

# **The Knowledge Tree: an E-journal of Learning and Innovation**

***The Knowledge Tree - Going Aural***  
**Edition 10**

July 2006

**ISSN: 1448 2673**

**[flexiblelearning.net.au](http://flexiblelearning.net.au)**

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### ***The Knowledge Tree goes aural***

The impact of podcasting and voice technologies on global e-learning practice is the focus of Edition 10 of *The Knowledge Tree: an e-Journal of Learning Innovation*.

Published by the national training system's e-learning strategy, the 2005-2006 Australian Flexible Learning Framework ([Framework](#)), Edition 10 contains contributions from voice specialists who discuss the latest innovations and their applications for education and training.

In this edition, Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Associate Professor Dr Michael Thomas, presents the lead article *iPods in Education: Innovations in the Implementation of Mobile Learning*. The article examines the latest developments in iPod implementation and looks at how the technology has developed and its future potential.

In other contributions:

- Tasmanian teacher and professional development mentor Donelle Batty describes her busy life supplementing mainstream school curriculum offerings, through the Distance Education Online Campus. She facilitates blended learning in Child Studies, VTE Children's Services and Gifted and Talented programs to students, aged 11 to adult, distributed across 14 schools
- Stephan Ridgway discusses innovations in podcasting and vlogging for teacher development and learner engagement
- TAFE South Australia's Jim Plummer describes 'podvocation' strategies for shifting time and bending space, to increase student engagement in Environmental Management.

On **Tuesday 25 July at 2pm Australian EST** a live online 'conversation' with lead writer Dr Michael Thomas will be held, allowing users to discuss and debate articles and surrounding issues in greater depth.

To participate in the live online 'conversation' visit:

<https://www.illuminate.com/mtg.jnlp?password=348143572>

For more about the 'conversation' and how to participate visit:

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/networks>

The 'conversation' will run in conjunction with activities run by the Framework's [E-learning Networks Project](#).

For more information on Edition 10 contact the editor Jo Murray on Tel: (03) 6253 6029 or email: [jomurray@southcom.com.au](mailto:jomurray@southcom.com.au)

To access contribution guidelines and previous editions of *The Knowledge Tree* visit: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree>

For more information about the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, its products, resources and support networks, visit: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au>

**Ends**

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## Editorial

The focus is more aural in Edition 10 of *The Knowledge Tree: an e-Journal of Learning Innovation*, with the exploration of the impact of innovations in the use of podcasting and voice technologies on global e-learning practice.

Published by the national training system's e-learning strategy, the 2005-2006 Australian Flexible Learning Framework (Framework), Edition 10 contains contributions from e- and m-learning specialists working with and creating sound resources. Questions raised and answered include: How well do we plan for using new technologies like iPods? What benefits do they bring to learning environments? How do you make podcasts of sound learning design and high sound quality? What equipment do you need to create and catch them?

In this edition, Nagoya University of Commerce and Business Associate Professor Dr Michael Thomas, presents the lead article ['iPods in Education: Innovations in the Implementation of Mobile Learning'](#).

Michael examines the latest developments in iPod implementation, especially in the English as a Second Language field, focusing on how the technology has so far developed and its potential for the future. A great list of reviewed podcast sites for English language teachers and students is provided.

Citing Duke University's iPod Education evaluation report, Michael notes that faculty found the iPod technology promoted higher levels of student independence.

Distance Education Tasmania teacher and professional development mentor [Donelle Batty](#) describes her busy life supplementing mainstream school curriculum offerings, through the Online Campus. She facilitates blended learning in Child Studies, VTE Children's Services and Gifted and Talented programs to students, aged 11 to adult, distributed across 14 schools. Students of the Online Campus at North East Education and Training (NEET) Inc. also noted that the independence offered them by online and blended learning was a key motivator.

[Stephan Ridgway](#) discusses innovations in podcasting and vlogging for teacher development and learner engagement, including Talking VTE.

[Jim Plummer](#) of TAFE South Australia describes 'podvocation' strategies for shifting time and bending space, to increase student engagement in Environmental Management.

On Tuesday 25 July at 2pm Australian EST a live online 'conversation' with lead writer Dr. Michael Thomas, allows users to discuss and debate the lead article and surrounding issues in greater depth.

To share your experiences of using podcasting or other online technologies, participate in the live online 'conversation' at:

<https://www.illuminate.com/mtg.inlp?password=348143572>

The 'conversation' will run in conjunction with activities run by the Framework's E-learning Networks Project. For more information visit <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/networks>

# Lead article - iPods in Education: Innovations in the Implementation of Mobile Learning

## Abstract

Apple's iPod music players have quickly established themselves as the leading portable media devices among today's technological gadgetry; so much so, in fact, that they are deconstructing the border between education and entertainment. While a host of schools, colleges and universities have now developed podcasting initiatives at a faster rate than their previous interest in blogging, Duke University in the United States of America (USA) was one of the first to see the potential of the iPod as a pedagogical tool. In 2004 Duke, in partnership with Apple, launched a project with Macintosh's 20GB iPod, with the specific aim that instructors consider how it could be used in the classroom and lecture hall to promote e-learning initiatives. Following an overview of Duke's initiative, still the largest experiment of its kind yet to publish results, this article will contextualise the use of iPods vis-à-vis mobile learning, emphasising the need to engage in effective planning if innovative e-learning projects are to be successful. Finally, it calls for more research into the relationship between mobile learning and the enhancement of real learning outcomes.

## Introduction

"iPod therefore I learn". When I recently said this to my new group of freshmen English majors in Japan, all of whom had been given Apple's entry-level iPod shuffle on entering the university a few weeks before, not surprisingly, 'iPod' was one of the few words in the sentence they seemed to immediately understand. Instead of venturing into a roundabout explanation of Descartes' cogito ergo sum, I decided to tell them that having an iPod meant they could improve their English learning. While this appeared to me to be a bold attempt to try and help education catch up with the already existing technology, which had been given to them without any instructions, I was nevertheless still greeted with the same incredulity and blank faces. Finally, the brightest student in the class turned to me and said: "iPod therefore / listen to music". The stress on the first person pronoun, as well as the word 'music' made the point perfectly.

It is no surprise perhaps that university marketing managers have been using the seemingly ubiquitous iPods to woo wavering freshmen, with all the fervour of a politician confronted with a floating (swinging) voter in the final weeks of an election campaign. Until recently students only needed to deliberate over the latest incentives from major high street banks for an extension to their overdraft. Now, even banks in the United Kingdom (UK) are using iPods to attract students to their undergraduate accounts (Macworld 2006). Moreover, in the increasingly competitive business of global student recruitment, an iconic product that all potential customers recognise and covet seems to be the academic marketing manager's dream-ticket. Is this then the reason behind the iPod's sudden appearance in education institutions? Or have educators been able to develop pedagogically sound ways for iPods to encourage effective learning?

iPod therefore I learn? My original opening statement for this article didn't have a question mark tagged to the end. As my ideas have developed, however, it has emerged as a necessary addition, attaching itself to the end of the sentence like a counterweight, suggesting doubt, requiring more confirmation than the logic of a Socratic syllogism: I

have an iPod; listening to English will improve my language competence; iPods will improve my English.

Just when educational technologists were getting to grips with blogging, along came podcasting. With both terms there has already been a massive escalation in the number of web sites and, latterly, journalistic and academic articles claiming that iPods offer a rich pedagogical vein to be explored by educators of all disciplines, and language educators in particular. In a recent conversation with a freshmen English major student, I asked which activity preoccupied him most when using his iPod. The answer, perhaps predictably, was listening to hits from the American Top Forty. Of course, while listening to music in English is to be encouraged, it is not enough to get this freshman, who was too embarrassed to tell me that his TOEIC (Test of English for International Communication) score was nevertheless less than 400 points, to improve his English listening skills. He used his iPod more than any other student in the English Listening course, but registered an unsatisfactory grade D for his final examination. Immersion in an e-learning technology, however portable it may be, however closely it fits the changing contours of study, leisure and work, does not guarantee success. This is true regardless of how much the product's promotional website emphasises the seeming inevitability of increased learning outcomes every time the mobile device is switched on in the vicinity of a student 'on the move'.

With iPod education, educational technologists are, perhaps, still at a similar stage to that which guided the enthusiasm to get computers into all high schools in the mid 1990s. Just having computers in the classroom, educational policy makers and politicians argued, will increase students' motivation to learn, as well as enhance learning outcomes. The same philosophy emerged with the advent of the Internet. As we all know, however, sitting a student in front of a computer with Internet access to millions of pages of rough input in English will not be as effective as having produced a highly structured series of tasks, clearly articulated and set at the appropriate level of competence, with which the student can interact. Another example of this trend is the recent explosion of excitement and latterly disappointment, surrounding the use of Interactive Whiteboards (IWB) (Nightingale 2006). Choosing yet another example at random: for all the hype surrounding improved student-teacher and student-student communication via online discussion forums, how many remain underutilised and silent, unless students are compelled by their assessment system to use them?

The reality is that technology requires a rationale that predates and guides its use in pedagogical contexts. While successful approaches can and have been developed after the introduction of e-learning technology, it is necessary to have a pedagogical discussion before it is introduced on a campus-wide scale. In the excitement surrounding the introduction of new e-learning innovations, a word of caution is still often required. The task of this article is to define some of the parameters of iPod education by providing an overview of the key terms and issues in the debates. Section 2 focuses on podcasting, describing how the technology works and has been used to date. In Section 3, the wider context of Duke University's iPod project is summarised, and a number of potential features for language learning are identified. The final section provides a brief description of some of the current podcasting innovations in English as a Second Language (ESL) listed in the iPodder.org directory for Education. As Keegan (1995) indicates, language education remains one of the most innovative disciplinary areas for

the development of new learning technologies especially in the emerging area of mobile learning.

## iPods, podcasting, learning

Since their first appearance in 2001, Apple's range of portable digital media players have become one of the most recognisable icons of the twenty-first century (Moss 2005). While the exact derivation of the name is not quite clear, the 'i' prefix has been used since the arrival of the iMac in 1994, in which the 'i' clearly referred to the Internet, and the ease with which the computer could connect to the new medium of information exchange. Subsequently, the use of the lowercase 'i' has been identified with other meanings, such as 'individual' and 'independence', both characteristics freely associated with the Apple brand in its struggle to win market share against the ubiquitous PC. They are portable, relatively easy to use, and have a clear goal: to facilitate the effective production, transfer and dissemination of digital audio and video and move beyond the limitations of the analogue world. Moreover, this iconic cultural status has given rise to ideas that their designers might never have seriously envisaged, especially in the whole area of e-learning education and innovation (Adenekan 2005, Lederman 2005).

McCarty (2005b) attempts to re-evaluate the significance normally associated with Duke University's iPod experiment, which first gave the devices to students for pedagogical purposes. Osaka Jogakuin College had already distributed 15GB iPods to two hundred and ten incoming freshmen six months before the Duke project in April 2004. Two years previously, however, Georgia College and State University in the USA, again in partnership with Apple's education division, was the first to disseminate fifty iPods to its own students (Sellers 2002).

An Internet search for the word podcasting a couple of years ago would have led to few hits. Now, as we enter July 2006, the word registers in the region of 97,500,000 hits on the Google search engine. iPods now dominate over 80% of the market for MP3 players, and it is estimated that Apple will have sold in the region of forty five million of them by the end of 2006. Jonathan Ive, the American company's Vice President of Industrial Design, recently won the widely recognised President's Medal, from the Royal Society of Engineering, for innovation in engineering. Not only have large worldwide sales and such high profile awards helped Apple re-establish itself as the symbolical mix of cool design and high technology, but they are also increasingly being used to promote e-learning initiatives.

Chinnery (2006) briefly mentions iPods in the context of the new area that he names MALL: Mobile Assisted Language Learning, an outgrowth of the more established Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). He also draws attention to many of the case studies in Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler's (2005) study of mobile learning, in which iPods are used to aid language learning, when they function as digital voice recorders or camcorders to produce interviews and make audiovisual tours of towns or museums. One problem he notes, however, is that students were given the iPods at the beginning of their course, a strategy that left them little time to adequately understand how best to utilise them.

Thorough overviews of the meaning of podcasting are increasingly being set in the context of education (Meng 2005). Rather like blog, which combines, web and log, the term, podcasting, is also a hybrid consisting of iPod and broadcasting. The word in fact

confirms the success of Apple's marketing strategy, as any MP3 player or computer can be used to receive audio or video. Unlike simply downloading content from the Net, however, resources are put on the Web using a special format, known as a feed. Anyone who wants to receive the podcast must first subscribe to it by using podcatching software such as iPodder or Apple's own iTunes. This software regularly checks the subscribed source and automatically downloads (or 'pushes') new podcasts to a computer. Like blogging, podcasting has become especially attractive to people interested in starting up their own sites or radio-like broadcasts that operate without censorship or sponsorship. As such the technology opens up a way to disseminate and share audio using basic software that can be used for public access around the world. As well as just audio-only podcasts, there are currently two other forms of podcast available - enhanced podcasts and video podcasts.

### **Enhanced podcasts**

This type of podcast includes chapter marks, images that change when the podcast is played and additional hyperlinks to Internet sites. It is also possible with enhanced podcasts to move easily to different chapters in the file, a feature used extensively in audio books.

### **Video podcasts**

With the launch of Apple's fifth generation iPod, video podcasts are the very latest in podcasting technology and provide a full visual and audio experience for the user. Now that Apple has replaced the iPod Photo with its new video model, it is likely that advances in the compression of video and audio files will continue to be a priority.

There is, then, a difference between podcasting and just downloading audio from the Internet. Nevertheless, podcasting is still being used to describe the posting of any link to an Internet page, even though no subscription model is involved.

There are typically three steps involved in making a podcast:

1. digital audio content is created and edited using the MP3 format
2. the MP3 file is published on the Web
3. an RSS feed is published with the podcast as an enclosure.

Similarly, in order to subscribe to a podcast, these steps are involved:

1. subscribe to the desired podcast feed
2. listen to the podcast online or alternatively download and listen to the podcast later
3. move the podcast to an MP3 player such as an iPod.

Podcasting technology relies on an XML-based technology named RSS (Really Simple Syndication). In the UK and USA, popular websites from the BBC and CBC now have an increasing number of RSS feeds on a diverse range of topics related to heavily accessed news or sports stories. RSS feeds enable the inclusion of a diverse range of meta-information related to such aspects as channels, dates, titles and descriptions. In

addition, new developments in XML called 'enclosures', similarly allow information about audio files to be included. This type of metadata can be useful for tracking a file's history as well as for making the whole process of searching and indexing significantly more user-friendly.

## M is for mobile learning

The development of the iPod has occurred at the same time as the consolidation of laptops, the emergence of Personal Digital Assistants (PDA) and mobile phones. All three devices have propelled mLearning to the forefront of research in instructional technology. The 'm' in m-learning is primarily associated with mobile: the use of small, handheld devices that can be used anytime, anywhere. The 'm' may also signify a number of other meanings: the increasingly prominent place of marketing in education, management considerations leading pedagogy, or, on the other hand, the need to plan technological innovations through multilateral cooperation.

Duke launched a project with Macintosh's 20GB iPod in 2004, aimed at the promotion of e-learning initiatives using the mobile device. In all, approximately 1,650 freshmen students were given iPods along with a voice recorder, which allowed them to record audio from lectures. The collaboration between Duke and Apple enabled the iTunes framework to be used to host academic content including language learning lessons (especially in Spanish and Turkish), as well as music, lectures and audio books.

The evaluation of the project after one year resulted in a new plan for using the devices in which a more targeted approach was to be foregrounded. The new strategy focused on providing iPods only to students who were enrolled on courses that required the iPod as an integral tool. Second year undergraduates who already had iPods were able to trade-in their 4G iPods for the newer iPod Photo. The new strategy was based on the evaluation procedure that showed that 75 percent of freshmen surveyed used at least one iPod feature for academic study, and of those students, half used the iPod because of their instructor and half used it on their own. Interestingly, the evaluation indicated that the iPods were used in four primary areas: as a course content dissemination tool, as a classroom recording tool, as a field recording tool, and finally as a study support tool.

In all these areas, the Duke evaluation recorded that increased student mobility resulted. Students were able to listen to content outside of their normal study periods, while travelling to and from campus, or moving between activities. It also reported that increased student motivation was noticed by faculty, primarily as a result of higher levels of student independence promoted by the technology.

While many of the suggested advantages will need to be researched, a series of challenges were also identified. Faculty and students indicated that the project initially suffered from an approach that emphasised 'install first, think about the pedagogical consequences later'. On the technical side, the device's short battery life remained an issue, as well as problems related to sharing files between different iPods. Other areas of resistance derived from the need to secure permission for copyrighted audio material, and sometimes as a consequence of the lack of quality content.

Although it seems relevant to pose the question of student recruitment as perhaps the main reason for the project in 2004, the re-evaluation process will perhaps produce a clearer engagement with the real pedagogical potential of the devices.

Clearly, Duke's experience reinforces the need for an approach to the integration of educational technology that synchronizes evaluation and planning, as other mobile learning theorists have begun to suggest (Kukulska-Hulme and Traxler 2005:1).

In their discussion of blended e-learning, Jochems, van Merriënboer and Korper (2004) provide criteria for evaluating the future of such mobile devices as iPods, focusing on the primacy of three main factors:

1. pedagogical
2. technological
3. institutional.

According to this framework, e-learning innovations must demonstrate what they call their 'value-added' dimension. For this to happen effectively, they argue that these three important variables have to achieve a strong interrelationship:

The implementation of an instructional approach will be much more powerful if it is to be anchored in both the organization and the technological instrumentation. For the same reason the introduction of e-learning will have far more impact on education if it is able to support the organizational and instructional concepts that courses are based on. (Jochems, van Merriënboer & Korper 2004:7)

Similarly, another notable advocate of mobile learning, Keegan (2004) raised the importance of five factors:

1. trust in the effectiveness of the technology
2. frequent use
3. easy to use
4. cheap
5. fashionable.

Building trust with all stakeholders has to be achieved by e-learning innovation, if it is not to damage the association with quality standards it so keenly seeks. Jochems, van Merriënboer and Korper (2004) underline the importance of a 'design perspective' for e-learning projects such as Duke's, in which the successful integration of all aspects can be combined:

Integrated e-learning ... typically tries to combine elements from face-to-face teaching; distance education and training on the job. Thus it is a media mix, that is to say, a mix of methods, each having certain characteristics in terms of cost, availability, effectiveness, efficiency, appeal and so forth on the one hand, but a coherent one in the sense that the specific combination of methods is the result of a systematic design procedure on the other. (2004:5)

## Podcasting projects in ESL

There are numerous examples of podcasting currently being used in education. The iPodder.org site lists eleven under the heading of English as a Second Language (ESL) in the Education Folder, though many of them have yet to be fully developed. According to Stanley (2005) they can be divided into three types:

1. authentic podcasts that are not aimed at ESL students and can often be a rich source of listening
2. podcasts produced by teachers, often for their own classes, and usually aimed at helping students learn by producing listening content that is not available elsewhere; and
3. student podcasts produced by students, but often with teacher help, which tell about their lives and interests.

All of the iPodder podcasts for ESL use a blog site such as BlogMatrix or eBlogger to host their content. A brief review of the sites listed under English as a Second Language at the iPodder site follows.

### **The Daily Idiom** (<http://www.englishcaster.com/blogs>)

Though listed in iPodder as The Daily Idiom, this site has changed its name to English Idioms and Slang. The online archives suggest that idioms are posted on a regular basis, sometimes two per day, sometimes with an intervening period of four to five days. For example, the 13 November entry is: Get the ball rolling. On 11 October, the idiom is: Burned out. The idea is not new, as there are a number of comprehensive online listings for idioms, including an authoritative site at Dave's ESL Café. A script for the audio is available on the homepage, and there are usually at least two review questions that attempt to put the idiom in context. Idioms can be listened to in streaming audio, one by one, by clicking a link, actually named podcast. Alternatively, users can subscribe by clicking on the RSS feed link. Monthly archives are also available, beginning in December 2004, and the author sells a collection of 101 idioms online, many of which have never been used on the site.

### **Barcelona Young Learners Podcasts** (<http://bylpodcasts.blogspot.com/>)

This site uses a blog format to offer downloadable and podcast audio resources suitable for young learners. Topics include, to date, witches, ghost stories, and accidents. A very brief text accompanies each podcast and comments are invited in the form of a message board forum. Very few responses have been posted as yet, however, and limited archives from May 2005 are linked to the site.

### **Madrid Young Learners Podcast** (<http://mylcpodcasts.blogspot.com/>)

This site uses the same blog/discussion board format as the Barcelona group, with the same target audience evident in the topics posted. These include: song lyrics, Elvis Presley, finding your ancestors, walking in the Himalayas, running a marathon and poetry.

**The Bob and Rob Show** (<http://englishcaster.com/bobrob>)

This radio show style podcast is created by an American and British pair. Their first podcast on 29 May, 2005 dealt with the issue of greetings and meeting someone for the first time. Since then they have moved to a new site (address above) and developed a range of resources related to grammar and structure (make and do, present perfect simple versus continuous), as well as thematic concerns of a topical nature, such as the meaning of Thanksgiving.

**Pod EFL** (<http://blog-efl.blogspot.com/>)

This is a comprehensive site that addresses a range of teacher related information about the use and development of e-learning resources for English language teaching. Podcasts are available as well as comprehensive information, short discussions and links to educational technology issues such as web logs and the development of online student communities.

**Phonetic Podcast** (<http://phoneticpodcast.com/>)

This site is produced by a non-native speaker of English who is interested in developing students' pronunciation skills. Each of the Phonetic Podcasts, which uses native speakers, is five minutes and fifteen seconds in length. Topics discussed include: phonetics, pronunciation of English language, stress, accents, various dialects of English language from the point of view of pronunciation, learning how to speak English like a native speaker, and learning how to speak various dialects of English language.

**Japancasting** (<http://stevemc.blogmatrix.com/>)

This site is run by Steve McCarty, Professor of English at Osaka Jogakuin, where iPods have been circulated to students since 2004. Hosted by WebMatrix, Japancasting is aimed at students who want to study Japanese or English. Educationally oriented broadcasts on such themes as Japanese culture, history and society are interspersed with interviews from students and professors at McCarty's university. Links are also provided to additional resources, audio scripts and photos related to the podcast resources.

**Comprehensible Input - The Podcast** (<http://ci.iplusone.org/podcast>)

A site based on a web log of the same name that aims to provide information on subjects related to information and communications technology (ICT) for teachers and educators. Overviews of the latest developments in e-learning across the educational spectrum are provided by podcasts.

**Flo-Joe Radio** (<http://www.splendid-learning.co.uk/podcast/index.html>)

This site provides an online service for ESL teachers and students preparing for Cambridge First Certificate in English (FCE), Certificate in Advanced English (CAE) and Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE).

### The Linguist Community Blog (<http://www.thelinguist.blogs.com/>)

This blog supports a commercially available site from a company of the same name (<http://thelinguist.com/>), which offers comments and discussion about the company's methods for studying and learning foreign languages.

### ESL Listening For Japan (<http://www.eigolistening.com/>)

This site includes many free downloads of English phrases and expressions, as well as links to other sites which offer streaming or downloadable English listening.

As this brief overview indicates, while iPodder is seen to be one of the major directories for currently available podcasts, the range of those currently listed is of varying quality and usefulness to the ESL educator or student. Given that podcasting in education has developed quickly, often at the expense of a more considered approach to pedagogical issues, much of the available literature on the topic remains journalistic in style and depth.

One of the exceptions to this is a short study by Jobbings (2005) in which he usefully discusses the study skills that iPods may develop in the context of the UK's objectives for the use of ICT in the National Curriculum. Jobbings provides one of the first systematic attempts to delineate the potential of iPod Education into three areas: ICT knowledge, skills and understanding; developing ideas and making things happen; and exchanging and sharing information, as shown in Figure 1 to follow.

#### PODCAST ACTIVITY

Design and plan a podcast  
Consider focus, content and format of audio materials  
Identify and acquire the sources of audio material to include within a podcast

Prepare scripts and plan recordings of audio material (talk, music, SFX)

#### RECORD THE PODCAST

Record and edit audio material (talk, music, SFX)

#### ICT KNOWLEDGE, SKILLS AND UNDERSTANDING

Finding things out:

- a) to consider systematically the information required and to discuss its use
- b) how to obtain information suited to the purpose by choosing appropriate sources, using and adapting search techniques and questioning the value of the results
- c) how to collect/enter/analyse/judge quantitative and qualitative information and check its accuracy

#### DEVELOPING IDEAS AND MAKING THINGS HAPPEN

- a) To develop and investigate information, solve problems, produce new information for specific purposes

**PRODUCE AND PUBLISH A PODCAST**

Design programme, considering style, content and forms of audio

Record, edit and master audio material in different forms to produce suitable content

Publish and listen to the podcast as part of an RSS feed on a website

**EXCHANGING AND SHARING INFORMATION**

a) how to make sense of information to reorganise and present it in a range of forms that fit the purpose

b) efficiently use a range of ICT tools to draft, combine and refine information, creating good presentations suited to the needs of others and to the content

c) the way to use email and other ICT to exchange information effectively

**Table 1: Podcasting and the UK National Curriculum at Key Stage 3 (for 11-13 year olds) (Jobbings 2005:3)**

Such a systematic approach to the skills inherent in the use of this ICT provides a suitable framework for further research on the topic, and a way for those engaged in existing projects to begin to assess the learning skills and objectives involved.

**Conclusion**

While the introduction of iPod Education has continued the wave of interest created by blogging, research must be done on the actual consequences of using it in structured pedagogical contexts. Nevertheless, it is already evident from this precursory overview that podcasting does have a number of advantages, and opens up a world of digital audio and video to be explored by m-learning technologists in the future. While student-friendly banks and educational institutions have both contributed to the image of iPods as the latest gimmick to attract new recruits, as is so often the case, educational technologists in ESL have found a number of pedagogically valid ways to incorporate them into their learning environments. As iPod Education exemplifies, educational technology can be productive for administrators, attractive to students and give rise to sound pedagogical practice, when their various interests are brought together.

Above all, however, iPod Education is an exemplary case study that demonstrates how educational institutions themselves still require educating about producing effective instructional technology initiatives. It proves yet again that it is necessary to involve everyone in discussions about sound pedagogical objectives for e-learning prior to implementation. For my students in Japan, who are still getting to grips with the implications of the new mobile technology in an environment that involved little pre-planning, the stress on the connector – iPod therefore I learn – is still being modified by the culturally appropriate perhaps.

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# Time shifting time – Podvocation: What it is and why you should care

## Abstract

Do you ever listen to the radio whilst driving, ironing, gardening, studying or even lazing on the beach? It would be unusual if you don't! Radio broadcasts enable us to consume their content, and the experience whilst otherwise engaged. Podcasting is just like radio, but even better, because while we can be entertained and even learn, whilst otherwise engaged, more importantly, we can listen to podcasts at other times and places than when they are broadcast. We can even make them ourselves. But, is podcasting an effective learning method? Our student surveys suggest so. Do learner's use it? Our students say yes! Are podcasts easy for an educator to produce? Relatively so. Should you care about podcasting? You bet you should, and this article tells you why!

## Introduction

This article is based on some of the findings of a 2005, work based learning research project called Time Shifting Time. The project assessed the potential use of podcasting for vocational education, termed herein 'Podvocation' - i. e. podcasting adapted for vocational education purposes. Time Shifting Time, the project, was fundamentally about the how, when, where, why, how much and the maybes of podcasting for vocational learning. The project was funded through LearnScope, a professional development program of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. (See Acknowledgements for more details.)

Time Shifting Time - the project - is slowly becoming time shifting time - the reality - as commentary and ongoing trials demonstrate that for some learners, podcasting can offer the almost unique ability to improve their learning, by giving them the potential to juggle their precious learning time by shifting time and bending a little space (Greeson 2006). However, while offering great promise, the usefulness of podcasting as a vocational education learning strategy is still being clarified. Currently, it is far from being a mainstream learning strategy.

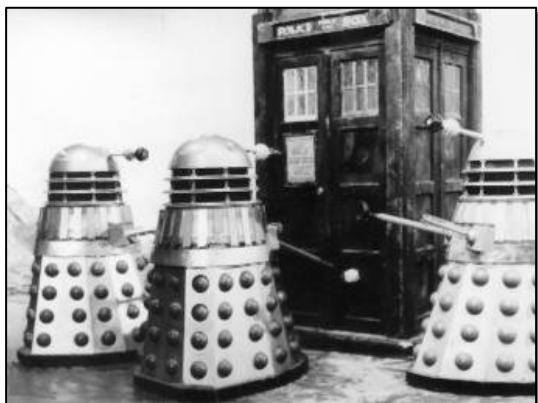
If podcasting is to be effective in vocational teaching and learning, what in particular might be the appropriate formats, textures (rough to smooth, short to long), topics, production and publishing techniques, hardware and software combinations and associated costs that make it work on a day to day basis? Vocational education podcasters have a few embryonic ideas, but there is still much to learn and even more to prove. Maybe podcasting is really is just another passing fad, seemingly a good idea, but unable to live up to all the hype and failing to pass the ultimate test of being effective on a day-to-day basis?

## Podcasting defined

Podcasting, as a process is relatively new (no more than a few years old), but as a technique it's as old as the developed human brain – the good, the bad and the broken bits. Podcasting is basically about encouraging people to put 'voices' in their minds, with the hopeful consequence of creating understanding and knowledge. Done well, podcasting has the potential to build a rich, aural world of imagination, understanding and knowledge. Done badly, podcasting can be just as ineffectual as any boring face-to-face lecture on a cold, rainy Monday morning. Podcasting done well, however, can link seemingly disparate concepts into melded, holistic atoms of knowledge.

## Visual Explanations of Podcasting: The Time Lord and the Monster

When I try to explain the concept of podcasting to learners and my colleagues alike, I often fall back to these two visualisations of the Time Lord, Dr. Who (to explain the concept) and Nessie (to show what podcasting can do).



Just as Dr. Who is able to bend, warp, bash, pulp and shred time and space at will, whenever the Daleks' behaviour requires him to, so podcasting allows us to download audio files from the Internet to a portable audio player to be heard anytime, anywhere. Essentially, podcasts are shifted in time and space through their consumption by listeners. This may appear a bizarre linkage, but it helps our students get the idea of podcasting i.e. the possibility of listening to radio for more than just music and, most importantly, its potential to help their learning. Every learner has the ability to become a Dr. Who when they learn, but alas, not everyone gets to drive the Tardis!



So where does 'Nessie' the elusive monster of the depths of Loch Ness fit in? Nessie has inspired 'Messie', the name given to the possible Bunyip reportedly sighted in the shallows of Urrbrae Wetland, an urban catchment-based wetland, located a mere twenty minute drive from the heart of Adelaide's central business district. Urrbrae's wetlands are small, and unfortunately a lot dirtier than the deeper, darker, cleaner waters of Loch Ness. Despite a number of recent sightings, Messie still eludes objective confirmation as Urrbrae's resident Bunyip and this is where some of our environmental management students become involved.

Our final year Diploma in Environmental Management students are posed the question: 'How can you prove scientifically that a Bunyip does not live in Urrbrae Wetlands? Design

an experiment or survey to achieve this'. The first step of this project involves the students listening to a podcast with the instructions for the project, followed by an interview with the wetland's manager Dr. Allin Hodson, who outlines the nature of the reported sightings, and if Messie does exist, what it would eat and how it would probably live.

The podcast continues with some vox-pops (brief comments) from members of the public about their thoughts on the existence of Messie. It finishes with an amusing and highly implausible interview with Messie in person ... or is that 'in creature'? This audio resource is a humorous take on a quite serious, but often boring section of work on the design and analysis of experiments and surveys. Podcasting is arguably the best technique to approach a topic like this, because it is relatively easy to produce and as an educational resource is very effective. Video can be too hard and time consuming to produce and paper and face to face sessions - when they can be used - are often perceived as just more of the same old 'stuff'.

## Why should you care about podcasting?

Podcasting is worth considering simply because any learning technique that proves to be effective, interesting and has the power to move a learner from a wetland in suburban Adelaide to a loch in Scotland to look for wee beasties, whilst they are driving their car or lazing on the beach, simply cannot be ignored!

## What is podcasting?

My definitions:

- 1) An amalgam of the words 'iPod' and 'broadcasting'. The term iPod is now used generically to refer to any portable/personal media player capable of playing mp3 format audio files (or equivalent). MP3 is a format for compressing audio to reduce file size substantially without reducing listening quality excessively.
- 2) The process of automatically receiving time-shifted (accessible and usable at any time) content (audio, images, movies, documents, although mainly audio currently) from a personally selected subscription to one of a growing number of podcast-enabled (enclosure capable) Really Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds (covering education, sports, music, travel, languages, news, entertainment, technology, food, etc.) on a portable media device, enabling place-shifting use (accessible and usable in any place). A type of m- or blended learning depending on the formats used. Apple's iPod is the most widely used player at present.
- 3) Syndicated distribution of audio files (mp3 format) through the Internet from an individually selected source (podcast feed) using a computer program (called an 'aggregator') that automatically downloads to a personal audio device (an mp3 player).
- 4) An emerging model of distributed education and m-learning.

## How It Works

Generally, podcasting is a relatively simple publishing/broadcasting process, involving just four main steps:

- Step 1: Create a podcast - collect audio, edit and create the final mp3 audio podcast file
- Step 2: Upload (publish) mp3 file to Internet host

Step 3: Tell the world about it via RSS or blogging

Step 4: Listeners' download mp3 files to their players & listen... creating new knowledge.

Of course, each of these steps has a range of tasks associated with it, which are documented widely on the Internet (see Useful Links). However, for podvocation it is Step 1 - the production of the audio content – that is the most important and time consuming part of the whole process.

Step 1: Creating a podcast can be further broken down into the following tasks. This is a generalised approach, which can vary depending on the format being developed - and may even start at task 5 for the recorded lecture format.

Task 1: Objective/purpose of your podcast - what's it for? This will often decide the format to use format (see Figure 1 below).

Task 2: Audience - who's it for? This will usually resolve the approach to style (rough to smooth, long or short, fast or slow).

Task 3: Content - what's it about and what audio do you need? What is the take home message?

Task 4: Talent - who's going to be talking? What is their relationship with the content? expert, student?

Task 5: Collect audio - with what and how? (Refer to Podcast Recording Section).

Task 6: Edit audio - transfer to PC for editing? Edit with what software? How much editing? Music needs? Voice links? File storage needs? Quality of mp3 files?

Step 2 and beyond includes:

Publishing audio - how will it be accessible and distributed?

If Internet, via RSS, what is your notification site - iPodder, iTunes, etc? and aggregation software?

You can also publish it to an intranet, CD-ROM, flash drive, personal audio player (mp3 player, mobile phone) and PDA.

## Podcasting approaches

A podcast should only be used for educational purposes when it will add value to student learning. This seems self evident, but at times traditional, effective and tried and true strategies can be usurped by new trends. If there's a better and easier learning approach to use other than podcasting, then use it! There's no point in making a podcast about something when it can be done better another way. Podcasting is most appropriate when learners can seriously bend time and shift a bit of space, by learning as they are driving, or studying, or laying on the beach, or even relaxing in the bath.

For example, podcasting is not the most useful approach for botany and plant identification. When starting out, it's better to have real plants or images to learn with, rather than someone's audio descriptions. Imagine this description without any visual guide.

The leaves are a broad oval to oblong shape, smooth and dark above and with a lighter, downy lower surface, with a short stalk, whilst the flowers have a white petals and a five-lobed calyx, which remains on top of the fruit as it develops.

If, however, you have a quince plant in front of you, then the previous audio becomes a very useful reinforcement. Ideally, podcasting adds learning value. For example, after initially viewing a quince tree, you may remember a lot more about it by holding a quince fruit in your hand, down on the beach and hearing a podcast:

The quince, *cydonia oblonga*, is a native to west Asia, but it is cultivated throughout Asia and the Mediterranean for its astringent, pulpy fruit which is cooked and eaten in jams, jellies and desserts. The fruit is fragrant, yellow, shaped like a pear and is covered with frizzy hairs – take a bite and then go for a swim!

Podcasting can be a very effective tool for inducing, and then managing knowledge. Knowledge is formed in the minds of learners when they are able to link incoming symbols, data and information to their existing understanding of subject matter. If a learner actively listens to a podcast, and can make sense of the content, then to understand it, they are likely to paint a mental picture. When this happens, arguably, new knowledge is usually formed. If a mental picture cannot be formed then the podcast has probably failed for this listener, although it may work for others.

Producing educational podcasts for my students is about collecting those symbols, data and information that I think they will respond to most successfully, structuring these into knowledge packages that they should find interesting, and then challenging them to visualise the words so that learning may occur and new knowledge be formed almost as easily as daydreaming.

With educational podcasting, the chosen format is very important. Should it be an interview, or an audio story book - maybe a 'how to' guide or a super slick radio magazine approach? There are so many ways to do the same thing, but the final format used should always be based on a combination of the:

- characteristics of the learning material
- preferred podcast styles of your students
- data and information to hand
- time needed to collect, edit and publish the material
- equipment needed and its cost
- level of information and communication technologies (ICT) and support you have available
- confidence and the 'know how' you have to collect, process and publish the audio.

My preference is to collect, and then process (edit) audio in as high a quality format as possible in order to keep the final podcast product as easy to listen to as possible. There is nothing more annoying than having to listen to a really interesting podcast which is marred by poor quality sound. The final audio file format is usually mp3, which is a highly compressed, thus smaller sized file. This compression often reduces audio files to about 1/10th of their original size, but can be of varying fidelity, which may reduce listening ease at times. Keeping audio quality high until the last stage, helps to ensure the final product will be as easy on the ear as possible.

Oh, and did I mention information technology (IT) support? An external Internet site is needed, with the ability to upload and download mp3 format files, and enough storage space for audio files which can be largish in size, with each file often ranging from 2 to 20 MB. Broadband access is very highly recommended for podcast download and upload.

Dial-up access is painfully slow for the file sizes in question. If students are campus based, then podcasts can be loaded onto an Intranet, but audio software, such as Apple's iTunes, needs to be installed on computers so that files can be downloaded to mp3 players, or played on the computer itself. Audio CDs can be distributed to students as an alternative to the two methods above, but it's really only suitable if small numbers are involved.

## Potential Podvocation formats

Figure 1, to follow, describes a range of podcast formats and categorises producing them in terms of skills#, gear\* (equipment) and time, against a production rating scale (1-5), where 1 denotes ease of production, in terms of skills, simple gear and a short time to produce, and 5 denotes complexity of production in terms of skills, more sophisticated gear and a longer time to produce. The level of gear (equipment) needed to produce podcasts is a slightly tricky issue, because it can range from the 'cheap and nasty', 'cheap and not-too-bad' to 'expensive and pretty good' and 'expensive and really good'. Essentially, you need to be really clear about who the audience is, what message they should end up receiving and how you are going to get it to them. There are many ways to do this, but here are three approaches to podcasting gear:

1. Keep it totally computer based. All that's required is recording/editing software (free versions are available) and a set of integrated microphone/headphones. Whilst these are available for as little as \$10, to produce reasonable audio quality \$50 is a better starting point. Field based recording isn't easy with this approach.
2. Use a portable recording device and external microphone available from about \$150 assuming that you already have all the gear required in approach 1.
3. Use a PDA instead of a portable recorder. This option would realistically start at around \$400 - \$500.

FORMAT	COMMENT	SKILLS	GEAR	TIME
Sound-scene tours - digital audio story telling	An audio tour of place or object. Very powerful if done well, as it engages the listener with their own constructed 'mental' world based on the audio content	1-3	3-5	3-5
Extending topics	Extension material to provide greater depth, and enhance student motivation eg interview with a topic 'expert'.	1-3	3	3
Recorded talk/lecture	Straight recording of a class, talk or lecture presentation. Can, potentially, be boring, but useful to make up missed sessions, etc.	1-3	5	1
Audio tutorial	To provide extra clarification on specific topics of interest or concern. Can be simply recorded text, but not very engaging.	1-3	1	1-3
Audio assignment	Background material for assignment/project work	1	1	1-3
Student exposition as digital audio stories	Students 'exposing'/talking about their work (especially project based work), field work or case studies. Sharing their knowledge and skills with other	1	1	1-3

FORMAT	COMMENT	SKILLS	GEAR	TIME
	students – marketing potential?			
The 'how to'!	Instructions on 'how to' do something eg. start a pump safely,	1	1	1-3
Audio 'package' style – a type of audio texture	Smooth – slick, high production values, bells n' whistles, fast paced, similar to some types of radio magazine formats Rough - can be hard to listen to, but earthy, raw, eg. – some community radio programmes Smooth tends to need multiple speakers with links tying segments together, music links and professional radio style Usually not an individual format, but a way in which some of the formats can be published	5	3	Smooth – very intensive, with 1 minute requiring approx. 1 – 2 hours work. Rough – can be as little as actual length of recorded audio, plus preparation time.
Sonification – representing data as sounds so that different values have different tones that can be easily heard as being different, etc.	Conversion of data to an audio format for ease of analysis and learning. Examples include 'talking' cockpits in aeroplanes, audio weather forecasts, etc. Potential for learning requiring the processing of large amounts of data/information. e.g. long term weather data sonified and analysed for trends, variations	Various	Various	Various

**Figure 1: Podcast Formats**

The following describes the Skills (#) and Gear (\*) rating scales in more detail.

**# Skills:**

- 1- Low - some basic knowledge of using recording and editing/publishing equipment, some knowledge of structuring interviews to reduce editing time.
- 3- Mid level - a higher level knowledge of using recording and editing/publishing equipment is needed, some knowledge of structuring interviews to reduce editing time.
- 5- High - high level knowledge of using recording and editing/publishing equipment is needed, high level knowledge of structuring interviews, use of multi track mixer software.


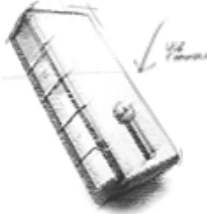

**\* Level of gear (equipment) needed:**


- 1- Low - mainly computer based with integrated microphone/headphone set, assuming access to a computer this level starts at about \$50, high quality recorder minidisk, high bit rare recording mp3 unit, pc interface unit, editing software, mp3 player, Internet site, aggregation software.
- 3- Mid level - either high quality computer based approach (better microphone, etc), or portable recorder with good quality microphone (for field based work) - starts at around \$150, assuming prior access to a computer and recording/editing software.

- 5- High - High quality portable recording device and good quality microphone, and/or high quality microphone and computer audio card if just computer based. PDA approach fits at this level, as costs start at around \$400.

## Podcasting recording methods

Audio has to be collected, edited and then published and distributed for student use. There are a variety of ways to do this, varying in cost, time and effort.

METHOD	+ve	-ve	COMMENT
Record audio direct to PC [Memory/disk] 	Very quick, relatively easy	Not suitable for field based recording especially if moving about.	Need recording/editing software (e.g. Audacity on PCs, Garage Band on Macs). If possible, use an external audio interface unit, or high quality internal audio card. Built in audio interfaces are often of very poor quality.
Record audio direct to a portable, low quality recording such as an mp3 recorder/player, note-taker, phone or PDA (may record mp3 files directly, or some other format). <b>MUSIC STICK</b> 	Very quick, relatively easy. Highly portable & suitable for field work. May be relatively cheap? Low visibility (helpful if people being interviewed are a little nervous).	Microphone recording quality is usually poor – often only ‘note-taker’ quality. Many devices do not have ability to use an external microphone, forcing use of built-in mics which are often not good enough for podcasting purposes.	Must have recording software/hardware built in – not all models offer appropriate file formats or recording quality.
Record audio direct to high quality mp3 recorder (e.g. iRiver H340, m-audio microtrack, etc.) 	Very quick, relatively easy. Highly portable & usually very suitable for field work. Low visibility (helpful if people being interviewed are a little nervous). Ability to use high quality microphone, if needed.	Microphone recording quality is usually high, or very high. Usually have the ability to use high quality external microphone. More expensive.	Usually ideal for podcasting purposes, but some smaller devices may have confusing menu systems, small buttons, etc.

METHOD	+ve	-ve	COMMENT
Record audio to high quality portable recording device [non mp3 format, e.g. minidisc]. 	Very quick & relatively easy to use. Highly portable & usually very suitable for field work. Low visibility (helpful if people being interviewed are a little nervous). Ability to use high quality microphone, if needed.	Usually do not have in-built microphones. Audio must be transferred to PC for editing in real time – additional time required. Additional cost of recording unit and media over other methods, but often higher audio quality,	Need recording/editing software (e.g. Audacity on PCs, Garage Band on Macs). If possible, use an external audio interface unit, or high quality internal audio card. Some of these high-end recording devices now come with digital cameras and GPS (Global Positioning System) built-in.

**Figure 2: Recording Methods**

A high quality microphone (\$100 - \$150) is highly desirable, but not essential. A personal audio player (mp3) is highly desirable for testing purposes (start around \$50). A personal audio player that also records is more expensive, and one that has a reasonable level of audio quality is even more so. These tend to start at around \$100. A note of caution: recording mp3 players vary greatly in their ability to record reasonable quality audio for podcasting purposes. You need one that lets you record from an external microphone with a 'high' recording bit rate, as in-built microphones are rarely good enough for podcasting.

## What Our Students Say about Podcasting

The results of a formal, written survey of a small sample of our students (approximately 45) studying Environmental Management and Garden Design diplomas generally confirmed the results of early, anecdotal focus group work. The sample consisted of approximately two thirds females and one third males, with half being in the 18 – 24 year old range, 40% over 30 years old age with the remainder in the 25 – 30 year old range. The survey was carried out in October, 2005, with the results indicating:

- the majority of students had never heard of podcasting or listened to one. Of those few who use podcasts, most listen to music.
- the majority of students don't own or use an mp3 player. Only one third plan to buy a player within the next 12 months (Some found out later that they actually had mp3 players in their mobile phones which could be used.)
- sixty six percent do, or would, find podcasts useful for their learning
- sixty percent do, or would, listen to podcasts as they drive (the largest response by far), study, or relax, including whilst gardening, lazing on the beach, having a bath, doing house work
- seventy per cent would prefer to listen to podcasts that are presented using a range of styles and formats
- the most preferred content/format of podcasts were: how-to guides, subject expert interviews, guest speakers, spoken word/documentary format, recorded lectures and tutorials
- the most preferred duration was 10 -15 minutes, mainly as interviews (that are short and fast) and recorded lectures and tutorials
- seventy per cent would be interested in video style podcasts.

A small focus group of final year environmental management students rated podcasting from eight to ten out of ten as a learning tool. All found the ability to learn whilst otherwise engaged as the most attractive feature of the tool, especially when extension material was involved. All of the participants thought that recorded lecture would be a very valuable learning tool, potentially enabling them to make up for missed sessions. Video style podcasts would be beneficial, although more limiting.

## Issues & Challenges

As with many new learning technologies, there are issues, challenges and even some problems. They tend to fall into three main groups: IT related (the biggest challenge by far), time and cost. All should be, and can be overcome, however IT related issues have been the hardest for us to tackle. Blocked access to mp3 file downloads, lack of access to Internet hosting sites for audio files, inability to get RSS feeds working, and limited access to editing software are all common IT challenges, but which mostly can be overcome with either a workaround, and /or time and effort. This project has demonstrated that podcasting for vocational education - podvocation - is perfectly feasible and an increasingly valuable m-learning tool. It's well worth you giving it a go, so as Dr. Who might say, if he knew about podcasting, "Go and shift a bit of time and bend a bit of space yourself".

## Useful Links

ABC Science Show

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/scienceshow/>

BargainTravel.com - hosts a range of podcasts associated with travel

<http://www.bargaintravel.com>

BBC World Service Go Digital

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/technology/1478157.stm>

EduPodder

<http://www.edupodder.com>

Introduction to Podcasting presentation

<http://sridgway.wikispaces.com/IntroductionToPodcasting>

Podcasting in Education presentation

<http://seanfitz.wikispaces.com/access2005>

The Connected Traveller

<http://www.connectedtraveller.com>

The Dawn and Drew Show

<http://dawnanddrew.podshow.com>

Wikipedia - Podcasting

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>

## Acknowledgements

Time Shifting Time - the project - was funded by LearnScope. Since its inception in 1998, [LearnScope](#) has been part of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework's (Framework) national strategy to increase the capacity of vocational and technical education (VTE) professionals to use flexible learning approaches and new technologies in the delivery of training. It provides funding for work-based professional development projects and encourages both individuals and teams to model sustainable practices in their own learning through a range of strategies including engagement with recent thinking about

professional development in the 'knowledge era' (Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2006).

I would personally like to thank Marlene Manto and Judy Fawcett (Learnscope South Australia), Pam Gurner-Hall, Marlene Boundy, Debra Walkley, Simon Hallsworth and Susan Meier (TAFE SA Urrbrae Campus), Allin Hodson (Urrbrae Agricultural High School) and dozens of students and industry experts for their unflinching support and encouragement for this project.

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## Who's podding why and where? An interview with Stephan Ridgway

**Interviewer: Jo Murray**

*Jo: Welcome to The Knowledge Tree Everyone, today we're speaking with Stephan Ridgway, who's based in Sydney, Australia. Welcome Stephan.*

**Stephan:** Welcome Jo

*Jo: So Steph, you work with Technical and Further Education, New South Wales, can you tell us briefly about your role there please?*

**Stephan:** Yeah sure, I work for the Sydney Institute and I'm the e-learning coordinator and I work for a unit called Learning and Innovation and we look after the professional development needs of staff across the Institute as well as supporting teachers delivering flexibly online etc across the Institute.

*Jo: So in the last couple of years, Stephan, you've emerged as a national contact and hub for information and networks on podcasting for teacher professional development, so how did you get interested in podcasting?*

**Stephan:** Well it's true... it's amazing the interest in podcasting is phenomenal and we scheduled a workshop here a few weeks ago and we got more people than we've ever had turn up to a workshop so it's fantastic. But I first got interested in Podcasting through a LearnScope project in 2006, 2005 sorry, last year, and I have to give credit to Sean Fitzgerald who was my colleague on that project because he first mooted the idea that we should explore podcasting in an educational context and we put together a LearnScope project that was very successful and really that's when podcasting was starting to emerge into the sort of mass consciousness Apple had yet to provide podcasting support in iTunes, so it was just a coincidence that in 2005 it just suddenly took off.

*Jo: Ok, so we'll be able to find access to that project and the write up in your Wiki space won't we?*

**Stephan:** Um should do, there's also an EdNa Group we very much used EdNa as the sort of information hub for the project, so if you go to EdNa and you... EdNa Groups and you type in Casting the Net or podcasting you'll find us there.

*Jo: Great thanks a lot. So, what are some of the podcasting projects that you're in touch with at the moment then?*

**Stephan:** Well of course Sean and I... we refocused the podcast that we had created for that project and we continue to have a regular podcast called 'Casting the Net' and that's more about Web 2.0, Network Learning, Distributed Learning but also I'm involved in another podcast which in a way is about.... it's a VTE podcast..... so any conferences, seminars, material that's useful to a VTE audience .....we cast through a podcast which is titled 'Talking VTE'.

*Jo: And VTE stands for Vocation and Technical Education, is that right?*

**Stephan:** Indeed that's the replacement for what was VET.

*Jo: OK.... so, that project we'll be able to link people to so they can catch up there with people's reports on conference sessions and interviews with LearnScope Team Managers and that sort of thing, is that correct?*

**Stephan:** Yeah that's the idea basically, I do that with a colleague Alex Hayes, Alexander Hayes, and I mean.....each of us will interview people on Skype or face-to-face but if I attend a conference or he attends a conference we'll just record it, with the permission of the speakers and the organisers of course, and put it up there on Talking VTE and share it.

**Jo:** *Great well that's obviously going to be a mine of information for people wanting to start looking at podcasting. I believe you've been doing something with the BAIT (Business Arts and Information Technology) Curriculum Centre as well. Can you tell us a bit about that?*

**Stephan:** Sure, well I'm a peripheral to that project but they did ask me to come along and assist them on the day but that was Stanley Tonkins and Tony Winningham and Agnes just um I just can't think of her name, (Vukovic)...she is the Project Manager for BAIT here and basically what they did is they put out an expression of interest to TAFE teachers in the IT area across the state (New South Wales) to attend a workshop on podcasting and wikis and they had a tremendous interest in that and I think they got about 30 people to come to a two-day workshop that Tony and Stanley ran over at North Sydney Institute of TAFE and the idea there was they set them up into teams, six teams and they were to basically create an audio resource that would be used for podcasting to support a competency in a new training package, the new IT training package and oh it was a really fantastic workshop and some great stuff came out of that.

**Jo:** *And you've provided us with a link to the wiki space for that as well so people will be able to have a look at some of those project reports, is that right?*

**Stephan:** Yeah, yeah and of course perhaps I think probably Stanley and Tony's contacts are there so you can get in touch with them and find out more about the... he created some templates for making podcasts that would be useful for teachers who are wanting to explore it for their own resource development.

**Jo:** *Great, ok so where do you think we're headed with innovations in podcasting for teaching and learning?*

**Stephan:** Well I think at the moment we have to get over the podcasting being sexy and just how we can actually make it a part of mainstream teaching and learning out there in the TAFE Institutes. Part of that's professional development, part of that's providing a means for teachers to be able to do it very efficiently and very effectively so that means providing server space for teachers to be able to put their files um, and an easy way for teachers to be able to record their material and get it up and out because it's all about being able to do it very quickly and efficiently. You don't want to be spending one or two hours post-processing audio after the event.

**Jo:** *[laughs] Yeah, I can understand that. I've heard that there's some moves into video blogging as well. How does that relate to podcasting?*

**Stephan:** Yeah well V-blogging or Video-blogging or Vodcasting is another term for it, it uses exactly the same syndication and distribution technology that is RSS as podcasting. The only real difference is it delivers a video file as opposed to audio files so all the concept is exactly the same.

**Jo:** *And so how do you see teachers being able to do that simply and easily? I noticed the other day you had on Talking VTE you had Skype window –a video Swindow with Robyn Jay in it beaming in from [laughs] Montego Bay in Jamaica so is that a strategy for how teachers might bring in special interest teachers into a classroom?*

**Stephan:** Well now that would be a great thing to do and you could do that quite easily with software like Skype. The difficulty is that Skype is still very much under the radar in TAFE certainly in our Institute, It's only special people or people with special permissions who are able to use it, it's certainly not one that is, how you might say, allowed by network managers, so we would have to overcome some issues there, but there might be some other technologies that would provide exactly the same capabilities. We've seen the roll out of Breeze for instance, we've seen Elluminate used by some institutes. All these technologies enable VOIP (voice over internet protocol) and screen presences of some kind or another... like video so you could use those just as well as Skype.

**Jo:** *Ok so, I'm just winding up now and thinking about the best way for people to get in contact with networks of other people who are getting comfortable with podcasting, is, apart from the Casting the Net group, is there any other networks that you think people should know about?*

**Stephan:** Absolutely yeah, there's the National Networks project that Sean FitzGerald and a whole range of other people are involved with.... called Connected Learning Community and I'll give you the URLs for that so you can put that on the show notes... that's fantastic.

**Jo:** *Great! Thank you.*

**Stephan:** For those people who are more newbies to online and network learning etc they can join the Online Mentoring Network which was something that was a 2005 Networks project but has continued to live on beyond that, and that's Wendy Zammit's project. She has created a space there for people, who are experienced and a little bit further down the track, to mentor new people online -sort of online coaching, online mentoring network so they have Skype chats every Tuesday and Elluminate on Thursdays and they'll be using and exploring a range of technologies for people to learn how to use. But of course I've mentioned my national Networks projects any of them are fantastic and the EdNa Groups are great as well and the NSW LearnScope blog or I can give you a link for that too but I imagine there's probably similar things of blogs in all states, similar networking presences for all of the LearnScopes in each state.

**Jo:** *Ok Stephan well look, thanks very much for providing us with that insight with what's going on in podcasting. You've provided us with some great links to follow up, some networks to join and some models of teacher professional development and learner engagement so thanks again for speaking with the Knowledge Tree*

**Stephan:** It's a pleasure, Jo, thank you.

## Useful Links

Business Arts & Information Technology (BAIT) Curriculum Centre project  
wiki

<http://tafepod.wikispaces.com/>

blog

<http://podtafe.blogspot.com/>

Casting the Net

<http://www.groups.edna.edu.au/course/view.php?id=272>

Connected Learning Community

<http://clcommunity.wikispaces.com/>

LearnScope New South Wales blog

<http://www.nswlearnscope.com/>

Online Mentoring Network

<http://castingthenetpodcast.blogspot.com>

Stephan's home page

<http://sridgway.wikispaces.com/>

Talking VTE

<http://talkingvte.blogspot.com/>

## **Students come first: blended learning in a distributed model - an interview with Donelle Batty**

**Interviewer Jo Murray**

**Jo:** *Welcome to The Knowledge Tree Everyone. Today we're speaking with Donelle Batty who is a high school teacher from Riverside in Launceston, Tasmania. Donelle is a grade supervisor teaching face-to-face within the Riverside High School but she also works within the Distance Education Tasmania Online Campus as a very experienced teacher and professional mentor for other teachers within that campus, which runs across the whole state of Tasmania. This is an edited version of a phone interview conducted as part of the evaluation of the Distance Education Online Campus Service. Thanks for speaking with us Donelle. Can you give us a quick run down please of your students... where they are and the programs that you teach them?*

**Donelle:** I teach Child Studies to grades 9 and 10 and there's some grades 7s and 8s from Cape Barren island are doing that, and I do Children Services Certificate II in Community Services Work which is grade 11 and 12 VET and I have one called the Pegasus Project which is for grades 7 and 8 Gifted and Talented students across the state.

**Jo:** *And your receiver schools?*

**Donelle:** I do Child Studies to start with. OK I have Flinders' Island, Cape Barren Island, Triabunna, Woodbridge, Bothwell, St Mary's and Rosebery. Now for VET, I have St Helen's, Glenora, Triabunna, Sorell, Huonville, Sheffield, St Mary's as well and Winnaleah and then for Pegasus I have Reece High School, Brooks, Geilston Bay, Lilydale, Burnie, Rosetta, Woodbridge, Bothwell, Riverside, Taroon, right so that's all my schools.

**Jo:** *So how many students do you have in each of those schools?*

**Donelle:** It ranges from one to about five. There's thirty-four students enrolled at the moment in Pegasus.

**Jo:** *And what about in the other two programs?*

**Donelle:** In the other two programs, in Child Studies I think there's about thirty-three I just have to check.

**Jo:** *And is that including your VET?*

**Donelle:** No VET's different, so for Child Studies I have thirty-three and for VET yes seventeen.

**Jo:** *OK, so what would your perceptions be of your students' employment prospects for a start?*

**Donelle:** Well my perception is that the kids really enjoy it ...

**Jo:** *Yeah*

**Donelle:** And it actually allows the students to have a greater choice of subjects in those schools and allows access to something they wouldn't have access to if it was not offered through online.

**Jo:** *OK, and how would you rate the impact of it?*

**Donelle:** I think it's highly significant.

**Jo:** *OK*

**Donelle:** And for some it allows them to follow a career path because Child Studies is actually a career path ...

**Jo:** *Yeah*

**Donelle:** ...they can work out where they can go with that for later on

**Jo:** *So what about your perception on students' life skills*

**Donelle:** OK

**Jo:** *Like what significance do you think that has?*

**Donelle:** Student life skills (the impact on) is exceptionally high because they learn how to operate in an online environment and in online communities. Let's face it; our world revolves around online life in a lot of cases. Everyone uses email in their workplace well not everyone but the majority of people are using it more and more and at home as well for communicating with friends and family members if they are overseas and it's getting used more and more. Yeah so I see it really vital because it gives them the skills and confidence for them to be able to do that effectively and just understanding how to use discussions...discussion boards and how that works because even now you have online conferences and if you go out to the university you'll find that they use WebCT, so having some understanding of how WebCT works and how to be part of the community before you get to the uni would be really valuable.

**Jo:** *Yes, basic online etiquette and that sort of thing*

**Donelle:** Yes that sort of thing is really important and the safety and the etiquette for someone who is going onto university is really worthwhile. In the online environment you get the text and kids are known for changing their persona in different environments, in the online area, as do adults and you have to be very aware of, that some child that is very timid may actually be quite able to be forthright in the online environment because they don't have to physically be in front of a group of people, so it allows them to come out and say things that they may not say otherwise.

**Jo:** *So Donelle, what are the main issues you find in your professional development role with new online teachers?*

**Donelle:** I had a conversation with a teacher the other day and she said, 'Look I'm giving up on the pretty stuff because the most important is the teaching... that's my core business' and I said, 'That's correct it is your core business and so you've got to focus on that' and so, I think when probably people go into it for the first time, it's almost like being a brand new teacher...

**Jo:** *Yeah*

**Donelle:** ...you walk in and you see some people in the school, who are these amazing teachers who don't seem to be troubled by a thing and you're on this really steep learning

curve. For someone who is coming in brand new it's all there and it hits them really fast and it's like 'What do I need to know?' and often because they haven't taught in that area they don't know the questions to ask, for new teachers, and if you don't ask questions people assume you're OK .....but that's my assumption

**Jo:** Yeah OK

**Donelle:**..like if someone keeps quiet you assume until you get some feedback from somewhere else, that you're not getting work, or whatever, it's just like a normal classroom you're working in isolation from everyone else

**Jo:** Yeah

**Donelle:** ...so people don't start to realise there are issues there until other people start making comments and I think that's very much a teaching profession thing and some people are too scared to ask for help because they don't want to be seen as not knowing,

**Jo:** Yep

**Donelle:** Whereas I just ask dumb questions [laughs] I'll say 'Here comes the dumb question of the day...'

**Jo:** Yeah, yep

**Donelle:** [laughing]'...I know I've been shown this but I can't remember'. I suppose that also takes enough confidence as well.

**Jo:** So Donelle, you've got an awful lot of schools... how does the face-to-face component come into it because I understand you're running a blended program?

**Donelle:** When we visit students we put in a fair amount of effort with those kids on that day. I actually, usually I take them for an entire day of activity when I visit them and when we visit them we usually go to the site.

**Jo:** Yeah

**Donelle:** We spend time with the students and when you've got fifteen schools I had Bothwell and Woodridge come together on the one day and that was a really good thing. When I go to Flinders Island, Cape Barren Island will fly over to Flinders.

**Jo:** So it's about getting the schools to do residential stuff or bring kids together...

**Donelle:** Together, yeah VET..it's different because it's a nationally credited course so you have to be very careful with your assessment there so I'll be spending about half a day there with each student discussing their understandings of that course and I have to be happy as to whether or not they are able to be assessed appropriately and I know that they really enjoy the days when I visit them, they absolutely love those days. For the majority of students I've had in the courses have always been really happy with what they're doing. The feedback I'm getting about the VET course is really good and also I'm getting that with the Child Studies courses as well in most cases.

**Jo:** Yep.

**Donelle:** But you see that's the key, if the support from the support teacher isn't there. If they're not saying 'So-and-so is struggling with this, how else can I do it?', then that's where it can fall down. It depends how the school at the other end sets it up. Like Queenstown sets it up like a line, so there's one teacher with 24 or 26 kids and they're all doing online courses, that's an online classroom. But you see I expect the teachers who are supporting me actually go into my course and read what I'm asking the kids to do.

**Jo:** *So a two-way exchange going on all the time?*

**Donelle:** Yeah so that exchange is happening there.

**Jo:** *It's about explaining what a co-facilitation model is?*

**Donelle:** mmm

**Jo:** *and outlining those expectations clearly and all that sort of thing*

**Donelle:** Yeah. At Riverside High School, it's not a rural school it's in Launceston, so it has, it's impacted by online learning with the Pegasus Project. We've had students it that for two years now.

**Jo:** *Yep*

**Donelle:** And last year we couldn't provide a student with French so she went in and did French online and that was really positive. She did that as an extra so she did all her normal subjects plus that.

**Jo:** *Yep*

**Donelle:** ...and came out of one subject for one lesson every week to do her French and then her parents supported her at home by finding a tutor to talk with, so that was really good and that allowed her then to do French later on and follow through with her career path because she wants to go overseas and teach English as a Second Language so that's her aim and the knowledge of other languages is important to her so that allowed that to occur.

**Jo:** *So what about your receiver schools?*

**Donelle:** I would presume that would be very high (impact)...

**Jo:** *OK so*

**Donelle:** ...simply because when you're looking at somewhere like Flinders (Island), I've got six or so kids doing that and there's not many kids in the high school. So it's quite high, the impact there, and they're also doing other (online) stuff. Then you've got Cape Barren Island and all the kids are logged into it so they're talking about it and it's part of their, you know, it does, it gets home and that sort of thing... so I'd say it's quite high in those other places and because what happens is the kids are involved in it and they start making friendships with kids from other schools and that gets talked about and that would be discussions held at home so you could say it's quite high. But it may not be the course content, although I do actually ask my students to go home and ask questions about, from their parents about, themselves when they were babies and stuff like that, so they're actually engaging their family in their learning, because they need to find out stuff about

themselves and also what it was like for Mum to be pregnant and what it was like for Dad to cope with it, so that sort of thing happens in my course.

**Jo:** Yeah

**Donelle:** But basically a lot of kids would talk about the relationships that they're building within the courses, because that the thing they love, the fact that they get to meet other people.

**Jo:** *What's your perception then of how it contributes to community development?*

**Donelle:** I think it's a real positive one

**Jo:** *So that would be highly significant or significant?*

**Donelle:** Highly significant

**Jo:** *Yep. So what about how you think parents view the service in terms of a. whether they're involved as adult learners themselves or b. whether they're involved as supporting parents or non-supporting parents whatever?*

**Donelle:** The adults that I have in VET they would view it high because otherwise they wouldn't be able to do the course

**Jo:** Yep

**Donelle:** So they wouldn't be able to do something that takes them onto a pathway that they want to get work in

**Jo:** *What's your perception of parent support for students overall doing online programs?*

**Donelle:** I've never had any negative feedback. In fact I've had positive feedback so I'd say highly significant.

**Jo:** *OK, and what about parent's perception of the program and how it impacts on the school standing within the community?*

**Donelle:** I think it would have a high impact simply from the perspective that it says to them that their school is allowing their child to have lots of opportunities, and they're not being disadvantaged by the place that they live in. I think that is the absolute key to all of it, is the fact that it's providing students an even playing field, no matter where they live and that's exceptionally important.

**Jo:** *So what about the wider community? So this is outside of parents, this is community generally around the school perceives the future employment prospects of people involved in it*

**Donelle:** Actually no I'd like to say it would be high because most of the kids – well on Flinders the kids get involved in going to the day-care centre and stuff like that. It is very dependable on the school you're delivering to and whether they've got community links and whether they're using those links to enhance the course. So for instance I'm about to send out an email to all my Child Studies teachers to say to them... 'Between now and the end of Term 2 can you please organise if possible a visit to a hospital to see a birthing room and to see the bathing room, to see a baby bathed and all that sort of thing... and

can you organise a visit from a breastfeeding association person to talk about breastfeeding and bring a baby in and show them what it's like to breastfeed' and that will really depend on the school and whether the person who's there, follows up and does it. You know it's a different skill to other teachers, you're actually dealing with things from a different perspective because in your face-to-face class teacher role you are dealing with just your students, and if someone acts up and isn't doing the right thing da de da de da..., then you'll put in place a number of behavioural management strategies. If they don't work then you go to the next step and talk to the grade coordinator and that sort of thing, whereas in the situation with an online class, if I have bullying and harassment that occurs then I'm dealing with two different schools, usually, and I'm discussing the issue with the student and the support teachers of two different schools and so it's actually different to normal in class...

**Jo:** *Yes of course it is, the discipline*

**Donelle:** ...behaviour management. Yeah, I don't have little Johnny who's throwing a rubber around [laughs] or whatever ...but it's more communication...

**Jo:** *Negotiation and stuff like that...*

**Donelle:** ...with other people required for the course to occur.

**Jo:** *So a high level of negotiation skills...*

**Donelle:** Yeah you're actually requiring a teacher who has exceptional communication skills, who is able to negotiate and discuss things from a different perspective. You might have thirty students and you have seven different teachers to communicate with, plus your thirty students or you might have only three teachers, so the paperwork is bigger than the normal teaching classroom. Within the school I'm really lucky, I have my own office and my own phone and you know I got my own computer before most people did because I put my hand up to be a Grade Coordinator because I saw that by being a Grade Coordinator I get my own office, my own phone and my own computer and therefore I can actually run my (online) classes better. So I really think one of the resources that is identified is that you actually have your own office and that's because you are teaching. Being involved in a normal school also means that you're involved in normal school activities and sometimes you've got clashes of timetables, calendars with schools as in you know this school might have their athletics carnival and you might also have your athletics carnival but they're all on different days so that can sometimes interrupt keeping in contact with students. If carnival day's on a Thursday but my online day's on a Thursday I still have commitment at the school that I teach at. It is, it's not like distance education where all those teachers work at the one site, so it's very different because you're working in other schools.

**Jo:** *OK, so the advantages of the blended model over the face-to-face model?*

**Donelle:** The advantages of the blended model, I think the advantage is that the students are working with more than one teacher, so they can ask questions to more than one teacher. They actually, they are getting more suppose one-on-one time really aren't they?

**Jo:** *I reckon so, I think that's why it succeeds a lot of the time, because people actually do get to feel like they have a real one-on-one relationship with you as a person, as opposed to be an authority figure for example.*

**Donelle:** Yeah and that's the other thing is that they don't call me Ms Batty. They call me by my first name so, and I treat, I tell them it's a learning environment, in a learning community and we're learning together. So I think that's probably the key there, is the fact

that it's not a real classroom, so they don't have those issues that some kids bring to a normal classroom and they're able to, well, for instance, there was one child she's moved from her school now and is not in the course, but she was a school refuser, but she would get in a course at home. So it actually enabled her to engage when she would probably find it more difficult at times to engage and also it's the fact that they're mixing with other people from other schools that's most important.

**Jo:** *What about additional benefits and some particular skills that blended learning brings?*

**Donelle:** I think it actually increases their communication skills because the simple fact is that kids will get there and say 'I can't do..., I need help, I don't understand it', and I simply send them an email back saying 'Well you need to tell me exactly what you don't understand and where you need help, because I need to know that before I can help you'. So it actually causes them to think more carefully about what they're communicating and I think that's the key for the future as well because we are a society that's going to evolve more around jobs that involve really clear communication and jobs that haven't been created yet and those will include a lot of communication that doesn't necessarily happen face-to-face.

**Jo:** *And arguments for all students having access to an online or blended experience as part of a broader education.*

**Donelle:** Well I think they should [laughs], no questions asked [laughs]. I just think they should simply because it gives them a better understanding of the world they're living in and it prepares them better for later on. The reality is that of no matter what workplace you go into you are going to be dealing with different situations and if we can give them more experiences now, where they are put into different situations, isn't that a better thing for later on? It gives them more experiences and it allows them to be more comfortable with new experiences. To give them the chance to be part of that, now, is really important. And the other thing is that you can set up group work with kids from different schools and that simulates situations where...you know ...I'm in... I work with people in Hobart and people here, people on Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island so it's giving them reality in their learning.

**Jo:** *Yeah. Thanks heaps, Donelle.*

**Donelle:** OK Bye.

**Jo:** *See you. Bye*

## Live Conversation

A live online ‘conversation’ with our lead writer will follow the Edition 10 release, allowing users to discuss and debate articles and surrounding issues in greater depth.

**To join Dr. Michael Thomas on 25 July at 2pm Australian EST go to:**

<https://www.illuminate.com/mtg.jnlp?password=348143572>

The ‘conversation’ will run in conjunction with activities run by the Australian Flexible Learning Framework’s (Framework) E-learning Networks Project.

For more about the ‘conversation’ and how to participate visit:

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/networks>

Details of how to set up and configure your aggregator and mobile device are available in *The Knowledge Tree* space at <http://flexiblelearning.net.au/knowledgetree>