

Case 04

Podcasting: Learning on the Go



Background Information

Podcasting is an automated technology that allows people to subscribe and to listen to digitally recorded audio (Flanagan, 2005). What this means is that people can download lectures, movies, television shows, and even minister sermons to a media player. Such a simple idea has prompted questions about the applications this technology could have in the world of education.

Benefits of podcasting to education include cost effective, lectures *on the go*, and cross curriculum learning opportunities. Duke University has conducted one of the most interesting studies on this topic. The study showed that there was no difference in the grades of students who received in-class instruction versus those receiving auditory instruction via podcasts.

Preview

New trends in technology classroom integration have led to innovations such as interactive smartboards, classroom performance systems, and wireless devices. One of the latest technology advances has led to students being able to *learn on the go*. More specifically, downloading content and having it available whenever and wherever has led to an innovation referred to as “podcasting”.

Focus Questions

As you study the following case study, keep these questions in mind: (1) What are the financial obligations involved in the podcasting process? (2) How much training will it take for the teacher to learn the process? (3) What are the long term benefits of podcasting in education?

The Case

Learning on the Go

Imagine the following: A university allows professors to give students the opportunity to download lectures as podcasts. Professors provide in-class instruction and also post the lectures

for students to download. Therefore, students have several options. Many may choose to use only the audio file for instruction instead of attending the class. Others may attend the class and reap the benefits of having an audio recording of the lecture available for later review. Students would no longer have to rely only on their notes from the class for information, for they would be able to simply re-play the professor's exact words on a topic. This means, for college students, not going to class *could* become an acceptable practice. These students can download lectures in a flash and listen to them at their convenience. The question is then posed, what about music or a foreign language class? In fact, appropriate instruction for these classes could also be provided using this technology. Teachers can upload native music, literature, language lessons, and even plays through podcasting. How about having a guest speaker who is not on campus, but virtually with you in your bedroom, kitchen, jogging with you, or where ever else you take your media player?

Podcasting cannot be all good; there has to be some down side to it, right? Indeed, there are a few drawbacks to this new technology. Some include potential copyright infringement, unsuitable information for all audiences, technical support, training teachers, and lack of student interaction (Flanagan, 2005). Teachers cannot just download information and distribute the information; they must have permission to use content. Also, podcasting is currently unregulated, so there may be unsuitable information available online to students. Technical support can be a problem in different areas, one being the potential large amounts of storage space needed. Lastly, there must be some training for teachers in order to have their class experience the maximum benefits of podcasting. There must also be a commitment from the institution to provide support and training for the teachers to be able to effectively and efficiently integrate podcasting as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning.

Podcasting is a rapidly evolving technology. Its benefits are only limited by its users' creativity. Podcasting can appeal to educators on two levels. First, the ease of production allows one to disseminate information by recording and making it available for others to download. Secondly, the element of convenience allows teachers to record instructions and lectures for their students to download. This alleviates the necessity for the teacher to attend a class as well. "Essentially, there's nothing new about podcasting -it's simply another source for compelling content." (Warlick, 2005, p. 70).

Questions for Discussion

1. As a teacher, what must you do to prepare your class for podcasting?
2. What are the potential detrimental effects on education for podcasting use? What are the potential benefits?
3. If a teacher uses podcasts, what are the students' obligations for the class?
4. Should there be options for class attendance?

Links

Apple itunes: www.itunes.com
Audacity: www.audacity.sourceforge.net
Audible: www.audible.com
Feedburner: www.feedburner.com
Flickr: www.flickr.com
Pod Safe Audio: www.podsafeaudio.com
Indie Podder: www.ipodder.org
Podcast Alley: www.podcastalley.com

Resources

Anderson, L. (2005). Podcasting: Transforming middle schoolers into middle scholars. *The Journal*, Retrieved February 7, 2006, from <http://www.thejournal.com>

Bull, G. (2005, November 3). Podcasting and the long tail. *Learning and Leading with Technology*, 3 (33), 24-25.

Calandra, B, Flanagan, B. (2005, November 3). Podcasting and the long tail. *Learning and Leading with Technology*, 3 (33), 20-22.

Heinen, T. (2005). Podcasting becomes another pulpit. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*, Retrieved February 7, 2006, from <http://www.jsonline.com>

Warlick, D. (2005). Podcasting. *Technology & Learning*. 70. Retrieved February 6, 2006 from <https://libdata.lib.ua.edu/login?qurl=http%3a%2f%2fwww.lexisnexis.com%2funiverse>