Podcasting student voices to support transition from school to university

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Abstract

Background

This presentation is based on research that investigates how student-created podcasts can support new undergraduates’ transition into Higher Education (HE). Studies of undergraduates’ satisfaction, academic performance and retention in HE identify the critical importance of the first year for shaping their attitudes and approaches to learning (Hultberg et al, 2008; Lowe and Cook, 2003).

Most interventions to support transition from school to university are institutionally-driven, such as courses on learning and study skills (eg Knox, 2005). The knowledge and experience of students who have already made the transition have rarely been exploited. Such informal knowledge is known as ‘hot knowledge’ (Ball and Vincent 1998), ‘embedded’ in informal social networks (Hutchings, 2003, 110). Potential HE applicants consider ‘hot knowledge’ to be more trustworthy than information from ‘official’ sources (Hutchings, 2003).

The approach

Our project, called IMPALA4T, uses podcast technology to capture this ‘hot knowledge’ and make it available to HE entrants. Despite the interest in and links between informal and mobile learning (Sharples, Taylor and Vavoula, 2007), little attention has been given to exploiting technology to improve peer-supported transition into HE.

IMPALA4T taps into the knowledge and experience of students (‘hot knowledge’) who recently made their own transition. Second and third year biological sciences students were involved in developing two types of podcasts: Type A for the benefit of learners about to start their first HE course, and Type B for those well into their first year.
Results

Semi-structured interviews were carried with eight students who listened to Type A podcasts. Data analysis show that students’ transition occurs at three levels: into HE, into teaching and learning environment and into a new socio-cultural environment, and that Type A podcasts can assist transition by helping with re(orientation), integration, and managing teaching and learning processes. A key challenge involved in developing podcasts and using them was getting students to engage with a new form of literacy.

Conclusions

The presentation discusses above findings, and will draw on data related to Type B podcasts. It offers a model to capture ‘hot knowledge’ to help undergraduates’ transition process through podcasts.

References


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