

New developments - Audience response systems for large enrollment undergraduate classes – does it make a difference?

Jacques E. Morin

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, USA

Abstract

The use of audience response systems in classroom is a relatively new phenomenon in university classrooms. While many such systems have been employed in the business setting and large gatherings for many years, its application in a classroom setting remains a novelty. Several manufacturers now produce devices intended for classroom use – either a stand alone system or student purchased device incorporated into a classroom set up by the instructor.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill introduced an audience response system last fall to an initial audience of 293 students in an undergraduate sociology class. This spring, an additional audience of nearly 1200 students in four core courses were introduced to the technology. This short paper reports on the success of the pilot program, student and faculty satisfaction with the devices and learned lessons with this type of equipment as well as the success and challenges with corporate partnerships

Demonstration plan

This brief paper will provide a report of the current project but will be presented in a fresh approach to a conference presentation. The presentation will utilize a stand alone audience response system¹ which will be provided by UNC Chapel Hill. The pilot project report will be presented using this system with a maximum number of participants set at 50. The system will be used to gauge audience response in contrast to UNC Chapel Hill survey results. The survey was designed at UNC Chapel to obtain feedback on the technology from the students as well as the instructors using the tool in the classroom. A comparison of responses between the UNC respondents and those in the presentation will provide an excellent opportunity to demonstrate as well as discuss this new technology in a classroom setting.

Survey Results

All students in the sociology class were surveyed (n=293). The survey was conducted using a web based survey tool and included a total of 11 questions. A total of 124 responses (42%) were returned. The questions were intended to examine student's attitudes about the use of technology in the classroom, its application for this course and its impact on learning. A sampling of questions and results are outlined below in Table 1 below.

Table 1.

2. Do you feel that using the wireless (CPS) system during class helped you learn the material?		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Yes, definitely		4	3%
Helped frequently		7	6%
Helped occasionally		52	42%
Not at all		61	49%
Total		124	100%

3. Does the use of the wireless (CPS) system change the likelihood that you attend class?		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Yes, definitely		13	11%
Helped frequently		16	13%
Helped occasionally		31	25%
Not at all		62	51%
Total		122	100%

4. Overall, would you rate the wireless (CPS) system as a positive or a negative addition to this class?		Number of Responses	Response Ratio
Very positive		7	6%
Slightly positive		48	39%
Indifferent		27	22%
Negative		42	34%
Total		124	100%

Summary

Overall, the use of the devices in the classroom was deemed a positive experience for students, but doubt remains about the value of the equipment in terms of enhancing learning for students. Additional trials are required to provide a truly integrated experience for students to gain a comfort level with this technology and to provide an opportunity for faculty to learn how to use it effectively in teaching.

¹ System donated by E Instruction (www.einstruction.com)