



Podcasting and Higher Education

– How Finnish professionals reason

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<p>Abstract:</p> <p>The purpose of the study was to get an understanding about how podcasting would fit in higher education in Finland, and what characteristics high-quality educational podcasts have. By ‘podcast’ in this study is understood audio files created by the instructor to support learning of the subject matter. Empirical data was collected with four semi-structured group interviews. The 14 Interviewees were gathered using snowball sampling. Two groups represented a higher education context and two a professional media/podcast – context.</p> <p>The results bring forth that the positive aspects of podcasting make the medium suitable for use. The technology is available and not too complicated, it is relatively easy to create podcasts and freeing listeners (learners) from screens is a positive aspect. Using audio can create motivation and a more intimate experience than attending a lecture, thus enhancing learning. The media professionals emphasized the importance of the whole concept: the tone, the manuscript, adjusting for the target audience and that many podcasts are educational because listeners want to experience of a kind of “small movement in the brain” (quotation from interview). The professionals from an education context described different ways of using audio in higher education. Audio is used for giving feedback, for giving instructions and for explaining terminology for example. There was a general understanding that podcasts are welcomed in educational contexts for example to replace reading texts. Podcasts were seen to lighten up the course work and thus ensure that students pass courses, something that is important for the financing of the courses. The education professionals also introduced the idea of having students create podcasts as part of examination.</p> <p>Future societal developments suggest that higher education will become more media dependent. The roles of instructors and media professionals will move towards each other. Formation of this common ground will be an area to study in the coming years.</p>	
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Table of Contents

1	<i>Introduction</i>	1
1.1	Teachers producing content	1
1.2	What is media?.....	2
1.3	Screens, audio, and education.....	3
1.4	The meaning of 'Podcast' in this study.....	3
1.5	Changing Research Aim.....	6
1.6	Research Questions	8
2	<i>Earlier Research</i>	10
2.1	Podcasting in Finnish higher education.....	10
2.2	Podcasting in Higher Education	11
2.2.1	Listener.....	12
2.2.2	Listener and creator	12
2.2.3	Synthesis and rationale of using podcasts	13
2.2.4	Creators.....	16
3	<i>Methodology</i>	19
3.1	The case-study that became a pre-study	19
3.1.1	Design and progress of pre-study	20
3.1.2	Choosing the target group	21
3.1.3	The target group	22
3.1.4	The podcasts and distributing.....	22
3.2	Rationale of the new methodology	25
3.3	Selection of interviewees.....	28
3.4	The interviewees	29
3.5	Semi-structured Interviews	36
3.5.1	Theme 1: the audience	37
3.5.2	Theme 2: the producer (creator)	38
3.5.3	Theme 3: content.....	38
3.5.4	Theme 4: alignment	38
3.6	Recording and Transcribing.....	39

4	<i>Analysis</i>	41
4.1	Introduction	41
4.2	The interview themes – analysis	42
4.3	Listener	43
4.4	Content – arranging the podcast, and how content should be presented	47
4.4.1	Media professionals’ views.....	47
4.4.2	Education professionals’ views on content	49
4.4.3	About podcasting content and education	52
4.5	Instructor/creator	53
4.5.1	Manuscript	53
4.5.2	Resourcing.....	56
4.6	Analysis – summary	57
5	<i>Discussion and Conclusion</i>	59
5.1	The research questions	59
5.2	The interviews	61
5.3	Conclusion	62
6	<i>References</i>	64
	<i>Appendices</i>	68

Figures

Figure 1: Podcasts offered on a Padlet Screenshot, 1.10.2022 (Björkroth, n.d.).....	23
Figure 2: Overview of perceived orientation of interviewees in the interviews.	29
Figure 3: The themes in the interview guide	37
Figure 4: Colour coded interviews help distinguish between interviewees	40
Figure 5: The themes in the interviews guided analysis.....	42
Figure 6: Overview of perceived focus of discussion in the interviews.....	43
Figure 7: Different listeners require different content.....	45

Tables

Table 1: Interviewees, Interview A	31
Table 2: Interviewees, Interview B.....	32
Table 3: Interviewees, Interview C.....	33
Table 4: Interviewees, Interview D	34
Table 5: Interviewees, Interview D, continued.....	35

1 INTRODUCTION

When society and technology develop as fast as it does today, it can be challenging even for skilled workers to keep up with the pace. Professional life is probably more demanding than ever when it comes to learning needs and call for innovation. A growing proportion of the workforce is expected to need skills acquired in higher education and continuous learning is expected to be the rule rather than a luxury for few. With changes in the job market, retraining, even gaining a higher education degree (a first or a new, maybe in another field) will become a necessity for many. Thus, more formal continuous learning will also be provided by higher education institutions. It is evident that higher education must adapt to the situation: it is not possible for many to use 2-3 years and study for a new degree, at least not if the studies are heavily dependent on presence at the higher education institution during daytime. How then can higher education institutions continue to serve professionals who are actively engaged in working life?

1.1 Teachers producing content

The challenge that higher education is facing has been widely recognized at least in Finland. The Ministry of Education and Culture now finances a program, Digivision 2030, to address future challenges (*Digivision 2030 Project Implementation in Higher Education Institutions Launched*, n.d.). All Finnish higher education institutions are involved in the program. The Digivision 2030 programme (*Digivision 2030*, n.d.) describes the vision of future continuous higher learning like this:

Digitalization, internationalization, working life and lifelong learning can no longer be separated from higher education – they must instead all be tightly interlinked. Finnish learners also deserve the ability to choose for themselves a learning path that is seamlessly integrated with working life.

A learning path seamlessly integrated with working life will inevitably require self-paced studying and for example frequent gathering for lectures in a lecture hall will become difficult. The solution the Digivision 2030 programme will focus on is, as the name suggests, promoting and enabling high-quality digital pedagogy in higher education. Digital pedagogy covers a broad spectrum of techniques. For this study the most interesting vision communicated by the programme is:

Digivision strengthens the role of the teacher as a producer of high-quality content and as a facilitator of internationally renowned study experiences. (*Digivision2030*, n.d.)

Since the programme also supports flexible studies not dependent on time and place, the high-quality content mentioned in the quotation above, necessarily includes media production. The quotation can be understood in different ways and some interpretations may be less popular among teachers than other. The vision that teachers are to produce “high-quality content” to be distributed digitally can be controversial: as a rule, higher education teachers in Finland are not required to produce digital content, or any other “materials” whatsoever in fact. Many higher education teachers of course work with producing media content already, but the quality probably varies. Producing “high-quality” content can be seen as challenging, and professional development for teachers/lecturers will be needed. Another solution for improving the quality of the produced content is engaging media professionals. Whatever the solution, teachers will be more involved in media production. This is of interest for this study, and, in fact, guides the forming of the aim of the study.

1.2 What is media?

The concept *media* can be understood and used in many ways (c.f. Wikipedia (“Mass Media,” 2022)). In this thesis the approach is that a producer of material to be distributed over media, is also working with media. The Swedish encyclopedia *Nationalencyklopedin* defines *media* as channels for distributing information (*Media - Uppslagsverk - NE.Se*, n.d.). Someone producing information or entertainment with the purpose of distributing it for example over the web, thus works with media. A more comprehensive description of what *media* is, is found e.g. in David Buckingham’s *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture* (Buckingham, 2013):

[...] the term ‘media’ includes the whole range of modern communications media: television, the cinema, video, radio, photography, advertising, newspapers and magazines, recorded music, computer games and the internet. Media *texts* are the programmes, films, images, web sites (and so on) that are carried by these different forms of communication. Many of these are often called ‘mass’ media, which implies that they reach large audiences; although of course some media are intended to reach only quite small or specialized audiences. And there is no reason why more traditional forms such as books cannot also be seen as ‘media’, since they too provide us with mediated versions or representations of the world.

Both radio and the internet are mentioned in the definition. Podcasts are media texts, mostly distributed over the internet. Radio channels also broadcast podcasts. Podcasts are, i.e., audio programmes.

1.3 Screens, audio, and education

Different media are frequently used in education. The most traditional media students encounter is of course the book or other written texts. With technological advancements and greater spread, also other types of media, such as social media for example, enter education. Educational videos are as old as film, and are today often distributed over educational platforms such as *LinkedIn Learning*, *Khan Academy*, and *Udemy*. To a greater extent, such videos are also available on social media. *Youtube* is the prime example, but also less obvious channels such as the short video platform *Tik Tok* and *Instagram* attract producers of short educational videos. The mentioned media are heavily reliant on video and thus on screens. It is safe to assume that higher education became heavily dependent on screens during the Covid-19 pandemic, and that not all students were comfortable with that development. With growing ‘screen fatigue’ and easier access, audio has become more popular among media consumers. Educational podcasts are, however, as will be further described in the literature review, maybe not that common within specific higher education programs in Finland.

The pandemic also raised a health-related issue connected to distance learning. The Finnish Broadcasting Company, Yle, in October 2020 describes (Korpela, 2020), how distance work can be a risk factor for public health. Working at home decreases exercise activity substantially. When working at home people do not cycle to work, do not walk to the printer or to a nearby lunch restaurant to the same extent as when working in an office. The same goes for students – watching video lectures on the computer forces – or at least tempts – students to be less physically active. Podcasts can counteract this. It is e.g., possible to listen to a podcast while taking a walk, cycling, or doing in practise any other physical activity. Being outdoors, in fresh air, also has other benefits for learning. The effects of exercise on learning will not be discussed further in this thesis. Suffice to say that a lot of people in the western world suffer from many life-style related diseases.

1.4 The meaning of ‘Podcast’ in this study

The term podcasting is said to originate in an article by Ben Hammersley, a British technologist and broadcaster, in the *Guardian* (Hammersley, 2004). The two parts of the word ‘podcast’ contain “cast” as in ‘broadcasting’, and “pod” as in “casing” or “capsule”,

or – of course – as in *iPod*. The first *iPod* was released in 2001. Drew’s definition for podcasts includes both the connotations, broadcasting and capsule (Drew, 2017b):

A podcast is a digital packet of audio which is generally part of a series, released at regular intervals and automatically downloaded to personal media devices [...].

A podcast can thus be defined as an audio file easily accessible on a media device such as a smartphone or computer. This is also the definition used in this study for podcasts in general. It should be emphasized that podcasting in an educational context is further guided by didactic concerns. Thus, release intervals and the series components mentioned in Drew’s definition are looked lightly upon in this study.

A few clarifications and emphases can be made though, for avoiding confusion concerning older usage of the concept, and for a more precise definition for the purposes of this thesis. First, Drew’s definition is fairly recent and thus avoids the conceptual confusion that was present in articles at least in 2009: “*Podcasting refers to the distribution of audio/video files in digital format.*” (McGarr, 2009) and in 2011 (O’Bannon et al., 2011): *Podcasts may be delivered in audio format only or in enhanced format (audio and video). Video can be in the form of video clips or screencasts [...]*”. Podcasting could at the time refer to both audio and video files. In this thesis video is not included in the concept ‘podcast’.

Further, a type of recordings that was called ‘podcasts’, i.e. recordings simply of lectures given in class, as in (McGarr, 2009):

Podcasting appears to be most commonly used to provide recordings of past lectures to students for the purposes of review and revision (substitutional use),

are not considered podcasts in this study. The author realizes that a series of lectures *can* be published as podcasts, but the purpose of such a series would not be to use it for the benefit of the students attending the course during which the recordings were made. If the recorded lectures were distributed to the students attending the course in question *before* they had finished the course they would not, in this study, be considered podcasts. A lecture recording can thus be both a podcast (for an audience not attending the course), and, at the same time, a plain lecture recording, depending on the usage of it. It is of course difficult to draw an exact line: if the lecture recordings were edited before distributing them to the students, would they then be podcasts? It is however not crucial

to have an exact definition for the purposes of this study. The issue was raised here to bring the author's preconceptions into light.

Yet another clarification must be made, i.e., the question about who creates the podcasts. This study focuses on "instructor created" podcasts, rather than on "entrepreneurial educational podcasts" (c.f. (Drew, 2017b)). Other than instructor created podcasts are, as assumed by the author, realized with a broader assumed audience. Or, to re-phrase: instructor created podcasts are presumably first and foremost realized for the needs of the students of a certain course or higher education field. Entrepreneurial podcasts can fit perfectly for a course setting, but they still have a broader assumed audience. The difference could be described using a comparison with science and popular science – it is impossible to draw an exact line.

There are yet other ways of categorizing podcasts in education, i.e., based on their content. A division into three categories can be used: substitutional podcasts (consisting of lecture recordings and used for substituting them), supplemental (these support in-class activities and bring nothing significantly new), and finally integrated podcasts that bring something new to the course content. Of these the integrated are said to be least common (Drew, 2017a). This is not surprising, since creating extra material for a course, of course includes extra work as well. The author of this study is most interested in the last category though, i.e., the integrative podcasts. It is in the creation of integrative podcasts that for example the skills of broadcasters and professional podcasters are of interest – not in recording a lecture.

It is important in this study to also distinguish between the creator of a podcast and the producer of the same. In this study the creator of a podcast is the person who chooses and/or creates the content in the podcast. If a person makes available, for students, for example an interview without including her/his own voice, that person is still considered the creator of the podcast. In a sense it is thus the person who makes an audio file available for students that is the creator. The implied creator is an instructor of a course, or equivalent, that the podcast is primarily realized for. The roles of publishers and producers are downplayed in this study. Questions such as who the publisher is and who produces a podcast are not discussed.

To sum up: by podcasts in this study is understood

1. Digital audio files,
2. made (easily) available for students,
3. created by an instructor,
4. for a specific course or similar
5. with the purpose to enhance learning of the subject matter.

With bullet number five instructions or other administrative audio used by lecturers are excluded from the definition of podcasts. When it is considered important to distinguish between instructor created podcasts and other, it is henceforth made clear in the writing.

1.5 Changing Research Aim

To begin with the author had a rather pushing hypothesis and research question: 1. *Adult learners would benefit from podcasts in their studies*, and 2. *How should podcasts be produced and introduced for the group of learners in question?* When the case-study presented in the next chapter proved impossible to carry through, it also became clear for the author that a less specific research question would be of more interest. The first half of the original aim of the study, trying somehow to show that podcasts would be beneficial in education, felt superfluous. It would have been like studying if, or arguing that, using a black- (or white) board is good for some learners' learning. Trying to somehow prove that podcasts have a positive effect on course grades felt like a platitude. It is not self-evident, or proven, that podcasting, in all circumstances, improves students' performance, but is it even important to prove it? In the author's mind podcasting is merely a learning tool – albeit an in many ways excellent and economic tool – that can be used among other tools, without necessarily having proof for the efficiency of it. Has it been proven that videos, lecturing, or even reading, improve grades, one could maybe ask. Drew (Drew, 2017a) crystallizes in a literature review that: *“Benefits [of using podcasts] for on-campus students significantly differ; and indeed, debate continues as to whether benefits outweigh potential pitfalls”* (p.50). The author did not want to participate in that debate. The difficulties with proving the efficacy of podcasts were present in fairly early research, and probably still is. (Heilesen, 2010) presents this well (NB. Heilesen includes videos in the term podcast):

As matters stand, the answer to whether or not engaging in podcasting is worthwhile for purely academic reasons is not entirely clear-cut. Evidence that students score better at exams after having listened to podcasts is inconclusive, and most likely the positive effects claimed should be attributed to the uses made of the technology rather than the technology per se.

It is in other words possible to see that students who listened to podcasts could score better, but the positive effects might just as well have been a result of an increased amount of revision that could have been done using notes just as well as podcasts.

The second original research question again needed revision. Studying e.g., difficulties in introducing a medium to adult learners was no longer feasible when the case-study was terminated, and the question how podcasts were to be produced needed refining. The question needed to be more general than was first intended. Introducing a new technology, or medium, to users, is further a different field of study than podcasting and education.

As described above, the first approach to, and efforts in, this thesis changed how the author viewed the phenomenon of podcasting in education. It is fair to say that “intellectual development” had taken place. Wiedner and Ansari (Wiedner & Ansari, 2017) justify taking such changes seriously and, if necessary, revising the research design. They argue that successful qualitative research and adapting to changes have (at least) the following positive outcomes:

(1) having access to data that are deemed interesting by academic peers and therefore stand a reasonable chance of being publishable in reputable outlets, (2) furthering our own intellectual development, and (3) being ourselves motivated to continue researching a phenomenon.

During the work for the first approach of this study, the author (1) was not able to gather any interesting data, (2) realized that the pursued questions were not of interest, and (3) had to find another way forward to stay motivated for studying the phenomenon. Thus, the plan had to be changed and the author learned to “Appreciate emergence and serendipity in qualitative research” (ibid.), and to resist the urge to follow set plans. The revised approach, in the author’s opinion, better answered the three aims of qualitative research mentioned in the quotation above.

My interest in the podcasting medium had thus inspired me yes, but it also hindered me to see the more interesting and obvious questions related to podcasting and higher education. For me it was, and is, so self-evident that higher education would gain from podcasts and instructors creating podcasts, that the questions “Podcasting in higher

education – why and how “, never occurred to me. The stranded case-study opened new possibilities.

1.6 Research Questions

The author experiences that educational podcasting in higher education and in continuing education is not yet a topic discussed nor studied in Finland. Indications supporting the claim are presented in the next chapter. At the same time the higher education field faces changes that will bring more digitalization, asynchronous learning methods and media production into focus. Podcasting appears to be one answer to future needs: it offers an economical way of distributing subject matter related information, it utilizes a technology that in practise all students constantly carry with them, and it is possible to listen to podcasts while for example walking in a park, thus freeing the learner from a screen and passive sitting. These are only a few of many positive features of podcasting, but already these demonstrate the potential for higher education podcasting offers, and the question arises: why is it not used, studied, or even discussed, more widely? Other positive features of podcasting are discussed also in the literature review and the results of the interviews. Here it suffices to mention a few examples: podcasts accommodate so called auditive learners, they are accessible also for visually impaired, and they are considered “intimate” in the sense that listeners may feel less distance to the instructor thus underpinning learning. It is also relatively easy to use the not very expensive technology for creating podcasts.

Creating a podcast technically speaking is rather easy, but instructors are not trained in using the medium. The content probably needs to be organized differently than in a lecture for example, and it is not necessarily easy for all. There are many formats that can be used and choosing one can be difficult. King and Gura, in *Podcasting for Teachers*, for example list the following formats (K. P. King & Gura, 2009): interviews, group talk, recorded events, newscasts, dramatic readings, audio guides, monologues and panel casts (pp. 118-120). Not all formats need to be mastered of course, and following examples and advice probably works well. Podcasts are often heard on the radio in Finland, giving examples to instructors. It can be difficult though, to pinpoint why podcasts created by professional broadcasters appear to be of high quality. It would therefore be valuable for instructor podcasters to learn how broadcasting professionals describe working with

podcasts, and how they reason about using podcasts for education. One research question in this thesis is thus: what insights can broadcast professional offer to educational podcasting?

The work with this thesis began before the Digivision 2030 was launched (compare § 2.1, above). This is of relevance since the author had not yet fully envisioned that a change towards more asynchronous learning will take place also within ordinary higher education, as opposed to adult-education and continuous learning approaches. The latter type of education is to a greater extent organized so that lectures for example take place during evenings and weekends since the students are expected to work during weekdays. It was therefore easy to assume that podcasting could be a welcomed method, supplementing, or even replacing, lectures and/or reading. The choice to focus on continuing education professionals rather than on instructors was prompted partly by the assumptions described above, and partly by a hunch that planners of continuing education would have a broader perspective on using podcasts. Instructors would probably focus more on their own field and their own context, thus limiting the focus more than what was intended. The second focus and research question of this study, then, is to try to create an understanding about how education professionals, with an inside perspective on adult- and continuing education in Finland, view instructor created podcasts within higher education. What advantages and disadvantages do they see, what experiences do they have and what possibilities and hindrances do they experience?

The research questions can be compressed to:

1. What can higher education instructors and other creators in Finland learn from broadcast professionals about podcasting?
2. How is podcasting considered to fit in Finnish higher education and what kind of usage would be included in the concept?

2 EARLIER RESEARCH

This overview of studies on podcasts in higher education served to give topics to discuss in the interviews. Since the aim of this study is to study the Finnish context, studies made in other contexts primarily guide the conducting of the interviews. This overview is also organized in accordance with the four themes to be discussed in the interviews: creator (producer), listener, content, and a synthesis of the three mentioned themes. All four themes were in the interviews implicitly connected to higher education, even though a more general approach was not actively discouraged.

A remark concerning the usage of the word ‘podcast’ needs to be made. When studying earlier research on podcasting a confusion concerning the concept is revealed – many studies include video in the concept *podcast*. Studies that include video in the concept podcast are avoided here (compare paragraph 1.4.). Since video presupposes watching a screen, one of the huge advantages of audio-only podcasts, a possibility to listen while for example driving, is not possible.

The studies on podcasting in education presented in this literature review are from an international and predominantly from an Anglo-American context. The Anglo-American predominance is probably due to what could be called historical reasons: technology development, early adaption of technology, language reasons and the size of the market for commercial podcasts.

2.1 Podcasting in Finnish higher education

Podcasting is present in Finnish higher education. The biggest universities like the University of Helsinki (*Podcastit*, n.d.), and the University of Turku (*Turun yliopiston podcastit*, n.d.) as well as small universities of applied science (*Poddar*, n.d.) distribute podcasts on their websites. Publishing podcasts clearly is a way for the universities to address their so called third task, i.e. to be in dialogue with the society at large (*The Third Task of the Universities Stresses the Social Significance of Teaching and Research*, n.d.). The podcasts on a university’s website are maybe indirectly connected to education but that they would be used in actual course work is not evident. It appears that research and publications on educational podcasts in Finland are only now emerging.

It has proven difficult to localize a discussion on using podcasts in higher education in Finland and it is thus also difficult to estimate how widespread the usage is. An indication about a still very limited discussion is that a search for ‘video’ on the *Finnish Journal of University Pedagogy* site gives sixteen article hits (“Hakutulokset haulle ”video”,” n.d.), while a search for ‘podcast’ results in only three (“Hakutulokset haulle ”podcast”,” n.d.). (Searches October 4th, 2022). It can further be noted that the hits for ‘podcast’ are all from 2022, while the articles found with the search ‘video’ are spread between 2014 and 2022. One of the articles implies the similar kind of difficulty in localizing the discussion on podcasting: “*This paper is therefore not just a contribution to the modest but growing field of pedagogical approaches to using podcasts in teaching*” [author’s underlining] (Hoegaerts & Wuokko, 2022).

A second indication for a scarce academic discussion on podcasts in Finnish higher education – relevant for this study since it concerns adult education – is that a journal called *Aikuiskasvatus* (Finnish for ‘adult education’) publishes a podcasts, but podcasts themselves, based on a search on the titles, have neither been discussed in the journal nor in the podcasts (*Arkistot / Aikuiskasvatus*, n.d.). Finally, the master’s thesis *Suomen podcast-kulttuuri – kehityskatsaus ja uudet muodot* (Aimola, 2021) [The Finnish podcast culture – development and recent forms] can be mentioned. The thesis is recently published, and yet it mentions no peer reviewed articles on podcasting in Finland.

2.2 Podcasting in Higher Education

All podcasts have creators, all have content arranged in different ways, and all creators hope for listeners. And, of course, there thus are different mixtures, or compositions of the three first mentioned categories, a kind of synthesis: content organized as interviews with media professionals for first year media students in which the creator wants to present different aspects of media work, for example. All these four categories are present in all literature, if not directly, at least implicitly. Arranging literature based on the mentioned categories is thus not a totally straightforward task, and it involves a bit of judgement. In the following the author has categorized the literature based on own judgement about the content in a text. The categorization must not be seen as something exact and absolute, but more as a reflection of how the author has perceived the literature.

2.2.1 Listener

The listener is crucial for the success of podcasting, also in adult- and other higher education. Studies showing that people active in working life listen to podcasts with content about their profession, indicate that the medium is suitable for continuing education at least within some disciplines. A recent article about medical education (Berk et al., 2020) advances many positive aspects about podcasts. The authors themselves are podcast producers, and may not be totally reliable in their opinions, but what is of interest, relevant, and probably reliable, is the description of the listeners in the study. Out of a bit more than ten thousand subscribers more than 80% had identified themselves with titles that can be considered post-graduates and 15% as students. The high percentage of post-graduates indicates that podcasting is a medium that employees find worthwhile to listen to, even when working in an environment as demanding as medicine. The interest in medical podcasts was also demonstrated by Riddell & al. (Riddell et al., 2017). Out of 356 emergency medicine residents 88,8 % reported listening to podcasts at least once a month, and a vast majority (88,5%) reported that they listen to them to “Keep up with current literature” and to “Learn emergency medicine core content” (70,2%). Residents are post-graduates who specialize in a specific field. They work with patients.

2.2.2 Listener and creator

Podcasting and listening to podcasts require technology. How using a technology is accepted by parties is to some extent decisive for the success of that technology. If instructors perceive the technology time-consuming and/or complicated, they will not accept it. Students on the other hand, who often are younger than the instructors, probably accept new technologies faster. When it comes to podcasting, students in higher education, younger and older, all have access to podcasts, and thus there are no hindrances for listening to, nor creating podcasts – a phone is everything needed. This was noted already in 2009, in a study that included using iTunes University (founded 2007 and shut down in 2021). The authors of the study (McKinney et al., 2009) conclude with

The current generation of college student has never known a time before cell phones and personal computers. They are eager to use technology to enhance their learning.

The eagerness to use technology in learning might have been replaced by “a readiness to use technology”, but there for sure has not been a decline in using technology for learning

in a higher education context. It is here also worth mentioning the title of the article: *iTunes University and the classroom: Can podcasts replace Professors?* (ibid.). The title reflects a kind of fear, maybe comparable to the fear of VHSs (Video Home System) replacing going to the movies. The fear demonstrates a reluctance to change, or even worse, replace, the oldest higher education method – the lecture – with podcasts (Note that by ‘podcast’ at that time (2009), podcasts were generally understood (also) as videos or audio recordings of lectures. Thus, a threatening idea, however irrational, can emerge: “once a lecture has been recorded, the professor is no longer needed”). The fear of change, or the hesitance towards something new, has maybe also launched and supported the urge among scholars to “prove” that using podcasts improve students’ grades – or the opposite.

2.2.3 Synthesis and rationale of using podcasts

The urge to study whether podcasts improve learning has resulted in many studies. It is however not easy to demonstrate that a single method (or technology) affects the outcome of a learning process. Evans (Evans, 2008) for example found that podcasts are good for revision before exams, and (Abdous et al., 2012) found that using podcasts as “supplemental material” correlated strongly with students’ final grades. In Evans’s study only three 5 minutes long podcasts were distributed to the students. The length of them appears to be too short and number too few to provide a basis for drawing conclusions. When Evan for example says that

However, podcasts did not appear to offer much in the way of facilitating multi-tasking, with most people claiming that they did not undertake any other activities whilst listening to podcasts.

it feels almost absurd: who would include, or begin, other activities when revising for an exam by listening to a five minute podcast? The students had given positive feedback on the value of the three podcasts, but somehow a result like (ibid., p. 495):

[...] significantly more students thought that revising from podcasts was quicker compared with revising from notes. Significantly more students thought that podcasts were more effective than revising from textbooks. Finally, significantly more students believed that they were more receptive to the material delivered as podcasts than either textbooks or traditional revision lectures.

is probably worth regarding with a bit of scepticism. Is it for example possible that a kind of Hawthorne-effect was present? A new technology, a new method and a 5-minute summary of lectures would probably be experienced as fresh and motivating in comparison with textbooks or written notes used in all other courses. The hypotheses in

Evans's studies regarded how students feel about using podcasts and what they believe the result of listening would be. The results probably reflect the student's attitudes, but the effectiveness was not measured, and not demonstrated. It is interesting, but a closer analysis is outside the scope of this thesis, to note how then Evans' results are used in other studies. (O'Bannon et al., 2011) say, referring to Evans, that:

Previous research indicates that there are documented benefits to using podcasts in learning. One in particular is that students are more receptive to learning material provided in podcast form versus textbook and traditional lecture form.

The question however remains: *are* the students more receptive, or do they *believe* they are more receptive?

The results in Abdous et al.'s (2012) study are in line with Evans's (2008) since the "supplemental material" in Abdous et al.'s study almost solely consisted of "Instructor's recorded lecture of course content", i.e., recorded lectures or summaries of them. The students could thus revise by either "attending" a lecture for the first time or by re-visiting it. Since it is possible to skip – fast forward – parts of a recorded lecture, it is relatively easy to check the most important parts of a lecture and thus "learn" for the exam. It appears difficult though to be sure about what the result exactly is. They studied: 1) integrating podcasts into the curriculum and contrasted them to 2) using podcasts as supplemental instructional material. Podcasts in group 1 were "integrated" and included for example, group discussions, student presentations in class, and guest lectures. Group 2 podcasts consisted of to some degree compressed lecture content. In the paragraph on limitations in the study, the authors note that "Various instructors used the PIC [group 1 above] in various ways". Thus, we do not know what the podcasts contained, if they were related to what was graded in the exam, and vice versa: did the exam measure what was learned? Did the exam measure the effects of the podcasts or something else? It is safe to say that the exam used as reference point most certainly tried to measure what was lectured and that it thus would be surprising if the podcasts summarizing lecture content would *not* have a positive effect on the results.

Above two studies trying to measure the effect of having students listen to podcasts are presented in more detail. The purpose of presenting them was not to show whether podcasts are effective or not, but rather to present difficulties with the measuring – the validity of the studies is difficult to ensure since there are so many factors that can affect

the outcome. Instead of trying to prove efficacy, a more fruitful approach is to look at what introducing podcasts does for what could be called *the whole learning experience*.

Heilesen, despite of the in a podcasting context early publication date, presents a different, maybe more Scandinavian (not so focused on quantitative studies), view on introducing podcasting in higher education (Heilesen, 2010). The article is a literature review and Heilesen thus gives a broader perspective on the field and the summary feels balanced and interesting. Unfortunately, videos are included in Heilesen's definition of 'podcast'. The ideas below nevertheless serve as examples of effects also audio-only podcasts can have on higher education. The ideas also clearly demonstrate the connection between education (pedagogics) and podcasting. Heilesen (2010, p. 1066) summarizes for example (Heilesen's writing/wording, layout edited by author):

- ✓ podcasting serves as a challenge to the conventional lecture. It introduces elements of net-based learning into perhaps the most conservative and formal of all teaching methods;
- ✓ [podcasting] on the one hand increasing the effectiveness of lecturing, because now the students are able to learn far more of what was communicated. On the other hand, podcasting undermines the very idea of requiring synchronized attendance for the reading of a "text". The time spent together can be used in more active and constructive ways, [...]
- ✓ It is also worth noticing that podcasting has opened up for new ways of integrating classroom teaching and net-based learning on the basis of pedagogical concerns rather than mere administrative convenience [...]
- ✓ In a more general sense of utility, increasing student acceptance of podcasting as a useful tool for studying may help improve the academic environment.
- ✓ [...] preliminary findings indicate that the availability of teaching podcasts is experienced as a boon and as a liberating and motivating factor for keeping abreast with course work.
- ✓ It may be speculated that the experience of an improved study environment may eventually be reflected in shorter time of study, higher rates of completion, and perhaps a higher academic level.

Further discussion of the points presented above is not possible in this thesis. The points are used, as also previously said, for establishing a connection between pedagogics and podcasting. An observation that Heilesen makes, that is not mentioned above, is about having students create podcasts. This aspect of podcasting is not included in this study, but from an educational point of view it is an excellent initiative. Heilesen (2010) comments:

When it comes to actively engaging the students in the creation of course podcasts, it is a well-known fact that having to transform and communicate information increases retention rates dramatically.

Using podcasting as student assignments was found successful also by (Hoegaerts & Wuokko, 2022). Their experiences are in line with Heilesen's remark:

The students considered the audio assignment more innovative than written assignments, and their excitement was reflected in the recordings, which contained insightful dialogue, and even debate [...].

Students as podcast creators could be encouraged and it is here worth repeating that the technology needed is easy to use and in a Finnish context, always available. The technology is easy to use, which for example so called "kidcasts" demonstrate: "Podcasts created for kids, and often by kids, are quickly growing in number, scope, and popularity." (Felde & Rogers, 2017).

Kidcasting, and other podcasting, is also said to induce what could be called meta skills (Goldman, 2018):

Learning to create podcasts also require the technological understanding of various recording and publishing applications. Not to mention, students are undergoing the same type of creativity writers go through when they are trying to create original content. The technological and mental skills developed through this process is lifelong.

Kids, higher education students and instructors alike can all gain from creating podcasts. Creators have many choices to make. These choices are discussed in the following.

2.2.4 Creators

As was introduced in paragraph 1.4, there is a vast variety of audio file content that are called podcasts, ranging from pure lecture recordings to giving instructions for students and to a style of podcasts that in a genre analysis on educational podcasts are called " *The Narrative* ' [and] *has the communicative purpose of telling a story about a topic.* [...]. *This genre is very common among history podcasts whereby continuous narratives can run for several hundred episodes in a row* (Drew, 2017b). In the genre analysis Drew (2017b), presents three genres he has distinguished in the material he has studied: *The quick burst*, *The narrative* and *The chat show*. These three genres answer to what Drew calls the *raison d'être* of the podcasts (Drew analysed 35 podcast series of entrepreneurial podcasts, i.e., podcasts available on for example *iTunes*, not created by course instructors). Drew then observed several factors for further analysis. These factors also exemplify choices creators of podcasts can consider. Such factors are for example "*type of content (new materials, assessment discussion, guidelines for practice), length (short*

1–5 minutes; medium 5–15 minutes; long 15+ minutes), author (teacher, student or other), style (formal or informal), purpose (inform, reflect, motivate, etc.)”. (Ibid.)

In an institutional, or instructor-as-creator, context, podcasts are categorized for example as *substitutional*, *supplementary* and *integrated* (compare 2.2.3. above). Substitutional podcasts present in-class content (lecture recordings), Supplementary podcasts are for example summaries of lectures and other “nonessential” content, and the integrated content is for example guest interviews or “podcast-only lessons” (Drew, 2017a). Administrative podcasts are also mentioned sometimes. These are audio files providing instructions for students.

Apart from the factors mentioned above, factors that could be described as ‘technical’ as they involve variables such as length and type of included content, there are factors uniquely connected to audio, the usage of voice. König (König, 2021) shows that students react to the way the instructor sounds. König made an experiment having two groups of students listen to the same podcast content, but with different levels of enthusiasm, neutral and enthusiastic. The results, according to König, are in line with previous research and overall – for a novice in studying the effect of enthusiasm on motivation – overwhelming:

Participants who listened to the enthusiastic version of the podcast rated the instructional quality as more positive. More specifically, participants who listened to the enthusiastic version rated the podcast as more interesting and exciting. Furthermore, they enjoyed listening to the podcast more; had a higher motivation to learn more about the topic; wanted to listen to further podcasts of the podcast host; evaluated the podcast host as more trustworthy; and gave the podcast a more positive overall rating.

The results are interesting also from the point of view that podcasts are considered intimate in the sense that the presenter’s voice often, when using headphones, surrounds the listener completely. Drew (Drew, 2017a) points out that podcasting can build rapport between teacher and student, and also create a sense of community in distance mode students. Reducing the sense of isolation in distance learners is also documented by Lee and Chan (Lee & Chan, 2007).

Podcasts can be said to have a possibility to engage students in ways that is impossible for text. Enthusiasm and especially one’s voice are of course not so easy to influence, but also the more technical choices described can be adjusted to meet the needs of specific student groups. The question about choosing the optimal mix of the variables – “factors”

– is not possible in this thesis. The discussions and research on that topic is maybe yet to come. With Drew's (Drew, 2017a) words:

Moving away from universalising ideas about good podcast design [...] may help to maximise the potential of education podcasts in institutional contexts and lead to new and unique learning opportunities. It is the hope that the findings of this study might shift discourse from an interest in universalising ideas about “good practice” in education podcast design, towards more nuanced discussion of design practices that fit within specific contexts.

3 METHODOLOGY

Since my experience in podcasting was rather limited, I to begin with wanted to have a practical approach with my study. I did not want to do a purely theoretical study, a study that for me would have concerned something very abstract and that would have produced a for me rather abstract result. I thus needed to step into the role of a podcaster to get first-hand experience about educational podcasting. An advantage with this line of working was that I would have a clear idea about my own reasoning behind the creation of the podcasts; it would have been possible for me to get feedback on the podcasts and to pinpoint weaknesses and strengths in my methods. The learning process would have been valuable. Flyvbjerg (Flyvbjerg, 2006) points out that: “*It is only because of experience with cases that one can at all move from being a beginner to being an expert.*” Flyvbjerg talks about being an expert in doing research and teaching, but the same applies for all skills: “*Context-dependent knowledge and experience are at the very heart of expert activity*” (Ibid.). My case-study approach would thus have served me in two ways: I would have learned about research and about podcasting.

3.1 The case-study that became a pre-study

My motivation for commencing media studies was also connected to podcasting. It was also clear from the beginning that my thesis would be related to podcasts. Since I work with teaching in a university of applied sciences, it was further easy to relate podcasting to my work – what role could podcasting have in higher education?

The research plan was to create podcasts for a group of students participating in adult education and to do a longitudinal case study, i.e., following the students during the progress of the course they were participating in. I was, in other words, planning to do a case study but, to have a case to study, I first needed to create the case; it would not have been easy to find a course in an adult education context that used podcasts that I could have studied. The approach was also in line with the author’s frame of reference for example because it partly was a case-study that directed the thoughts towards studying podcasts in education in this way. In their article *Rethinking Continuous University Education for Professionals – a Podcast-Based Course on Service Design and AI* (Wärnestål & Sjöberg, 2020) Wärnestål & Sjöberg evaluate a case. Those authors, just as

I planned to do, had created their case, the podcast-based course, themselves. The article is based on data collected from seven respondents commenting a series of 12 podcast episodes. The article gives an idea about what learners appreciate and what improvements could have been made. My intention was to do a longitudinal study on a smaller scale series of podcasts, with preferably more respondents. A longitudinal study could have included maybe two interviews with a few respondents and surveys with the whole group of students. The plan did however not materialize.

3.1.1 Design and progress of pre-study

The purpose of the planned study was to investigate how podcasts could be used, and would be welcomed, in adult education, and more specifically among learners professionally active. To get access to the target group, the *Centre for Lifelong Learning (CLL) at Åbo Akademi University and University of Applied Sciences Novia*, was contacted. The CLL is “the largest provider of adult education in all of Swedish Finland” (*Centre for Lifelong Learning*, n.d.).

The design of the case-study took form in discussions with the CLL and representatives of possible partners to cooperate with. The study was to be conducted in five stages:

1. Find a target group to work with
2. Create a few podcasts on a topic that possibly and preferably would interest the target group. This was planned and realized in the very beginning of the case-study.
3. Distribute the podcasts to members of the target group. The podcasts would be distributed by the learning providers (hence forward: the project) and/or other means
4. Gather feedback from persons who listened to the podcasts and possible other stakeholders. The feedback would be gathered preferably in interviews, but also other means were considered, not least because of the pandemic that restricted social contacts
5. Analysis of the feedback and answer research questions.

3.1.2 Choosing the target group

The idea was to find professionally active adult students, preferably studying as part of their work. The students would have to study the same course or be part of the same program, since the produced podcasts would be created with the students in question as the assumed audience, as the target group of the podcasts.

This aim proved difficult to meet, partly because there were not that many educational programs, or projects, active at the time of contact (end of November 2020 – January 2021), and partly because the planned activities of another active program did not fit the needs of this study. In the latter case, it would not have been possible to finish the study during spring 2021. One project met the practical needs of the project, and the project's participants were judged to be interesting for the purpose of a study.

After having been in contact with the CLL, and after receiving a kind of positive response on a few enquiries, the target group was set. The slight hesitance in the previous sentence is because it proved a bit difficult to reach an understanding on how the study would be conducted, and whether it would be worthwhile for the learning providers to assist in the study. The reason for this hesitance was that the learning providers felt that their part in the study would have been too passive, they would have wanted a more active role and a design that would fit their purposes better. Thus, the role of the project changed from functioning only as mediators of material (links to podcasts to participants, and possible questionnaires + response to the researcher) to a role in which producing podcasts as part of their activities were discussed.

It can here be mentioned that the discussion and slight misunderstandings between the project and the researcher were due to the researcher's way of approaching the learning providers. The researcher wrongly assumed that the project would want to avoid greater involvement in the activities planned for the study. This approach resulted in that the learning providers experience their planned role to be too small, and thus of no interest or use for them. After a few clarifying discussions a win-win situation could be established between the parties and the production of podcasts commenced.

3.1.3 The target group

The CLL was hosting a project, in which training was provided to caregivers to become mentors for other caregivers. In the study, caregivers are persons giving care to a partner, child, relative or another close person. By caregiving is understood caregiving not as work, but as an at least quasi-voluntary undertaking. The caregiver can, e.g. in Finland, be paid an allowance, but this is not comparable with a salary. The project was called “Experience-expert mentors for caregivers” [author’s translation from Swedish: *Erfarenhetsmentorerna för närståendevårdare*]. The project and its participants were considered suitable for this study for the following reasons:

- ✓ the project was planned for adult learners
- ✓ the participants were presumably less accustomed podcast users
- ✓ the subject matter was such that the author thought he could produce a few podcasts on it
- ✓ the people involved in the project were acquainted with, and accessible for the researcher, and trust towards the researcher could be established.

At the time of deciding that the project would be the case for this thesis, the author was not fully aware of project data such as, number of participants, age and gender structure of participants or number of activities planned. It was, however, clear that there would be contacts enough for the purpose of the study. The assumption that the participants would be less accustomed podcast users was based on a) caregivers (persons caring for spouse or other close person) are more often elderly, and b) in Finland podcast listeners are generally speaking younger, less than 55 years old (c.f. (*Finnpanel - Tiedotteet*, n.d.)).

After having established the project to work with, keypersons were contacted. The first step was, as described above, to be in contact with persons who could participate in podcasts. The plan was to create three podcasts.

3.1.4 The podcasts and distributing

During the thesis process the author had 3 discussions with professionals working with caregivers. The first discussion was conducted with a diaconic worker, i.e., a social

worker working for a congregation of the Church of Finland. The second discussion, with a social worker specialized on working with elderly, focused on the services municipalities in Finland offer caregivers. The third interviewee was a nurse working within the care of people with memory disorders.

The podcasts were uploaded on *Soundcloud* but were distributed over a homepage-like *Padlet* (see Figure 1) (Björkroth, n.d.). This way of distributing was chosen for different reasons:

1. All podcasts are visible on the same page, under the same URL
2. The target audience was judged to be less familiar with platforms such as *Apple Podcasts* or *Spotify*
3. *Padlets* are very easy to create and offer easy to use comment fields.

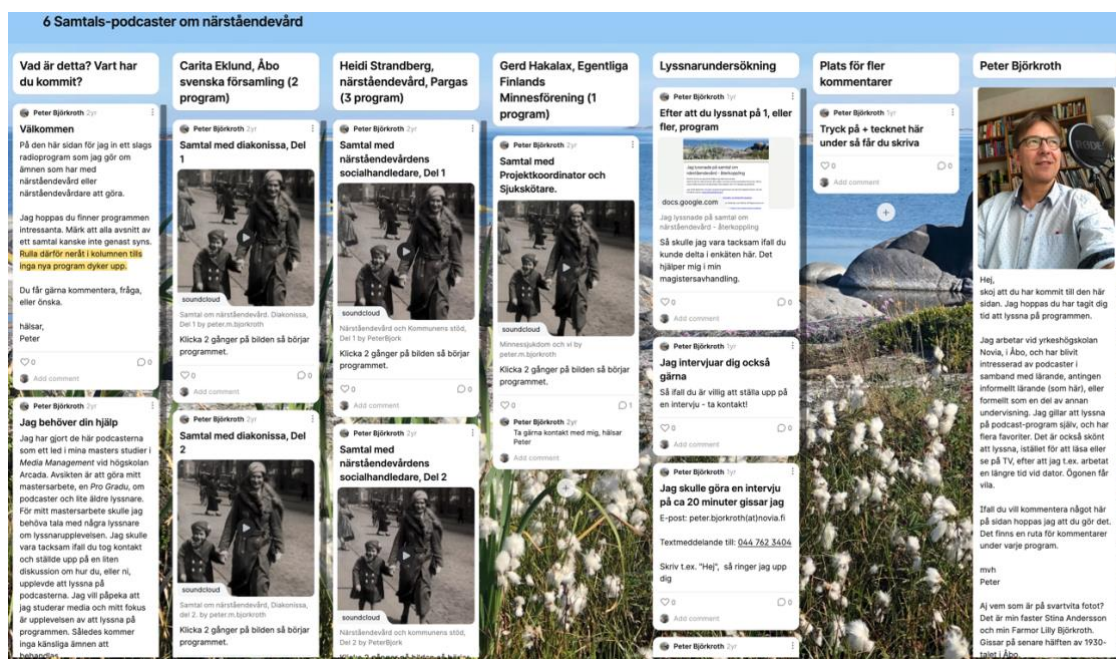


Figure 1: Podcasts offered on a Padlet

The webpage, and thus the podcasts, were published the 6th of February, 2021. In order to be clear about the content on the webpage it was named “Discussion-Podcasts”, to try to clarify the content for persons less acquainted with the term ‘podcast’. The webpage was first distributed over the author’s *Facebook* feed, i.e., to some 600 persons. The interviewees distributed the podcasts using their own channels. The plan was then for the author to participate in the project’s activities and to promote the audio-material to possible listeners. Getting listeners to interview was crucial for the success of the study.

Without listeners to interview it would be impossible to continue in the planned way. This failed. Only one interview was made, and only a couple short comments were made in the *Google form* survey that had been prepared and distributed via the *Padlet*. The author decided that it would not have been possible to further pursue that line of research. The reasons for failing were probably mostly due to the author's inexperience of participating in this kind of projects, as well as in promoting media. Contributing causes were that the project the author cooperated with, was working in a region 3 – 400 kilometres from where the author lives, and that the pandemic forced the project to arrange their activities in ways that did not support the author's participation. Longer gatherings for example, were cancelled, and the few online meetings arranged proved difficult to use for this purpose. Another mistake by the author was the wrong assumptions concerning readiness to use a webpage, podcasts and for example a Google form. A closer analysis of the reasons for failing is outside the scope of this thesis. The project the podcasts were produced for ended in the spring 2021 and the author decided to use the gained experience as a kind of pre-study for a different study on podcasts.

The process of planning, creating, and distributing podcasts was however a valuable experience for the author. Acquiring first-hand experience of challenges with podcasting gave a readiness to better understand the discussions from a media perspective.

3.2 Rationale of the new methodology

As described in the discussion about the aim of this study, the author's interests changed in the course of the work with the case. Modifying the aim of the study from understanding principles for - and demonstrating positive effects of - podcasting in adult education, to instead understanding the dynamics in the discussions concerning podcasting, solved the methodological issues. The new aims better corresponded with what the planned method of interviewing could result in: showing that using podcasts, for example, improve the number of students passing a course would require a quantitative approach rather than a qualitative method. A quantitative, positivistic approach was never the intention of the author. A more explorative approach, studying the whole field, was considered more suitable. The aim of qualitative studies is, generally speaking, "such as discovering what occurs, the implications of what occurs, and the relationships linking occurrences" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). As demonstrated in the chapter on previous research, there is not that much data available on podcasting in Finnish academia and thus an approach to find out "what occurs", is well-grounded and motivated.

Already in the beginning of the process the author had chosen to conduct semi-structured group interviews. Group interviews were considered to fit the aim since the author was not experienced in interviewing about podcasts or educational outcomes of such. In a discussion with a group, a wider variety of views could be expected. After that the case-study approach was dismissed, a broader group of respondents was needed. The aims of the study were wider, and hence wider experience about podcasting was needed. Snowball sampling was the solution for finding respondents. The reasons for the decision were several. First, the author had limited experience from the field of study – podcasts and podcasts in education. In that lies different risks:

- ✓ The interview(er's) questions, even though only semi-structured, might well limit the interviewees and cut off issues that the author had not thought about. A group interview makes it possible for the participants to share their experiences and to induce points of view new for the researcher.
- ✓ The interviews were to be conducted during the Covid pandemic, when it was common, and, in many cases, only possible, to do interviews using videoconference tools. The author felt that one-on-one interviews in a videoconference would be inhibiting, especially since the interviewees were not

familiar with the author. It would thus be challenging to create rapport in the interview situation. There was a risk that the interview situation would turn into a question – answer session, rather than into a discussion of a type the author was hoping for. A group, especially a group formed through snowball sampling (c.f. below), would create a more comfortable atmosphere for the interview. A comfortable atmosphere, in turn, would underpin the participants' willingness to bring forth also own thoughts and ideas.

- ✓ The author was also a bit worried about his own tendency to participate in discussions too actively for this purpose. A group interview setting would stress for the author to listen to the group, rather than to lead the discussion.

Second, choosing interviewees can be done in many ways. For this study, snowball sampling was suitable. The plan was for the author conduct four group interviews. The author would contact four persons who would be the first chosen participants (tier 1) in respective group interviews. The first four would then suggest two participants each, which in turn would suggest one more. The number of interviewees would thus be a maximum of five in each interview (the first chooses two who in turn choose one each: $1-2-1-1 = 5$). Five was considered suitable for interviews conducted over the software *Microsoft Teams*.

Snowball sampling is especially, and more often, used when more open recruiting is not viable. It can be challenging finding interviewees when wanting to interview e.g., criminals, drug-addicts, persons with sexual preferences not openly shown in society, people with mental disorders, or, in general, interviewing about sensitive topics. In this study the topic of course was not sensitive, but instead other reasons favoured snowball sampling. The aim for the author was to enable an open and constructive, yet professional discussion, about a phenomenon that basically anyone can have opinions about, but that not all have considered deeper. It was therefore important to find informants who in their professional life either were professionals in education, or in audio-media and/or podcasting. A third group of viable informants would have been “students”, preferably with experiences of podcasts in their studies. Interviewing this group of informants had initially been the author's plan, but that line of study proved too difficult to accomplish within the available time frame. Thus, interviews with students were not carried out.

To identify persons with a suitable background and a favourable attitude towards pondering on the questions at hand, would have been like looking for needles in a haystack, if using a metaphor is allowed (c.f. *ad hoc*, in (N. King, 2019)). Building on the descriptions above, the challenge could be further described as: “there are plenty of pointy hay straws, but finding the needles is difficult”. All the mentioned issues could, in the author’s opinion, be addressed using snowball sampling:

- ✓ To create an open atmosphere in a conversation, trust is important. In an interview situation there is not time to build trust, and a videoconference setting is a further obstacle. If the group has a common denominator, e.g., a participant all the others are acquainted with, trust is easier to accomplish. It is even better if the participant all others are acquainted with, also knows the interviewer – the interviewer is thus, in a way, included in the group.
- ✓ The person who is approached by the interviewer is likely to suggest participants for the interview s/he feels comfortable discussing with, and who s/he also feels will have input for the discussion. The interviewer can thus rely on that at least part of the group will be able and willing to freely discuss with each other.
- ✓ It was not possible for the author to know the roles and experiences a group of professionals have within the field of interest. A person can be involved in education and be very distanced from the daily work of lecturers, and likewise a person can work with audio broadcasting without being involved in work with podcasts. Snowball sampling ensures that the interviewees at least have some experience in the topics to be discussed.
- ✓ Ensuring the suitability of the persons that the author approached was strived for with an introductory letter, describing the aim of the study and giving some idea about the author’s line of thinking (See Appendix A)

To ensure successful recruiting of interviewees, the plan was slightly modified, i.e., two of the tier 1 persons were in fact suggested to the author by a person who, in the author’s opinion, would increase the probability of the suggested persons accepting the invitation to participate. Thus, the interviewees referred to as C1 and D1 below, were in fact chosen by another person than the author. The author and the person in question are acquaintances through media studies. The person, who has a network within broadcasting, who suggested persons C1 and D1 did not participate in the interviews. This arrangement does, in the author’s mind, not affect the outcome of this study in any way – the

arrangement only ensured access to interviewees. The arrangement and the criteria for choosing tier 1 interviewees, is further described in the paragraph on the interviewees (§ 3.4).

The author contacted four persons (A1, B1, C1, and D1) who then were asked to suggest two persons each (tier 2 of interviewees) for the group interviews (A2, A3; B2, B3; C2, C3 and D2, D3). Tier 2 participants in turn, were asked to suggest only one new interviewee each (A4, A5; B4, B5; C4, C5 and D4, D5), to prevent the group from growing too big. Each group would thus end up with 5 interviewees: tier 1 invited by the author and tiers 2 and 3, invited by participating interviewees. In a sense tier 1 persons had most influence on the composition of the group of interviewees, since they got to suggest 2 participants.

It should be mentioned that even though interviewee A5 was suggested by interviewee B1, the person participated in interview A, due to scheduling challenges. In the author's opinion this arrangement did not in itself affect the results of this study. The arrangement influenced the number of interviewees in the groups, and this will be discussed further in the evaluation of the interviews.

3.3 Selection of interviewees

Since snowball sampling was used, the author only chose tier 1 interviewees. The criteria for choosing interviewees were rather loose, but first-hand experience of adult education and/or podcasting was a pre-requisite. Podcasts and adult education can be approached from many directions, most obviously from a podcast point of view or from an adult education point of view. There are of course other entrances to the field of this study as well: possible subjects for this study could have experience of both podcasts and education, while other subjects could be for example producers of other media, such as video or digital material that enhance learning. The author's interests were however closely connected to podcasts and learning, and thus the interviewees were chosen on this basis. Tier 1 and tier 2 interviewees were given the instructions to suggest persons with a connection to podcasts, adult education or to both.

3.4 The interviewees

The idea with the mix of the respondents, interviewees, was to get an understanding about how podcasting is reasoned about in the two contexts, about perceptions of the usefulness of podcasting in higher education and about where the two contexts meet, i.e., about what the contexts can learn from each other and possibly what they have in common.

The author succeeded in recruiting 14 out of planned 20 interviewees. Five interviewees participated in interview A, and 3 in the remaining groups respectively. Tier 1 interviewees A1 and B1, were both adult education professionals. They were both the author's acquaintances, but not in any frequent contact with the author. Tier 1 interviewees C1 and D1 were media and broadcasting professionals. Tier 2 and 3 interviewees had slightly varying backgrounds. Interviews C and D consisted of purely media/broadcasting professionals. Interviewees in interview B were purely adult education professionals and interview A came to consist of a mixture of participants; two of the interviewees were more education oriented, two were involved in education but worked with media in education, and one had a background in media/broadcasting. All interviewees are presented in more detail below, in tables 1-4.

The composition of the interviewees came to form an in the author's mind successful whole, with sufficient balance between perspectives. As a kind of hindsight, it can be mentioned here that the discussions in the interviews also reflected the interviewees' profiles. Figure 2 below illustrates the composition of interviewees.

Media Orientation →	Interviews C and D	Interview A
		Interview B
	Education Orientation →	

Figure 2: Overview of perceived orientation of interviewees in the interviews.

In tables 1- 4 below, the interviewees are described in more detail. The descriptions are written by the interviewees as answers to the researcher's questions sent to them after the interviews. The researcher had given suggestions for answers, e.g., age grouping, answers like "some", "sometimes" and "often" on the statements "I have been involved in creating audio for learning and I listen to podcasts". For the statement "My connection to podcasts and/or adult education" the suggestion "In my work" was given. The purpose of the suggestions was to communicate that a short answer would be enough, and thus making sure that the interviewees would not leave the questions un-answered. The answers in tables have been translated by the author when necessary, and the answers have been anonymized, i.e., all details revealing the identity of the respondent have been deleted or modified.

Table 1: Interviewees, Interview A

Interviewee	Age-group	My connection to podcasts and/or adult education	I have been involved in creating audio for learning	I listen to podcasts	Other comments*
Tier 1: A1	35-39	In my work as education planner and by testing ideas I have. In connection with my work at the adult education centre.	Some	Sometimes	It was nice hearing the opinions of my colleagues concerning these issues.
Tier 2: A2	- 35	I have worked with a series of podcasts within a project. I have also listened to podcasts produced by the adult education centre. I am interested in popularisation of research, so this topic is close to my interests.	Some	Often	The topic is interesting and on the agenda. Many important issues were raised in the interview, and the interviewees formed a great group.
Tier 2: A3	35-39	In my work as journalist	Only for broadcast, but some of that of course is for educational purposes.	Sometimes	
Tier 3: A4	- 35	I work with adult education	No	Sometimes	
Tier 2: A5	40-44	In my work with media production and as education planner	Yes	Periodically, short intensive periods followed by longer pauses	

* Other comments have been included only when considered relevant for the study by the author. “Thank You, Good Lucks” and similar have not been added here. The author has translated the answers when needed.

Table 2: Interviewees, Interview B

Interviewee	Age	My connection to podcasts and/or adult education	I have been involved in creating audio for learning	I listen to podcasts	Other comments*
Tier 1: B1	55-59	I have worked within adult education for more than 30 years. I have listened to some podcasts related to adult education. In the web-based courses I manage within continuing education at the university, we have unfortunately not used podcasts to any greater extent. It is due to the instructor's choice, and I have not put any pressure on them.	I have been involved in producing audio within projects, not that much though. Maybe more video-material. I have created videos on my own and with others since the 1990's. I have further created some introduction videos, but unfortunately no podcasts.	I listen to podcasts all the time. Every day, many times a day. I listen mostly when out walking, to and from work, going to the supermarket and so on. Podcasts are super!	I think I got some ideas I could try in courses I work with. Who knows – maybe we'll include more podcasts in our teaching.
Tier 2: B2	50-54	My work as education planner within the open university. Our foremost target group is adult learners.	So far, I have not done any myself, but maybe in the future!	Sometimes	The discussion was nice and gave us education planners ideas. Thanks.
Tier 2: B3	50-54	My work as education planner and teacher within the open university. I have added others' podcasts into the "reading list" for courses.	Yes, some, in connection with open university work	Rarely	

* "Other comments" have been included only when considered relevant for the study by the author. "Thank You, Good Lucks" and similar have not been added.

Table 3: Interviewees, Interview C

Interviewee	Age	My connection to podcasts and/or adult education	I have been involved in creating audio for learning	I listen to podcasts	Other comments*
Tier 1: C1	40-44	My work, journalist/producer	Yes, many of our pods are used in education	Often	
Tier 2: C2	30-34	In my work as project manager and program host for/in podcasts	A bit/a lot – depending on point of view: I have worked a lot with fact-based programs and podcasts about society related issues.	A lot, every day.	
Tier 2: C3	35-39	I have worked with different forms of podcasts within a broadcasting company. Now I work as journalist creating a podcast of my own. During the years, I have participated in quite a few podcasting conferences and so on, and thus experienced how podcasting has developed in the world: e.g., <i>Radiodays</i> <i>Podcastdays</i> and Nordic cooperation groups. I am not especially familiar with adult education, but I think that there is an element of education in a great part of podcasts. Everything fact-based is somehow educational.	No	It is relative as everything, but it is part of my daily usage of media, as music and series are. I guess I listen to some kind of pod every day.	Nice discussion. Nice to get new perspectives!

* “Other comments” have been included only when considered relevant for the study by the author. “Thank You, Good Lucks” and similar have not been added.

Table 4: Interviewees, Interview D

Interviewee	Age	My connection to podcasts and/or adult education	I have been involved in creating audio for learning	I listen to podcasts	Other comments*
Tier 1: D1	40-44	I have produced a few podcasts through work	Yes, some.	Sometimes	Nice to get to talk with colleagues and to help the interviewer
Tier 2: D2	50-54	<p>I produce / have produced quite a few among younger women popular podcasts. Producing includes conceptualization, resourcing, planning and project management from the beginning to publication and postproduction work. Often also a kind of creating a phenomenon is planned.</p> <p>I have studied pedagogics.</p>	The podcasts I have worked with have all been to some degree educative, directly or like edutainment.	<p>A lot. For work as quality control/bench marking, or for entertainment, to learn or to get new viewpoints about a subject.</p> <p>From a work perspective I am demanding when it comes to content. If a podcast proves to be messy, rambling, or if it does not answer to what it promises I interrupt my listening. Trying to catch a listener's attention in a podcast is merciless. On the other hand, hooking a listener can happen purely by serving facts in the right way, with a good rhythm and in suitable portions.</p>	

Table 4 continues next page

Table 5: Interviewees, Interview D, continued

Interviewee	Age	My connection to podcasts and/or adult education	I have been involved in creating audio for learning	I listen to podcasts	Other comments*
Tier 2: D3	45-49	<p>My work includes idea generation, developing and realizing podcasts. I work daily with podcasts.</p> <p>I am familiar with adult education since I have taken part in adult education myself, and I also regularly discuss with an adult education instructor.</p>	<p>But when planning podcasts, education is not the primary focus. Content is what matters and I believe that working with public service guides the audio content towards a more meaningful direction.</p> <p>The podcasts I have worked with have been in some way suitable for educational usage.</p> <p>As we discussed, podcast content is more supplementary with relation to the facts in schoolbooks.</p> <p>Podcasts can provide extra information, can create enthusiasm, and inspire listeners to further exploring the subject.</p> <p>I have been involved in creating podcasts related to history, economical history, economy, popular culture, and nature.</p>	<p>Often.</p> <p>I also try to listen to a variety of podcasts, domestic as well as foreign.</p>	<p>I believe it would be a good idea to distance oneself from the “Educational podcast” thinking, and rather consider what kind of audio offers content that provides background information, that explain and open phenomena, occurrences, and the world.</p> <p>There are lots of podcasts, and the quality of the content varies a lot.</p> <p>The creators have a responsibility yes, but to a growing extent also the listeners – what content do you want to listen to, and what is reliable.</p>

* “Other comments” have been included only when considered relevant for the study by the author. “Thank You, Good Lucks” and similar have not been added.

3.5 Semi-structured Interviews

One way of categorizing interviews for qualitative studies is by how strictly they follow a set of pre-planned questions that only have a limited number of possible answers. Such interviews are for example opinion polls: “Are you in favour of nuclear power – yes/no?” In this study the researcher was interested in how podcasts are reasoned about, and possible answer-alternatives could not be defined. Thus, structured interviews were not a viable choice. Instead, only a rough interview guide, including some exemplifying questions, was created (see Appendix B). The purpose was to let the interviewees discuss, “think aloud”, about the topics. This way of semi-structured interviewing is recommended when the researcher wants to explore other people’s perspectives on phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). In a structured interview all concepts used are further assumed to be interpreted and used in the same way by all respondents and the researcher. In this study the researcher could not be sure about how the concept of podcast would be used or understood, again favouring semi-structured interviewing.

In the interviews for this thesis a meaning for the concept ‘podcast’ was not specified for the interviewees. The author did not want to limit the respondents’ thinking, but the approach was more explorative – how do the respondents use the concept? In Drew’s description (§ 1.4 above), it is for example implied that podcasts often are published as series of programs over time (c.f. “regular intervals”). The regularity of publishing and publishing in series are part of the author’s understanding of what podcasts are, but these features were not forwarded in the interviews. Neither were any constraints on what for example the length, the content or the format of the content should be, included in the working definition of the term. For the interviews in this thesis, a podcast was defined – if defined at all – simply as an audio file used in education.

The interview guide (Appendix B) was built around four themes (Figure 3):

1. The creator (producer) of audio
2. The listener (audience)
3. The audio contents
4. A possibility to synthesize the three previous themes.

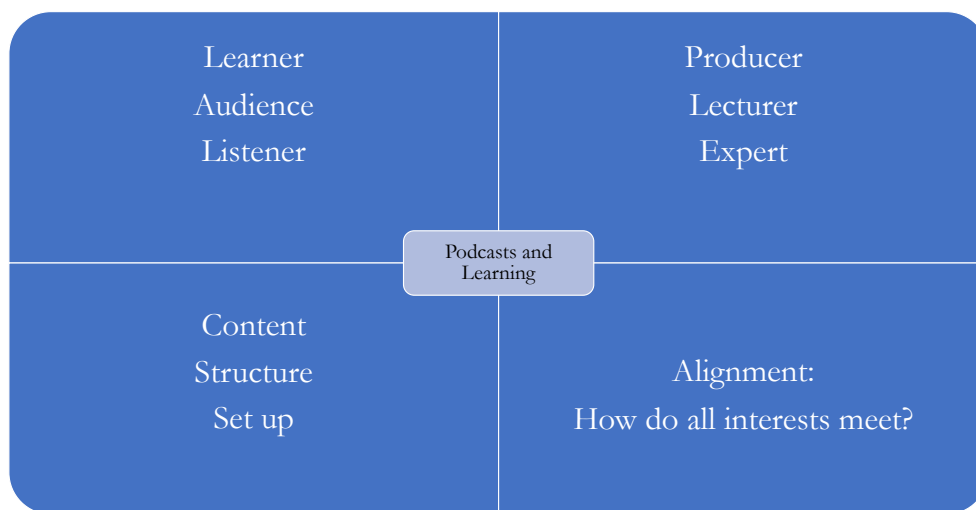


Figure 3: The themes in the interview guide

3.5.1 Theme 1: the audience

The aim of this study was related to higher education, and thus the assumed audience for the podcasts in the interviews is at least 20+ years old. With the chosen two first respondents (A1 and B1) with a background in education, the author wanted, and succeeded, to recruit interviewees from a continuous learning and “open university” context. In that context the age variety of the assumed audience can be expected to be greater than in a purely “studying for a degree” audience. Also, the heterogeneity of the assumed audience is probably greater since basically anyone can attend open university courses. The assumed audience for the respondents with a background in broadcasting is more a matter of choice: for whom do we create this podcast? Thus, because of the great variety of the possible assumed audience, the topic was of interest. The discussion about the assumed audience could also raise a discussion about learning preferences (reading vs listening), about accessibility (visual impairment), and multitasking. Since enabling multitasking, washing dishes, and studying at the same time, is one important positive feature of podcasts, it was important to bring up this question, not least since the assumed audience could be expected to be slightly older, possibly with children, fulltime jobs, and other duties.

3.5.2 Theme 2: the producer (creator)

In the interview guide the term ‘producer’ was used with the meaning ‘creator’, as defined in § 1.4. The author realized during the interviews that the term ‘producer’ could cause confusion and revised the usage of it in the text. The interview guide was however not changed. The ‘producer’ concept in for example audio broadcasting is a rather broad title and can include varying duties. In a higher education setting, a person responsible for the realization of a course could be called a producer. That responsibility primarily lies on the ‘teacher’, the instructor. The instructor also has the freedom to choose teaching methods. Thus, the motives to create for example podcasts are of interest – are purely utilitarian reasons important?

3.5.3 Theme 3: content

The theme “audio content” explored the respondents’ thoughts on the kind of podcasts that could be suitable in education. Numerous variables could be discussed: length of podcast, suitable academic disciplines, monologue vs interview/dialogue, questions – answers, theory – practise, reflection – facts, edutainment, dramaturgy, and so on.

3.5.4 Theme 4: alignment

The fourth theme, alignment, gave the respondents an opportunity to discuss various choices of using podcasting in higher education. An obvious example is that if there are visually impaired students attending a course, podcasting can be considered an excellent aid for learning. Another example of using podcasts would be enabling studying while commuting. Changing the perspective from the learner/listener to the lecturer/producer however, raises another kind of questions: do I have time to create podcasts? If I do podcasts, do I then reduce the number of lectures in the course? Under this theme matters such as

- *“Is a certain kind of podcasts more, or less, suitable for this academic discipline?”*
- *Are they suitable for this level of students (e.g., bachelor vs master)?*
- *For this age of students?*

and other similar could also be discussed.

3.6 Recording and Transcribing

All interviews were conducted using the online meeting software *Microsoft Teams*. All participants used video during the interviews and the interviews were recorded. The interviews had a scheduled time of 1 hour, and they all also lasted approximately 1 hour. The 1 hour included introductory chatting and presenting some practical details such as ethical considerations and turning off the phone (c.f., Appendix B: Interview guide). The interviews for this study were conducted during approximately three weeks.

The four interviews followed approximately the same script:

1. 15 minutes before the scheduled time, the author shared a photograph with a nature motif and played classical music (See Appendix B).
2. When all interviewees were present in the online meeting, the author showed a slide with the practicalities for the meeting: schedule, “please close your phone”, I will record this interview, the recording will be stored on the university server and password-protected, and the author will not reveal your identity in the written thesis.
3. Introduction by author
4. Discussion / interview
5. Last question by author (freely): What am I missing? Is there something you believe we should discuss before I stop recording?

The interviews were stopped when approximately the scheduled time of one hour had been used.

The interviews were then transcribed from the recordings. First the voice typing function in *Word* was used. The recordings of the interviews transferred to text well enough for further work with the transcribing. Since the interviews included several persons, and voices, they were colour coded accordingly (see figure 4). The different colours helped connecting the text with the correct interviewee. It enabled the researcher to “hear” the voice of the respondent when reading, which in turn could underpin a more accurate analysis of the discussions.

kommer ju ihåg sånt bättre berörde dig på utbildning som är liksom ganska långt...?

också på något vis om jag tänker på vad jag om man kommer in och känner att oj nu är är så här så då känner man sig som egen på skämmas tråkigt och jag vet inte men om du pratar direkt till mig att det liksom att jag fått helt annan inställning till ja informationen ja

jätte viktig aspekt det där, att berätta det här jobbar med poddar ser gärna vilken publik

Figure 4: Colour coded interviews help distinguish between interviewees

As also can be seen in Figure 4, comments (the with grey highlighted rows) were inserted in the text when transcribing. These comments were short to begin with, “*Multimedia!*”, but in later readings the comments grew into longer, kind of dialogues, with the respondents: “*Teachers do the same balancing! That then develops into multimediality – podcasts become part of a toolbox*”. The comments later came to form a basis for forming themes in the analysis.

4 ANALYSIS

Analysing inevitably begins during transcribing, if not already during the interviews. Since the data begins to inspire thinking, induce thoughts, form patterns, and raise questions already when first hearing it, ideas begin to form.

4.1 Introduction

Qualitative research is emergent in its nature. The questions asked in interviews, for example, must not necessarily remain the same throughout data collection. Herein lies one difference to quantitative studies in which for example the same experiment must be repeated in the exact same way. In a qualitative study, in which the idea is not to prove that something is the case, but rather to understand different aspects of a problem, it would be a waste to repeat a question one already had understood. Likewise, it would be bad research not to follow up, in later interviews, on an interesting phenomenon that was noticed in an earlier interview, even if the phenomenon had not been included in the first plan for the interviews. A flexible approach in the data collection is supported in literature:

The researcher usually does not know ahead of time every person who might be interviewed, all the questions that might be asked, or where to look next unless data are analyzed as they are being collected. Hunches, working hypotheses, and educated guesses direct the investigator's attention to certain data and then to refining or verifying hunches. (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015)

Thus, analysing the data begins already during the very beginning of the data collection. As was described in the methods chapter, the interviews were recorded, transcribed and colour coded. While transcribing, comments and thoughts were written in the interview text files. The comments then formed themes, categories and results that are described in the following paragraphs. The work with the analysis was inductive in that categories were formed from statements and grouped together. At some stage of the analysis though, after categories had been formed, thinking most likely became more deductive: when analysing interviews after having formed categories, utterances are categorized within the already established themes, categories. Merriam and Tisdell (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015) describe:

[...] there is a subtle shift to a slightly deductive mode of thought—you have a category and you want to see whether it exists in subsequent data.

Results and analysis are thus impossible to separate from each other since they merge.

4.2 The interview themes – analysis

In the following analysis the assumption is that the podcasts are, or have been, created in a higher education setting, by an instructor or equivalent. An exception to the latter could be podcasts produced by teams consisting of, for example, lecturer and media professional, e.g., technician and/or scriptwriter. Further, in the author’s mind, podcasts are integrated (provide extra content, something more than a recorded lecture for example).

The analysis is presented mainly following the themes presented in the interview guide that were used as a basis for the interviews (Figure 5, below). It can be pointed out that when voice and, for example, intonation (pitch) or affect (attitude or emotion) in a speaker’s voice is discussed, the vocabulary of the interviewees will be used. In the literature review ‘enthusiasm’ is mentioned but analysing this kind of “meta-communication” is outside what is possible within this thesis.

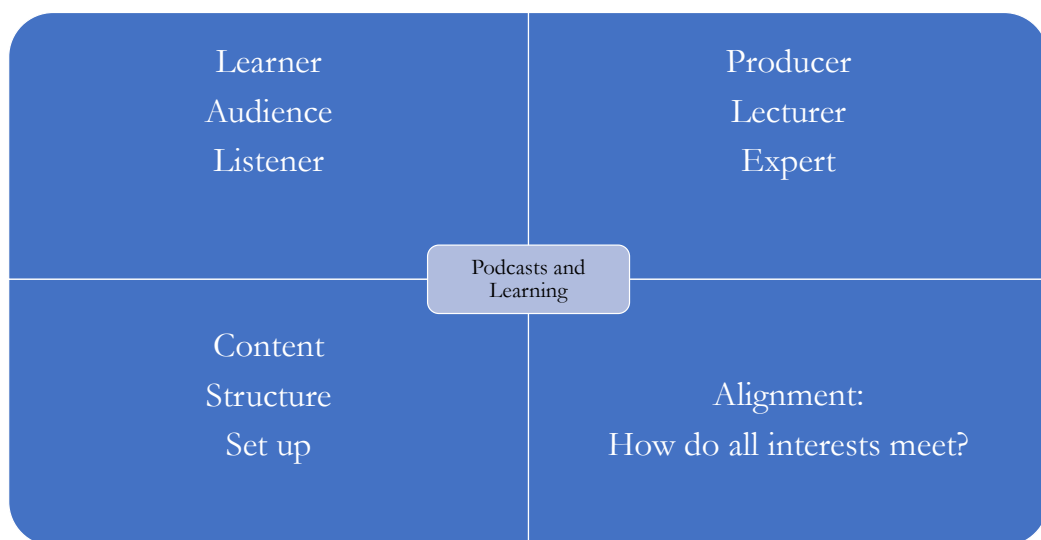


Figure 5: The themes in the interviews guided analysis

The four interviews were all presented the same interview guide (Appendix B), but the discussions came to focus on different aspects of podcasting in education. The differing

backgrounds and contexts of work of the interviewees affected what was discussed. In line with the idea of semi-structured interviews, the focus was chosen more by the respondents than by the author. The general tone of the discussion in the different interviews followed what is shown in Figure 6.

Media Orientation →	Interviews C and D	Interview A
		Interview B
Education Orientation →		

Figure 6: Overview of perceived focus of discussion in the interviews.

For obvious reasons, since all media professionals have most certainly taken part in higher education, it was easier for media professionals to relate- and refer to education, than it was for education professionals to relate to media work. It should be mentioned however, that, both in interview A and B, thoughts about academic content for a general audience were discussed.

In the following the whole group interview is referred to as “Interview X” and the interviewees as X1, and so on. The presentation begins with reasoning about the listeners.

4.3 Listener

In the Letter to Interviewees (Appendix A), a heuristic figure was used to illustrate the age distribution of podcast listeners and adult education students. It was assumed that the percentage of the population in an age group that listen to podcasts decreases after the age group of 35-45. This assumption appeared to be shared at least with some of the interviewees. In interview D a typical listener was seen as a younger person with headphones (D1):

[...] they have headphones and use them in a completely different way, like an accessory that they carry with them all the time, but I don't think it's like that in the older crowd. They are

not used to using the phone as an entertainment centre to begin with, and then they should still get some headphones from somewhere, [...], it could just be a weird thing for them.

Just like headphones were seen as more or less an apparel for younger, the whole phenomenon of podcasts could be seen as a generation thing, something that a whole generation share (D2):

[...] podcasts that now have come with such a huge rush, and there is a wide variety of things on offer, but it's clearly, shall we say, the group of people under 35 who consumes podcasts the most, they have a knack for podcasting and somehow they've taken podcasts to themselves.

In interview B, varying views on open university students and thus their potential podcast-listeners were discussed. One interviewee did not see “a typical student type” at all. Another participant in the interview said the stereotypical open university student was a middle aged woman but continued that the average age was probably decreasing. The students were however seen to have a potentially negative attitude towards producing podcasts themselves (B3):

I have prejudices, I guess, I somehow think that they [...] could complain more. Yes, I believe they would. But only for that reason [...] I will now try this.

If what was described in the quotation indeed was a prejudice, then what was problematized in interview A could also be the result of a prejudice, i.e., a discussion about infantilization. There appeared to be a tension between what could be described as a continuum between too childish in the one extreme, and too academic in the other. So, if the listener is perceived to be prone to stop listening if the content is perceived to be “difficult”, then the creator might adjust too much towards the easier end of the continuum, at the same time infantilizing the listeners (A3):

[...] there is a tendency to infantilize the audience, it is present in media, it is in education, it is there... that is to say that you don't expect people to be terribly interested and knowledgeable. It might have to do with competition, that it can be thought that “now we're going to serve something light that is easy to listen to, and it can result in like you look down on the audience and then create “rautalankamalli” [very simplified models] which is not good.

The other end of the continuum, *too academic*, might not be a problem in a purely academic context, but it was mentioned as being challenging in a broader context(A2):

[...] to make it concrete in the form of video in our case, has been very difficult and it is clear that this is based on gut feeling, but I think that the more theoretical you are, the more difficult bringing it down to a concrete level. And there I see podcasts as having a place in academia - as long as there is someone who takes a little peek at the content and makes sure that it is on a concrete level, especially when thinking about accessibility and dissemination.

In interview C various comments showed the assumed audience was at least “younger”, even though no more exact figures were mentioned. This avoiding to categorize based on age reflects what in interview C was called “the digital times”. C2 noted that:

we have moved away from thinking that an age tells everything about the audience. There are for example so many different 25-year olds; there are more educated and less educated, there are those who live in bigger cities and those who live in smaller towns. People have different interests [...]

The quotation shows what commonly is called bubbles – people have their own groups they associate with and identify with. These groups, more defined by shared interests than age, also represent different “audiences” (C2):

living in digital times everything is about that you choose your own content [...] you have alternatives, why would you choose X if someone else creates something more entertaining or something you identify stronger with ...

In relation to this, C3 presents an idea that can be visualized in a 2x2 matrix (Figure 7).

Entertaining ↑	X	[Curious and open minded]
	“Nerd” / High interest in content	X
General public →		

Figure 7: Different listeners require different content.

The idea with figure 7 has relevance for education: can higher education instructors assume that the students are interested enough to not care about whether a podcast is entertaining or not? In a sense this idea is maybe what it “all comes down to in the end”: can instructors rely on that the students are closer to the “Nerd”-category than to the “Curious”-category? If yes, instructor created podcasts need not be entertaining (to cut a long explanation short: by ‘entertaining’ in this context is meant “amusing”. The Xs in figure 7 show categories that maybe have difficulties to find an audience. A content that is designed for a broader audience and that is not entertaining might not get many listeners. A content with focus on entertaining and at the same time being very focused on a specialized content might backfire – so called “inside jokes”, for example, can maybe be fun for a while, but someone with strong focus on the content might get frustrated on e.g., being interrupted by “jokes”. D1 supports this line of reasoning:

... entertainment and facts are important motives for listening to a pod and it must be quite clear which one it offers, of course if it offers facts it can also be in an entertaining form but somehow if you try to offer some strange mix it may not work.

Here it would be possible to go in for a pedagogical discussion on for example if more specialized podcasts could be used later in a student's studies and only more general and at least slightly entertaining earlier. That discussion is however outside the scope of this thesis, and here is only referred to what is said in the end of chapter 2, i.e., that the discussion about podcasts in higher education could move towards design questions for specific contexts. One such question would then be: how should podcasts be designed for different stages of a student's studies?

The previous introduces a question about the difference between media- and education professionals. Could one assume that media professionals can choose their target group freely while the target group is given for the instructor in higher education? Media workers can reason that (D3) [author's underlining]:

... at its best, the content is, well, you do not choose that "I want something now, so that I learn", but rather that the content in itself is interesting, that it brings that movement and that it hooks you and makes you want to listen more.

Is it possible for educators to reason in the same way? In a sense it can be: maybe students do not always choose to read or listen to something only "to learn"? Some students certainly could listen to a podcast only out of interest, especially if the content is to some degree entertaining. The instructor can create podcasts with a broader perspective than for a single course, for example by applying the theoretical content of a course in a wider context, thus lightening up the content. This perspective resonates with what was said about the possibilities of podcasts (C3):

[...] It is a golden opportunity to learn by listening to podcasts – An artisan friend of mine, works with his hands, and listens [to podcasts] almost the whole day, says he is happy since he is paid for educating himself.

The artisan referred to in the quotation probably experiences that educational podcasts can be (sufficiently) entertaining as well.

Aligning content with the assumed listeners is one variable to take into consideration. Next, reasoning about the content is presented.

4.4 Content – arranging the podcast, and how content should be presented

It proved difficult to synthesize the views on content put forward in the interviews. The analysis is therefore done in two different paragraphs. Reasons for the difficulties were maybe that education professionals lacked the vocabulary to discuss content and content presenting techniques in podcasts, while media professionals emphasized distancing podcasts from what was described as educational. This gap between the two groups of respondents is probably one that e.g., universities try to bridge over by hiring persons such as respondent A5, i.e., persons who work with both education planning and media production. The gap between the groups, or professions, is something that should be focused on – solved – to create optimal podcasts for higher education. The optimal podcast format for higher education may be found somewhere between what is discussed in the two following paragraphs.

4.4.1 Media professionals' views

More or less the first thing one media informant made clear in the interview, was that using an educational undertone in a podcast outside academia, is strongly discouraged (Interviewee C1):

[...] public education is almost a bit of a swear word now, people who listen don't want like pointers or like education in this way, especially not the younger ones. But rather you should bake in that like learning content in a very attractive way.

C1 was supported by C2 who described working with podcasts as a process in which the creator gathers facts and material from experts, and then applies that on cases that the assumed listener can relate to (C2):

Experts are not heard in the pod. We research, and pre-interview, and then we share the results in a more lively and engaging way.

The idea is that the pod is educational, but the listener does not get the experience of participating in a lecture or that s/he is educated, “learning is a bonus”. It is “edutainment”. C1 then continues:

Facts are welcomed, but it [the content] must be somehow entertaining, and do not misinterpret 'entertaining' – but it must be very well presented and very interesting.

The same idea was also present in interview D. Podcasts are created “content first”. ““Content first” means that if we do a podcast on historical developments and/or events, it is the events we want to present that are in focus, rather than the idea of teaching history to the listener” (D3). D1 describes another way of realizing the content-first philosophy. In basic education subjects like geography, language, political science (e.g., “democracy”) can all fit in the same context. Interdisciplinary approaches could fit well in podcasts as well.

D3 also demonstrated what educational content could sound like years ago, say in the 1980’s:

... not in the same way as before when it was explicitly done, I worked there myself, the programs were even called “Educational Programs” and then there clearly was more like: *Educational Programs* [imitates stereotypical “teacher-talk” to children] [...] now it [the learning ingredient] is in a different way woven into the program and that learning is not thought about, but instead the thought goes, content first.

When D3 changed tone and intonation when speaking and imitated the way of talking earlier, the rest of us in the interview recognized the tone, resulting in smiles and laughter. It clearly demonstrated that one must not make “teaching” obvious. Explicit teaching results in listeners raising a kind of psychological barrier towards listening and studying – we want to learn, but we do not want to be taught – seems to be the message put forward by the broadcasters. Explicit teaching would be experienced as patronizing, maybe like arrogant, *von oben*, talk. A technique to avoid this was described in interview C. Apart from avoiding the sound of teaching, using self-irony is a way of putting oneself on the same level with the listener. If the podcast is about investing money for example, a creator can relate to what experts have said by describing own questions and challenges (C2). The technique gives the listener a chance to learn from experts’ answers to questions made by others. Thus, it is not the listener who “did not know”, but the creator of the pod.

The importance of the speaker’s tone and the sound itself (echo – no echo, and similar) was discussed in interview C. ‘Tone’ includes both the sound and vocabulary – sarcasm for example, we recognize from the tone and the words. The creator and/or content should be on the same level with the listener, i.e., again: an arrogant *von oben* attitude was strongly discouraged and “being on the same level” (C1) with the listener was put forward. The talking in a podcast should have the tone one uses when having a conversation around a table in an office break room.

Podcasts were described as intimate. The voice of the person talking penetrates the listener's mind, especially when listeners use headphones. Many interviewees put forward this idea and mentioned the difference to, for example, lectures. When lecturing the lecturer's voice is often not adjusted to a mode that you use when speaking to only one person: "we speak to our friend, rather than to mass of 200 in a lecture hall" (C2). Podcasts give the listener a more intimate situation than what can be achieved in a lecture hall. In an auditorium the audience easily gets emotionally detached from the lecturer. The aspect of sound and voice also relates to the recording quality. C3 exemplifies:

If, when entering [a podcast], one feels that "oh, the acoustics here make me feel like being in a lecture hall, I feel like being one of 200, which is sad [boring]", but if I feel that the lecturer sits and talks directly to me, [...] then one has a totally different attitude to the, well, yes, the information.

In the above paragraphs, two slightly amusing, but relevant, observations, that could be discussed further, can be made: Slightly amusing observation 1: in interviews C and D, the way of using facts in podcasts were described using two different metaphors: facts should be baked into the content, and facts should be woven into the content.

Slightly amusing observation 2: the intimacy of podcasting is demonstrated by the fact that beds were mentioned in both interviews C and D. In interview C, when discussing the tone of a podcast, it was mentioned that during the pandemic recording a podcast could be done in bed, at home. The reason for using the bed(room), was practical: the soft materials in the bedroom improve the acoustics. It was however also pointed out that the location, the bed, of course also affects what the talk sounds like (compare for example: bed vs. lecture hall). In interview D, beds were mentioned in an even more intimate context. In the discussion about tone in the podcast, it was said that a pleasant sound environment, including the voice in the podcast, is important and that: "at its best, the podcaster gets to be a bedfellow", implying that the listener listens in bed (compare audiobooks).

4.4.2 Education professionals' views on content

The education professionals had varying experiences on podcasting and the discussions came more to touch upon using audio in education than on the content and the arranging of it. Somehow this orientation towards the usage of podcasts rather than on the content of them, reflects what was said in the literature review about studies on podcasts and

education: it is the pedagogical value, utility, that is in focus. Do students learn the subject matter better and does podcasting decrease dropout of students? These questions were discussed in interviews A and especially in B (the interview closest connected to education). One problem was for example that adult continuing education learners can join a course to learn the content, but it is not important for them to pass the course, i.e., to take the exam and get the credits. Since the university gets its financing based on credits earned by students, dropouts are a problem for the university. Podcasts were seen as a possible remedy for this challenge. The usefulness of podcasts was connected to utility (B2):

Generally speaking, course materials are text dominated, and it is challenging and hard work for basically anyone. This is why we have had different campaigns during the years – ”hey, let’s try to lighten up this a bit with a little more video production or at least audio production”.

Podcasts can decrease the amount of reading, and thus support passing the course. The potential value of podcasting was noted also as replacing lectures (A4):

[...] to sit and listen to a lecture for 90 minutes, two hours, then sometimes I get the feeling that the same information could have been given considerably faster and made a lot easier to grasp.

It is interesting to contrast the above quotation with what media professional C1 says about how the audience is taken into account:

This has changed during the maybe last 10 years. Now we consider the audience’s interests a lot more than earlier. Competition is so much fiercer - we can no longer reason that “we know how to do this”, instead we must ask the audience.

It appears clear that if there was more competition in the “lecture market”, and if lecture attendees could choose, either the lecture would be replaced by other methods, or the way of delivery would change. It is possible that a need for change in the methods used within higher education is sensed. Both the lecture format *per se*, and the way of delivering what was described as “longer and more difficult” were challenged (A4):

I think that the podcast format in itself answers to a need to make things easily accessible and to simplify, make them more colloquial.” [...] I think the tradition [of (radio)programs] has developed from longer programs – that maybe are experienced as being difficult – to that there now are two persons discussing, something that somehow makes things easier to grasp in a shorter time.

A4 then summarizes the challenges higher education faces:

[...] maybe we within education have begun thinking that we must react. We can no longer offer long and boring lectures that have been videoed in a lecture hall. No one wants to have that so how can we now become trendy and accessible?

The quotation shows that there is a kind of pressure from what is produced in the entrepreneurial media field, including public service, towards education. Education is not isolated from what goes on in the society in general. When students become accustomed to the way media works, then the expectations are transferred to education and creates a need to adjust methods used. Here it can be mentioned that in cases where there are both a producer (education planner) and an instructor for a course involved in the course planning, as often is the case within continuing education for example, the producer can encourage instructors to use alternative methods, such as podcasts. It is however the instructor who decides what methods are used in a course. This tricky situation was discussed in the introduction. It can be added here that producers and instructors in a sense have conflicting interests: the instructor wants to do as little as possible for the course, while the producer needs to assure that as many students as possible get credits for a course. These interests do not always meet. Naturally many instructors want to do the best they can, but there are of course limits. B1 describes:

We have participated in countless trainings about an immense number of topics, and we have learned a lot. And I don't know how many times I have been on a training and thought that this would fit perfectly for that course, and it could be realized like this and this, and if I was lucky an instructor has swallowed the bite, but then there are those who directly say "No, video never, only text" and then, with time I have become less enthusiastic.

The same dilemma is also present in cases where the instructor and producer roles are condensed in the same person, in an instructor.

Audio is a versatile media, and the informants in this study describe various ways of using it within education. The different forms of using audio presented sometimes fall outside what in this study is meant by podcasts, but they are examples and show an openness towards new technology. Audio had been used by instructors for giving feedback and instructions to students, for defining concepts used in a course, and for introducing a discipline for potential applicants. Students had also been required to create podcasts as course work. The assignment had been well received by the students (B2):

[...] And not only do they create a podcast, but they are also required to listen to the other students' pods, and grade, or somehow evaluate them using a scale somehow. I think here the participants are creators, they share subject matter that they themselves have specialized in, and, so at the same time it is a learning process for all, they get feedback from students and from the teacher. It is part of the examination. The assignment has received positive response. [...] In the course feedback there were more complaints about how difficult it was to find the required literature, but podcasting was fun.

The comment resonates well with what earlier research suggests, i.e., that podcasting can bring new and motivating working methods into academia. It also demonstrates that the technology is not an obstacle for podcasting – students are willing to use audio. One could speculate that the feedback “podcasting was fun”, even confirms what was discussed above, i.e., that students expect higher education to change in a direction reflecting developments in the media field, and in society. Reading and writing are less popular and other ways of acquiring knowledge and demonstrating learning are favoured.

The ways of working with skills and knowledge have changed, but the will to learn has not disappeared. Whether podcasting and learning are possible to combine is a theme introduced in the next paragraph.

4.4.3 About podcasting content and education

Even though there appear to be barriers that make listeners react against a “teacher-like voice” and other, for “teaching” distinctive features, learning is still a reason for listening to podcasts. Learning was discussed by education- and media professionals alike, but there was a divided attitude towards it. As already was mentioned, interview C opened by stating that public education was almost a cuss word in the podcasts. Later in the interview the statement was modified and a more positive approach towards learning was displayed. Part of the negative attitudes first mentioned are probably due to different implications the value-laden words like ‘education’, ‘teaching’ and ‘learning’ have for different people. In interview D the dilemma of ‘learning’ being something positive, yet something to avoid, was solved by describing something similar, or very close to, ‘learning’, but without using the word itself (D3):

... all the content that we make, we kind of have a goal that it would offer something new for someone, that some kind of *movement* for someone would take place.

Here, ‘movement’, in the author’s mind, describes an almost physical experience of something happening in the brain, a kind of aha-experience, or Heureka-moment. The importance of the experience is shown when returning to the concept later in the interview (D3):

... that at its best the content is [...] not that: “I want something now that I learn”, but that the content in itself is interesting and it offers you, brings you that *movement* and hooks you to listen and to want more.

The experience of “movement” hooks the listener to the content. Another interviewee in interview D, uses ‘movement’ and ‘learning’ almost as synonyms. So learning is nevertheless mentioned as an important reason for using different services on the web and similar (D1):

in people's interests in general, when all kinds of studies have been made, it has been found that their motives for using the Internet, and similar, that learning is there, yes, as a big motive. So, people really have the desire to learn. It can also be seen, for example, in audio book services, where non-fiction books are really popular, ... people have the desire to develop themselves, learn new things and get those *movements*.

Podcasts with content meant for learning have potential, but for education professionals, it is also important to understand what could be called the pedagogical logic. Interestingly the question about whether recorded lectures can be regarded as podcasts was raised in interview A. What was considered to be podcasts in early research (see chapter 2) was thus challenged. The format of lecture recordings was dismissed as not being enough, and instead a deliberate method of creating podcasts for learning was asked for (A2):

“[...] what is the difference between a podcast in a teaching context versus a recorded lecture or a recorded webinar? What I might be looking for specifically are other possibilities, for example being able to put the airpods on, the phone in the pocket and go out for a walk. And to create the kind of learning that supports that kind of activity. But the question is whether it takes you all the way, instead it must be backed up by something else that adds to it ... but that it is like a specific format with a certain kind of input. “

Clearly the respondent sees podcasts as part of a collection of course materials. The content of a podcast must be planned and realized to fit in with the rest of the course materials. Interviewee A2 asks for a method to answer to this challenge. For podcasts to be largely accepted within education, a methodology for working with them must be developed. One essential part of such a methodology is the manuscript.

4.5 Instructor/creator

The instructor of a course is the central person in podcasting within higher education. An instructor can influence a podcast in many ways, and below some of these are presented.

4.5.1 Manuscript

Reflecting different understandings about podcasts, media professionals bring forth the importance of planning how to arrange the content one wants to present. The aim is to support listener attraction and retention. In interviews A and B, the more educational

groups, these thoughts were presented by the interviewees with a stronger relation to media, A3 and A5. As a consequence of wanting to attract and maintain listeners' attention, the attitude against being taught should be removed in the listeners. One way of breaking down this attitude, a kind of psychological barrier towards explicit teaching, is using dramaturgy. Dramaturgy means planning and outlining the content that will be presented. Practising dramaturgy, or maybe storytelling, can for example mean creating suspension. Podcasts can and should in other words be dramatized, thus catching the attention of listeners. Many respondents put forward the importance of the way a subject matter is presented. Respondent A3, with experience from broadcasting, stressed the importance of a manuscript already in the interview's first statements about podcasting, and continued later, describing in more detail:

... it's about the manuscripts, about storytelling. I think regardless of whether it is about lectures or a historical true-crime pod, so, so it's important to focus on the storytelling and script writing. And it can be completely that, also within education, it can be of use. I plan some lectures now as well, and thought that like it is good to go back to dramaturgical techniques as if you are narrating documentaries, how to create documentaries and so on because it's always about getting hold of and maintaining attention and there's also a lot of techniques as well as simpler tricks you can use to keep the listeners engaged ...

The same respondent later in the interview mentions other techniques related to dramaturgy, like dialectic reasoning for example:

[first] more abstract forms then back to the concrete, so it's dialectic, dialectic as well as reasoning seems to work perfectly well. I think it's the same with education as it is with speaking to an audience that is familiar with a subject.

Respondent A5 points out that education professionals not always have the skills to create optimal manuscripts for podcasts and that for example university staff, who have expertise in creating media, can support the lecturers:

... you shouldn't create a lecture [...] there is a difference between a lecture and a podcast and then we get to be like support for people and help [...]. I think that this understanding the structure and to understand the dramaturgy and the whole of that red thread [storyline] that's what we must help a lot with.

The same observation about that experts' choose to ignore "entertaining", in a way *not to* present subject matter in a listener friendly way, was made by respondent C2:

... experts are rarely media trained, they are rarely very engaging in audio content and the important is in some way this storytelling technique and a bit of what C1 was just talking about, that you want to learn enough, you want to hear new things that help you concretely in your everyday life, but you don't want to think that you are watching a lecture or that you get educated.

The observation in the quotation above, highlights what could be a decisive difference between educational and entrepreneurial podcasts: instructors may experience that

educational podcasts do not need to be entertaining (compare figure 7 and discussion about “nerds”). Therefore, they might not be willing to invest extra time on working with the manuscript. The question remains though – why should one avoid creating podcasts that work well, also dramaturgically? Is it then possible to use dramaturgical means in all disciplines? The question was raised in one interview:

Interviewer:

... take public law now for example so so how would it be possible to use this [a rhetorical technique] like to create like, to keep the tension alive, what do you think, is it possible?

Education respondent A1:

... I would say that every single academic discipline can use audio clips, podcasts, [...] you can have a discussion between 2 parties, for example between a government official who makes a decision and a researcher who researches a theme that is current, for example corona restrictions.

The example the respondent gives, demonstrates firstly that there are dramaturgical techniques that can be used in different disciplines, and secondly, that podcasts enable for example reflecting over theory and practise in a way that differs from lecturing. Having two persons discuss, as in the example above, is of course possible also in a lecture, but for practical reasons (schedules, time, economy) it is not possible to repeatedly use the method. A recorded interview can be edited and parts of it can be used in different episodes in a series of podcasts, thus making the most of invested time.

In interview D, aspects about dramaturgy and narrative techniques were summarized, also from an educational point of view (D3):

... One thing that keeps coming to my mind concerning learning and podcasts is that “OK we make something of some content and we give titles and write leads, we wrap it up, we know what the concept is, for example spending-investment-money-women, but what we then have at our disposal is all the means of narration, the way we do it, the content, what it sounds like, how we approach the listener, is it entertainment, facts – what does the target group want – is it true crime, but with the investment and spending included. There can be so many layers in podcasts.

There are numerous ways of creating educational materials. The above mentioned “layers” for example are worth mentioning: a podcast can be created for the true-crime genre, but it can at the same time include a lecture on law and philosophy of law. The technique is possible to use in a lecture as well, someone might argue and be right of course. But, from an educational point of view, one could then ask: would it not be better to record the lecture? To be able to edit a bit, to give the students the possibility to have

it available at their choice of time, and to have it ready for use also the next time it is needed.

Finally, the question about resources needs to be addressed. One could simplify a difference between media professionals and educational professionals: instructors are not paid for creating excellent manuscripts for their lectures, not to mention for podcasts. Creators of podcasts within media in turn, are paid exactly for that – for attracting listeners. Herein lies the controversy presented in the introduction of this thesis: will instructors, university teachers, in the future be paid to create attractive content for use asynchronously, i.e., outside scheduled lecture times? Or will universities hire media trained personnel to assist the instructors?

4.5.2 Resourcing

Podcasts are not as expensive to produce as for example videos. A lower cost for podcasts derives from a less demanding technology: basically, anyone can record sound and publish it on the web (this is the case also with videos of course (c.f., screencasts), but if one wants to use more of what video has to offer, the process gets more complicated). The production cost per podcast listener is comparatively low, making it economically viable to create content also for smaller audiences. This fact supports the idea of using podcasts in education. Challenges arise when students expect, or even demand, higher quality, possibly because they are used to a higher quality in the “outside educational institutions” media environment. There is a tension between easy & cheap and high quality & (more) expensive. What is true within media, is also true within education(A3):

[...] podcasts are cheap to produce and easy to produce, both for media companies, you need much less resources than for broadcast, you can cut personnel resources, you can, so there is, like, an expressed economic, an economic agenda, an agenda of cutting personnel behind this switching to podcasts.

Podcasts can be viewed as something that can be done as something extra, on the side, but when creators invest effort in them, they maybe require just as much of the creator as other forms of work. A3 continues:

... [employers] want to add this podcast because it's like so easy to make a podcast, yes and I think that we have to be quite careful we who work with this that we ... and I've seen that this in different places leads to burnouts, etc. when you get then even that podcast there to do, that you are expected to produce it too, I think that is what employers see this as such a thing, and when this discussion about podcasts is sort of imperative it's yet another thing that you have to do in your working hours.

Within the perception that podcasts are cheap and easy to create lies the risk that creating podcasts is made a must, something that must be done within education on top of giving a lecture for example. There is a relation between price and quality of course, directing the discussion towards proving the utility of higher quality podcasts within education. If simple recordings of lectures are as effective for learning outcomes as podcasts created especially for a specific course, then investing in podcast production is unnecessary. It remains however to be seen if podcast production in universities will develop in the same direction as within entrepreneurial podcasting. C1 points out that:

we have noticed that we have to spend as much time spreading and reaching out as creating the content itself for someone to find it, because the supply [of podcasts] is so huge.

C2 then continued to describe: “this is perhaps what costs, that working time, it is just as much work before and just as much after [the creating of a podcast series]. C2 continues and describes further:

but what is perhaps different now [compared to an earlier example of a podcast series] is how much time we spend on concept development. We worked actively closer to 4 months on the pod X [a podcast series on economy] maybe 4 months before we launched it.

The quotation above somehow suggests that creating a series of podcasts is more to be compared with planning of a course in a higher education context, than with one single lecture. Podcasts could maybe also be compared with a compendium for a course – they replace, or support, other learning activities. It remains to be seen if the envisioned more competitive higher education setting will result in a demand for high quality media products or for less expensive solutions.

4.6 Analysis – summary

As was said in the beginning of this chapter, rich qualitative data, in this case speech, does inspire thinking, induces thoughts, and patterns form in one’s mind. It is a continuous learning process. A few snapshots from the analysis above can be described.

As expected, there were differences between the preconceptions about podcasts between media- and education professionals. The different aims with podcasting within the two sectors was one factor that laid at the background of the differences. Media workers stress the audience more, while educators are focused on the utility of a podcast. The utility

aspect is reflected in the earlier research on podcasts in education while the media's focus on the audience is rather natural and embedded in media work.

An interesting and challenging result was a unison message from both media- and education professionals: podcasts used in higher education should not be experienced as educational, yet, at the same time, they should give an experience of learning to the listener. This slight controversy was visible in all the three themes used as a framework for analysis.

The interviews were analysed using the themes presented in the interview guide: listener, content, and instructor/creator. The fourth theme in the guide, "alignment", was not used though. Applying a framework on data inevitably violates the data by categorizing. Categories float into each other. In this analysis, for example, "infantilizing the listeners" was discussed. Infantilizing reflects the creators' view on what the listeners are or want. Infantilizing can be done both on a content level, i.e., how the text is written and on a "sound level" – the tone of speech can remind of the way a parent talks to a child, or a teacher to a pupil. Infantilizing can be discussed in both the Listener- and the Creator categories. This fusion of categories was the reason for not using the category "alignment" in the analysis – it was felt that anything would fit in that category.

Above the analysis was described with the word 'snapshot'. An analysis of a discussion can be seen as a description of one's understanding *at a given time*. The result would probably change with time. What was presented here, probably best describes the author's basis for constructing the understanding of the present situation concerning podcasting and higher education in Finland.

5 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This thesis describes three entities: one attempt for a thesis, the creation of a series of podcasts for educational purposes, and finally a qualitative study using semi-structured interviews as data gathering method. In the author's mind all three parts were important for achieving an understanding of the field of podcasting within higher education.

5.1 The research questions

Overall, this thesis developed into exploratory research. Because of lack of practical first-hand experience in podcasting I wanted to create podcasts and gather data based on that. The work with the first podcasts, for the first thesis attempt, was successful in a surprising way – an opportunity to create a series of podcasts for educational purposes opened for me. The opportunity offered a possibility to realize a complete process of podcast production, from conceptualization and finding financing to scriptwriting and recording, and finally to publication and launching. The process was immensely valuable for both the author and this thesis. At the same time, however, the thesis work had to be revised because the initial methodology had proven impossible to realize. The experiences from the first attempts had deepened my understanding about the field of podcasting in education, and I realized that podcasts could and should be studied both from an educational point of view and a media point of view: combining the perspectives would not be possible without studying them both. A new research design was developed to answer to this challenge. I had to make sense of the logic within the media field, and the logic within education. Realizing this had, for me, required the work that had already been invested in the thesis. Now the pieces fell into place.

The research questions in the final study were:

1. What can higher education instructors and other creators in Finland learn from broadcast professionals about podcasting?
2. How is podcasting considered to fit in Finnish higher education and what kind of usage would be included in the concept?

The first question opens two discussions: what educators can learn and what others can learn. The main finding of this study, and the continued discussion on that finding, answers both discussions. The message that was strongly put forward by media professionals was that podcasts must not appear educational. That is the main finding of this study – if educators want to use podcasting, it should be done in a way that does not give an experience of being taught to the listener. The methods to avoid being too educational, are then what all podcast creators can learn from this study. The manuscript, storytelling techniques, dramaturgy, tone of voice, and the acoustics – the sound – are some aspects to pay attention to. Podcasts must have a manuscript that differs from a lecture, and the listener should get a feeling of sitting at the same table with the speakers. Recording and publishing lectures does not work. One possible reason for the development away from a teaching centred approach, is the immense amount of information available for students. The lecturer is not the only source for information. Since students, in many cases, easily can find the same information that the lecturer has elsewhere, the reaction against a slightly patronizing *von oben* tone and/or voice, simply creates a strong reaction against the situation. Lecturers must adjust and apply means maybe more familiar from drama: storytelling, dramaturgy, and a usage of a conversational tone rather than a teaching one.

The second research question explored the higher education field, and, because of the interviewees' backgrounds, more specifically continuing adult education within higher education. The interviews indicate that recorded audio is already used for different purposes. Recorded audio was used e.g., for giving instructions and feedback as well as for defining terminology or explaining concepts. Podcasts were also used as examination or coursework, i.e., the students created podcasts as part of their coursework. Some interviewees within education had also made a few podcasts. The general picture was however that podcasting, as defined in this thesis, had not been used apart from a few attempts. Podcasting was seen as something positive, as an opportunity to substitute burdensome reading with listening or to develop the teaching more generally, also since continuing education often uses distance learning methods. Some education professionals viewed podcasting through a utility filter: do podcasts support learning and passing a course? This way of evaluating podcasts was in line with earlier research on the field, but it nevertheless surprised me. Using podcasts in education, for me, feels as natural as using a whiteboard – it is simply a tool among others. Its utility need not be specifically

measured or proven. The “business logic” within education might create this need for proving the utility, which is measured in credits earned. More earned credits by students give more money to the university. Instructors are also not required to create “extra” materials, and if utility is not proven, employers are not willing to invest in podcast production. Producers of continuing education, here education planners, can suggest to the instructors, but have no means of encouraging, let alone forcing, instructors to create podcasts. It is up to the instructors what methods they use. I believe however that this is something of a generation question, and with a new generation of university staff, podcasts will become part of ordinary course materials. A small indication in this way was possible to see also in the interviews of this study.

5.2 The interviews

By coincidence, or perhaps because of the snowball sampling, the participants in interview B were all about the same age, 50 + years old and they also formed a more homogenous group than the second education based group. One must not generalize based on this study, but it is however interesting to notice that the discussion in interview B was more focused on education and on the kind of curating and course managing role of education planners than on using podcasts. The other education based group, interview A, was more diverse and the participants were slightly younger – only one out of five was 40+ years old while the rest were less than 40. The interviewees A had a more diverse profile, even though they all were involved in education – A3 most loosely so. Some of the interviewees in interview A, were involved in media production in their work even though they worked within education. This involvement set the tone to the discussion and the focus laid clearly on using podcasts in higher education. In contrast interview B focused more on education and on how to involve podcasting in higher adult education. The impression was thus that interview A was implementing podcasting in their work within education – due to the differing profiles of their jobs – while interview B more were in the process of change. To me this indicates a change in the higher education teachers’ profession: persons who more recently have entered education work bring podcasting with them as a method among other, while more experienced professionals within education must create the change themselves. Using podcasting is not yet a part of

the methods used, not because of the education planners, but perhaps more because of the instructors they work with.

The snowball sampling proved to work well. Four groups for the interviews were formed, and they all came to have participants of slightly different ages or backgrounds. Group interviewing was a suitable method for this study. I believe that the interviewees could trigger discussions that I would not have been able to do, simply because I was not familiar enough with the contexts the interviewees worked in.

The number of interviewees was maybe not optimal. Because the interviews were conducted using *Teams*, five participants in one group were maybe one too many and three participants were maybe too few. The scheduled time of one hour for each interview was sufficient, but in interview A, with five participants, maybe more time would have been needed for all to get a chance to speak on all topics. In the rest of the interviews, all with three participants, a fourth person could maybe have brought more viewpoints to the discussions.

Overall, the interviews were enlightening and inspiring conversations, and, as was also pointed out by the interviewees after the interviews, also many of them viewed the interviews as something positive (Tables 1-5).

5.3 Conclusion

When studying a vast amount of data over a longer time, the experience of the importance of different aspects in the data changes and develops. What first was considered important faded and other points of view crystallized and felt more important. A few key takeaways can be listed. They represent what I will keep in my mind when working with podcasting in higher education.

Key takeaways:

1. An experience of learning something is important for many podcast listeners, but podcasts should go content first. Higher education instructors can apply this insight when creating media.

2. Media professionals discussed podcasts as podcasts. Education professionals more the usability of audio and podcasts. Here more research, as was also suggested in the literature, could clarify the common ground and further the developing of podcasts for different higher education contexts.
3. The above described gap between the groups of interviewees, or their professions, is something that should be bridged over to create optimal podcasts for higher education. In a near future, universities in Finland will begin teaming up instructors with professional media workers more than today. The dialogue will have to begin, for example because of the ongoing Digivisio 2030 project, as was discussed in the introduction of this thesis.
4. Storytelling and other dramaturgical techniques are excellent methods for learning, also in higher education. These techniques help attracting and retaining listeners, also in a future, even more competitive higher education context.

Finally, I can now safely say that I have developed an understanding about entrepreneurial podcasting, podcasting as an art- or skill-form as well as about both educators' logic concerning teaching methods as well as about using podcasting in higher education. I believe this understanding will be valuable for me in my future work with podcasting and education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Letter to Interviewees (2 pages)

Åbo, den 18.1.2022
Peter Björkroth
E-post: Peter.bjorkroth@novia.fi

Bästa ”podcaster i vuxenutbildning” intervjudeltagare,

Här följer en beskrivning av vad mitt examensarbete behandlar och hur jag hoppas vi kan gå vidare med genomförandet av intervjun för arbetet.

Svenskspråkig introduktion

Tack för att du visar intresse för mitt examensarbete för studierna *Master's degree programme in Media Management* vid yrkeshögskolan Arcada. Jag har intresserat mig för användning av podcaster i vuxenutbildning. Gruppintervjun kommer alltså att behandla frågor i anslutning till det området.

På grund av pandemin kommer gruppintervjun att genomföras som ett Teams möte. Jag kommer att spela in mötet för att kunna analysera diskussionen. Jag tänker mig att gruppintervjun blir ca 45 minuter lång. Efter intervjun kontaktar jag var och en deltagare för att samla in några få bakgrundsdata, närmast rörande erfarenhet av vuxenutbildning.

Jag har alltså som avsikt att spela in gruppintervjun. Skulle du så önska, behöver du inte använda bild, även om jag hoppas att samtliga deltagare använder video. Du kan också logga in anonymt, ifall du så önskar. Jag vill dock betona att diskussionsämnena inte kommer att vara personliga eller annars inkräkta på intervjudeltagarnas privatliv.

I det skrivna examensarbetet kommer jag förmodligen att citera delar av vad som sagts i gruppintervjun. Jag kommer dock att lägga vikt vid att inte röja någons identitet genom citaten. Och igen vill jag påpeka: diskussionsämnena kommer inte heller att vara känsliga till sin natur.

Min handledare vid Arcada är Tomas Träskman och ifall du vill fråga honom om något, så hittar du honom här: <https://www.arcada.fi/sv/om-oss/kontaktuppgifter/institutionen-for-kultur-och-media/tomas-traskman>

På nästa sida hittar du en liten inblick i temat för gruppintervjun. På engelska, av praktiska skäl.

Vänliga hälsningar,

Peter Björkroth

Dear Interviewee,

Thank you for showing interest in my thesis study on podcasts and adult education. The thesis is part of my studies in the *Master's degree programme in Media Management* at Arcada UAS.

The main question I want to address is whether using podcasts in adult education is a feasible method for arranging studies or not? Will podcasts reach the intended audience, and what should be considered when planning them, from a media point of view?

By “a media perspective” I mean that the focus could be e.g., on how podcasts relate to questions like available time for studies, schedule of course gatherings (tight-loose), what the content could be like (lecture or discussion), preparation-habits (well prepared for class – less well prepared), dependency on written communication channels, and similar.

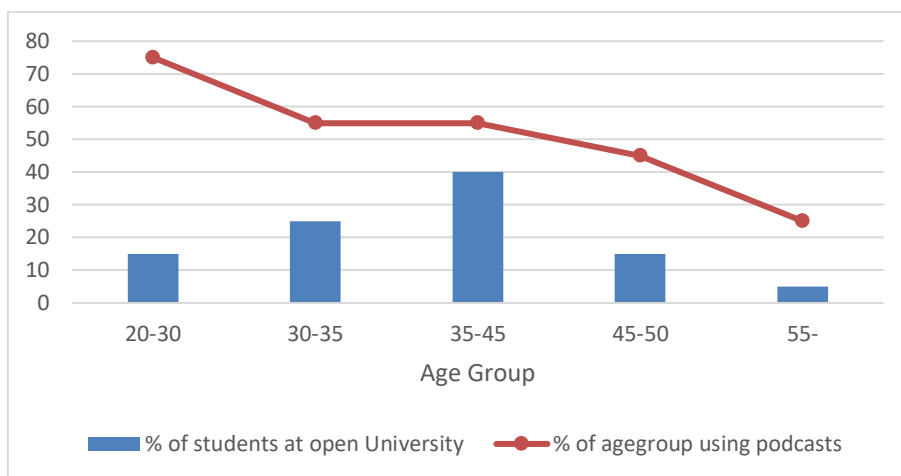


Figure 1. Heuristic figure for illustrating reasoning

Another topic of interest is how podcasts would seem to fit the audience, the participants in adult education – do they listen to podcasts? Figure 1 is based on Scandinavian data on podcast listeners¹ and on the researcher’s assumption concerning the age of participants in adult education. (Comment: it has not been easy to find data on the age of participants in adult education.)

In broad terms one can say that the older the adult – the less likely s/he is to listen to podcasts. Since the younger generations are experienced podcast listeners, it seems safe to say that podcasts will enter higher adult education. Interesting questions are therefore – how the podcasts should be “realized”, i.e. planned, produced and used in and for adult education.

¹ <https://poddsverige.atspotify.com/> <https://radiomedia.fi/tutkimukset/podcast-tutkimus-2020/>
<https://www.podcastmedia.fi/wp-content/uploads/suomen-podcastmedia-kuuntelijaprofiilit-2021.pdf>

APPENDIX B: Interview Guide (3 pages)

Välkommen till Gruppintervju poddar och vuxenutbildning

- Jag siktar på att börja 09.30, eller lite tidigare ifall alla redan är på plats
- Jag ställer min telefon på flygläge
- Jag spelar in diskussionen – du märker förmodligen då jag börjar inspelningen. Du måste inte ha din kamera på, men jag tror att det är bättre för diskussionen ifall du har den på.
- Jag tänker mig att diskussionen tar ca. 60 minuter
- Tack.

1

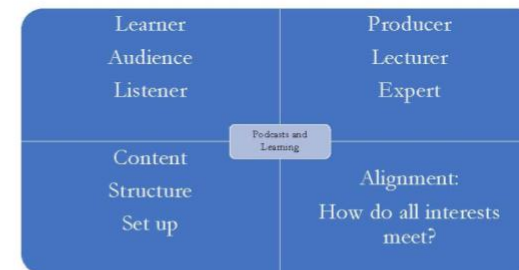
Etiska förbindelser (nej, jag förväntar mig inga känsliga diskussioner)

- Jag kommer inte att dela inspelningen med någon
- Inspelelingen kommer att finnas bevarad på högskolans område, bakom password. Samma gäller för andra dokument i anslutning till intervjun.
- Jag kommer förmodligen att använda citat från diskussionen i min grad, men jag kommer att skydda er identitet. Ni intervjudeltagare beskrivs i stil med: "Kvinna/man, 37 år, arbetat med vuxenutbildning ca 5 år".
- Thomas Träskman, Arcada, är min handledare.

2



3



4

Vuxna och "lära sig nytt"

"Typiska" vuxna lärande – finns sådana

Vuxna och inhämtande av information

Läsa-skriva-föreläsning-video-audio-Moodle-grupparbete-diskussion-presentation ...

Aktivt – Passivt studerande/inhämtande av information hur?

Examen – "Arbis"

Publikations-frekvens av material för kurs

I "klassrum" – Annanstans

5



6

Audio (ljud) i/som skapandet av kunskap

✓ roller i skapandet av "information"

✓ producent ("massmedia", högskolor, privata (jfr Udemy, Coursea, ...) 3dje sektorn ...)

✓ motivation för att producera "material" - Finns sådan?

✓ Skulle du vilja att föreläsarna skulle använda poddar?

7



8

3. vilken typs poddar kunde funka? för vem?

- ✓ Samtal mellan kolleger
 - ✓ Intervjuer med proffs
 - ✓ Föreläsningstil – monolog
 - ✓ Frågor – Svar
 - ✓ Presentera en bok/artikel
 - ✓ “edutainment”
 - ✓ reflektion
 - ✓ praktik
 - ✓ “3dje uppgiften”
-
- ✓ högre utbildning
 - ✓ vetenskapsområde
 - ✓ teori

9



10

Mötet vuxna lärande – producenter - innehåll

- ✓ synskadade, hörselskadade
- ✓ äldre, yngre
- ✓ tillgänglighet, minoriteter, icke-inkluderade grupper, “svagare röster”, special-behov/fokus

11



12