

Making it funky – RE, iPods and MP3s.



Walking along the street singing to yourself is not a sign of madness these days but more likely to signify that the singer is the owner of an MP3 player, the most trendy of which is the iPod. Sitting on the train on the train recently I was able to spot half a dozen fellow travellers sporting the identifiable white earplugs which signified that they were the owner of an iPod – the “must have”, cool MP3 technology.

So, are you a podder? Do you have that fashionable rectangular cuboid of hard plastic nestled in your pocket or purse? The chances are that your students have an iPod, or a similar MP3/4 player, in theirs. What is your schools attitude to these ‘must have’ items? Is it to welcome these into the schoolyard and the classroom or do the cries of ‘bannem’ ring out?

There are some good reasons why the RE department should be welcoming these devices. Firstly RE is a multimodal subject and sounds form. For most religions, a major part of the religious experience. The opportunity for students to be able to access a digital bank of religious sounds and spoken text should be seen as a definite yes. You can find suitable stuff on-line in a variety of places, both as downloads and as podcasts. If you are not sure what a podcast is, or how you can get access to them see www.ipodder.com or <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Podcasting>



The range of material that is available is quite extensive, as a search will quickly find out. If the students have access to a video iPod, or equivalent then you might be able to source video materials for example from www.youtube.com or <http://video.google.com> that can be shared with the students. Be aware when sharing audio and video materials with the students of the copyright limitations. See <http://schools.becta.org.uk> for more information on copyright and IPR.



Having given students access to materials produced by someone else what about producing your own? Podlearning allows students to be using audio files that you have created, or if they have access to a video iPod or equivalent to narrated video or narrated PowerPoint turned into movies. Ideal for reinforcement and revision as well as making missed lessons available to students. To learn about voice narration in PP see www.mmiweb.org.uk/downloads.html

Think also of the ethereal nature of much of the discursive work in RE. For your iPod an attachment called iTalk will allow you to capture, digitally, the students’ oral work. You might extend this to capturing presentations and assessed work and making these available as podcasts. Remember that you will need students and parents permission if you are going to record in class and you should consult with the school leadership team.

Lastly can you encourage students to produce their own audio podcasts? Many students, If not most, are more orate than they are literate. Could you set homework that involves students recording their own voice rather than committing words on the page? Many computers now come with a built in microphone and recording package but a nice piece of free open source software is Audacity (<http://audacity.sourceforge.net/>) [available for Windows, Apple and Linux platforms] or Photstory3 (www.microsoft.com/photstory3/) [just Windows] which allows recording, editing and duplicating of sound files [Audacity] and video files [Photstory]



So what are you waiting for? Sound is the new writing! Get your player, check your OS software, download Audacity and get recording. I would love to hear of any projects that are happening contact me via paul@paulhopkins.org.uk