EAP programme management by text message

"Timeless time", & "placeless place"...(Castells 2000)

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This session...

1. Why text?

2. Text messaging three functions:
   i. *Real time 'instant' management*
   ii. *Mediating the curriculum*
   iii. *Social bonding*

3. The risks of management via text

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Our context in 2012

A summer pre sessional course:

- ❑ In house EGAP & ESAP materials used throughout
- ❑ 3 intakes: 12, 8, and 4 weeks
- ❑ A three person management team – *all owning smartphones*

- ❑ 40 teachers –
- • 50% new to Durham on 8 week programme
- • 80% new to Durham on 4 week programme

- ❑ Split across three sites and two wings of our main site

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1. Why Text?

Existing communication systems:

❑ Face to face – teachers' meetings & conversations

❑ Email – group, & one to one

❑ Paper –
i.   In house course books & assessment guides
ii. Notice boards
iii. Flyers in teachers' in trays

Little different from the standard management communications literature

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Challenges...

An increasingly complex programme to manage – pedagogically & logistically

- Curriculum 'breakouts' to five different ESAP streams
- Classes spread across sites + visas, police registration & NHS registration

❑ Face to Face – too "territorially anchored" *(Castells 2000)* - lacks reach & mobility
❑ Email – too asynchronous & lacks mobility; and informality?
❑ Paper – lacks interactivity, lacks speed "dromologically constrained" *(Virilio 1986)*

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The emergence of management via text

2011 – two to three teachers became regular texters

❑ Texting me when I wasn't around to answer questions
❑ Texting during class and student induction events when the unexpected happened...

My reaction:
❑ At first – should teachers be texting out of classrooms?
❑ Later – an opportunity for real time management of the teaching team!

2012 – encourage all teachers to use the mobile phone numbers list for texting - promoted dromology

➢ my change from pay as you to contract smartphone enabled this

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So EAP meets modernity (at last)

The use of texting moves us further towards:

❑ An "annihilation of space" *(Virilio 1989)*

❑ Exploiting "multiple temporal rhythms" *(Virilio 1986)*

❑ Extending management's gaze into the classroom; a virtual panopticon?

❑ "timeless time" & "placeless place" *(Castells 2000)*

Which could help conquer our logistic and pedagogical complexity…

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2012 – what happened?

Enthusiastic, substantial, but very uneven use of texting by the teaching team

❑ 505 texts exchanged in total

❑ 78 in one month from teacher *y*

❑ 0 in two months from teacher *x 'I am not texting, email... phone me if its urgent'*

Teachers and managers "socially shaped" *(Baym 2010)* the new media

"The medium" was NOT simply "the message"! *(Mcluhan 1964)*

So how was texting used?

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2. Three Forms of Text Communication

Texting functions:

i.   Real time 'instant' management

ii. Mediating the curriculum

i.   "Social bonding" *(de Waal 1998)*

i. Real time management e.g. 1

Hello Chris! Trying a spot of dromology…please cld we get 1 copy of politeness strategy stuff in our boxes later today so we can prep for tmrw? Many thanks! ☺

Unbelievable speed! They just arrived in my classroom – 6 mins from text to delivery Blimey I'm impressed! ☺

☺

i. Real time management e.g. 2

Hi chris – I forgot policy – can we leave notes on the board during timed writing? Or wipe off?

Yes you can leave notes on wboard; but they can't have private notes on their desk

Thanks

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Thus...

1. Space and time were being collapsed!

2. Things that would have become problems later in the day never did...

3. Teachers feel they are not out there alone

But...

4. What happens if everyone texts simultaneously?

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ii. Mediating the curriculum e.g. 1

Hi Chris-really sori 2 disturb you yr b/day w/end away but just wantd 2 chek if its ok to award a D-grade for the the timed writing? Sum of mine r fairly woeful! Thanx.

If you feel it's a d, then that is ok. Some students do make a mess of the timed writing it can serve as a wake up. I can have a look tomorrow if u want…

Ok thanx Chris-mite get u 2 have a look at it 2moro. Enjoy Dublin!

Am doing so!

ii. Mediating the curriculum e.g. 2

Hi chris, the refs for the finance are very quant and students finding abstract and conc only accessible and useful. How much quant and models should they have in the ext essay? One is worried that it's going to be like a diss. thanks

They really don't need many, in the past students have done the essay successfully without piles of quantitative data

Get the students to focus on the conclusions authors have made about the models rather than unpacking the models themselves

Great, have told them that. Student has just told me he hasn't done any reading yet! Agh!

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Thus…

1. I was able to steer the curriculum and compensate for paper's lack of interactivity

2. I could engage in discussion about the goals of our curriculum

3. I could compensate for the fact that curriculum meetings are not perfect

But…

4. In e.g. 2 was I guilty of micro managing the curriculum – ventriloquising the teacher…

iii. "Social Bonding" *de Waal (1998)* e.g. 1

Tommy [the security guard] locking up at 9.30

Thanks Steve, I appreciate it [*small gremlin like symbol*]

Hope you don't need to to stay too late. Really appreciate you you always putting so much in. students benefit massively

Aw thanks Steve. That is very nice to hear.

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iii. Social Bonding e.g. 2

Hope you're ok. You looked mighty distracted when we passed in town. Hope you get some down time tonight!

Am fine, off daydreaming ☺

Good good!

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Thus…

1. The normal social interactions that take place with year round colleagues can be replicated

2. Encounter your teaching colleagues – as colleagues hierarchies flattened
   Castells (2000)

But…

3. To what extent is the text and the mobile phone a socially different place compared to face to face communication

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3. The Risks of Management via Text

Risk 1: "Perpetual Contact" *Katz & Aarhus (2002)*

Do the management team find themselves living across:
 "multiple temporal rhythms" *(Virilio 1986)*

Is this desirable?

Does perpetual contact = contact overload?

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Risk 2: Blurring the public & private worlds

❑ Crystal (2008) found people are very, very private about their texting; much more so than emails

❑ The mobile phone is a private space– in some societies a very private sphere

❑ Does management via text invade this space?

❑ Possibility for social missteps

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Risk 3: Exclusion & Hierarchy

Why Castells is right and wrong:

Exclusion:

❑ "what is not in the network does not exist for the network" *Castells (2000)*

Hierarchy:

❑ Texting in 2012 was used in a one to one form – were some teachers enjoying a stronger bond with the management team

❑ Maybe networks don't necessarily flatten hierarchies

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Would we use texting again?

Yes

But…

❑   increased use of group messaging – properly utilise the the technology I've bought

And…

❑   do it even more frequently!

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Should you do it: yes, but...

Language, including texting, can be considered to be "a local practice"
(Pennycook 2010)

How you and your institution 'socially shapes' texting in your institution will be different depending on your 'local practices'

And finally... theorise your practice; engaging with the 'high theory' of Castells, Virilio and Baym helped reflect on and question what I last this year

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