Videos in higher education – why bother? (0265)

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A pilot study at Staffordshire University suggested that students particularly appreciated the idea of using video-podcasts as a support tool with difficult material or being able to catch up when they missed a class (Fiserova, 2014). The possibility of using one's own device to watch videos multiple times, anytime and anywhere have been identified as the main advantages in the study (Fiserova, 2014). The rationale behind the current study is therefore the expressed need and perceived usefulness of video-podcasts when a complex message is conveyed. This way, students can learn at their own pace and can re-listen to instructions. In addition, the conveyed message is unified and consistent, which is particularly important when there are a number of academic staff delivering a module and assessing student work. Furthermore, this will save staff time as those students who missed a class or did not comprehend a particular point can use the video-podcast resource first before they contact their tutor for extra help. This is particularly helpful in large modules with student numbers being in excess of 100. Coupled with the advantages of flexibility in when, where and how it is used, vodcasting appears to have significant potential as an innovative learning tool for adult learners in higher education. However, as higher education is more competitive and customer satisfaction driven than ever before, it is important to evaluate the impact innovative tools have on our students so that we can provide tailored education that fits our learners. This research study therefore aims to evaluate student experience with video podcasts and the impact they have on student learning experience and confidence.

Previous studies have identified a 'digital divide' or lack of access to or knowledge of technology as some of the barriers to effective use of podcasting. For example, in 2009 Lonn & Teasley (2009) reported that only 9% of their students owned a portable device, and in 2011 O'Bannon et al. (2011) found that students were still unfamiliar with the technology and that almost half of their students had not listened or viewed a podcast before. Thanks to the recent rapid technological advancement, our findings from 2015 show that all our students have access to at least one type of technology (including portable technology such as laptops, iPads/tablets or smartphones), enabling the use of video podcasts on the go, anywhere and anytime. However, we do not yet know what device students watch the video podcasts on and whether they do so at home or on the go, which would be well worth exploring as there seems to be lack of evidence in the literature as to whether current students are 'mobile' learners and if so, what impact this has on vodcasting.

We have used a sample of full-time first year Business School students from all undergraduate awards. Approximately 40% of all these students responded to the questionnaire (52 respondents in total), which contained demographic questions and questions enquiring about their perceptions of the suitability of videos as a teaching and learning tool in higher education. The final part of the questionnaire asked students about their experience with the videos that were made available to them as part of a core module in semester one in 2014/15. Two thirds of the sample watched at least one of the three videos (with a minimum of 52% watching all three), with almost half saying they either did or planned to watch them again. Indeed, this is one of the advantages of using videos for teaching and learning that have been identified (Fiserova, 2014; Walls et al., 2010).

Students seem to prefer the use of videos as an additional tool for extra support and revision, with over 60% of students saying it should be used all the time or often, rather than to replace an actual lecture. This finding is in line with Henderson et al. (2015) who suggested that videos were welcomed for the ability to repeat, revisit or consolidate what students were taught as it could be broken down, played at their own pace, and forwarded to relevant points. Indeed 71% of those who watched video podcasts in our study used pause/rewind/fast-forward options.

Approximately three quarters of our student sample found the videos useful or very useful but there does not seem to be any consensus amongst the respondents as to whether or not the videos are better than a traditional lecture, with one third agreeing or strongly agreeing, one third neither agreeing nor disagreeing, and one third disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This would suggest that students appreciate the availability of videos for additional support but would not want to replace traditional lectures with videos altogether. The main reason for this seems to be lack of interaction with tutors and other peers, which, together with no possibility of asking questions immediately when students do not understand something, have been identified as the main disadvantages of using video podcasts as a tool for teaching and learning in higher education by approximately 80% of our students.

On the other hand, students see the following factors as the main advantages of using videos; the possibility of using their own device has been identified as an advantage by 70% and the ability to watch the video multiple/unlimited times by 84% of students. The ability to watch the video whenever and wherever is considered an advantage by 92% and 86% of students, respectively. Finally we asked students about their perceptions of the impact videos had on aspects such as their confidence, motivation and independence. The results seem positive as 72% of students agreed that watching video podcasts improved their confidence in understanding of the subject; 50% of students agreed they felt more motivated to study after watching the video podcasts; 69% of students would like to have videos available in other modules too; and 67% of students agreed they felt as if videos help them to become an independent learner.

In conclusion, students seem generally keen on the idea of using videos as a teaching and learning tool but academics need not worry about losing their jobs. In fact, they should be prepared to work more than usual, as students seem to be keen on having videos *in addition* to traditional teaching and learning methods. In particular, students would like to have videos available as a revision tool or extra help with difficult material. The reward for more work for academics seems to be having more motivated, confident and independent students.

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