

## **The Issue of Podcast Effectiveness in Higher Education- A Case Study of the University of Georgia**

***Tamar Gagoshidze, PhD***

Associated Professor, Grigol Robakidze University,  
School of Public Administration and Politics, Tbilisi, Georgia

***Tamar Tavkhelidze, PhD student***

Assistant Lecturer, Grigol Robakidze University,  
Faculty of Business Administration, Tbilisi, Georgia

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### **Abstract**

The podcast, originating in 2001 in the U.S. and later expanding globally, challenges traditional media with its customizable content. Podcasts distinguish themselves by affording listeners the agency to curate content to their preferences, a departure from the prescriptive nature of conventional media. Comparable to having a bespoke show tailored to individual interests, podcasts have emerged as a sophisticated and customizable avenue for content consumption. This article explores the transformative role of podcasts in higher education in Georgia, investigating their developmental stages, diverse perspectives, and implications for the education system. With four main objectives, the research first examines divergent perspectives on podcast integration in higher education. It then presents qualitative and quantitative findings on podcast impact, focusing on comparative statistical research in Georgia and developed countries. Additionally, the study evaluates the effectiveness of podcasts as instructional tools and their contribution to the learning process. Lastly, it explores student preferences, seeking to understand why students favor podcasts over traditional courses and analyzing the implications of this shift. Revealing a prevalent interest among students, the study shows that they not only express interest but also independently

integrate podcasts into their learning practices. The positive impact on student knowledge levels, as indicated by the survey, adds valuable insights to the evolving relationship between podcasts and education in Georgia.

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**Keywords:** Podcasts, podcasting, education, teaching, students, Georgia

## **Introduction**

The greatest revolution and innovation of the 20th century is certainly the appearance and development of the Internet. It is currently a larger medium than television (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2023).

It is obvious that the Internet plays an important role in their lives. And in the educational environment, its two greatest advantages are communication and information.

First known as an object of leisure, over time, the Internet has become one of the means of higher education. It has become a truly limitless and constantly evolving educational technology. During university courses, we see more and more computers or cell phones turned on and several professors promote them and do not oppose the technological development of our time. But there is still a question that arises – Is it really good that technologies start to invade all areas of our environment?

Is there a real risk that one day the Internet will play the role of teacher? To answer these questions which worry all of humanity today, we will try to analyze the qualities and defects of the use of the Internet in academia.

To better understand and explain this new phenomenon which has also penetrated the halls of Georgian universities, on the one hand, we studied international research on the subject, as well as we interviewed professors and students from Georgia. There are different approaches to the emergence of new technologies compared to traditional teaching methods. As it seems impossible to describe all points of view regarding learning techniques, we draw attention to two largest groups. As a result, two starkly opposing views were revealed.

## **Opposing opinions**

As our subject of study concerns the methodology of podcasts in teaching, it seems reasonable to discuss the opinions of teachers who are against new technologies in general and those who consider the Internet revolution as a positive aspect of the learning and educating process. According to a group of scientists and students, technology has simplified and made study-related research more accessible. The Internet is described as 'the main source of information for young people for completing university assignments' (survey conducted in Georgia in September 2023). Research becomes more manageable as the Internet covers every area known to

humanity. While young people can find a wealth of data on any subject, it is crucial to visit reputable sites and check the sources. Additionally, research from Western countries indicates that information via the Internet is faster and easier to digest than reading an entire book (<https://www.forbes.com/sites/robasghar/2021/02/01/why-the-smart-leaders-best-new-tool-is-the-old-fashioned-telephone/?sh=3aee41464d2b>). Another positive aspect of the educational use of the Internet is online teaching, which is currently trendy in the educational sector. Young people can now learn remotely, take courses on the Internet, participate in online exams, and obtain diplomas.

People from all over the world can complete courses through online learning. The Internet, with its rapid and individualized communication, further simplifies the learning process. While the Internet will never fully replace traditional classroom lectures or books, it is undoubtedly the best way to gain in-depth knowledge on any subject. It seems interesting to review the educational aspects of podcasting, especially in higher education. Quality education is essential for students, whether in college or university. According to Western and Georgian scientists and professors, this learning is greatly appreciated when researchers have access to online files such as instructional videos, academic work samples, and advanced research materials. Teachers also play a crucial role in providing quality education to students (Richardson, W., 2006). They invest time in offering additional materials for student studies, such as creating websites for active learning. Students visit these sites to engage in interactive lessons and take essential academic quizzes for review.

However, it should be noted that another group of specialists in the same field finds that technological advancements have removed significant obstacles, making education more accessible to all. Many researchers faced limitations in their studies due to high costs, as highlighted by McFadden, A. (2008). Numerous individuals cannot afford to pay school fees or purchase books to facilitate quality learning. This is where the Internet has played a transformative role, allowing education to surpass imagination. Students can now access free educational videos on different sites and enjoy online courses at affordable prices. This inevitably raises questions about the evolving role and importance of teachers and the higher education system in general.

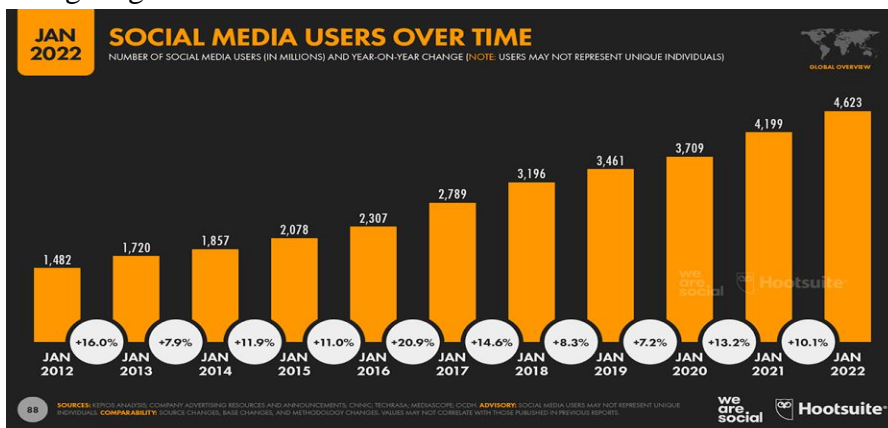
### **Massive insertion of new technologies into our daily lives**

Particularly the widespread use of computers and cell phones has become even more pronounced following the pandemic. It's crucial to acknowledge that the health crisis and lockdowns have spurred a surge in distance education (Kay, Robin, 2012). In response to the challenging circumstances, teachers have displayed remarkable creativity and acquired

new technical skills to ensure educational continuity and enhance the available tools for students.

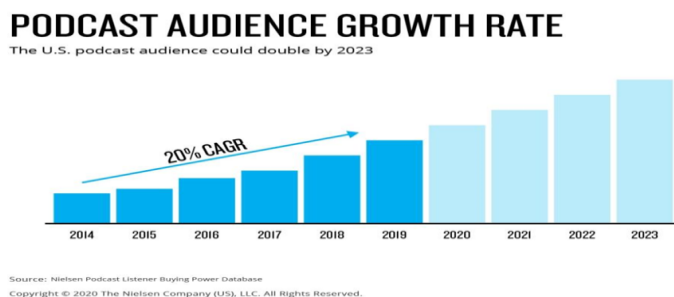
This period has witnessed a flourishing variety of podcasts across all disciplines, offering educational content that goes beyond traditional courses. These podcasts often blend educational elements with entertainment and explore innovative formats. Concurrently, young Georgians have actively embraced podcasting, recording, and broadcasting content on diverse subjects, including educational topics (<https://www.trt.net.tr/georgian/podcasts>).

Studies conducted by colleagues in the United States clearly highlight a substantial increase in the number of podcast listeners during the confinement period. For a comprehensive view, Hootsuite provides the following diagram:



The latest report indicates a significant surge in the number of regular podcast listeners—those who listen daily—with an increase of more than 3.6 million. Simultaneously, the average number of episodes listened to per week has risen by 10%. It's noteworthy that podcast participation is not only increasing among heavy users; the overall podcast audience is growing at an average compound rate of 20%.

The American company Nielsen also offers us the following diagram:

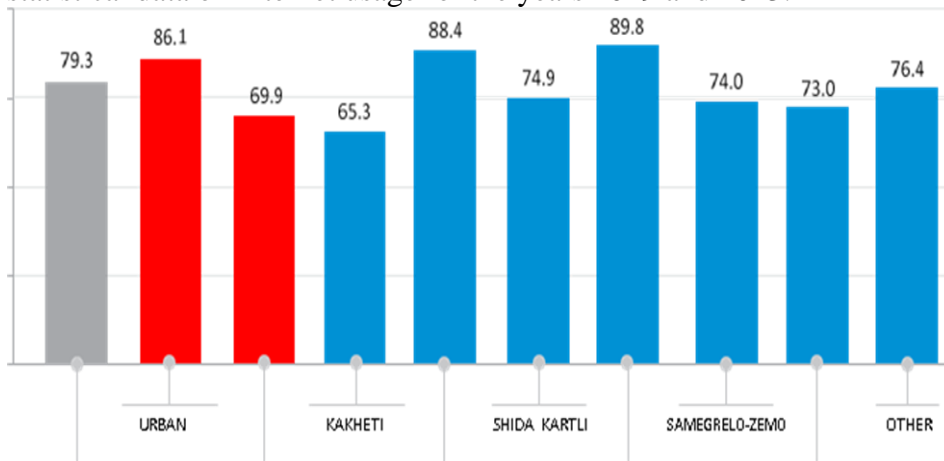


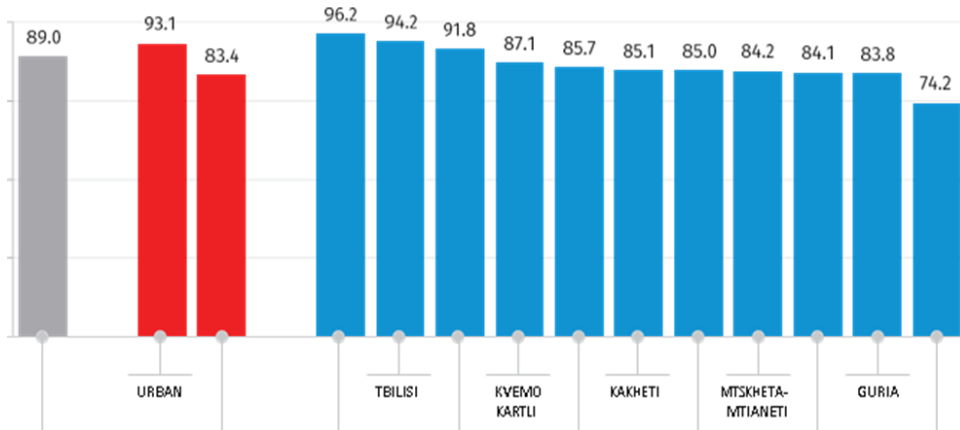
In this way, it becomes clear that the technique of podcasts is very current among the population of our time.

On January 18, 2023, the French newspaper Figaro published an article about the rise of podcasting in France among students from various faculties. According to the article, which highlights particularly high completion, listening, and subscription rates (8 out of 10 downloaded podcasts are listened to, according to the Harris Media 2022 study), podcasts are proving to be more than just a trend. They are achieving various communication objectives, including growth in notoriety, expansion of the community, and strengthening of the brand image. However, there are concerns about the potential negative impact on traditional or modern education in the long term. The article suggests that as students increasingly turn to podcasts, they may become less attentive in class, listen less carefully, and engage less with teachers compared to previous practices.

Due to these considerations, many higher education institutions in Western countries have recently made significant investments in media. The objective is to effectively convey their message to the youth, a particularly captive target audience. This has led to the emergence of numerous podcasts tailored for students, covering diverse topics such as orientation, student life, societal developments, career paths, and professional opportunities. Examples include 'Tomorrow is our Business' from HEC, 'Parcours d'entreprises' from ICAM, 'EDHEC Vox,' 'The Choice' by ESCP, and 'Imagine Your Future' by ISG.

However, in Georgia, as in many post-Soviet countries where the adoption of new technological advancements tends to be sluggish, the integration of new technologies has taken on a more widespread nature. Therefore, based on statistical data, the trajectory of Internet usage appears to be more straightforward (<https://www.geostat.ge/en>). Below, we provide statistical data on Internet usage for the years 2019 and 2023:





Like many other regions, Georgia and its teachers and students are no exception to these trends. Since 2020, podcasting has permeated the screens of young Georgians and has emerged as one of the preferred tools in the realm of higher education (<https://www.geostat.ge/en>).

### **The effectiveness and choice of podcasts for learning**

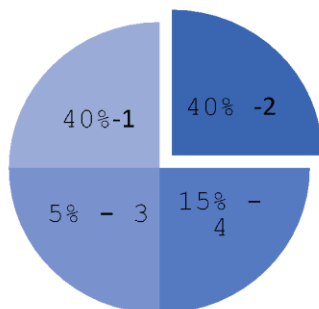
It should be noted that university professors in Georgia do not yet incorporate podcasts into their teaching methods; rather, it is primarily students who choose this innovative approach to learning or general training. According to the majority of teachers in Georgia, 'the Internet and especially podcasts remain a leisure activity and not serious education' (survey conducted in Georgia in September 2023).

While the reasons for this popularization among students are diverse, this article focuses on highlighting the most widespread motivations among Georgian students. To gain a deeper understanding of what motivates today's students on this topic, we conducted a survey with more than 60 students in Georgia, exploring their interest in podcasts. The results are intriguing, as young people mainly discussed the phenomenon of enhanced learning or understanding of various subjects taught in universities. Furthermore, we observed variations in motivation based on the faculties surveyed (a study carried out in Georgia in September 2023).

Upon analyzing the responses of the students, distinct motivations emerged. Some expressed a desire to watch podcasts aligned with their center of interest, aiming to broaden their general knowledge (1). Others were motivated to delve deeper into humanitarian and sociological disciplines, demonstrating a keen interest in expanding their understanding of these fields (2). Additionally, there were students driven by the aspiration to learn foreign languages, recognizing the value of linguistic proficiency in today's interconnected world (3). For those enrolled in faculties associated with exact,

natural, and medical sciences, a noteworthy motivation was to use podcasts as a tool to better comprehend subjects that were inadequately explained by their professors (4).

Counting the percentage of goals, we can present the following table based on the reality of Georgian students:



"When examining surveys conducted in the country, it becomes evident that students are still dissatisfied with the way teachers explain exact, natural, and medical sciences. Let's focus on the percentage of the fourth motivation, which unfortunately remains quite significant."

"According to researchers from around the world, this type of discipline has been traditionally explained in a strict manner for years, without incorporating stories or curious aspects of the cited subjects (<https://www.lescoursduparnasse.com/specialite-physique-chemie-first>). Developed countries have launched campaigns aimed at making this group of disciplines more attractive to school or student audiences. While changes are evident in school textbooks, university programs have yet to reflect these modifications. It must be emphasized, however, that this concern does not apply to all teachers. Many are already making efforts to present their material in an interesting way. Nevertheless, some teachers resist new approaches and continue to focus on old methodologies of explanation."

## Conclusion

Exploring the extensive research covering the historical, qualitative, and quantitative aspects of incorporating podcasts into education, along with specific statistical insights from Georgia, reveals a compelling narrative. It becomes evident that interest in podcasts is consistently growing, especially within the university sector.

Our aim is to examine both the positive and negative aspects of using podcasts. In Georgia, podcasts are vital tools for students to delve into their studies, but there is a challenge: a potential shift in the traditional role of teachers and a decrease in student interest in regular lectures. This challenge

is more apparent globally, where the fast-paced life, driven by heavy social media use, emphasizes the importance of visualization. This became especially evident during the Covid era when screens became crucial. Our exploration also considers the risks tied to heavy internet and artificial intelligence use in education, pointing out potential hazards with increased technology integration.

In drawing our conclusions, it is crucial to emphasize that Georgian university students are keenly aware of the current trends in the modern world. The incorporation of podcasting into their education is not just a departure from the norm; it is a smart adjustment to the changing dynamics of contemporary learning. It acknowledges that, in the pursuit of academic excellence, using podcasts brings several benefits. It caters to the fast pace of life, recognizes the preference for visual content, and reflects the flexibility needed in today's socio-technological environment. In essence, the ultimate aim remains unwavering: to study more effectively, delve into learning more profoundly, and grasp a deeper understanding in a world characterized by constant change.

#### **Human studies:**

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

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**Data availability:** All data is included in the document content.

**Conflict of interest:** The authors have reported no conflicts of interest.

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