

Simplifying Podcasting

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The article intends to simplify the different aspects of podcasting. The article covers types of podcasts; the pedagogical benefits of podcasting; the connection between theory and podcasting; answers to questions, queries, and apprehensions. Before trying out a new tool, it is important to understand why we do things the way we do. A crucial part of using any tool or technology is to understand, test, and determine the pedagogical appropriateness of it for specific context. Through the article, the author has tried to suggest some of the uses of podcasting along with the pedagogical appropriateness in different scenarios. At the end, the author has tried to (through pictorial representation) describe the podcasting community and the tasks performed by the community members. Also, through a pictorial representation, the author has provided a gist of the podcasting creation process as a producer and as a consumer.

Podcasting is the hottest topic in the training industry, including the educational as well as corporate sectors. With this new tool in the market, different groups of people have emerged – Naïve, Inquisitives, Beginners/First-timers, Experimenters, Enthusiasts, Intermediates, Experts, and Critiques. Often, the term “podcasting” overwhelms many people, especially who plan to or who try it out for the first time. The process of podcasting can also frustrate people if podcasting does not work the way they expected it to work. The first-timers, naïves, beginners can refer to the article to get an overview of the podcasting process. The group of experimenters, intermediates, and enthusiasts might refer to the article to deepen their knowledge about podcasting. The group of experts and critiques might want to skim through the article to find solutions to the questions or queries on which they have been mulling over for a long time. Many people are exploiting podcasting (medium of entertainment) for education. There are different factors driving people’s attention toward podcasting.

Social Software

Learning is a social process. The medium of learning has transformed from face-to-face to e-learning to c-learning (communicative learning, collaborative learning, constructivist learning, or community learning). The three most important things in c-learning are interaction, social feedback, and social networking. Today’s competitive world requires us to provide resources and inculcate skills that will help today’s generation to keep up with the rapid growing technological world and to continue learning throughout their lives. The questions we should ask ourselves are, “What do today’s learners want? How do they want the learning to occur? What are the best ways to teach today’s young generation?” Learning is a process of rich and diverse experiences that are possible through collaboration and interaction with as many

people as possible. How do young people learn? Young people want hands-on experience, action, interaction, identity in cyberculture, and connectivity with the world. They want a change in the role from consumers to producers. They want learning to be a social process. To enable social learning, educators are coming up with the ideas of social software. Podcasts, blogs, and wikis fall under the category of social software. The term “social software” came into use in 2002. The use of this term is credited to Clay Shirky, who defined social software as “software that supports group interaction” (as cited in Owen, Grant, Sayers, & Facer, 2006, p. 12). According to Owen et al., (2006), social software and the changing goals of education seem to be moving in the same direction (p. 12). There is a growing trend of digital culture in the current generation of learners. The time is not far away when young learners will be taught B for Blogs, I for iPod, M for MSN, G for Google, P for Podcasting, W for Wikis, and Y for Yahoo! Integration of technology in education and as a part of their lives is a cultural phenomenon where these fragmented learners want continuous connectivity with the world and on-demand content at their “computer-step.”

Podcasting Definition

Podcasting – a simple process of disseminating audio content – tends to overwhelm many first time users. Wikipedia (2007) defines Podcasting, as “a portmanteau of Apple’s ‘iPod’ and ‘broadcasting’, a method of publishing files to the Internet, allowing users to subscribe to a feed and receive new files automatically by subscription, usually at no cost.” I define podcasting as, *Providing on-demand content at a student’s desktop in the net generation.* Podcasting is an optimum way of using the music devices, especially mp3 players, for the purpose of education. Earlier mp3 players symbolized activities such as Listen and Enjoy! Now, they symbolize activities such as Listen, Enjoy,

and Learn! Podcasting, an amalgamation of two words - iPod and Broadcasting has spread rapidly in the field of education throughout the world. There are a myriad uses of podcasting – ranging from the uses in corporate world to uses in the academic world. People are using podcasting in as many areas as possible; where there is audio, there is podcasting. Podcasting is a simple process of capturing human voice, uploading it online, and sharing it with the whole world. In today's education system, educators are trying to create a community-based, collaborative learning environment as opposed to narrowcasting learning to a single learner. The New Oxford American Dictionary entitled "Podcast" as the *Word of the Year* for 2005 (MacDailyNews, 2005). A podcasting process involves the following:

- *Thinking* about a topic to podcast
- *Creating* a podcast
 - *Recording* podcast episodes (mp 3 format)
 - *Uploading* the podcast episodes on a webpage
- *Creating* an RSS feed for the podcast
- *Subscribing* to the podcast
- *Listening* to the podcast
 - *Downloading* the podcast
 - *Transferring* the podcast to an mp3 player

Pedagogical Benefits of Podcasting

Why Should I Get into this Complex Process of Podcasting?

Audio plays a very important role in the learning process. Audio has a few characteristics that text lack. Audio can have a significant impact on understanding of some information. Often, we understand better in a face-to-face lecture than when we read the same content on our own. According to Clark and Walsh, "listening is instinctual, [whereas] reading and writing are not" (as cited in Chan and Lee, 2005, p. 62). Frequency modulation in human voice has an advantage over text when conveying any information. Audio is powerful mode to communicate information – it can add a flavor to information; however, audio does have some drawbacks. Too much of information in an audio format might tend to distract the listener's attention and interest. According to the Scottish Council for Educational Technology, audio is an extremely powerful medium for conveying feelings, attitudes and atmosphere, and less powerful for conveying detail and facts. From a 30-minute audio tape, one will remember general opinions and arguments and not very many facts and figures (as cited in Chan and Lee, 2005). Podcasting encapsulates the power of audio. Durbridge identified audio's educational advantages as its ability

to influence cognition through clarity of instructions and emotional aspects of learning by conveying immediacy and a connection with the teacher (as cited in Edirisingha, 2006). Hargis and Wilson (n.d.) relate the concept of podcasting to information processing and conceptual learning. According to them, a podcast (a collection of real, raw, and spontaneous ideas) captures the attention of the listener and can sustain this attention to transfer the concepts into the long term memory. Also, the podcast creation process facilitates self-correcting of ideas and concepts. The hype of the iPod has spread to such an extent that it has become a social symbol to have an iPod. For educators this can be an advantage – students already use these mp3 players – educators can ask them to use it for the purpose of education. According to Clark and Walsh, listening to an mp3 player in public is "socially acceptable" – today's modern young learners (who may be impatient with traditional forms of teaching and learning) like these devices that have a consumer appeal (as cited in Chan and Lee, 2005). According to Ractham and Zhang (2006), podcasting is a knowledge distribution model and represents useful knowledge management artifacts.

Podcasting can serve as a learning strategy for the auditory learners. In this fast-growing technological world, it is very important to provide information to the students in different formats and to offer different dimensions of learning. Kolb's experiential learning circle outlines four phases highlighting four different abilities: concrete experience, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, and active experimentation. Based on these activities, Kolb suggests four types of learning styles: (a) converger, (b) diverger, (c) assimilator, and (d) accommodator (Smith, 2001). Now, let us see how and where the process of podcasting can fit in.

According to Kolb's experiential learning cycle, based on the immediate and concrete experiences, the learner provides reflections and observations. These reflective observations and thinking serve as a foundation for abstract conceptualization. These abstract concepts drive learners' further actions in a new situation and thus create new experiences. As a consumer, listening to a podcast is a concrete experience after which the listener makes observations and reflections. These reflections facilitate strengthening of his/her learning and understanding. In this process, the learner might form abstract concepts which might drive further actions in his/her learning. As a producer, in the podcast creation process, the learner creates a podcast (concrete experience); then reflects on the podcast created (reflective observations) – in terms of concepts learnt; then mulls over the options for improvement (abstract conceptualization); and then takes steps for improvements in learning (active experimentation). According to the VARK

model developed by Fleming and Mills, there are four kinds of learners: (a) visual learners, (b) auditory learners, (c) reading/writing learners, and (d) kinesthetic, tactile, or exploratory learners. Learning material disseminated via podcasts can serve auditory learners, whereas, the process of creating a podcast can fit in the kinesthetic learner category. According to the R2D2 model proposed by Curtis Bonk and Ke Zhang (2006), there are four quadrants in which different learning activities can be classified: (a) reading/writing/listening quadrant; (b) reflecting quadrant; (c) displaying quadrant; and (d) doing quadrant. The R2D2 model suggests different learning activities for active and effective online learning. Here again, podcasting can fit very well in the first quadrant of the R2D2 model in which auditory activities are grouped.

The process of creating podcasts can develop a myriad of skills such as speaking, listening, interviewing, scripting, and communication. By using podcasting as a way to disseminate information, you can harness the technical knowledge and skills that already exists in today's young learners; also, you can use the mp3 players that many of the young learners already possess. Listening to podcasts during "dead times" (for example, free time at the airport) can be used to learn course related content. You can listen to the podcasts when at the gym, when walking your dog, when driving to work or university, or when enjoying a sip of coffee at the cafeteria. Listening to information frees up your eyes and hands – this helps in multi-tasking.

Listening, creating, subscribing to podcasts is an easy-to-use and user-friendly process.

Podcasting works on a subscription model driven by the RSS feeds. The concept of subscription model comes from subscription of a magazine. Based on our interest, we subscribe to magazines of our choice; we need to subscribe to different magazines if we have varied interests. Often, the information in the magazine might not be relevant to us or only half of the information is relevant to us, so we wait for the next copy of the magazine to arrive. Instead, with podcasts, you can subscribe to podcasts that are of interest to you. In addition, you can subscribe to as many podcasts as you want for free. This way you can get relevant information from varied sources. This on-demand delivery of information is possible because of the subscription model; RSS feeds fetch up relevant and up-to-date information for us from the Web sites to which we subscribe. The essence of podcasting is RSS (Really Simple Syndication). RSS feed is a simple code, written in XML, which is used to tag your podcast. This helps to provide immediate notifications of updates. Whenever you update your Web site with new content, the users subscribed to your Web site will

get an immediate notification of the updates, without even having to visit your Web site. The use of the RSS technique saves time and effort required to search for information. If I am interested in getting information from multiple web sites (for instance, from a news web site, from an educational technology web site, and from a technology web site), I just need to subscribe to these web sites and I will get updated information from each web site at one spot. This way, I do not have to visit these web sites everyday and check for updates. This would save my effort and time to search for relevant information.

Types of Podcasts

There are different types of podcasts - *public* podcasts, *personal* podcasts, and *professional* podcasts (educational or corporate). Podcasts can also be classified by the format of content – *basic* podcasts, *enhanced* podcasts, and *video* podcasts. Public podcasts are generic podcasts and are simple to use and easy to understand. You can create a public podcast to disseminate information that you would like to share with the world. You can also subscribe to different public podcasts. Mostly, podcasts are for use for everyone; however, you can narrow your listeners to your friends, family, and colleagues. Personal and professional podcasts are more diverse as compared to the public podcasts, therefore it is important to understand them in detail.

You can create a personal podcast and share your experiences with your family and friends. You can record the special occasions – birthdays, parties, anniversaries, and wedding ceremonies – and make it available for others. Personal podcasting is similar to sharing your photo album; instead it is in the audio format. You can also create video podcasts. You can shoot the videos of the special occasions (which you often do using your digital camera) and share it with others. After you have recorded your experiences – in audio or video format – you can upload the files using a free web-based service such as Edublogs or Podomatic. If your family members and friends have subscribed to your podcast, they will be immediately notified of the new files uploaded on your webpage. You do not have to even inform them! An audio or a video podcast will add emotions and feelings to experiences that a picture would not be able to. So next time when you are on your vacation enjoying lovely beaches of Florida or snow in Canada, remember to record your experiences. It would be like maintaining a digital audio diary of the trip. If you do not prefer outdoor activities, you can record indoor activities – you can spend some time recording stories with your children; start a home-made podcast show on story telling and record the stories.

If you do not want a personal podcast, you can create a professional one. A professional podcast could be an *educational* podcast or a *corporate* podcast. If you are working in an educational institution, you get a chance to exploit podcasting (a medium of entertainment) for the purpose of education. In an educational institution, you can create podcasts at different levels – a class podcast, an instructor podcast, a student podcast, a department podcast, or an institute podcast. If you plan to create a class podcast, you can ask the students to contribute their knowledge via podcasts. The students can record an event, their experiences in real-life, or anything they want to share with the class. You can create your podcast for the class to disseminate extra information that you cannot cover in the class (such as useful tips, help with assignments, project guidelines, feedback, motivational quotes, and so on). You or the students can also podcast an interview of the expert/guest speaker. Your students can maintain their own podcast and share information relevant to the class – you can also grade this activity. Podcasting is the best way to disseminate instantly captured information. Instant recording of experiences – field trips, events, occasions, tours – can be a wonderful learning resource for the students. How can podcasting help in the classroom? Podcasting is one more format for content delivery. Students who miss the lectures can refer to the podcasted lecture. Podcasted lectures might prove helpful for slow learners and learners with English as Second Language to comprehend information in their own pace. Also, English-language learners can use the podcasted lectures of some other language to learn a new language. By providing podcasted lectures, you can prevent note-taking from becoming a speed-writing test. If the learners know in advance that they will receive a podcasted lecture, they can use the face-to-face session for more productive purposes such as for discussions and knowledge sharing. This way, you can cover more content in a short period of time. Also, while taking notes, if the learners miss some information, they can refer to the podcasted lecture.

So, if I record a lecture, will that become a podcast? The answer is “No.” A recorded lecture will not become a podcast. It will become a podcast when you host it on your web site, continue hosting lectures to it, and when your students subscribe to your web site. Students can listen to the lecture podcasts for revising the content. It will help to reinforce their learning. By using podcasts as a medium of learning, you can exploit the power of audio for education – research shows that audio content facilitates memory retention three times more as compared to text. The audio power of podcasting – intonation, expression in voice – conveys a message direct to the listener’s heart/ brain compared to text. You can add a personal touch (emotions,

feelings, tone variations) to your message through audio, that you will not be able to in a textual message. Learning material disseminated as podcasts would prove extremely beneficial for the learners with reading disabilities. A class podcast might turn out to be a useful learning object that you can use later in your classes. An instructor podcast or a class podcast can be useful in language learning. Podcasts can be very helpful for computer science classes, where you or the students can create podcasts to narrate the steps to use software or to write a code. Other students can then listen to these audio guided instructions when performing the task. At a department level, each department can maintain a podcast and provide information to students and faculties. Also, instead of newsletters, departments can have audio podcasts to convey the information. A journalism department can ask other departments to contribute to their publications (audio weekly newsletters). At an institutional level, a podcast can be used to disseminate general information such as university news, school news, announcements, updates, advertisements, alumni talks and tips, and so on.

In schools or universities, the process of creating and maintaining a podcast can be deployed to different departments as part of an assignment. For instance, the students from the educational technology or education department can be involved in the ideation process (coming out with a pedagogically apt idea); the students from the journalism/communication department can script the podcast; the students from the media/production department can record/edit the podcasts; the students from the music department can create music samples that can be used to enhance the podcasts; the students from the Information technology (IT) department can maintain the podcasts. There are many applications of podcasting in education – it is just a matter of your imagination.

There have been many projects and pilot studies going on to try out podcasting. Through a pilot study, Chan and Lee (2005) at the Charles Sturt University investigated the application of podcasting to address the preconceptions and anxiety that first year students bring to the class. In this study, the students viewed podcasting activity as a form of experiential learning that yielded positive gains for them in terms of technical and generic skills (as cited in Lee, Chan, and McLoughlin, 2006). Another example is of a large iPod project carried out at Duke University in which 1,650 iPods were given to the freshmen in the Fall 2004; this project attracted and excited many students, attracted media attention, and made many upperclassmen and professors angry. William Lynch (director of Drexel’s education program) thinks that it is natural to test the use of iPods for educational purpose, when the students have been using iPods for the entertainment purpose (as

cited in Read, 2005). There are many educational institutions – schools and universities – testing the pedagogical benefits of podcasting. Your institution can also start with a pilot project to determine the benefits of podcasting for your institute and your students. However, unlike many universities who are using iPod and collaborating with iTunes for their projects, you can start with a cheap microphone and headphones.

In addition to offering benefits to the education sector, podcasting has something to offer to the *corporate* sector. In the article, “Reaching Employees Through Podcasting,” Edelman (2005) mentions a few reasons to use podcasting in the corporate sector. The article also outlines a few considerations employers should keep in mind when planning to use podcasting as a tool for learning. Podcasting is being immensely used in the corporate sector. It is in high-demand in two areas: employee training and marketing. In this fast paced, competitive world, organizations want productivity. Cost effective, good quality product or service is what the clients/customers and organizations want. In a tight schedule to meet the client requirements it becomes difficult to keep abreast with new technologies or information. Arranging a meeting or a training session for the employees is not only costly but also difficult when it comes to getting a common date and time. In a situation where employees do not want to stay for extra time after work for training and where employers want their employees to keep abreast with the fast-paced world, podcasting offers a mutual solution. The organization can disseminate training material in the form of a podcast. This way, employees can listen to the podcast when driving home, or to work, when in the gym, or in their leisure time. One could argue that this can be another way that the employer can ask employees to work extra hours (from home). In this highly competitive world, employees have to be up-to-date to progress, and by listening to the audio podcasts they can save time in traveling to training classes or they can avoid late hours at work. Podcasting can be very handy for sales representatives or the troubleshooting staff who have to remember tons of information about the product or the service. Listening to the podcasts before meeting the client/customer can serve as a revision for the sales representatives; it can also remind them of some crucial information they might miss. The troubleshooting staff can refer to the podcasts (audio-guided instructions) to efficiently serve the customer. Organizations can also create audio product manuals for their customers. By referring to these audio product manuals, customers can listen to the instructions as they work with the product. Organizations can also podcast regular customer/client feedback and tips/quick help for the consumers. Podcasting can also be used as an efficient marketing tool in this competitive world. By being there when the

customers need you, you can form a great impact and become one of the efficient customer-centered organizations. General Motors is pioneering an innovative blog and podcasts “FastLane Blog” (available at <http://fastlane.gmblogs.com/>) maintained by its vice chairman, Bob Lutz. The designers provide the information about the new car model using podcasts and blogs to the opinion leaders and employees (as cited in Learning Circuits, 2005, p. 3). Similarly, you can also podcast interviews and talks direct from the designers or the developers of the product and make it available for your staff and customers.

Questions, Queries, and Apprehensions

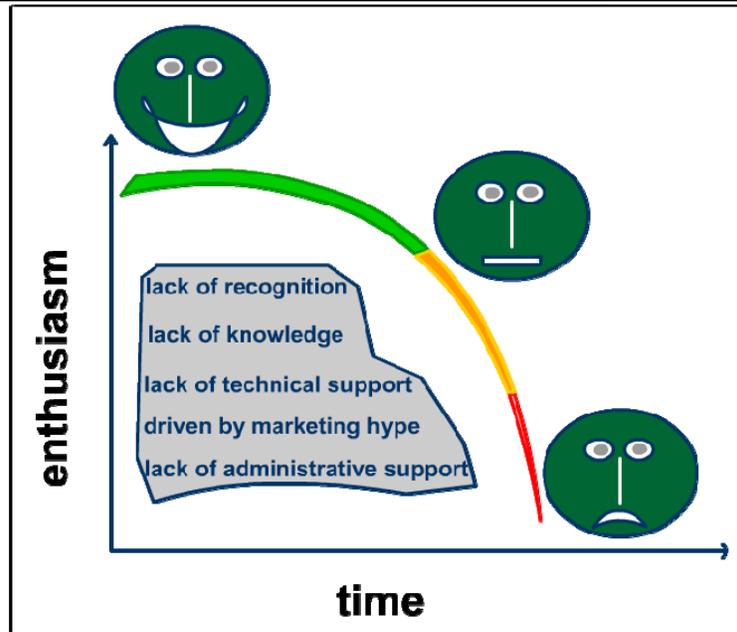
At this point, do you have any arguments, thoughts, and queries related to podcasting in your mind that are making you question the author? Before you do that, you might want to skim through the following points that might answer a few of your queries or might induce more queries in your mind.

- *Assessment/evaluation methodologies* – Various aspects of podcasting can be evaluated based on the concept and context it is used in. There are many rubrics available on the web that can be used for creating your own rubric. The following main points can also be referred to when creating a rubric. A podcast can be evaluated for different aspects: for the podcast creation process, for using podcasting pedagogically, for the podcast content, and so on. (see Table 1 for rubric)
- *Plagiarism and copyright issues* – Plagiarism and copyright issues have always been and will always be a matter of concern for educators; however, it becomes more crucial in the online world where information is publicly available. We know that light travels faster than sound, but did we ever think that information travels faster than light? Once the information is uploaded on the web, it is available for people around the world. Isn't that faster than the speed of light? There are a few considerations to keep in mind when choosing podcasting as a mode of information delivery.
 - *Pseudo name*: If students or children are creating a podcast (especially young learners) ask them use a fake identity – a virtual name; ask the students or children to never let their identity leak out (the students should not mention their real name, address, and so on).

Table 1
Rubric for Podcasts

<p><i>Speaker</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enthusiastic • Clear tone • Uses expressions to entice interest <p><i>Content</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant • Useful • Interesting to users <p><i>Delivery</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Logical/ well organized (begins with introduction and ends with a conclusion) • Smooth flow • Interesting • Effective use of music • Supplemented with script • No fillers in speech • Personified delivery • Appropriate podcast length/duration • Easy RSS subscription <p><i>Process</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adherence to process • Adherence to copyright guidelines <p><i>Purpose</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objectives met • Educational • Idea <p><i>Aesthetic</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovative • Creative • Productive <p><i>Output/Outcomes</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feelings of users (podcast boring, interesting, useful, excellent) • Users want more podcasts 	<hr/> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Permissible sound/music:</i> If sound effects or music is used in the podcast, make sure to seek permission from the creator or use copy-right free music. Also, ask the students to show a proof that the music/sound is copy-right free or the permission of the creator has been acquired. ○ <i>Source content:</i> If a podcast is a narration of some content from a different source (such as a book, or a web site), ensure to mention the source used. Also, seek the permission of the author for converting the content into a podcast. You can also refer to the Podcasting Legal Guide available at http://wiki.creativecommons.org/Podcasting_Legal_Guide • <i>Integrating technology into pre-defined Educational policies</i> – There have been many instances where educators are still arguing about new technologies being introduced into the pre-defined curriculum. Many educators want to try out the new tools available; however, they are helpless because the educational policies do not invite change. As educators, many people have been trying to mould the learning environment based on the learners’ needs. In this technology-driven world, where technology is a part of young learners’ lives, it is time to change and make the policies flexible to incorporate new tools. Cohen and Hill describe three policy levers: assessment, curriculum, and teacher learning, that must be pulled if changes in schools are to be effective (as cited in Owen et al., 2006, p. 49). There are many reasons why <hr/>
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Figure 1
Educator's Enthusiasm, to Use Podcasting, with Respect to Time



educators are still apprehensive to incorporate these new technologies:

- *lack of knowledge*: Educators are still unaware of podcasting and its uses in the education sector.
 - *scary technology*: Educators are scared to use the new technology.
 - *extra work*: Educators are yet not ready to invest extra hours to learn a new tool and use it.
 - *lack of recognition*: Educators are less enthusiastic to use the tools due to lack of recognition and support (technical and administrative). A few educators end-up doing a “one-man” army show and then discontinuing the efforts.
 - *fear of failure*: Some educators might get discouraged if the whole process fails. This could happen due to lack of understanding and knowledge to appropriately use the tool for the purpose of education.
 - *driven by the market trend*: A few educators might get driven by the marketing hype of the tool and use it for the purpose of education, without giving deep thought into the pedagogical applications of the tool.
- *Threat to privacy or safety* – Privacy and safety of the creator of the podcast is very important and very crucial in case the creators are children. A few solutions are to maintain a private podcast within the institute (a private/institutional podcast). To maintain privacy, it is always recommended to use a fake identity of the person who creates the podcast.
 - *One more format of learning would affect already shaky understanding of digital copyright* – The fear that this new format of learning might muddy the already unstable knowledge of digital copyright is very valid. However, it is important to introduce different formats of learning to meet different learning styles. Also, this new format of learning might compel learners to strengthen or reinforce the existing knowledge of digital copyright.
 - *Decline in attendance* – Many educators fear that the recorded lectures made available via a podcast will allow the students to miss classes. To some extent, this fear might turn into a reality; however, if proper precautions are taken, after some time, this fear might not exist. There are different reasons for a student to attend the

Figure 2
The Podcasting Community



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class even after getting the lecture as a podcast.

- The attendance policy might compel the students to attend the lectures.
- The students do not want to miss the discussions going on in the class.
- The interaction with the instructor and other students is important to widen the scope of learning.

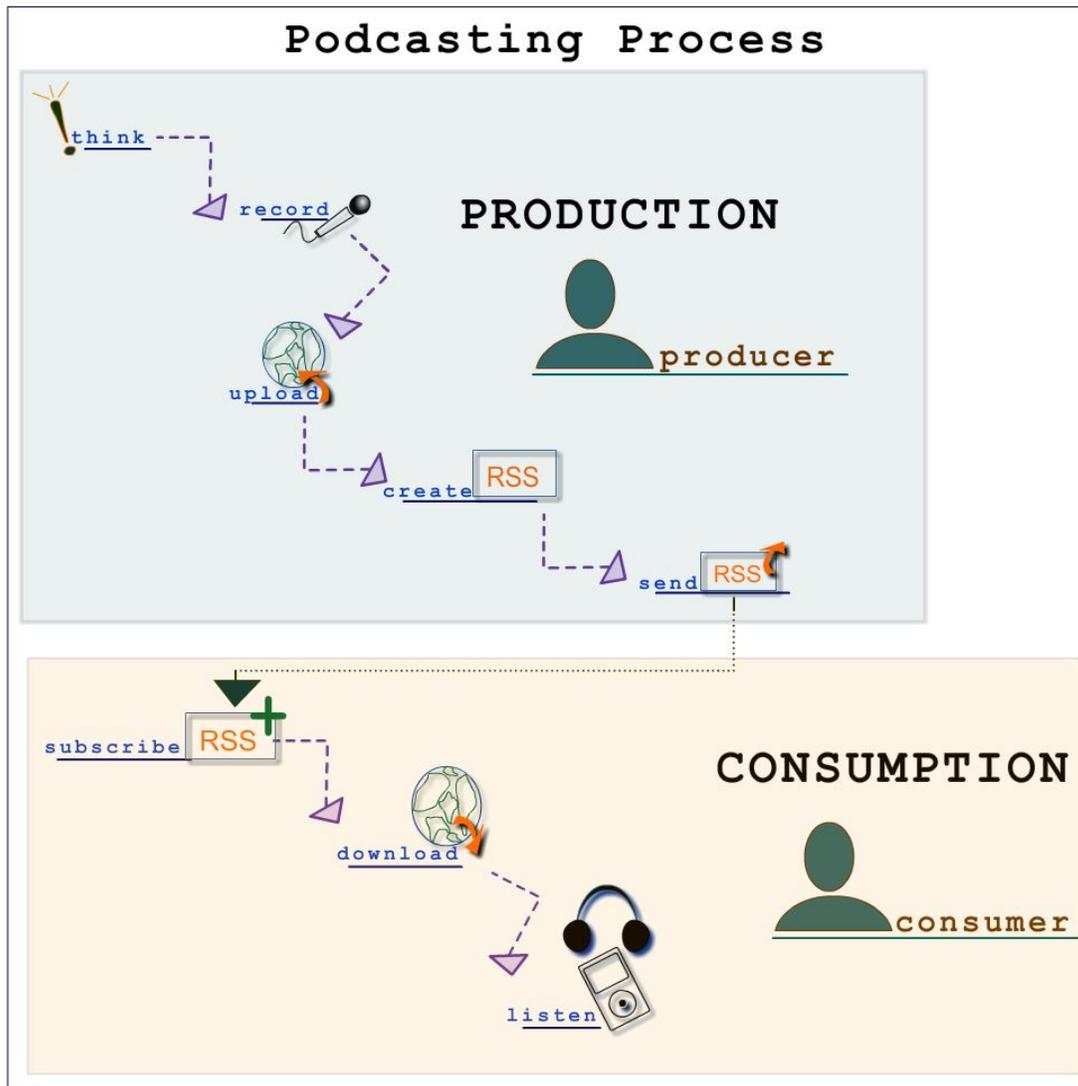
In one of the posts (Podcasting your lectures – will your students stay or will they go?), Andy Ramsden (2007) highlights the views of the students surveyed. The post addresses the impact of podcasting on student attendance. Making the lectures available as podcasts will allow the valuable class time for discussions.

- *Revisions before examinations* – There are chances that listening to podcast content again and again might generate verbatim response in

the examinations. However, this could happen with text too. Students should be made aware of not reproducing the information as taught.

- *Access to recorded lectures* – The administrators or the management might refer to the recorded lectures/training sessions and might use it for annual reviews. The instructors can also use their own recorded lectures to improve the lectures/sessions.
- *Sharing of course lectures with the outside world* – Educators might fear that anybody and everybody around the world will get access to their lectures. Education is about sharing; the more the knowledge is shared, the wider the scope of knowledge will get. There are many universities who have made their lectures available as a podcast for everyone to use – that too, for free!
- *Podcast lacks rapid comprehension* – It is a waste of time to listen to lengthy podcasts, just to realize it was not useful/ relevant or it was

Figure 3
The Podcasting Process (as a Producer and as a Consumer)



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not the information you were looking for. Although podcasts are linear in nature, now there are techniques to introduce markers/chapters to jump from one section to another. Also, if the podcast is lengthy, an abstract at the beginning of the podcast or as a textual abstract along with the podcast can be provided.

- *A primary source of information or an alternative source, is it just value added?* – Educators have been exploiting the use of podcasting in education, many are still experimenting and trying to determine the actual pedagogical value of podcasting. You might want to experiment with it too.

- *Will podcast actually improve communication skills?* – A few people believe that asking students to record and present the materials via podcasts is asking them to work in isolation. An important factor in improving communication skills is to get over the fear of speaking with others (in front of others). Although podcasting would be a preferred mode to deliver presentations for the students who are shy or feared about speaking in public, it is important to note that this mode will “ease” the mode of communication and not improve the communication itself. A solution to this problem could be to use podcasting in a slightly different way. One of

the important factors in improving communication skills is to “listen to oneself”. Listening to oneself provides an opportunity to learn from the mistakes. Students who are shy, feared, or not confident in speaking in front of the class need time to practice and get comfortable. Often, during the class hours educators do not have extra time to devote to students who need extra attention. So, initially these students can podcast their presentations and the instructor can provide constructive feedback on it. Later, once the students are confident, they can present in front of the class.

- *I will require an iPod for podcasting* – One of the very common misconceptions about podcasting is that an iPod is required for it. An iPod is an mp3 player – instead of an iPod, you can use any mp3 player. If you do not have an mp3 player, you can still podcast. An mp3 player adds the “content portability” feature to the concept of podcasting; however, you can listen to the podcasts using speakers or headphones.
- *Requires enormous search time* – There are so many podcasts available that it often becomes difficult to search for a podcast that is relevant to us. One of the advantages of podcasting is that it provides relevant information and saves effort and time required to search for the relevant content; however, searching for a relevant and good quality podcast from the copious collection requires substantial amount of time. Technology experts are trying to solve this problem by customizing the search engines (such as Podscope) and portals to search for exactly what we are looking for – it might take some time though for an efficient tool to be out in the market.
- *Listening to informational podcasts requires concentration, not possible on the move* – The concept of “portable content,” listening to podcasts using mp3 players when in the gym, when driving, and so on, suggests using the free-time for the purpose of learning. Many consumers/listeners of podcasts have experienced that listening to the academic or training material requires concentration and serious engagement which is difficult to maintain when on the move. This is one more reason to not worry about an mp3 player for podcasting.
- *Increased workload, lack of recognition, lack of support, learning curve* – One of the reasons for lack of interest and motivation amongst educators/trainers who want to use

this new tool is increased workload and lack of recognition. Often educators who try innovative tools are not recognized for their work and effort. Lack of management support, administrative support, or technical support might curb the curiosity of the educators to try out new tools for education. Educators are still not ready for extra time investment required to learn new tools. Before implementing a new tool in education, one has to invest time to learn, practice, and plan. If this effort is not recognized or supported, it will impact the enthusiasm and interest of educators who want to try out new tools for education.

Podcasts also have a marketing value – it could serve as a value-add to your resume in this technology-driven competitive world.

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