

Using podcasting to enhance the experiences of apprentice paramedics in higher education

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INTRODUCTION

Podcasts are being incorporated into more healthcare education programmes following COVID-19 (Newman et al., 2021). Podcasts are considered valuable tools in education; being entertaining and informative, yet allowing listeners to multi-task during episodes and use playback functions to aid understanding (Kirkwood & Price, 2014). This action research project explores the views of apprentice paramedics who already use podcasts within their teaching. Not all students feel podcasts benefit their learning and some feel traditional lectures still best suit their needs. However, for the majority, podcasts created a positive experience: many regard them as excellent revision tools, people feel comfortable using the technology and students are able to simultaneously complete other activities.

Aim

- To establish the critical question: 'Does my use of podcasting within apprentice paramedic education enhance learner experience?'

Objective

- To understand the experiences of apprentice paramedics when listening to the podcasts during teaching sessions in higher education

BACKGROUND

Podcasts have been used to facilitate discussions around emerging research in healthcare, to update listeners on changes to clinical guidelines, or alongside videos to demonstrate teaching of clinical skills remotely (Hurst, 2016). Preston et al. (2016) have embraced this modern change by creating the 'MDTea podcast', developing multidisciplinary team (MDT) working through education, by discussing management plans with different healthcare professionals. Podcasting is often utilised within the author's teaching, to improve engagement with different learning styles (Biggs & Tang, 2011). However, the benefits and challenges of podcast use in paramedic apprenticeship programmes has not yet been established.

INTERVENTION

The Apprenticeship programme included within this study integrates online learning with theoretical academic content and podcasts have been utilised in previous teaching sessions. The apprenticeship module for this project was titled 'Holistic Patient Care' and the specific teaching session was 'Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) working in Mental Health and End of Life care'. Following on from Preston et al.'s (2016) example, three podcasts were created between paramedics and professionals in Palliative Care and Mental Health to discuss the challenges around interprofessional working in this field. These were accessible for students to listen to during a 3-hour teaching session, to complete in any way they felt comfortable, before returning to discuss the key themes as a group. 60 students completed this task.

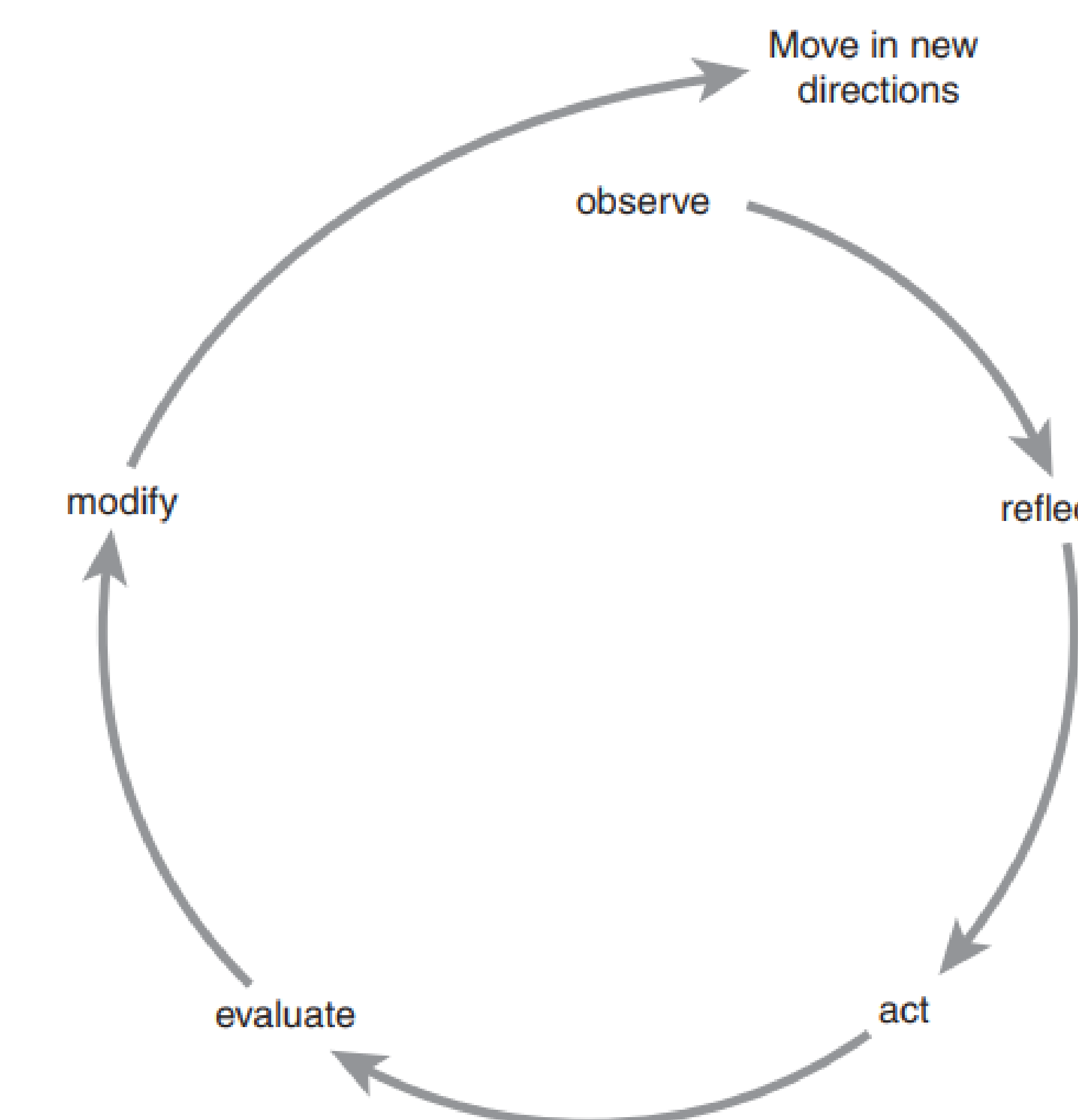
METHOD

The methodology for this study was action research, to evaluate the teaching practices of the author (Fig 1). All 60 students were invited to complete a quantitative Likert-scale survey after the task, which included 12 questions covering aspects of enjoyment, accessibility, overall learning experience and preference over other delivery types. The survey also contained two open-ended qualitative questions; "Please summarise your overall experiences and feelings towards podcasting in higher education" and "Please tell me how you feel about podcasts for this session using only 3 words". 21 students consented to participate and fully completed the survey. Ethics approved was granted by the project supervisor and all responses were anonymous.

DISCUSSION

Qualitative responses can be summarised into 3 key themes: 'Overall experience in Higher Education; Accessibility; and Quality of podcasts'. Podcasts were received very positively as a revision or additional learning tool, but not in replacement of a live teaching session, as they considered this to be 'lazy'. The content was also interesting, but that podcasts should not be too long. The quantitative data showed 71% were able to complete other tasks whilst listening, 14% still preferred to learn by Powerpoint, 100% were confident using the technology, 76% would enjoy more podcasts in general teaching and 71% had a positive overall learning experience with podcasting in higher education. The recommendations from the research are that podcasts should be encouraged within teaching, but in short amounts and as pre- or post-learning tools.

Fig 1- Action-reflection cycle (McNiff, 2017)



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