

Chapter 2

Podcasts as Learner–Created Content in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Using podcasts in higher education has caught more and more attention among educators and researchers, but there is still a strong need for research and academic publications to focus on certain issues, such as the role of the learners. Instead of lecturers (teachers, scientists, and experts), learners (students, trainees or pupils) produce a podcast with a specific content called learner-created content (LCC). This study aims to find out how students experienced the creating of content as learning material in the form of podcasts. The results are two-fold. First, using podcasts included four categories: (1) the development of meta-skills, (2) mobile learning, (3) support for content learning, and (4) facilitating student involvement. Second, the students saw podcasting as a study tool. The study proved authentic, internally and systemically valid and opened up logical generalizability. Some recommendations are given for a better educational use of podcasts in higher education.

INTRODUCTION AND PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON THE USE OF PODCASTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Podcasts and podcasting as terms have appeared more and more frequently in publications and discussions on higher education in the era of Web 2.0. In fact, these topics have received more and more attention as an interesting area in pedagogical development (Copley, 2007; Evans, 2008; Hew, 2009; Cebezi & Tekdal, 2006; Cooper, 2008; Fernandez, Simo, & Sallan, 2009; Lonn & Teasley, 2009). Researchers, teachers, tutors and staff developers in diverse scientific fields are experimenting with and discussing podcasting and its potential. The aim often is to identify novel higher-education contexts in which podcasting could be used beneficially.

The concept 'podcasting' combines 'broadcasting' and 'iPod', a well-known brand of portable media player produced by Apple. However, instead of a need for any form of portable media player, podcast is basically a digital media file that plays audio or audio together with something to view and is made available from a website (Salmon, Mobbs, Edirisingha, & Dennett, 2008).

Preliminary empirical evidence points to some benefits of podcasts in higher education. Students consider podcasts as elective revision tools (Copley, 2007; Evans, 2008), and podcasts allow them to listen repeatedly to specific materials that they missed or did not understand (Hew, 2009). Students feel that podcasting is a powerful tool to complement the traditional resources in a course (Fernandez, Simo, & Sallan, 2009) and that podcasts have greater value for learning than traditional written comments (Cooper, 2008). In addition, as reported by Lee, McLoughlin, and Chan (2008), podcasts stimulate conceptualizations of disciplinary content and collaborative knowledge creation.

Although a number of studies on podcasts have shown promising improvement in learning results and experiences, research on podcasting is

still in its infancy. As Lee, Miller, and Newhamn (2009) remark, empirical research on educational podcasting is needed to give a better picture of podcasts as a means for learning. They emphasize the importance of learner-created content. Spragey and Pixley (2008) point in the same direction when arguing that listening to recordings created by others is not much different from listening to lectures. The real power of podcast, according to them, is when it is placed in the hands of the students. However, previous research (Lee, McLoughlin, & Chan, 2008; Copley, 2007; Evans, 2008; Hew, 2009; Cebezi & Tekdal, 2006; Cooper, 2008; Fernandez, Simo, & Sallan, 2009; Lonn & Teasley, 2009) has mainly focused on how students use podcasts. Only a small number of academic publications are concerned with the issue podcasts as learner-created content. Following the idea of Spragey and Pixley (2008), this study adds an important aspect on previous studies by analyzing podcasts as learner-created content.

Different types of podcasts have been identified: audio podcasts (only the audio channel), video podcasts (video and audio channel) and enhanced podcasts (audio and additional applications such as templates, whiteboards, discussion forums, PowerPoint presentations, etc.). These types have been implemented in different ways in their introduction to higher education (Salmon, Mobbs, Edirisingha, & Dennett, 2008). Identifying the use of podcasts in higher education makes it necessary to take a closer look at the producers of podcasts and at their aims. We identified three main production groups: 1) teachers, trainers, instructors, etc. (podcasts as teacher-created content), 2) students, trainees, pupils, etc. (podcasts as learner-created content; LCC), and 3) authors, experts, scientists, etc. (podcasts as a source) (Figure 1).

According to research literature, using podcasts as teacher-created content seems to be the most common way at the moment. Teachers produce podcasts to support learners in different ways, for example, by creating a "podcast lecture" in order to clarify difficult topics (Aliotta, Bates, Brunton,

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