Audio logs

What is it?
Providing facilities for learners to audio-record their daily experiences.

Strengths
- Can provide rich data about day-to-day events, very close to the time they happened.
- This can support greater accuracy than later accounts
- Less time intensive for learners than keeping written logs.
- Timing of recording of data can be logged accurately.
- Captured voices give an insight into the emotion of the experience.
- Can produce vivid audio clips for staff development and dissemination.
- Audio logs can be used to provide artefacts for later in depth interviews.

Weaknesses
- Instructions need to be clear and freestanding as the researcher is not present to explain and clarify.
- Participants also need to be motivated to stay involved without personal contact with the researcher, though this can be addressed through regular contact of other kinds.
- Ease of use of audio recording equipment is crucial to the success of this method. Unless the system is plug and play, data will be lost and participants may drop out.
- Learners need to give consent in advance for their voices being used and must understand the difficulties of anonymising audio recordings.
- It can be very time consuming to code the data for analysis.
- Poor recording practice and background noise can result in data loss.

Process
1. Learners are provided with a means of identifying their audio logs such a voicemail number to call, or a personal digital voice recorder to keep with them.
2. In the voicemail scenario, learners hear a recorded message when they call, reminding them about the information to project hopes to collect. Prompts might also be provided in a written form or by email.
3. Learners leave their message when they have something to record, such as immediately after using a technology for learning, or after a critical incident.

Examples from the Learner Experience projects
The LXP project used audio logs as one of their data collection methods to create case studies of individual learners. They found a good response rate from students providing very rich data from small snippets of information.

The STROLL project gave learners a choice of keeping diaries on webcams, camcorders or digital voice recorders. During each data collection point, learners were prompted each day over a five day period to reflect on different aspects of their e-learning experiences and learning journeys in line with the key research questions.