

Podcasting in Teacher Education Can Enhance Critical Discourse and Collaborative Learning: Reflections From Researcher-Practitioners

Delecia Davids, Stellenbosch University, South Africa
Elzahn Rinquest, Stellenbosch University, South Africa

The Asian Conference on Education 2024
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

This study investigates the impact of podcasting on student engagement and learning within two distinct higher education modules: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Learning and Sociology of Education. Employing a Design-Based Research approach, the study integrated podcasting activities into these courses, exploring how this innovative pedagogy could foster critical thinking, creative expression, and collaborative learning. Drawing upon Gibb's reflective cycle for practitioner reflection, the study examined how podcasting can enhance student engagement and learning. Key findings reveal that podcasting significantly enhanced student engagement, with students demonstrating a deeper understanding of course content through critical listening and analysis of existing podcasts and by creating their own podcasts on educational topics related to the modules. Furthermore, podcasting fostered student autonomy and flexibility through asynchronous learning opportunities. Collaborative learning was significantly enhanced, as students engaged in peer feedback, group discussions, and shared decision-making during the podcast creation process. Notably, podcasting facilitated the creation of "third spaces" for learning, where students engaged with academic content in more personalised and reflective ways. This study provides valuable insights into the effective integration of podcasting into higher education curricula, stressing the importance of considering diverse learning styles, fostering critical listening skills, and creating supportive learning environments for successful implementation.

Keywords: Critical Discourse, Digital Pedagogy, Teacher Education, Third Spaces, Design-Based Research, Podcasting

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

1. Introduction

This reflective essay documents our journey of integrating podcasting into two teacher education modules. Driven by the challenges of large class sizes and a desire to foster deeper student engagement, we employed a Design-Based Research (DBR) approach to explore the potential of podcasts to enhance teaching, learning, and assessment. This paper shares our reflections on the design, implementation, and evaluation of these podcasting activities, drawing upon Gibb's reflective cycle to guide our analysis.

1.1 Context and Background

We are reflecting on the first iteration of integrating podcast-related activities into the teaching, learning and assessment (TLA) across two modules in a teacher education programme at one South African University. Podcasts are “user-generated audio creations that are uploaded to hosting websites and delivered to listeners’ electronic devices through various applications” (Lowe et al., 2021, p. 431) and have emerged as versatile educational tools, with diverse applications explored in recent literature. These applications encompass enhancing teacher professional development, encouraging interdisciplinary teaching methods, facilitating flexible and accessible learning experiences, and nurturing essential technical, communication, and critical skills. Our project had two aims: The first was to integrate podcasts into our teaching practice to overcome the challenges of large class sizes in higher education, and the second was to document the process and outcome to improve and critique our own practice as emerging scholarly teachers. The larger project, which we will call the podcast project, emanated from our early success in co-initiating and supporting students to create a co-curricular podcast called Staffroom Chatter in 2022. We collectively saw early signs of podcast activities deepening the student hosts’ critical discourse and influencing their teacherly becoming, and we wanted all our students to develop these capacities in some way. At the end of 2023, we thus asked ourselves, how could we scale the podcast activities in the teacher education programme?

We then embarked on collectively conceptualising the activities we wanted to include in our TLA practices and the podcast research study. We were drawn to the Design-Based Research approach (Collins et al., 2004; Sayre, 2023). as it outlined systematic yet iterative cycles of design, implementation and evaluation phases, which we could map onto our teaching and learning calendar for the year. Along with exploring literature on podcasting in education and searching for a conceptual framework to guide our practice and our study, we developed a more specific question: How can we design authentic teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA) experiences incorporating podcasting across two modules in PST coursework? This question forms the basis of our reflective essay, which attempts to capture the “messy, unfinished, personal work of SOTL (Scholarship of Teaching and Learning)” (Healy et al., 2019, p. 32) by sharing our lived experiences and the meaning we derive from it, which often remains overlooked in other types of scholarship (Healy et al., 2019, p. 32). By reflecting on our experiences in designing, implementing, and scaling the podcasting project across two modules in the teacher education program at Stellenbosch University, we aim to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges, opportunities, and transformative potential of this innovative approach.

1.2 The Context of Teacher Education at the University

South Africa has experienced a massification of higher education, which has resulted in an increased lecturer-to-student ratio in classes. Large class sizes and traditional teaching methods often hinder student engagement, leading to passive learning, disengagement, and a lack of critical thinking. Our podcast project was thus born out of an attempt to overcome these challenges. Traditional educational settings often operate with a one-to-many framework, characterized by a single teacher addressing students over a hundred students in a lecture hall, which fosters a silent audience (Cope & Kalantzis, 2022, p. 12) and thus, not all students participate in the critical discourse which forms part of our teaching and learning practice.

At Stellenbosch University, a historic white university which is the context of our project and study, preservice teachers are enrolled for a four-year Bachelor of Education programme. Each year, the preservice teacher cohort ranges from 120 – 150 students per class group, yet in 2023, at our institution, the classes increased to approximately 270 students per group. While attempts were made to support teaching and learning within the context of increasing student numbers, the number of lecturers as primary teaching staff remained the same.

At our institution, we generally enjoy high rates of connectivity on campus, with Wi-Fi being accessible to all students and computer user areas available for use 24 hours a day. Additionally, our Moodle-based learning management system (LMS) serves as a platform for all asynchronous learning. The LMS has mainly been used as a repository for teaching and learning materials, although post the pandemic, more functionalities have found their way into the TLA activities, with the use of discussion forums and online quizzes increasing. However, the digital divide remains a significant issue in South Africa (Dlamini, 2022; Rinquest, 2023), as connectivity, access, and proficiency in using technological infrastructure are often limited for poorer communities, disproportionately affecting those with challenging socio-economic circumstances. Our practice as teacher educators thus operates in a particularly challenging context, having to prioritise the development of digital literacy among preservice teachers, which is not only a national requirement (MRTEQ, 2015) but also a (future) institutional graduate attribute captured by the idea of the digital knower (Stellenbosch University, 2023).

2. Literature and Theoretical Frameworks

During our conceptualisation phase, we began exploring existing literature on podcasting to gather ideas and insights from others' practices. Our project was thus informed by existing literature from the onset. To this end, we begin our journey by highlighting the literature that informed our practice and ultimately was integrated into our approach and reflections.

2.1 Exploring Existing Literature on Podcasting in Education

Researchers like Fernández-Batanero and colleagues (2022) have investigated podcasts as platforms for continuous teacher education. These studies highlight the need for teacher professional development focusing on digital skills enhancement and bridging disciplinary gaps through collaborative exploration of diverse topics among students and educators (Waldron et al., 2023).

Podcasts also stand out as tools for flexible and accessible learning when engaging with lecturer or expert-generated content. Scholars such as Shahrizal and colleagues (2022) and Strickland and colleagues (2021) have emphasised their asynchronous nature, allowing students to engage with educational content at their own pace. Moreover, podcasts enhance accessibility, offering students an accessible medium to access high-quality, peer-generated content. This accessibility fosters a sense of community and shared learning experiences, enriching the overall educational journey (Milligan et al., 2021). Podcasts also foster learner-teacher rapport, enhancing approachability and connections in online learning environments (Conroy & Kidd, 2022).

Furthermore, podcasts are instrumental in the development of technical and communication skills. Students engaging in podcast creation refine their technical abilities, including editing and production, enhancing their overall digital literacy proficiency. Additionally, podcasts serve as platforms for honing critical communication and storytelling skills, encouraging students to construct narratives, articulate ideas effectively, and engage diverse audiences (Waldron et al., 2023).

A noteworthy area of application for podcasts is in promoting critical race discourse and social justice education. Podcasts, as highlighted by Harris (2019), provide a unique space to discuss sensitive topics, challenge prevailing narratives, and foster critical thinking. Similarly, Ferrer, Lorenzetti, and Shaw (2020) have explored the role of podcasts in social justice education, demonstrating their capacity to bridge the academic-community gap. These studies underline podcasts as powerful tools encouraging deep engagement with societal challenges, promoting critical dialogue, and enhancing social awareness among students.

Our first cycle of TLA activities was thus informed by evidence-based practices elsewhere in the world and assisted us in making decisions about the type and number of activities to include. Armed with this knowledge, we embarked on the collective implementation of podcast-related activities across the two modules in the teacher education programme at Stellenbosch University. However, before we could begin our research related activities, we needed to ground ourselves in a particular theoretical framework, which we briefly discuss next.

2.2 Searching for Helpful Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

Since we had already noticed something to improve in our practice and articulated our design problem, we searched for a helpful theory within which to frame our practice and our future analysis of the data we would be collecting. Since both of us have our postgraduate scholarship rooted in the sociology of education, we drew on frameworks which we were familiar with, or we were beginning to explore in other areas of our research, but that could help us to understand and describe our podcasting project in a theoretically informed way. We present this in figure 1 below.

Elzahn: During my PhD research on identity and school space, the works of Bhabha (1994) and Soja (1998) played a pivotal role in shaping my theoretical framework. Their concept of the "third space" offered valuable insights into how identities are negotiated and redefined within dynamic and contested spaces. While my original research focused on schools, I now find these ideas equally relevant in our exploration of podcasting as a pedagogical tool.

Bhabha's notion of the third space as a realm of negotiation and hybridity helps us view podcasting as more than just a digital platform. It becomes a space where pre-service teachers (PSTs) engage with diverse perspectives, critically reflect, and collaboratively construct new identities. Similarly, Soja's interpretation of third spaces as socially and spatially contested sites offers a lens to understand how podcasting mediates power dynamics and societal struggles, encouraging PSTs to navigate and challenge established structures.

Both scholars emphasize the concept of emergence (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), underscoring the fluid and evolving nature of identity. This idea resonates with my TLA practices, where creating reflective spaces for PSTs is central. By incorporating podcasting into our work, we aim to cultivate a third space that fosters critical engagement and the development of hybrid identities, connecting theory with practice. The intersection of Bhabha's and Soja's theories with podcasting highlights its potential as a transformative educational tool, bridging my research on school spaces with innovative pedagogical practices in teacher education.

Delecia: When we conceptualised the project, I had just completed my PhD proposal, which used De Leuze and Guattari's (1987) assemblage theory as part of its conceptual framework. Assemblage theory views teacher education as a network of entangled relations and interactions, or "irreducible social wholes comprising of heterogenous elements" (Bacevic, 2019). These elements include the university, staff, classroom technologies, schools, and national/provincial policies, all of which exert some influence on PSTs' experiences. It made sense to me to explain podcasting in a traditional higher education classroom as a disruptive activity that deterritorialised the university setting – that is, it challenges the traditional notions of power and erodes boundaries and structures since the HE classroom and its conversations can become public through sharing student-created and curated podcasts online, for anyone to comment on and engage with. Assemblage theory and its related concepts thus gave explanatory power to understanding 'what happens' when we introduce new digital technologies and multimodal platforms in a traditional, large classroom setting, emphasising the sociomaterial nature of the TLA activities that we were planning to implement.

Figure 1: Excerpt From Researcher-Practitioner Journal

By selecting these theories, we created a conceptual framework where we see podcasting as a transformative sociomaterial third space for teacher education. This means utilising podcasts as a medium for diverse cultural and social practices to intersect, where podcasting becomes a platform for these interactions, enabling PSTs to explore the fusion of various backgrounds. Moreover, podcasts are not just digital content; they epitomize dynamic social and spatial practices, where PSTs must engage in active negotiation and contestation of interests, challenging conventional power dynamics within higher education.

At this point of our journey, we understood that through intentional planning and implementation of well-thought-out activities, we could provide PSTs with opportunities to bring together diverse perspectives, challenge traditional narratives, and provide opportunities for critical reflection and identity formation.

3. Methodology: A Reflective Approach

We felt the need to reflect on our practice as we encountered both successes and challenges during the first iteration of our project and needed to make sense of these before embarking on the second iteration. We needed to take stock of what we were able to achieve and why things panned out the way they did. In the DBR approach, (re)developing the intervention after trying the intervention forms part of a mini cycle (see Figure 1) of implementation and evaluation.

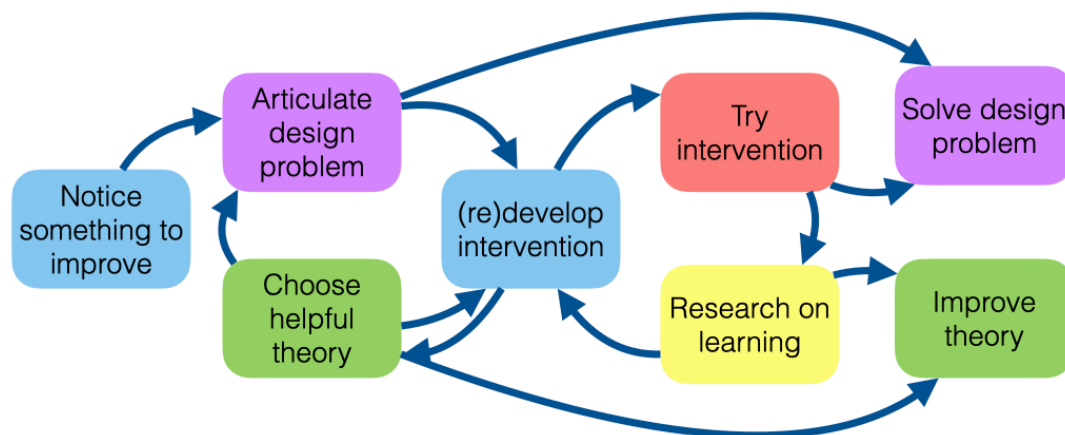


Figure 2: The Design Process From Start to End (Sayre, 2023. Available at: <https://handbook.zaposa.com/articles/design-based-research/>)

Since the DBR methodology does not explicitly include how one should go about reflection, we chose Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) to guide our reflections, allowing us to analyse our experiences and identify areas for improvement systematically.

3.1 Gibb's Reflective Cycle

Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988) involves six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action plan. We reflected on our goals, challenges, student responses, and the overall impact of podcasting on teaching and learning during in-person and virtual meetings, and we also wrote an individual reflective essay for which questions were developed, corresponding to the six stages of Gibbs' framework. These individual and collective reflections will inform future iterations of our practice, fostering professional growth and our SOTL identities through writing (Healy et al., 2019, p. 32). To aid our reflections, we re-engaged with student artefacts that were submitted as assessments – these included podcast-listening analysis essays, reflective essays and student-produced podcasts and scripts to evaluate students' critical thinking, communication, collaboration and digital literacy skills. We also engaged in document analysis to assess the impact of podcasting on student learning and teacher development by analysing course materials (lecture slides, readings, assessments) to understand the pedagogical strategies and learning objectives behind the podcasting project. By examining these artefacts, we were able to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and potential improvements for integrating podcasting in our own practice. In addition to our project-specific insights, we also explored the socio-material dynamics of podcasting as a third space, including the interplay between technology, people and the learning context. We thus also offer some tentative theory-building insights which we gained from engaging in critical self-and collective reflection alongside existing literature.

By combining the rigorous methodology of DBR with the insights gained through reflective practice, this essay and larger study aim to contribute to the development of evidence-based, innovative, and effective educational practices at Stellenbosch University and beyond.

3.2 The Researcher-Practitioners

In this reflective essay and in our podcast project, we take on the roles of researcher-practitioners, since we are both studying our own and collective practice as early career researchers and teacher educators. Before we entered the collective relationship as researcher-practitioners, we collaborated with one another on a variety of smaller-scale projects and previously encountered one another in a supervision group cohort. Thus, we were comfortable and excited to collaborate on a more elaborate project together. We include short reflections on our roles in this project and who we are as researcher-practitioners, particularly as it relates to our podcast project (Figure 3).

Delecia: I have been teaching in a part-time capacity at Stellenbosch University for four years, before securing a full-time position as a lecturer. During this time, I taught various modules related to Science Education, Environmental Education and Practical Learning (teaching methods). Since 2023, I have been responsible for the ICTs for Learning modules, which focus on developing preservice teachers' ability to critically engage with technology, to make informed decisions about integrating technology into their own teaching practice in schools, and to develop their own digital literacies. At the start of the project, I was particularly interested in developing PSTs' digital literacy, and podcasting was a relatively unexplored teaching method in our context. In this project, I used the ICTs for Learning 277 module as my site of experimentation, which had 277 students (half the cohort) enrolled for the module.

Elzahn: I have been lecturing in Sociology of Education to PSTs, where my focus has been on exploring innovative teaching methods to deepen student engagement with complex educational and sociological concepts. Inspired by a student's suggestion, I supported the development of Staffroom Chatter, drawing on my experience with recording software, radio hosting, and music production. In this project, I used the Sociology of Education module as a platform to engage pre-service teachers (PSTs) with themes such as Bourdieu's habitus and Fraser's theories on redistribution, recognition, and representation. Podcasting provided a creative medium for students to critically explore topics like access, privilege, and diversity while fostering collaboration and reflective practice. I believe this initiative has created an interactive space for co-constructing knowledge, bridging theory and practice, and empowering PSTs as reflective practitioners.

Figure 3: Excerpt From Researcher-Practitioner Journal

In the larger podcast project and study, we are acutely aware of the importance of reflexivity in shaping research outcomes. Reflexivity involves critically examining one's own biases, assumptions, and values, and considering how these factors may influence the research process (Olmos-Vega et al., 2023). In this study, our roles as both a researcher and a practitioner have the potential to shape our interpretation of the data, which includes our own reflections. To mitigate the impact of these biases, we engage in ongoing self-reflection and critical analysis. By regularly reflecting on our own assumptions, beliefs, and values, we identify and challenge any preconceived notions that may influence our analysis. To this end, our collaborative approach (Barry et al., 1999) allowed us to question one another continuously and to challenge and support each other through incisive questions when we reflected collectively and as we engaged with each other's individual reflections.

Additionally, sharing our reflections and interpretations with colleagues through peer review, conference presentations, and the writing of such a reflective essay can provide valuable feedback and alternative perspectives, albeit with some vulnerability and the potential of being misinterpreted or misunderstood (Healy et al., 2019, p. 33). By being transparent about our positionality and the potential impact of our biases on our analysis of our reflections, we can enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of our accounts.

4. Lecturer Reflective Journeys

Both of us as teacher-educators embarked on a journey of integrating podcasts into our teaching practices, sharing a common goal of enhancing student engagement and critical thinking. While we shared a similar vision, our approaches to podcasting varied.

The integration of podcasts into teaching, learning, and assessment (TLA) practices was piloted in two distinct modules within the Bachelor of Education (B.Ed.) programme at our university: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Learning taken at the second-year level and Sociology of Education where students are enrolled in the third year of the programme. These modules served as complementary yet distinct contexts for experimenting with podcasts as an innovative pedagogical tool. The integration highlighted not only the specific focus and requirements of each module but also the broader impact of podcasting on student engagement, critical thinking, and interaction with course material. Delecia focused on podcasts as a multimodal TLA tool, emphasising the practical application of podcasts as a creative medium, while Elzahn used podcasts as a tool for critical reflection and analysis of specific content related to the course themes. We present our reflections in figure 4 below.

Delecia: The ICTs for Learning module focused on equipping students with the knowledge and skills necessary to integrate digital technologies into educational practices. In this context, the use of podcasts facilitated digital literacy, multimodal engagement, and creative expression. I adopted a scaffolded approach, starting with the theoretical framing of audio as a multimodal tool and culminating in practical tasks, including podcast listening and creation. A guest lecture introduced students to professional podcasting practices, further bridging theory and application. Reflecting on the design of the module, I noticed that the ICTs module provided the opportunity to experiment with podcasts as both a teaching tool and a student-generated learning resource, encouraging students to think critically about how technology can transform educational experiences in the classroom and beyond.

Elzahn: The Sociology of Education module explored the social, cultural, and institutional factors influencing education. The integration of podcasts in this context focused on critical engagement with complex sociological themes, such as inequality, diversity, violence in education, gender and sexuality, and power dynamics. Students were tasked with listening to and analysing podcasts that addressed these themes, with guided reflection questions designed to deepen their understanding. In my reflections I noted that the Sociology module allowed me to see how students engaged with podcasts as a way of critically analysing societal issues, making connections between theory and lived experiences.

Figure 4: Excerpt From Researcher-Practitioner Journal

Despite the differing applications, both modules shared a common pedagogical goal: to explore how podcasts could enhance student engagement with coursework by fostering active, reflective, and critical learning practices. This objective was particularly evident in the

podcast listening and analysis tutorial, which was implemented in both modules with slight variations. Submission rates and average grades suggested strong engagement, but the nature of the reflections revealed more profound insights into how students processed and interacted with the medium. Elzahn shared a particularly striking reflection from a student that impacted her deeply:

Listening to podcasts made me think differently about the topic because it felt like a conversation rather than just another reading.

This shift from passive reception to active engagement aligns with the principles of constructivist learning, where students are co-creators of knowledge. Even though listening may seem like a passive task, students were encouraged to do active listening, with a variety of strategies shared with them during the lectures. Active, critical listening resulted in a rich and meaningful analysis of the selected podcasts across both modules.

The podcast creation assignment, primarily implemented in the ICTs module, further assisted creative and collaborative learning. The task required students to work in diverse groups to produce original podcasts on educational topics of their choice. While participation in this task was limited since students were given the option of an individual task different to the podcast-creation assignment, Delecia highlighted the transformative potential,

Creating podcasts allowed students to explore topics in their own voices, using their own languages and dialects, which brought authenticity and diversity to their work.

This aspect of the project resonated particularly strongly with the multiliteracies framework (Cazden et al., 1996), which advocates for the inclusion of diverse linguistic and cultural resources in education.

The reflections also revealed the pedagogical challenges of integrating podcasts into these modules. Students' unfamiliarity with open-ended, creative assignments often led to initial resistance. In a collective reflection session, we noted that in both modules, students expressed discomfort with the creative aspects of podcasting, as they are accustomed to traditional forms of assessment. This discomfort seemed to have been a contributing factor to reducing the number of podcast-related activities in the Sociology module and was also the reason why students were given a choice to participate in the podcast-creation activity in the ICTs module.

However, we also observed that, over time, many students came to appreciate the flexibility and relevance of the tasks. One student from the ICTs class posted on LinkedIn about the importance of podcasts in teacher education. She reflects on the quality of the Staffroom Chatter podcast, where one episode was assigned for the podcast listening tutorial, and she expresses her interest and curiosity about the medium beyond the assigned activities. She writes in her post:

As I've been thinking about the global teaching community, one question keeps coming to mind: What do teachers actually listen to? What mainstream platforms are they engaging with to vent, share experiences, and learn from one another? It's clear that there's a gap in the podcast space that could bring even more value to the education sector. In my own exploration, I've come across the fantastic podcast Staffroom Chatter by Stellenbosch University Education Faculty. Coming to the end

of another amazing season, this year has been hosted by [...] and with incredible guests like Dr Shannon Bishop-Swart dropping incredible gems on teaching approaches and experiences. It's a great example of how powerful a podcast can be in, sharing knowledge, promoting reflection, and fostering a community of teachers...

These reflections demonstrate the relevance for this student to her professional identity and the excitement that the podcasting activities potentially activated within the student. This evolution in student perceptions and interest beyond the coursework underscores the importance of scaffolding and support in navigating innovative pedagogical approaches.

From a broader perspective, the integration of podcasts highlighted key observational insights into how students critically engaged with coursework across the two modules. While the ICTs module focused on the technical and creative dimensions of podcasting, the Sociology module concentrated on critical analysis and reflective learning. These differing emphases provided a rich comparative framework for examining the impact of podcasts on student engagement. Elzahn reflected,

Although the modules had different goals, what stood out was how students engaged critically with content when using podcasts—they questioned, analysed, and made connections in ways that were deeper than expected.

The integration of podcasts into the two distinct modules served as a comparative study on how digital tools impact student engagement across different disciplines. We noted the importance of considering the diverse disciplinary and contextual needs when implementing innovative teaching tools. What was particularly striking was the variance in student engagement across the two modules—while both groups showed interest, the ICTs module students were more comfortable with digital tools, whereas students in the Sociology module needed more time and support to see the relevance of podcasts to the course content.

Despite logistical and institutional challenges, such as delayed ethics approvals and limited access to equipment, the project demonstrated the potential of podcasts to foster authentic and engaged learning in higher education. In both modules, podcasts served as a bridge between theory and practice, encouraging students to think critically, collaborate, and express their ideas creatively. Moving forward, we reconfirmed our commitment to refining the approach, since the integration of podcasts is a work in progress, but the insights gained from these modules provide a foundation for broader application in the B.Ed. programme.

The integration of podcasts into the ICTs for Learning and Sociology of Education modules illustrates the transformative potential of multimodal pedagogies in higher education. By situating these practices within the pedagogy of multiliteracies, the project highlights the role of podcasts in fostering digital literacy, critical engagement, and authentic learning experiences. The comparative insights from these two distinct contexts provide valuable lessons for future applications of podcasts in education, emphasizing their potential to enrich TLA practices across diverse subject areas.

5. Developing a Tentative Theory of Practice

We first highlight insights and improvements related to our TLA practices; thereafter, we move towards tentative theoretical insights that should inform our future work.

5.1 Strengthening Podcast-Making in Teaching, Learning and Assessment Practices

Podcast-making requires a sustained approach to integrating activities which begin at the individual level, and end with collaborative peer learning. From our reflections and engagement with literature, we propose for ourselves and others who are podcast-curious the following flow of activities, which could be implemented at different scales and with different intensities.

A. Establish Existing Podcast Practices

In both of our modules, we introduced our students to podcasts and related activities without understanding their level of exposure and engagement before we commenced with our activities. We thus suggest establishing students' current practices related to podcasts – do they listen to any specific shows, do they listen for educational purposes or purely for entertainment, what is the average length of podcasts they listen to, and how do they access podcasts? Are some questions, to begin with. Additionally, understanding their listening habits may be insightful at the start of implementation – do they do chores while listening or do they listen as they walk from one place to another, do they make notes or do they repeat key phrases to retain information – as this will give educators a gauge on how intense support for critical listening should be included in the course activities.

B. Critical Listening and Analysis of Podcasts for Educational Purposes

In the current cycle of our DBR project, this is where we had the most success, yet we can still improve. Our suggestions here are to curate podcasts for listening, both as formative and summative tasks. Many students would not have learnt how to listen and analyse critically, so they need multiple opportunities to hone this skill. You may consider playing with different lengths and forms of podcasts during this phase but choose topics intentionally. In this phase, the aim is to develop students' critical analysis and reflection capabilities with the podcast as a stimulus. Develop good marking guides, use commentary feedback and well-designed rubrics depending on the weight of the assessment. Additionally, you may consider giving students the option of choosing any episode from a particular series or show to increase student autonomy and agency during this phase of the podcast creation process.

C. Collaborative Peer Learning and Podcast Creation

Collaborative learning, distinct from traditional group work, emphasises peer-to-peer engagement and constructive feedback prior to the final grading process. This approach encourages active participation and fosters a deeper understanding of the content through dialogue and shared inquiry. However, assessments grounded in this method often introduce a productive tension for students, particularly when they are confronted with unfamiliar modes of evaluation that lack the conventional "memo" or prescriptive answers.

To navigate these challenges effectively, intentional shifts are required in both student and lecturer practices. These shifts demand a rethinking of traditional roles and responsibilities, as the collaborative process seeks to cultivate reflective practices and support the transformation of teacher identities, while students are co-creating a creative medium. By embracing this approach in our podcast creation process, we encourage students to take on specific roles in research, script writing and editing processes. The simple notion of turn-taking during the podcast conversation and dialogue encourages teams to negotiate

differences of opinion towards developing shared meaning and new knowledge. In this way, we emphasise the importance of moving beyond superficial compliance with assessment criteria. Instead, the focus shifts to fostering deeper reflective processes that align with the broader goals of teacherly becoming.

This intentionality necessitates designing assessments and learning experiences that not only challenge preconceptions but also scaffold students' engagement with the complexities of the teaching profession. In doing so, we can create a space where students can critically engage with their own learning and practice, developing the skills and dispositions necessary for their professional growth.

5.2 A Sociomaterial Perspective on Podcasting

It is evident from our analysis of our reflections that podcast-related activities can be integrated into various teaching and learning contexts. Even though our modules are within the same degree programme, our learning outcomes and module contexts differ greatly. The varied application of podcasts in the two modules highlights the distinct pedagogical contexts in which these tools were employed, which corresponds to Namakula and Prozesky's (2019) discussion of the potential for decolonial transformation within academic support programmes that adopt third space principles. In the sociology of education module, students engaged with social issues and historical injustices, while in the ICT module, the focus was on the technical integration of digital tools within a critical perspective. This dual application illustrates the flexibility of podcasts in supporting diverse educational aims, from fostering critical race discourse to enhancing digital literacy skills. The ability to cater to both content-driven and skill-oriented learning underscores the versatility of podcasts as educational tools, a point emphasised by Abraham (2021), who highlighted the transformative potential of third spaces in promoting culturally responsive pedagogy.

Additionally, the asynchronous nature of podcast-based learning, as noted in the reflections, also ties into the literature on the role of digital tools in breaking down barriers to participation. As Caldwell (2023) pointed out, cross-boundary collaborations in third spaces enable participants to engage in dialogue and learning outside traditional confines. The students' ability to access and reflect on podcasts independently fostered a deeper sense of autonomy and ownership over their learning process, supporting the notion that digital spaces can encourage more inclusive and participatory educational practices (Beck, 2020; Kozleski, 2011). This was also true for the podcast-creation task, which took place outside of the formal class time and in locations and during times that were convenient to the students.

5.3. A Third Space for Learning and Transformation

The integration of podcasts within these modules also aligns with the concept of third spaces in education, which are characterized by their ability to bridge gaps between formal and informal learning environments, enabling critical and transformative experiences. Seale et al. (2015) and Helleve and Ulvik (2019) describe third spaces as inclusive and collaborative, offering opportunities for students to engage with content in more personalized and reflective ways. Our reflection on students' experiences suggests that podcasts acted as such a third space, providing an opportunity to engage with academic content in a less formal yet deeply transformative manner. This approach echoes the work of Daza et al. (2021), who emphasised the importance of third spaces in fostering a fluid exchange of knowledge and ideas, where students can negotiate their roles and identities in the learning process. This was

particularly evident in the podcast-creation task, as groups had to negotiate speaking roles, turn-taking and decision regarding scriptwriting, hosting and editing responsibilities.

6. Conclusion

This study explored the integration of podcasts into two undergraduate education modules. Our journey as teacher-educators revealed the multifaceted potential of podcasts to enhance teaching, learning, and assessment. Key findings include heightened student engagement, evidenced by critical analyses of existing podcasts and the creative exploration of educational topics through student-generated podcasts. The podcast creation assignment proved particularly impactful, allowing students to express unique perspectives and connect course concepts to real-world scenarios. These findings align with a sociomaterial perspective, emphasising the dynamic synergy between social, cultural, and technological factors. The asynchronous nature of podcasting fostered student autonomy, while collaborative aspects encouraged peer-to-peer learning. Furthermore, podcasting created "third spaces" for learning, enabling personalised and reflective engagement. While challenges such as student resistance were encountered, the overall experience demonstrated the transformative potential of podcasts in higher education. Moving forward, we will continue to refine our approach and explore the broader implications of podcasting within the evolving landscape of higher education.

Acknowledgements

We extend our gratitude to the Centre for Teaching and Learning at Stellenbosch University for their support of our participation in this conference. This support, provided through the SOTL Conference Research Prize awarded to our joint podcast project in 2023, partially funded our attendance and contributed significantly to our engagement in this scholarly exchange.

References

- Abraham, S. (2021). Crafting a pedagogical third space in a transnational teacher education project. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 97, 103207. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2020.103207>
- Barry, C. A., Britten, N., Barber, N., Bradley, C., & Stevenson, F. (1999). Using reflexivity to optimize teamwork in qualitative research. *Qualitative health research*, 9(1), 26-44.
- Beck, J. S. (2020). Investigating the third space: A new agenda for teacher education research. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 71(4), 379-391.
- Bacevic, J. (2019). With or without U? Assemblage theory and (de) territorialising the university. *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 17(1), 78-91.
- Bhabha, H. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. New York and London. Routledge.
- Caldwell, J. (2023). *Optimising the third space in higher education: case studies of intercultural and cross-boundary collaboration*: by Natalia Veles, Routledge, 2023.
- Cazden, C., Cope, B., Fairclough, N., Gee, J., Kalantzis, M., Kress, G., Luke, A., Luke, C., Michaels, S., & Nakata, M. (1996). A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures. *Harvard Educational Review*, 66(1), 60-92.
- Collins, A., Joseph, D., & Bielaczyc, K. (2016). Design research: Theoretical and methodological issues. In *Design-Based Research* (pp. 15-42). Psychology Press.
- Conroy, D., & Kidd, W. (2023). Using podcasts to cultivate learner–teacher rapport in higher education settings. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 60(6), 861-871.
- Cope, B., & Kalantzis, M. (2022). The changing dynamics of online education: Five theses on the future of learning 1. In *Foreign Language Learning in the Digital Age* (pp. 9-33). Routledge.
- Daza, V., Gudmundsdottir, G. B., & Lund, A. (2021). Partnerships as third spaces for professional practice in initial teacher education: A scoping review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 102, 103338.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia* University of Minnesota Press. Minneapolis MN.
- Dlamini, R. (2022). Digital Equity in Schools: A Multilevel Analysis of In-Service Teachers' Technological Knowledge Competencies. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 21(2), 40-60.
- Fernández-Batanero, J. M., Montenegro-Rueda, M., Fernández-Cerero, J., & García-Martínez, I. (2022). Digital competences for teacher professional development. Systematic review. *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 45(4), 513-531.

- Ferrer, I., Lorenzetti, L., & Shaw, J. (2020). Podcasting for social justice: Exploring the potential of experiential and transformative teaching and learning through social work podcasts. *Social Work Education, 39*(7), 849-865.
- Harris, J. (2019). Podcast talk and public sociology: Teaching critical race discourse participation through podcast production. *About Campus, 24*(3), 16-20.
- Healey, M., Matthews, K. E., & Cook-Sather, A. (2019). Writing Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Articles for Peer-Reviewed Journals. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry, 7*(2), 28-50.
- Helleve, I., & Ulvik, M. (2019). Tutors seen through the eyes of mentors assumptions for participation in third space in teacher education. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 42*(2), 228-242.
- Kozleski, E. B. (2011). Dialectical practices in education: Creating third spaces in the education of teachers. *Teacher education and special education, 34*(3), 250-259.
- Lowe, R. J., Turner, M. W., & Schaefer, M. Y. (2021). Dialogic research engagement through podcasting as a step towards action research: A collaborative autoethnography of teachers exploring their knowledge and practice. *Educational Action Research, 29*(3), 429-446.
- Milligan, K. J., Daulton, R. S., St Clair, Z. T., Epperson, M. V., Holloway, R. M., & Schlaudecker, J. D. (2021). Creation of a student-run medical education podcast: Tutorial. *JMIR medical education, 7*(3), e29157.
- Olmos-Vega, F. M., Stalmeijer, R. E., Varpio, L., & Kahlke, R. (2023). A practical guide to reflexivity in qualitative research: AMEE Guide No. 149. *Medical teacher, 45*(3), 241-251.
- Rinquest, E. (2023). Chapter 3: Digital literacy acquisition pathways and practices: Experiences of first-generation black university students. In Fataar, A [Ed.], *The Educational Pathways and Experiences of Black Students at Stellenbosch University*. Stellenbosch University: African Sun Media. pg. 61-78.
- RSA-DHET Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET). (2015). *Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications*. *Government Gazette*. No. 38487. Government Printer
- Sayre, E. C. (2023, May 3). Design-based research. Retrieved from <https://handbook.zaposa.com/articles/design-based-research/>
- Seale, J., Nind, M., Tilley, L., & Chapman, R. (2015). Negotiating a third space for participatory research with people with learning disabilities: An examination of boundaries and spatial practices. *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research, 28*(4), 483-497.

Shahrizal, A. Z. S. A., Rahmatullah, B., Ab Majid, M. H., Samuri, S. M., Hidayanto, A. N., Yas, Q. M., ... & Malim, T. (2022). A Systematic Literature Review on the Use of Podcasts in Education Among University Students. *ASEAN Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (AJTLHE)*, 14(1), 222-236.

Soja, E. W. (1998). Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other real-and-imagined places. *Capital & Class*, 22(1), 137-139.

Strickland, B. K., Brooke, J. M., Zischke, M. T., & Lashley, M. A. (2021). Podcasting as a tool to take conservation education online. *Ecology and Evolution*, 11(8), 3597-3606.

Waldron, L. M., Covington, B., & Palmer, S. (2023). Critical pedagogy, counterstorytelling, and the interdisciplinary power of podcasts. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 1-19.

Contact email: deleciad@sun.ac.za