it not?

# Student Response Systems

o A student response system (SRS) is any system used in a face-to-face setting to poll students and gather immediate feedback in response to questions posed by instructors

o Examples could include: a show of hands to agree or disagree with a question; the use of coloured flashcards; clickers

# Some suggestions



## Mentimeter

Mentimeter is free, very simple to use, and unlimited. Wide range of question types.

In free version 2 question per event but no restriction on number of events.



## Poll Everywhere

Pre-prepared questions including Multiple Choice, Open Ended, Q&A/Brainstorm and Clickable Image questions. Can be embedded into PowerPoint.



## Kahoot!

Pre-prepared series of multiple choice questions in a quiz game style with countdown timer, music and scores.

Add video, images or diagrams to questions to increase engagement

# Blogging

- A blog is commonly thought of as 'a frequently updated web-based chronological publication, a log of personal thoughts and web-links, a mixture of diary forms around what is happening in a person's life, and reports and comments on what is happening on the Web and the world out there' (Lovink 2008: 3).

- O'Donnell (2006) labels blogging as a form of personal publishing that shapes authorship through its structured yet flexible forms. It is best understood theoretically as a communicative practice: a blog is conversational and both establishes and supports conversations with both self and others.

- https://edubloggingblog.tumblr.com/

# Somewhere in between (Morris, 2018)

### Write a blog

- Students submit an individual blog post on a sporting issue of their choosing. In keeping with the blogging genre, contributions had to be short (600 words) and incorporate web links, copyright free images and hashtags.

### Stimulate conversation

- Students were asked to comment on at least three of their peers' posts, as well as attracting readers and commentators to their own blog.

### Reflection

- This combined to make up the formative part of the assessment, with fed directly into the summative assessment: a 3,000-word sociological analysis of their chosen issue, of which a third is earmarked to reflecting upon the process of blog writing and how this informed their understanding.

○ "Blogging enables students to perceive of themselves as writers … respondents would repeatedly speak about their experience of blogging in terms of identity, with some referring to themselves as becoming 'bloggers' and 'writers'. In some cases, the interactive and participatory nature of the blog made them appreciate they were academics in their own right, fulfilling a role as an agent of change by raising awareness of an underexplored issue" (Hindley & Clughen, 2018:91)

'Yay! Not another academic essay!' Blogging as an alternative academic genre

# The awkward bit at the end

E-mail: david.hindley@ntu.ac.uk

Twitter: @drdavehindley