



Podcasts and e-tivities to enrich a blended learning environment: a case study

Dr Palitha Edirisingha
Prof Gilly Salmon
Prof John Fothergill

Technologies for e-learning: The 4-Quadrant framework

Established/core technologies:
VLEs, e-libraries

Existing students/markets

Peripheral/new technologies:
Mobile, wireless, context-aware
Combinations and blends

Existing students/markets

Established/core technologies:
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Peripheral/new technologies:
Mobile, wireless, context-aware
Combinations and blends

New students/markets

(Salmon, 2005, p. 212)

From the literature ...

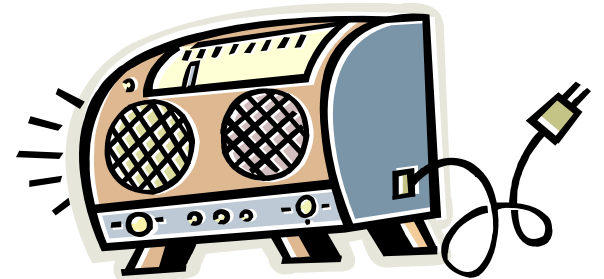


- New tools to support learning
- Specific needs and cognitive abilities of diverse learners
- Situated and authentic learning experiences
- Personalised learning

(Sharples, 2001; Kukulska-Hulme & Traxler, 2005; JISC, 2005; Taylor et al, forthcoming; Sariola & Rionka, 2003; Plant, 2001)

- Cognition through clarity of instructions
- Emotional aspects ... immediacy and connection
- Sense of online community, satisfaction

(Durbridge, 1984; Bates, 1981; Laaser, 1986; Power, 1990)



The case study module

- A 2nd + 3rd year undergrad engineering module:

Optical Fibre Communication Systems

- 30 campus-based students
- Content: online; 4 sections; 10 topics per section
- Weekly **podcasts** (10 minutes)
- 4 **e-tivities** on Blackboard
- End of section - online assignments
- Tutor support: weekly 1hr f2f meetings, Blackboard
- Final assessment

Prof's use VLE ...

When I became pro-vice chancellor and I didn't have to do any more teaching but it seemed a bit anomalous that as I was PVC for Learning and Teaching [and not] teaching so I decided that it was not on really.

There was nobody else that could teach this third year option so if I didn't teach it, it would just not happen anymore ... and I thought it would be a shame.

[having seen demonstrations of VLEs] I was quite impressed and I thought I should be able to start to use them in the actual learning environment to give my course. And that way, I could still teach on my course.

Prof's use of podcasts and e-tivities

I hadn't done podcasts [or] e-tivities before. You can do the course without them. But if you just had a course online, just answering questions on the discussion board ... the course can become a bit stale.

I use the podcasts really to give the course the feel that it was completely up to date and that ... the course is especially for them. to give the course the feel that it was really of the moment, up to date.

I didn't expect them to treat this as a lecture. [but] to treat it more like a radio programme. Something that will motivate them for the rest of the week and always put a bit of a joke at the end to motivate them to listen to the podcast

Students tuning in ...



Some results from ...

Personal interviews – 6 students and the lecturer

End of term questionnaire (n = 24)

Observations as an e-moderator

Content analysis of discussion forums

Do you have the use of an MP3 player? (Nos. responding)

No	= 2
An i-Pod	= 6
A feature of the mobile phone	= 6
An MP3 player	= 6
A feature of the laptop	= 11

Some results on podcasts

No. of podcasts listened to?

59% listened to 6 or more

Location of listening?

55% off the campus

When?

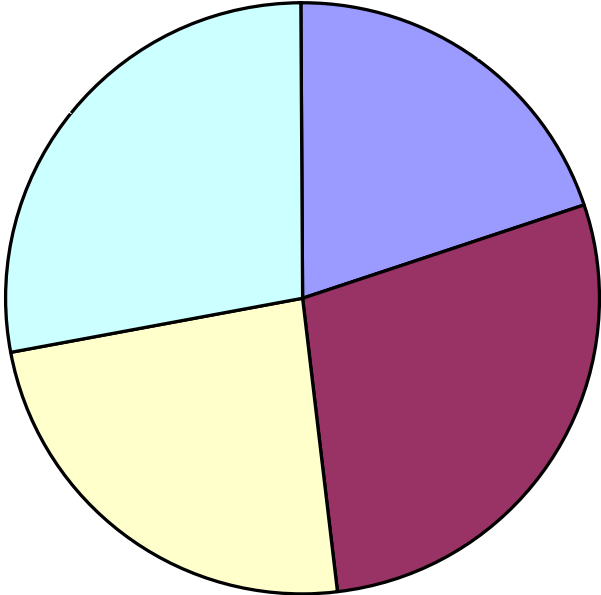
32% listened within two days

Activities while listening?

62% nothing, just listening

How do you listen to podcasts? (N=21)

Listen on a
campus
computer
without saving
28%

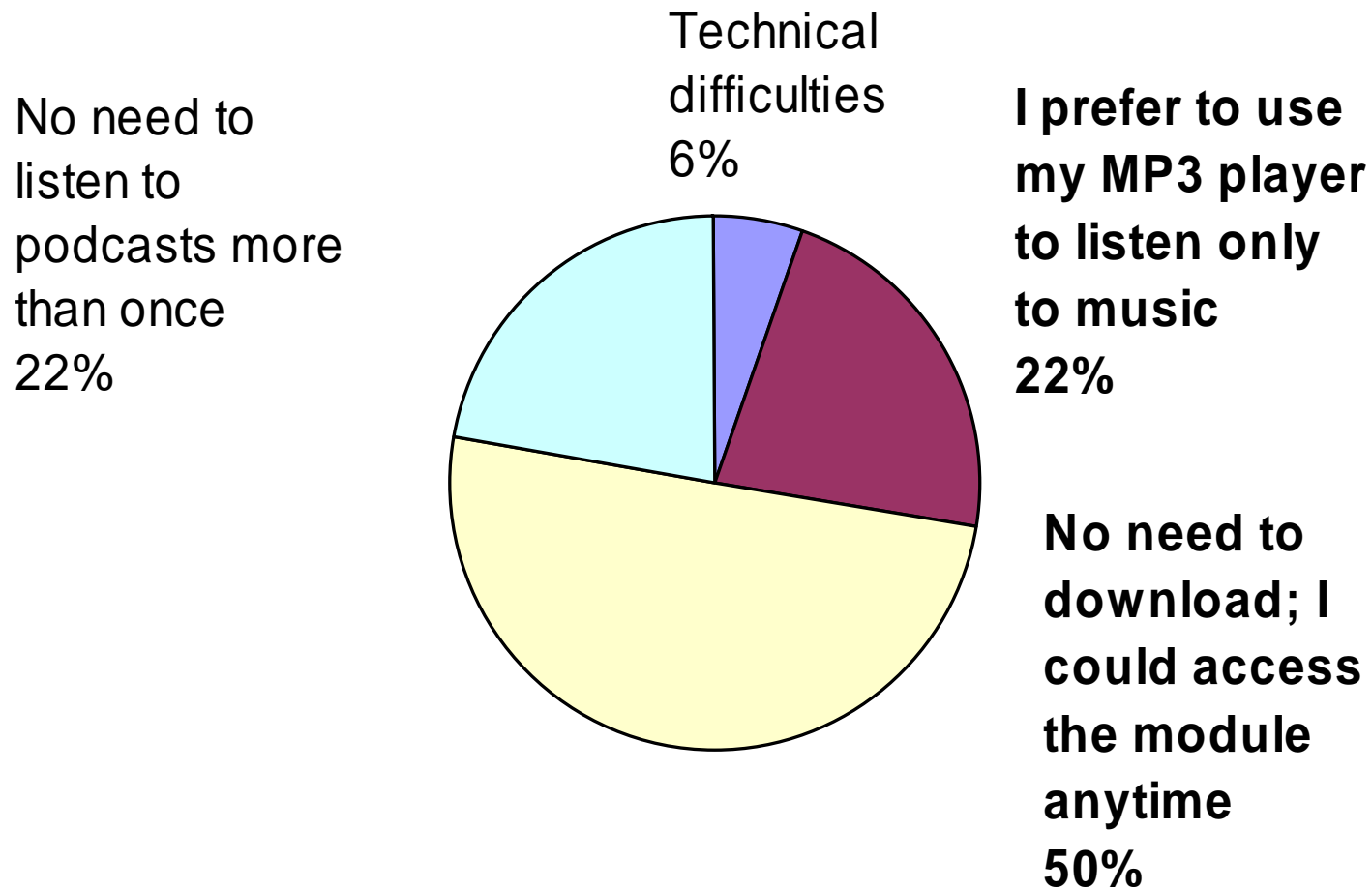


**Save to my
MP3 player
and listen later
20%**

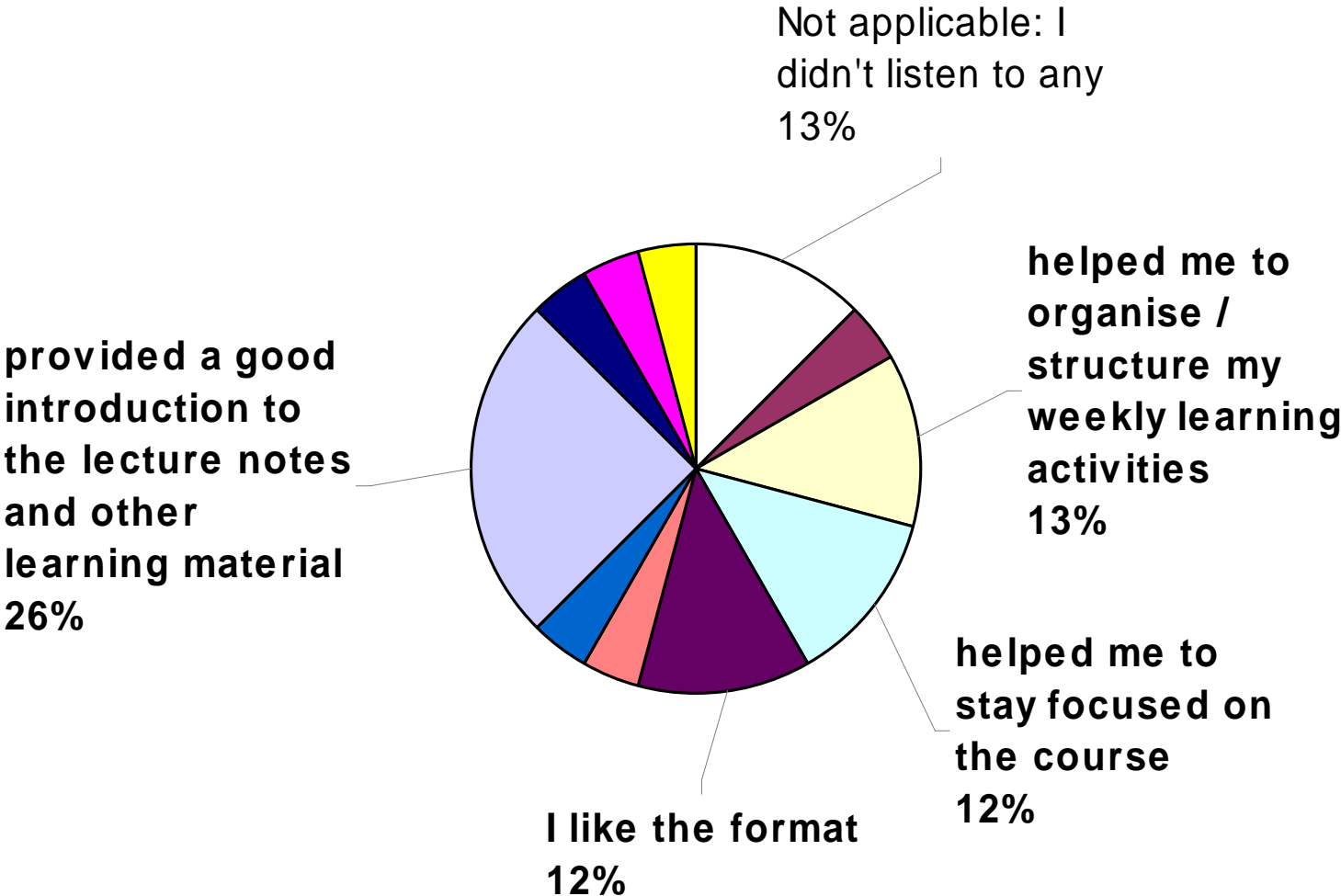
Listen on my
laptop without
saving
24%

**Save to my
Laptop and
listen later
28%**

Reasons for not downloading to an MP3 (N=16)



Statements concerning podcasts that you AGREE with:



Recommendations for future podcasts

... podcasts are a good idea, ***they should stay.***

...***get students involved*** with the casting (eg dj style), they'll tell the friends to listen and get involved.

Lectures could be made as podcasts, make them less serious and you can listen to them on the bus.

Continue with the podcasts. Especially the ***jokes to make the lecture more interesting.***

... podcasts [should] have ***more general knowledge and information*** than too much preview about the lecture notes.

E-tivities: No. of postings

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3	Group 4+5	Group 6
e-tivity 1	13 (6)	12 (6)	19 (4)	17 (8)	16 (6)
e-tivity 2	10 (7)	10 (6)	18 (10)	15 (9)	11 (5)
e-tivity 3	8 (2)	4 (1)	6 (1)	8 (3)	9 (4)
e-tivity 4	36 (7)	23 (4)	36 (4)	32 (5)	22 (4)

(Tutor postings in parenthesis)

Statements on e-tivities

helped me to get to know about the others in the group and the course

Strongly agree = 37%
Agree = 38%

Helped me to put forward ideas better than I would have been able to f2f

Strongly agree = 29%
Agree = 42%

Helped me to focus on the task better than in a f2f group work

Strongly agree = 42%
Agree = 54%

Looking at other postings helped me to broaden my perspective on the subject

Strongly agree = 33%
Agree = 67%

Two best things about this module?

E-activities - I think they are good in getting people together in a group to interact more ...

podcasts, e-tivity tasks and discussion board. They have been helpful for me to study this module ...

Impact of the blend – a summary

- Good use of time
 - Help organise learning activities
 - Stimulates interest / topical
 - Motivational & positive attitude
 - Enjoyment! Tuning in weekly
- E-skills development
 - Supports & complements other aspects of the module
 - Flexibility: Choice, preferred setting, context for learning
 - Take 'seriously' distinguish between learning and music!
 - Focus

Next year's podcasts ...

I might use podcasts to comment on how they are doing, specially after assignments.

I can comment on what I thought they did well and what they might need to do a bit of work on.

And I can also talk about what was coming up in a sort of easy way.

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