Proposed Solution for Using Podcasting as a Learning Tool in Higher Education

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Introduction

The use of podcasting in higher education is growing. Podcasting delivers instructional content in the form of an audio or video file to the student's computer by means of a subscription to an RSS feed. Podcasting offers the students a new tool with which to review the concepts and study before an exam (Fernandez et al., 2009). Podcasts are being used to enrich online classes and to supplement face to face classes. Students perceive that podcasts benefit their understanding and retention of knowledge of course material and accommodate various learning needs (Vajoczki et al., 2007). Although it appears that podcasting is benefiting students, it may not be producing a change in teaching (Lonn & Teasley, 2009). Also, it is not known if the podcast itself promotes learning, or if it is just another means to deliver instruction.

Adjusting Teaching Style

Although podcasts can use useful to reinforce concepts, they may be more beneficial if devoted to more specific uses, which would add to the instruction, rather than to just supplement it. Lonn and Teasley (2009, p. 90) reported one instructor's comment. "(Podcasting) has made me focus more on articulate delivery of material, the combination of visual and auditory information, and interactivity. It has also helped me cut down on repetition in lectures and so cover more material." It appears that podcasting has the potential to be used in more ways than merely repeating and capturing lectures. In order for technology to be successfully used in higher education, it appears that instructors must adjust their teaching styles to incorporate the technology in order to provide a good learning experience.

Technical and Pedagogical Training

Additional studies may be needed to examine the quality of the podcast itself. Although the process of producing an audio or video podcast may be easy enough to learn, that in itself is not evidence of effectively using a podcast to produce learning. Keeping learner attention, regulating physiological capacity, retention abilities, and sensory channels of the students should be taken into consideration (Cebeci & Tekdal, 2006). It is possible that the instructor may need to be trained in the mechanics of the recording tool in order to edit the presentation for more effective use. It is also possible that the instructor may need some training in effective design of audio and visual instructional material, to make the podcasts effective as learning tools. Education is moving away from authoritarian teaching toward the constructivism and connectivism learning theories. New tools, such as podcasting, can be used to promote these kinds of learning and activities. I would suggest that instructors receive training and support to develop podcasts which promote an effective learning experience.

References

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