

Improving Access to Learning Using Podcast Delivered on Mobile

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Overview

- **Introduction and background**
 - What is podcasting?
 - Why podcasts?
- **Literature review**
 - How podcasts can be used in teaching and learning
 - substitute for classes (substantial),
 - sometimes it is used to provide summaries of what has been taught (supplementary) and;
 - then there are podcasts that are generated by learners (creative type).
- **Research design and method**
- **Results**
- **Conclusion**

Introduction and Background

- ODL is faced with many challenges, according to Curry (2004). It is required of the student to go through tons of material and to cross-examine this information for reliability and congruence, with due consideration of the guidelines provided by the institution. This is a challenge for those who do not have the time and the resources to do this.
- Access to teaching and learning has been a challenge, especially for students at Open Distance Learning (ODL) environment where there is minimal contact with instructors. Students at ODL institutions are encouraged to learn independently and it is generally presumed that, with the technology available, it should be easy to learn. Although there is sufficient information available on various subject areas on the internet, some of the good learning material may require subscriptions, which may be an expensive exercise for some students.

Introduction and Background

- For example, if you were to look for information about the format and guidelines for writing a research proposal, you would find several sources which will show that the requirements of a research proposal is the same even if the information is delivered in a different way. The format differs from one institution to another and from one discipline to another in some cases.
- One of the methods proposed for the distribution of credible and factual information, is podcasts. Podcasts can alleviate the ambiguity in information presented in the internet and other sources. Arguably, this can be achieved by presenting a uniform source of information that can be flexibly accessed using many means among them mobile technology. This study examines the following research question: **“Can podcasts be used to improve access to learning delivered through mobile technology?”**

What is podcasting?

A podcast is:

- a **digital** media file
- that plays **sound** (or sound and **visuals**)
- made available from a **website** (via the internet) or mobile device
- can be opened and / or downloaded and played on a **computer**, and / or mobile device
- downloaded from a website to be played on a portable **digital player**

(Salmon et al., 2008, p. 20)

Why podcasts are being used in teaching and learning?

- bridges the digital divide/ distance
- provides a more personal contact with the students than text alone.
- addresses the concept that students have different learning styles.
- mobility and flexibility
- convenience, the ability to access it “on-the-go

Why podcasts are being used in teaching and learning?

Salmon and Nie (2008) suggest the following benefits of podcasting use:

- enhances flexibility and improved learner control;
- promotes better learner motivation, learner engagement and learner contribution;
- enhances cognition and learning;
- encourages innovative presentation of information;
- bring together learning locations separated from campus locations; and
- has ability to foster discussions during the learning process.

Research design and method

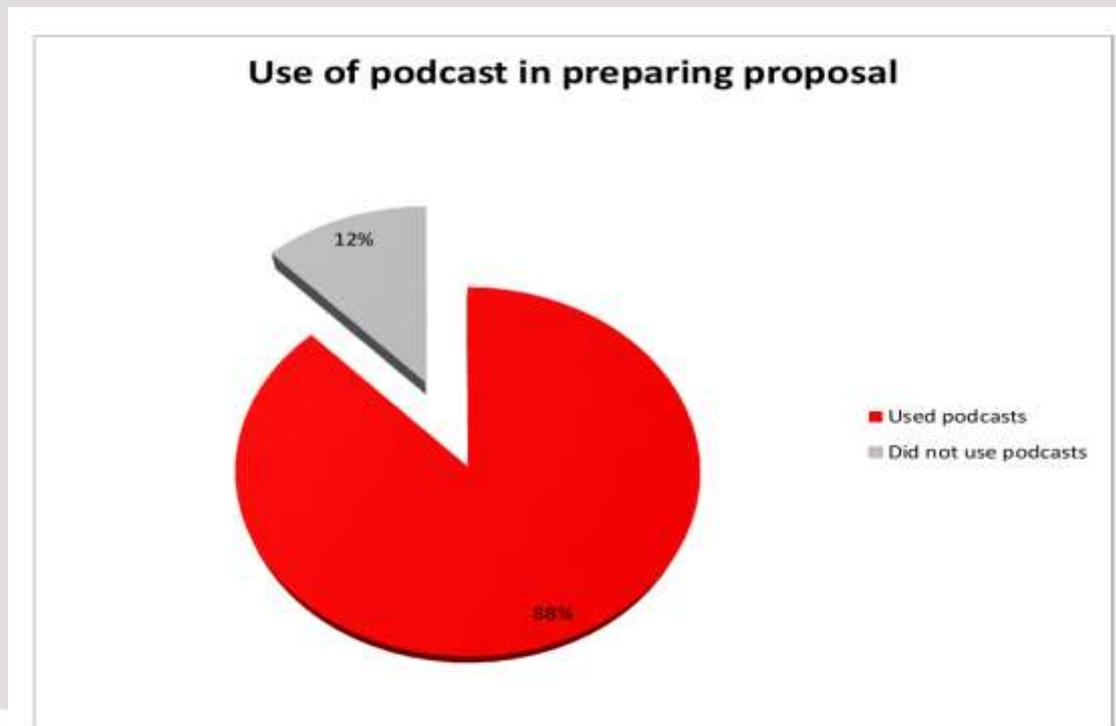
- Due to the nature of the subject, a number of research designs were used. A quasi-experimental research design was used in which a real-time operating podcast website was launched for the purposes of this experiment.
- In addition, exploratory, descriptive and explanatory designs were used with five different data collection tools, both qualitative and quantitative.
- The data collection tools included narrative feedback from the students (about the podcast, which was submitted on the Iono fm website), a questionnaire, interviews, observation and a case study approach in verifying the results obtained.
- The respondents comprised of 130 students, who were purposively selected to represent two regions, KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng, where Unisa operates regional centres

Research design and method

- During the data collection process, the observation of student use and activities on the podcast website as well as student narrative occurred on the podcast website (lono fm), which was automatically deployed after deliberations with the administrators. Periodic reports about the activities in the podcast were given by the administrators of lono fm with specifics on applications, download on each podcast as well as feedback from students
- A questionnaire was prepared and interview schedule outlined. The questionnaire was sent to the respondents and the interview schedule was used to organise the telephonically conducted interviews with the respondents. This method was chosen due to geographical and cost limitations.

Results: Use of podcast in preparing research proposal

- The number of students who listened to the podcast was 88%.
- Percentage of students who used podcast in preparing research proposals



Lack of technical capability

- The students encountered challenges with regard to their ability to navigate the website where the podcast channel was embedded. The researcher prepared a guideline (in pdf format) for students to demonstrate to them how to navigate the website. However, the technical capability of the students contributed to the difficulties experienced.

literature review demonstrates that you know your field of study. In this study unit I will guide you on how to identify literature proposed study and how to critically analyse this literature.

#4 — Theoretical Framework
UNISA > [Research Proposal Writing Module-MPEDU91](#) | Series | [Share & Comment](#) [✓ In Playlist](#)
A research framework is like a travel map that assists you in planning a journey to an unfamiliar place. A framework is a basic structure of ideas, principles, agreements or rules that serves as a basis for a phenomenon that is to be investigated. In this learning unit we will identify apply the relevant research framework underpinning your proposed study.

#5 — Research methods
UNISA > [Research Proposal Writing Module-MPEDU91](#) | Series | [Share & Comment](#) [✓ In Playlist](#)
The aim of the research design and method is to explain how the inquiry will be approached showing the specific design and methods. In this learning unit we will identify and select the design and methods of the proposed research study.

#6 — Qualities of a good proposal
UNISA > [Research Proposal Writing Module-MPEDU91](#) | Series | [Share & Comment](#) [+ Keep episode in Playlist](#)
The final in the series of podcasts for the Research Proposal Writing Module looks at the qualities of a research proposal.

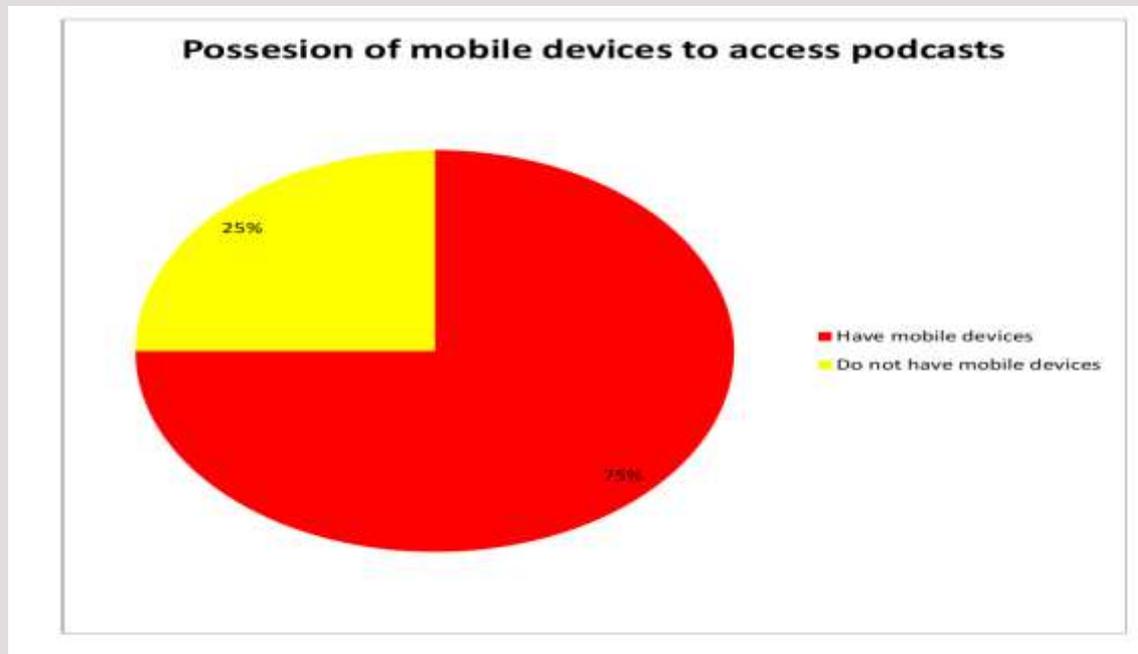
7 episodes A→Z Z→A More >

Feedback icon: feedback

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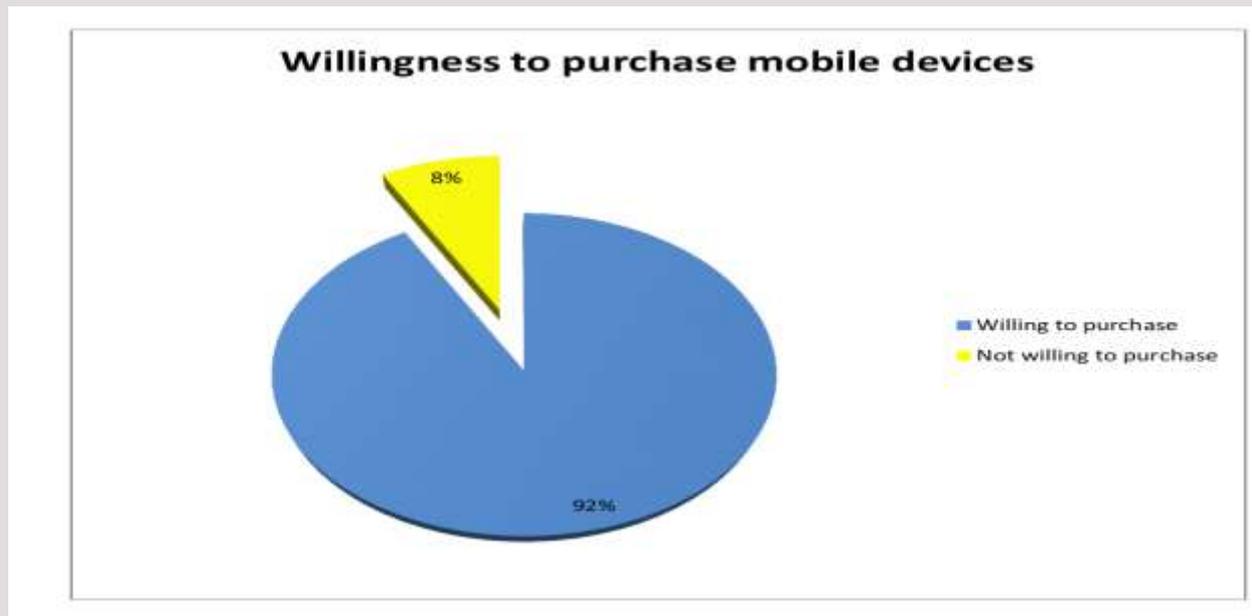
Possession of mobile devices

- Another problem encountered by students was availability of the internet at the regional centres.
- In addition to this, a considerable number did not have the mobile devices that would have allowed them to have access to the material conveniently. The findings are as follows:



Willingness of students to acquire mobile devices

- To measure students' opinions, students were asked if they would be willing to make a financial commitment to acquire a device which would enable them to have access to podcast, if this was the only option. An overwhelming 92% of the students indicated that they would be willing to buy mobile devices to access podcasts given the benefits that they get from the use of this method.



Conclusion

- In the results obtained from the study, there is no doubt that the attributes described by Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler (2005) in relating podcasts to accessible learning have been sufficiently met. They (Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005) included spontaneous, informal, personal, portable, contextual, pervasive and ubiquitous in their description of podcasts. However, there are still a few areas that need to be resolved.
 - A major challenge is the technical capabilities of the users with regard to navigating the website where the podcast is embedded.
 - Another challenge for the students was transmitting the podcasts to the mobile devices. If these challenges are not taken care of, it may curb students' enthusiasm to purchase mobile devices to aid with access.
 - Once these challenges have been addressed, there is no doubt that this method will be embraced, particularly by students who recognise the benefits of using podcasts to improve access.