

THE EFFECT OF PODCAST ON THE ACHIEVEMENT OF THE STUDENTS – A CASE STUDY IN MALAYSIA

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ABSTRACT

Podcast is a tool for blended learning which media files are made available online as a reference material for students. As podcast received many positive responses from many foreign educators, a local study was conducted to probe the responses of the local students to podcast. The study was done by a survey on students' perspective over the usage of podcast, as well as a measurement on the effectiveness of podcast through the achievement of the students. The students were divided into two major groups- blended learning with podcast and blended learning without podcast. From the study, majority of the students gave positive feedback over the usage of the blended learning approaches, as well as podcast. In addition to that, through statistical analysis, the overall achievement of the students with podcast was significantly better than the students without podcast. As conclusion, podcast can be a good tool to convey more effective teaching and learning process in Malaysia. However, a study with wider coverage and more subjects should be conducted to get a better picture about the usage of podcast in Malaysia.

KEYWORDS

Blended learning, Podcast, Student achievement, Student response, Malaysia

INTRODUCTION

Apple introduced iPod as one of the first mobile multimedia device in 2001. Since then, iPod has become one of the most widely used portable devices of its kind. Instead of the regular uses as a player that can be used to download multimedia files, iPod allows the rise of a new term – “podcast”, an abbreviation of “iPod” with “broadcast” (Silva Cruz & Amorim Carvalho, 2007).

Podcasting is one of the web-based tools that allows the authors, or called podcaster to publish their “speech-written” scripts online, which can be directed to certain subscribers or, open for all the audience around the world. For the distribution, an internet distribution system called Real Simple Syndicates (RSS) eases the effort for the podcasters to send the new published podcast automatically to all the subscribers (Chan & Lee, 2005). Podcasts consist of files in different media formats which can be uploaded and distributed through the internet, and can be downloaded and played in different devices, such as laptops, iPods, mp3 players, and most of the hand phones (Boulos *et al.*, 2006; Jham *et al.*, 2007). Contributed by the combination of astonishing growth in internet coverage and the increasing number of portable media playing devices, the number of podcast in United State along is estimated to reach an amazing number of 56.8 million in 2010 (Communications Executive Council, 2006; Udell, 2005).

Podcast gives the educators the tools to publish their lectures. As stated by Villano (2008), "Steve Jobs got it right. When the Apple CEO introduced the company's iPod in October 2001, it was the first portable media player of its kind, and he predicted the technology would change the educational landscape forever". Since then, many educational institutions have adopted and adapted the new technology as part of the pedagogical tool (Xie *et al.*, 2007). As described by Williams (2007), podcast bridged the traditional way of lecture to today's digital native students. EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (2005) described podcast as another way for educators to meet today's students where they "live"- on the internet and on audio players. The potential of podcast is consolidated by the survey by Evan (2008) showing that almost three quarter of his students owned some form of digital media players.

Different from many other online tools, podcast can be published according to the breakdown of a chapter, or a section of textbook, or just simply focus on certain highlights of a topic. To secure the students' attention, the length of each of the section of the podcast should not be longer than 15 minutes (Williams, 2007; Villano, 2008). The breakdown of a long text into sections may help the students to focus on the part that they needed most by replaying the podcast. "The essence of podcasting is the creation of audio and/or video content for an audience that wants to listen to what they want, when they want, and how they want" (Jham *et al.*, 2007). So, podcast augmented the teaching and learning by allowing the highly mobile students to listen to lecture while they are moving around.

Silva Cruz & Amorim Carvalho (2007) reported that their students looked positively towards the learning through podcast, with 77.7% of their students preferring listening to podcast rather than reading book for their history class. Berger (2007) noted that his engineering students responded well to podcast too, especially the group of weaker students. Gribbon (2007) integrated podcast into Management Information Systems course with 70.2% of the respondents agreed that "Overall, integrating of podcasting can be useful in college curriculum". The capitalization of podcast has brought benefits to the teaching and learning process is well agreed by many educators as well (Chan & Lee, 2005; Johnes, 2005; Shim *et al.*, 2006).

Podcast is perceived as an assisting technology in delivering lecture and knowledge. However, there are several challenges to make an effective podcast in teaching and learning process. Maag (2006) noted the issue of the technical part of the university, where technical support from the respective university instructional technology is crucial. The quality of the sound audio, as well as the attractiveness of the podcast are fully rely on the instructor (Villano, 2008). So, the dedication of the instructor on this technology is a crucial key to the effectiveness of podcast in teaching and learning. Williams (2007) stated some of the common flaws in podcasts such as, the speaker speaks too quickly, too low and high volume, background noise is too high, and the audio or video is garbled. Other challenge such as the sufficient bandwidth provided to the users to download the podcast, potential issues with the file format, not designed for two-way interaction, and training is necessary to create a good quality podcast (EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative, 2005).