

Chapter 22

Teacher Candidates Learning through the Creation of Podcasts

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ABSTRACT

As teacher educators it is imperative that we model the sound use of technology to enrich the teaching and learning process. Podcasting is enjoying phenomenal growth in mainstream society, alongside other new media that enable users to author and distribute content quickly and easily. The project reported on in this chapter focuses on teacher candidates creating their own podcasts for distribution on iTunes. The chapter explains the what of podcasting and how podcasting is being used in higher education, then details the podcast creation process and describes how engaging in the podcasting exercise promoted collaboration and knowledge building among the teacher candidate producers. Thus the focus is on teacher candidates learning through creating podcasts, in contrast to learning from podcasts.

INTRODUCTION

Podcasting is encountering phenomenal growth, alongside other new media that enable users to create and share content quickly and easily. According to Mindlin (2005), current estimates state that 30 to 57 million US citizens will be accessing and using podcasting technology by 2010. The increased popularity of iPods or similar mobile audio/video devices can help to explain this podcasting phenomenon. Analysts at The Diffusion Group, a

consumer technology research firm, believe US demand for podcasts will grow from “less than fifteen percent” of portable digital music player owners today to “seventy-five percent by 2010.” (PoducateMe, 2008).

In higher education, podcasting has been used to distribute information and to support learning at a number of institutions. However, the most popular use of podcasting in colleges and universities is the recording and dissemination of lectures. I believe the true potential of podcasting in teacher education lies in its knowledge creation value, and its use as a vehicle for disseminating learner-generated content.

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This view is echoed by Lee, McLoughlin and Chan (2008) and Atkinson (2006), the latter of whom believes that podcasting has a limited impact as a mere method for distribution.

Creating podcasts at the K-12 level has many educational benefits. Teachers and students are able to create a product to share with a potentially world-wide audience. Their podcast can be listed in iTunes, right along with podcasts from The Discovery Channel, Disney and NPR. Knowing that there is a real-world audience gives teachers, and students, purpose and motivation to create a spectacular product. The process of putting together an audio recording is extremely valuable and is certainly a cross-curricular experience (Vincent, 2009).

With a focus on teacher candidates creating their own podcasts for distribution in the Apple iTunes Store, this chapter will explain what podcasting is and how podcasting is being used in teacher education. It will then explain in further detail the podcast creation process and describe how engaging in podcasting-related exercises has promoted collaboration and knowledge building among teacher candidate producers in one institution of higher learning. Thus, the focus will be on teacher candidates learning *through* creating podcasts, as opposed to learning *from* podcasts. Teacher candidates as producers of content, not just consumers.

BACKGROUND

Podcasts are audio or video digital-media files delivered over the Internet by syndicated download, through Real Simple Syndication (RSS), to personal computers and portable media players. The same digital media files may also be made available by direct download or streaming, but what makes a podcast unique is the way it can be syndicated, subscribed to, and downloaded automatically when new content is made available. Like the term “broadcast,” podcast can

refer either to the series of content itself or to the method by which it is syndicated; the latter is also known as podcasting. The host or author of a podcast is often called a podcaster.

Dave Winer, a software developer and an author of the RSS format, in addition to former MTV VJ Adam Curry are recognized as the originating force behind the podcasting phenomenon. Journalist Ben Hammersley coined the term *podcasting* in the February 12, 2004 issue of *The Guardian* (PoducateMe, 2008). The term podcast is a portmanteau of the words “iPod” and “broadcast”, the Apple iPod being the brand of portable media player for which the first podcasts were developed. The term has been mildly controversial, since it privileges the Apple iPod and to some users, implies that one must own an iPod to listen to a podcast. But podcasting is not limited to the iPod, nor MP3s or even portable music players.

In some respects, podcasting is not even new: Both streaming and downloading audio are as old as the World Wide Web, and the RSS specification that enables podcasting has been around for several years. What’s new about podcasting is the ease of publication, ease of subscription, and ease of use across multiple environments. The term *podcast* has quickly gained traction, and the New Oxford American Dictionary selected podcasting as the Word of the Year in 2005 (PoducateMe, 2008). The term has been redefined by some parties as a “Netcast” or “Personal On Demand broadCASTING”. A complete history of podcasting would likely double the length of this chapter. Fortunately, there’s already a good one available on *Wikipedia* at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcast>. For the visual learners, the Common Craft video that explains in “Plain English” what a podcast is (<http://commoncraft.com/podcasting>) is highly recommended. I use this video, and others created by Common Craft, to introduce new technology tools and applications in my educational technology classes at West Chester University.

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