Podcasts in Higher Education

TA Scholar: Barrett Bonella, MSW, ABD
College of Social Work

Faculty Mentor : Donna Ziegenfuss, Ed.D
Center for Teaching & Learning Excellence

THE UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

BACKGROUND

Purpose
- Make information about podcasts as educational tools available
- Assess Professors' knowledge of podcasts
- Evaluate Podcasts as a learning tool

Reasons
- Podcasts are a relatively new technology
- Podcasts have multiple uses in higher education
- Expanding professors' knowledge of podcasts may increase usage- which will help the younger generation of students

SIGNIFICANCE

Technology is increasingly becoming a part of everyday life. Some technologies traditionally used for entertainment are now becoming the center of focus in academic circles. One such technology is the podcast, an audio file that is typically free and consists of individuals speaking on different topics (Rosell-Aguilar 2007).
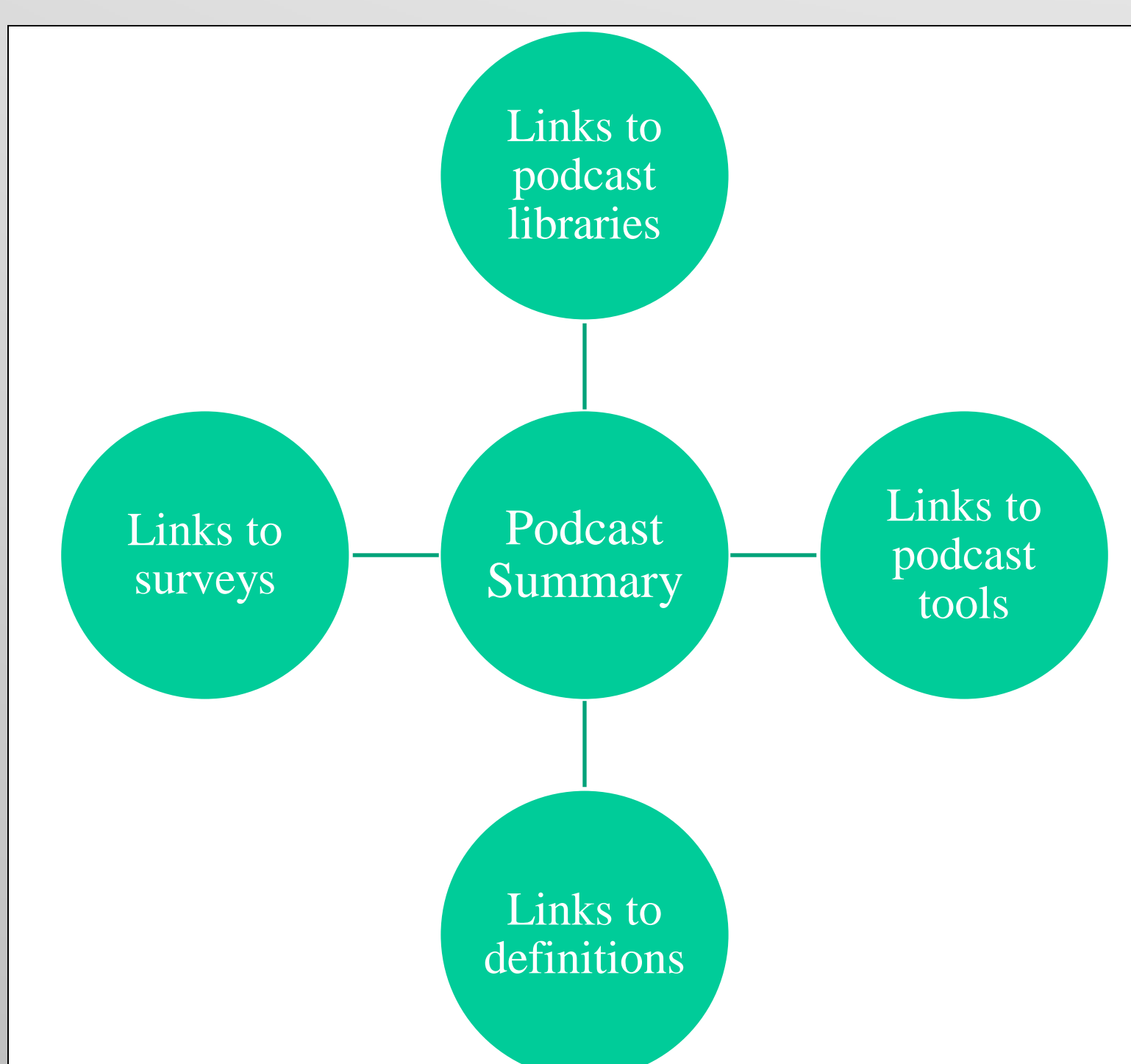
Podcasts have had a variety of uses in higher education (McGarr 2009). One use is to have professors record their lectures and distribute them later to students(Fernandez, Simo et al. 2009). Another is to have students create podcasts for class for the purpose of creating knowledge (Lee, McLoughlin et al. 2008). Finally, podcasts can be used to supplement weekly reading materials(Edirisingha, Rizzi et al. 2007).

Because of the novelty of this technology and its increasing usefulness as a teaching tool, three websites were created: One that would evaluate professors' knowledge of podcasts, one that would evaluate podcasts as study tools, and one that would provide information on podcasts including ways to use them, where to find them, and how to create them.

PROJECT DESCRIPTIONS

In order to achieve the three goals of this project, three websites were created.
1. **The Podcast Summary.** http://sites.google.com/site/podcastsummary/.
   a. Site gives definition of podcasts
   b. Site gives links to podcast examples
   c. Site gives links to podcast libraries
   d. Site gives links to tools for building websites
   e. Site gives links to study websites
   f. Site gives list of academic references on podcast studies and articles
2. **The Professor Survey.** https://sites.google.com/site/professorsurvey/.
   a. Site asks basic questions of professors' knowledge of podcasts
   b. Site asks questions about how professors use podcasts in the classroom
   c. Site asks general questions about professors' teaching, research, and ranking
3. **The Student Survey.** Podcaststudy.com.
   a. Site Experimentally evaluates podcasts as learning tools
   b. Students recruited from Psych, Social Work, and Social Science disciplines
   c. Students are asked a series of demographic questions
   d. Students have learning style evaluated
   e. Students randomly assigned to one of four study groups
      i. Group with 2 readings
      ii. Group with 2 podcasts
      iii. Group with 1 reading and one podcast
      iv. Group with no study material
   f. Students tested on materials presented
   g. Students give follow up questions on their study practices
   h. Differences between groups to be compared using ANOVAs and MANOVAs

INITIAL FINDINGS

Data is still being collected from both study websites. Initial findings indicate the following:
Professor Knowledge
60% of professors know what podcasts are
30% of professors aren't sure what podcasts are
10% don't know what a podcast is

Podcast Usage
40% of professors have used podcasts in the classroom
Most professors who have used podcasts used them as supplements
One professor recorded lectures for podcasts

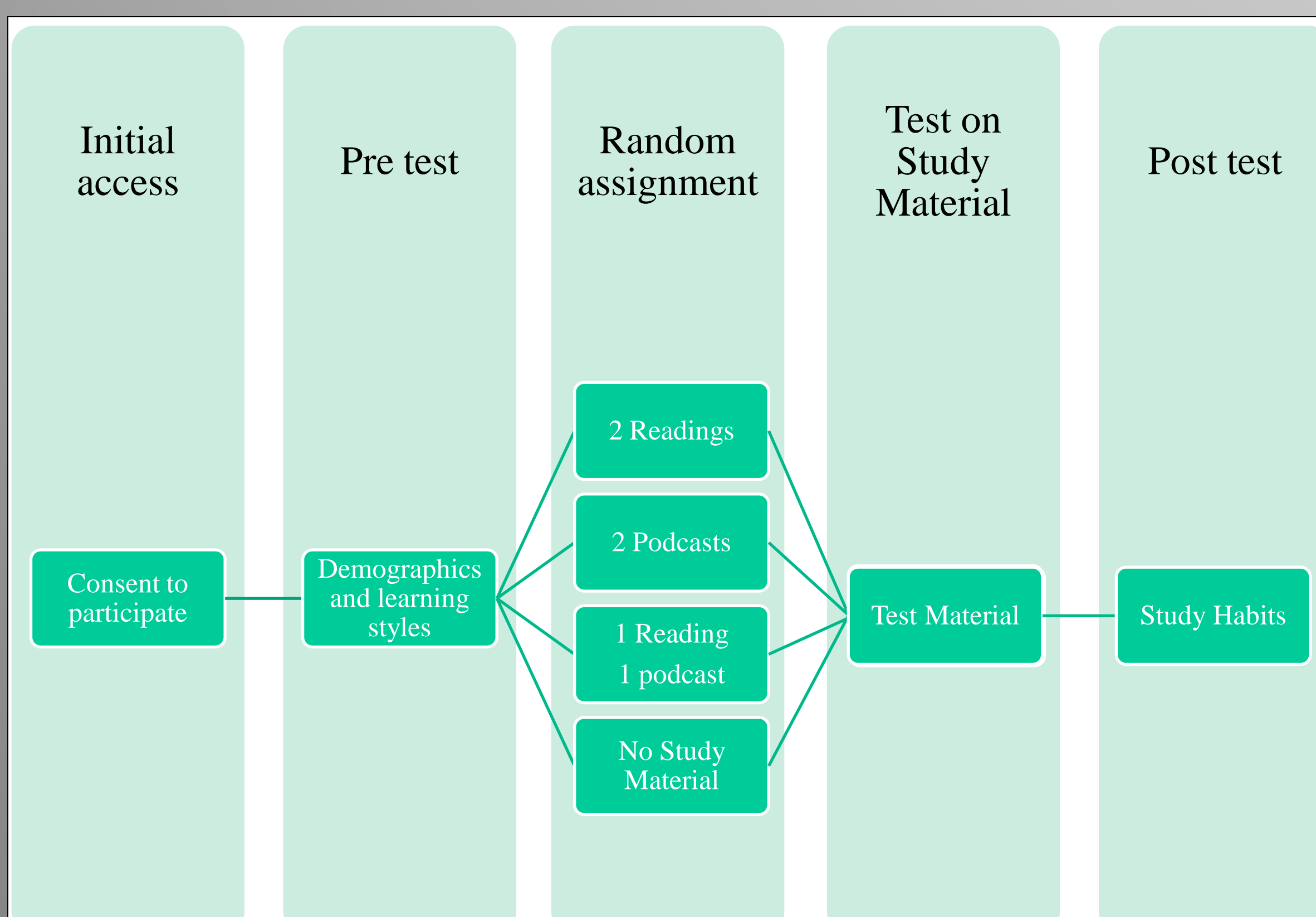## BENEFITS

The benefits of these websites are threefold
- The podcast summary website is easily accessible and links up to many websites on building and finding podcasts. The site also explains in basic detail what a podcast is for those who have no previous experience

- The Professor's survey is useful in assessing the knowledge and need for further educational materials on podcasts for professors. It also creates a useful gage to understand how many professors are currently using podcasts in the classroom and how they are being used.

- The Student Survey creates sound experimental knowledge in how students learn when podcasts are included, what kinds of students benefit most from the use of podcasts, and properly evaluates their usefulness in the classroom

- The combination of all of these benefits translates into a contribution to better teaching practices- a contribution directly helpful for the university, professors and students.

ASSESSMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

- The Podcast Summary Website was created on Google sites- a free program available to the public that allows for individuals to create their own websites. The website itself is free of charge and can remain up indefinitely. It can also be linked easily from the TA Scholars and Social Work homepages. It can also be easily edited and updated as new knowledge becomes available

- The Professor Survey is based on the same principle. The knowledge that is created by this site can also be continuously built, updated, and used to assess the knowledge of professors at the University of Utah

- The Student Survey is time based and will eventually expire. However, the knowledge created from this website can be used to create publishable journal articles that will remain in the annals of science history indefinitely.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & REFERENCES

Dr David Derezotes- Student Faculty Chair
Dr Donna Ziegenfuss- Student Project mentor
Dr Beverly Brehl- TA Scholars Teacher
All TA Scholars and peers
Russell Martin- Website writer
Pat Gay- Student who provided reference to consultants
Student and professor participants
Giovanna for supporting me in all of this madness
Other references available on request