

# USING IPODS TO TEACH HISTORY

*Leevina Iyer (Student)*

*History Education*

*UKZN*

## **Abstract**

The development of modern technology is the gateway to a completely different world, one where education is governed not by the educator's ability to teach; or his / her capability to pass on knowledge to learners, but rather by the availability of technological advancements which can be used as educational tools as well as a way in which to access, manipulate and create data and information. In this essay I shall discuss the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in History Education, while paying special attention and focusing a great deal on the use of iPods as a newly emerging and promising medium through which to teach History.

## **Introduction**

Notes, lesson plans and even school textbooks are now being influenced by ICT in numerous ways. Educators all over the world are turning to the internet for up-to-date information on topics which are relevant to their teachings. They do this in the hope of finding and keeping abreast of new discoveries, investigations, and so on. This helps to fulfil the educator's role as a lifelong learner in that there will be an on-going acquisition of knowledge and skills. According to Marcus, when selecting what ICT to use in class educators must ensure that they provide correct and accurate insights into social and political history "for their potential to engage learners' interest [as well as] for the appropriateness of age groups". If the type of ICT used can ensure that all of the above can be accomplished, then it will also ensure critical thinking, more questioning and closer examination and interpretation of visual, audio and textual material.

Even though it is helpful and poses as a great learning tool, not all

ICT are safe to use in the History classroom as they may pose as a huge threat to the safety of our learners. One such example is the internet. With new applications such as Face-book and MXIT, the world is becoming smaller and more dangerous in the sense that children may be lured into situations which may warrant monetary gain. With the rise in this antisocial behaviour, it would be best for us to use an educational tool which will provide an ICT-based learning environment with technological advancements while at the same time ensuring safety among our learners in the history classroom. One such tool which can achieve this is the iPod.

### *The Ipod as teaching tool*

One of the latest, more technologically advanced gadgets making its way into the pockets of learners is that of the iPod. The iPod is a brand of portable media players which has been designed and marketed by Apple Incorporated. The sales of iPods have dramatically increased with just over 22 million iPods being sold in the first part of the 2008 fiscal year. These devices serve as external storage gadgets and present an opportunity for learners and educators to communicate with each other via podcasts. A podcast is a news feed which appears in the form of audio files and which are catalogued in online directories. They exist in 3 types of formats which are audio files (MP3 formats), enhanced files (images) and video files (movies and MP4 formats).

### *I-Tunes*

One of the most important features on the iPod is the iTunes. This is an application which is used for organising and playing digital audio and video content. The iPod and ITunes work together in order to synchronize music, videos and other files available on a computer. When an iPod is connected to a computer which has iTunes already installed, the iTunes library will automatically become synched (copied) to the iPod. The iTunes application can also be used to connect to the iTunes store to download purchased music, television shows, feature length movies as well as free podcasts. It provides endless access to a multitude of resources and this allows the integration of visual, textual and auditory resources for an exciting and highly interactive experience.

With the emergence of iPods and the iTunes application, many history educators in schools all around the world are now opting to use iPods as an educational tool in the teaching and learning environment. This does however seem to be evident of a first world phenomenon as mostly European and American schools have implemented iPods and use podcasts to teach their learners. One of the many reasons for this course of action is due to the fact that “podcasting demonstrates the power of voice over text and listening over reading”. In today’s society children are becoming increasingly interested in the more technologically – advanced devices. In order to encourage learners to develop an interest in history as a subject, we as facilitators must find new ways and new sources of attraction with which to entice, interest and encourage learners to spend more time than they usually do, on historical thinking.

### *The role of educators*

When attempting to find sources of attraction for learners, we as educators must take into account several factors which may influence our teaching and assessment methods. One of these factors is the assortment of needs and differences amongst our learners. One of the main differences which we will be faced with is that of gender. Activities involving iPods for teaching History with iPods should be chosen with care and developed according to the topic preferences of learners. For example, when teaching in an all girls’ school, the type of activities most suited to them should include topics which emphasize groupwork, adventure and creativity. These topics should also entail “a broad spectrum of subjects, ranging from looking for solutions for complex social [and historical] problems ... to ... travel”.

### *Differences between the sexes*

According to Fiore, tasks that are best suited to girls involved having to compete with themselves rather than compete with other people. Fiore’s research has shown that girls consider self-competition while still interacting together as a group. It is for this reason that individual assessments should cater for the above, while still catering for groupwork.

Boys, on the other hand, seem to prefer action and 3-D diagrams to text and formal notes. Activities using iPods should therefore be exciting, fast-paced and allow for competition amongst them; while at the same time ensuring that activities are educationally - enriching and highly stimulating. Teaching history in the form of podcasts, which are visually and audio-based would be a perfect educational tool when teaching history to both boys and girls.

### **Other advantages of iPods as teaching tool**

There are numerous advantages of using iPods to teach history in schools. Firstly, lessons which learners have been absent from, on account of having to leave school early or having to go on fieldtrips and so on, become available to learners after the actual lesson has taken place. This makes teaching and learning history more effective in that the educator does not have to re-teach the lesson and re-teaching does not have to be scheduled after school or in other free time.

#### *Audiobility and visual qualities*

Based on several theories of 'multiple intelligences', and the fact that all learners learn differently (often according to their personal strengths) the way in which content is presented in the teaching-learning environment must aim to cater for all learners. iPods offer audio and visual files which can be effectively utilized in the formal classroom situation while still assisting visual-spatial and auditory learners a non-restricting educational environment in which to acquire knowledge. Learners engage in producing several types of creative presentations which include making slideshows, podcasts, websites, documentaries, motion videos and musical sound tracks. In this way, learners of all learning types become involved in activities which they are interested in carrying out and successfully completing.

#### *Portability*

The portability of the iPod is also advantageous in that when learning for a test, learners can do exercise, ride their bicycles, walk to the shop, and eat, etc, while still being able to go through their work and no time

is wasted. Instead of taking down notes for history while the educator is speaking, learners can use their iPods to record the lesson or acquire the educators' podcasts after the lesson. If need be, learners can replay their podcasts so as to get a better understanding of their work. This will also prompt learners to get practice in good record keeping in that all of their activities will be correctly and conveniently recorded for future reference. Using iPods ensures that all learners acquire notes, and unlike printed or paper notes, podcast notes will not get lost or stolen. iPods are also an effective tool to use when conducting interviews in that firstly learners record every word that the interviewee says without the hassle of scribbling down notes with a pen and page. Secondly, interviewees will not be intimidated at the thought of being interviewed and they will feel more relaxed to speak comfortably.

### **A new learning approach**

Learners are often afraid of and frustrated by the sight of typed out notes or History textbooks and they exhibit these feelings by the poor results they produce. iPods, in the other hand, create a non-threatening learning and teaching environment, as learners are engaging in an up-to-date device which they are keen and excited to use. Not only do they become experts on how to use the iPod creatively, but they also become actively involved in the actual process of learning History without having to cope with the monotony of a constant stream of written notes. When learners gain an interest in school-related activities their comprehension skills will be enhanced especially through the intent listening and reading skills.

Richard Mayer (a representative of Apple Inc.) has developed a cognitive theory so as to understand the role played by iPods in History with regard to the teaching and learning context. Mayer's cognitive theory consists of 7 principles which is firstly the Multimedia Principle which states that learners tend to learn better from both words and pictures rather than from words only; secondly, the Spatial Contiguity Principle which claims that learners learn better when related pictures and words are represented near or close to each other on a page or screen instead of being far apart. Thirdly, the Temporal Contiguity Principle states that learners learn better when related pictures and words are represented simultaneously rather than successively. The fourth principle is the

Coherence Principle where learners are said to learn better when extraneous words, pictures and sounds are not used. The fifth principle, the Modality Principle affirms that learners learn better from animation and narration. Sixth, the Redundancy Principle states that learners learn better from animation and narration than from animation, narration and onscreen text. The last principle, the Individual Differences Principle asserts that the design effects are stronger for low-knowledge learners than for high-knowledge learners and for high-spatial learners than from low-spatial learners. iPods are able to achieve all of the above due to its advanced audio-visual files and downloads.

### *The value of Podcasts*

Podcasts help to minimize the chance of learners completing their activities incorrectly by providing succinct instructions which has been downloaded by the history educators. In this way they will be given clear guidance and supervision on a portable and convenient hand-held device which can be carried around everywhere the learners goes. This can be particularly helpful when they are doing research on a specific Historical topic in the library, as the important information can be stored and quick reference can be made. In addition, learners can easily download the necessary information from the internet which is quick and easy to do. It allows learners to access information outside of the classroom and so learning occurs beyond the classroom walls.

Not only does the iPod allow history educators to provide accurate feedback to their learners, it also gives learners the chance to reflect on their own progress and individual development within the subject. iPods can also contribute to the “cognitive development of learners by stimulating them to articulate ideas, ask questions, participate in discussion ... and receive feedback on their ideas” from their colleagues, peers and educators,. It also allows learners to observe details and make speculations or inferences about historical content, which is what history, as a subject, aims to achieve. Since learners are often expected to preview their podcasts on assignments or discussion topics before they attend each lesson, it allows time in class for class discussion and the development of higher order skills. It eliminates the time spent in class going over readings and assignment topics and learners are able to do extra research on the topic/s for discussion in the history classroom.

Thus lessons become more learner-centred and make way for continuous and active engagement in classwork activities.

### **Discipline and Ipods**

iPods help to develop more discipline in learners' working habits. This is due to the fact that learners have to plan, prepare and do more research on their assignments so as to create outstanding podcasts. Also, the fact that some schools publish their podcasts on the internet further encourages learners to perfect their work. Listening and reading skills can be enhanced in this way as they will attempt to listen to and proof-read their podcasts over and over again to ensure that the assignment is good enough. Knowing that there is a global audience who are going to view their podcasts, prompts learners to do their very best to ensure that their podcasts are spectacular and enjoyable. iPods, in addition to this, enhances other skills as they learn how to shoot and edit videos, create flash animation, manipulate photographs, record digital audio, and so forth.

Podcasts assist special needs learners in that when in a test situation, for instance, instead of acquiring the assistance of Para-professional history educators, disabled learners can use their iPods to listen to or see the test questions. This can be done at the learner's own individual pace and he/ she can repeat the questions over and over until they actually understand it. Second language speakers can also benefit from using iPods with regard to learning history. With 1 in every 5 learners in the United States coming from a background where English is spoken as a second language, it is often a challenge for educators to communicate work to them, especially in another discipline such as history. iPods therefore present the perfect aide for assisting both, learners and educators. By teaching with audio and visual pictures / images, texts as well as videos related to historical events and people, important work can be easily communicated in a very effective way.

### ***Ipods and legative implications***

On the other hand, there are negative implications of the usage of iPods for History Education. First of which is the matter of finance. iPods are not exactly made for and marketed in the poorer areas of South

Africa. This goes back to the saying, “the rich get richer and the poor get poorer.” In addition to this, a large sum of money has to be set aside for the maintenance of iPods as it does not have a very long battery life and it does not support replaceable batteries. Many schools, therefore, can not afford to invest in such an expensive device. Beside the iPods technical flaws, it also has certain disadvantages in the history teaching and learning context and despite these incidents occurring in overseas countries, similar problems may be experienced in South Africa in the future. Many incidents of cheating have been observed and it is for this reason that some of the schools in the United States have banned iPods from school. Many accidents, usually that which involved pedestrians, have been the result of people listening to or paying more attention to their iPods. Another disadvantage is that if left to them, learners would rather utilise the iPod for entertainment purposes instead of a knowledge-imparting devices and they would not benefit enough.

### **The global view of Ipods**

Despite this, when looking at the implementation of iPods in schools for History Education, from the perspective of a globalization point of view, it is clear that these hand-held, technologically advanced devices can effectively fulfil the role as an educational tool to teach History. iPods can be used to connect learners to the outside world, one which they may never physically travel or experience. Yet through the use of iPods, the world comes to them in the form of various history-related podcasts which cater for all learners, irrespective of caste, creed, learning ability or geographical position. In fact podcasting crosses all known physical and mental barriers and can make the world a ‘smaller place’ by allowing access to all types of information to everyone, anywhere in the world. It is therefore evident that globalization is the theory which underpins the use of iPods as a teaching and learning medium and although it might take sometime to equip South African history classrooms with this kind of technology, we should attempt the giant leap into transforming South Africa into a country which can provide the latest educational tools to our learners and also let them have a similar schooling experience that learners in other developed countries are having.



### **Obtaining skills to utilize the Ipod technology**

One of the first steps in achieving this is to ensure that our educators are equipped with the adequate knowledge and skills to be able to implement the iPod into the history classroom. When attempting to teach History with iPods in disadvantaged schools, educators should allow groupwork to be done so as to allow all learners to experiment with the gadget, as there may not be enough iPods for each learner. iPods can be used effectively to achieve the following Learning Outcomes (LO's) based on South Africa's National Curriculum Statement (NCS) for History: LO 1 – Historical enquiry which states that the learner should be able to use enquiry skills to investigate the past and present, LO 2 – Historical knowledge and understanding. This expects the learner to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding and LO 3 – Historical interpretation; here the learner should be able to interpret aspects of History. In order to assess learners' assignments and podcasts, educators can use the Assessment Standards (AS's) from the NCS which depends on their respective learning outcomes. For instance, the AS for the intermediate phase differs to the senior phase in that basic skills may be required in the former phase when compared to the senior phase.

When setting tasks for learners using the iPod, educators must ensure that the use of iPods is coupled with stimulating, relevant activities so as to prevent learners from using applications other than what is meant to be used. For instance, when searching the internet for information to make a PowerPoint presentation, learners may be tempted to explore other websites which they may perceive as being highly interesting with regard to their hobbies or favourite preferences. Learners are bound to be curious and will often attempt a new exploration of technology. It is therefore imperative that we as educators learn to manage the classroom as well as individually supervise and monitor learners' activities.

### **Conclusion**

A great responsibility lies on the shoulders of educators because as history educators we must strive to familiarize ourselves with the different types of ICT which we plan to use in our classrooms. We should also keep abreast of new programs and applications which may either be beneficial or detrimental to our learners. iPods seem to be not only

the safer ICT option, but also one of the more effective learning tools with regard to teaching and learning History Education. The historical video files or history-related podcasts assist in stimulating the interest and attention of learners by providing images of the past so as to make them acquire a better, more 'real' experience and knowledge of historical people and events.

iPods are fast becoming the common medium through which the acquisition and application of knowledge is being conveyed. We should not avoid, but rather embrace it with an open mind. The only limitation of iPods is the educator's ability to channel his/ her creativity and imagination in order to make podcasts exciting, interactive and appealing to all learners.

- 
1. Van Eck and Volman. (2001). "Gender equity and information technology in education". *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), 613-634. Retrieved 28 March, 2008, from <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0034-6543%028200124%297153a453C613%3AGEAITI%E2.0.CO%3B32-A>
  2. Marcus, M. (2003) "Big history in little places: Hometown glimpses of the human web." *World History Connected*, 3(3), 1-14. Retrieved 27 March, 2008, from <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/whc/3.3/marcus.html>.
  3. Xing MXit Mixers. Retrieved 4 April, 2008, from <http://www.45664mxit.iblog.co.za/?m=200707>.
  4. Rainie, L and Madden, M. (2005). Podcasting. Retrieved 30 March, 2008, from <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>.
  5. Pasnik, S. (2007). iPod in education: The potential for teaching and learning, pp.1-11. Retrieved 27 March, 2008, from <http://www.apple.com/>
  6. Parrott, J. (2007). Using iPods in the classroom promotes interactive learning and more effective studying, pp.1-2. Retrieved 30 March, 2008, from <http://www.apple.com/iPods.htm>
  7. Vess D. (2006). History to Go: Why iteach with iPods. *The History Teacher*, 39(4) pp.478-492. Retrieved 12 March, 2008, from 2. <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/ht/39.4/vess.html>
  8. Campbell, G. (2005) There's something in the air: Podcasting in Education, pp33-46 Retrieved 25 March, 2008, from <http://www.educase.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0561.pdf>>
  9. Van Eck and Volman. (2001). Gender equity and information ... *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), p.613.
  10. Van Eck and Volman. (2001). Gender equity and information ... *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), p.613.
  11. Fiore (1999) as cited in Van Eck and Volman. (2001). Gender equity and information ... *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), p.623.
  12. D Detterman, (2005). Intelligence. Microsoft Encarta 2006 (CD). Redmond, WA: Microsoft Corporation.
  13. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 7.
  14. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...pp. 6-7.
  15. J Parrott, (2007). Using iPods in the classroom ... p. 1.

16. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 3.
17. G Campbell, (2005) There's something in the air..., pp. 34-35.
18. F Shen, (2005, 19 October). iPods fast becoming new teacher's pet. *Washington Post*, p. 1. Retrieved 25 March, 2008, from [http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/news/0511/EC\\_ipods.htm](http://www.nitc.state.ne.us/news/0511/EC_ipods.htm).
19. B Jordan, (2007, 20 October). New school textbooks show future of SA history. *The Sunday Times*, p. 1. Retrieved 16 April, 2008, from <http://www.thetimes.co.za/News/Article.aspx?id=591718>.
20. M Thomas, (2006) The knowledge tree: going aural. *E-Journal of Learning Innovation*, 10. Retrieved 7 March, 2008, from <http://kt.flexiblelearning.net.au/.../ipods-in-educationinnovations-in-the-implementation-of-mobile-learning.html>.
21. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 2.
22. Van Eck and Volman, (2001). Gender equity and information ... *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), p. 615.
23. Harasim, (1996) as cited in Van Eck and Volman, (2001). Gender equity and information ... *Review of Educational Research*, 71(4), p. 615.
24. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 3.
25. S Simo, (2006). Discuss the perspective and purpose of history. Retrieved 7 March, 2008, from <http://www.planetpapers.com/Assets/4611.php>.
26. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 5.
27. G Campbell, (2005) There's something in the air... , p. 38.
28. L Rainie and M Madden, (2005). Podcasting.
29. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 4.
30. P Sue, (2007). Turn the ipod into a teaching tool for special needs students. *The inclusion revolution - technology in Special Education*. Retrieved 17 March, 2008, from <http://www.classroom20.com/group/technologyinspecialeducation/forum/topic/show?id=649749%3ATopic%3A75857>.
31. W Hu, (2007) In some schools, iPods are required listening, pp. 1-5. Retrieved 15 March, 2008, from [http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/09/education/09ipod.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2007/10/09/education/09ipod.html?_r=1&oref=slogin).
32. A Kempen, (2008). Are there lasting alternatives to the traditional rod. Retrieved 26 March, 2008, from [http://www.servamus.co.za/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=158&Itemid=9](http://www.servamus.co.za/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=158&Itemid=9).
33. J Parrott, (2007). Using iPods in the classroom ... p. 1.
34. L Barrs, (2004). Apple iPods: causing deaths in New York, pp. 1-4. Retrieved 30 March, 2008, from <http://www.apple.com/iPods.htm>.
35. M Thomas, (2006) The knowledge tree... *E-Journal of Learning Innovation*. p. 1.
36. National Curriculum Statement, (2005). Retrieved 14 April, 2008, from [http://wced.wcape.gov.za/ncs/grade9/gr9\\_ss2.html](http://wced.wcape.gov.za/ncs/grade9/gr9_ss2.html).
37. S Pasnik, (2007) iPods in education ...p. 3.