

Methodological Strategies of Using Educational Multimedia Website in Teaching Arts Courses

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Abstract: The article examines innovation of teaching aids and creation of an integral educational information environment as urgent problems of contemporary higher education. After providing the notions of “educational web-resources” and “educational website” with proper definitions, we proceed to differentiation of the sites according to their use in different spheres of education. Within that theoretical framework we address the structure and contents of the educational website “*Multimedia Technologies in Music Education*”, and consider the methodological approaches to the use of the site in the study of such artistic courses as *History of Music Art* and *History of Ukrainian Music* at a pedagogical university. We introduce techniques of how to use the teaching facilities of the site in the classroom, supplementing them with examples of individual tasks for students, empirically approved in the author’s teaching practice.

Key words: educational website, multimedia teaching aids, history of music, methodology of teaching music

1. Introduction

Innovation of teaching and learning aids proves to be a developmental tendency in contemporary education. The notion of “teaching aids” which sustained the traditional model of education undergoes gradual transformation into the category of “integral educational information environment”, which correlates with the process of ICT development, determined by the system of web-servers and other Internet resources and processes. As a result, the notions of “an educational website” and “educational web resource” come into terminological circulation in education studies.

2. Literature Review

According to H. Stetsenko (2007), the term “Educational Web Resources” (EWR) refers to the data, which can be presented in textual, graphic, audio, video, and any hybrid formats, that come from a special subject area to facilitate learning process, consisting in formation of special knowledge, skills and techniques (Stetsenko G., 2007). EWR are basically electronic educational resources allocated within either a local network (Intranet) or the World Wide Web (Internet).

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The term “Educational Web Site” refers to a narrower notion, which still needs disambiguation. Some authors are inclined to link it to a more concrete notion of “an educational website” (EWS), referring to a group of hyperlinked webpages, whose content comes from a certain course or any other element of curriculum. It is typical to subsume school websites and course websites under the category of EWS. In the broadest sense EWS refers to any site providing either innovative modes of organizing the learning process or supporting teaching aids. According to Gosudariyev (2007), EWS is a Web-based information resource (Gosudariyev I., 2007).

In her research of characteristics of a EWSs as a component of integral educational information environment, T. Yashina defines EWS as a set of webpages integrated by a single design, which support the teleological process of education, located on one server and can be used for learning assessment. According to Yashina (2005), content, design, technical implementation, and functional capacity are basic components of a EWS (Yashina T., 2005; Mogilev A. & Yashina T., 2004).

Classification of EWSs according to the sphere of application considered in Zhuk (2006), Matveieva (2006), Samborska (2008) includes course websites for distant and in-class learning, consulting sites, sites of teaching groups, sites of informing internet projects, sites distributing cultural and educational information, reference sites (eEncyclopedias, online dictionaries, databases), sites of mixed types. It is also necessary to mention educational press (the sites of pedagogical periodicals) and personal websites of scientists, teachers and educators.

The objective of this paper is to identify the structure and the content of the website “Multimedia Technologies in Music Education”, and to find efficient strategies of using the website for teaching arts courses.

3. Strategies of Using EWS for Teaching Arts Courses

The primary school teaching department of the State institution of higher education Donbas State Pedagogical University includes a subdepartment of music, which offers qualification of a music teacher at primary school. Students of music specialty are to master a number of arts courses including “History of Music”, “History of Ukrainian Music”, “Multimedia Technologies in Artistic Education”, and “Integral Study of the Discipline “Art”, etc. In order to enhance teaching of the aforementioned courses, we created the educational website “Multimedia Technologies in Artistic Education” (URL: <http://multimusic.com.ua/index.php.ua/>).

It is necessary to mention that general requirements to structure and content of EWSs have not been well-defined yet. In Matveieva (2006), Sugak (2012), and Yashina (2005) we find only few demands to the content, design, technical realization, and operation of such websites (Yashina T., 2005; Matveieva S., 2006; Sugak D., 2012). The authors claim that content of an EWS should correspond to scientific principles of didactics; be systemic, visualizing, and accessible; provide structured information, hyperlinks, and multimedia facilities. EWS design should meet criteria of graphical layout, colour scheme, and dynamical construction. Requirements for engineering development and operation of EWSs include functionality, accessibility, interacting capacity, upgrade capability, user-oriented flexibility.

The EWS “Multimedia Technologies in Artistic Education” is designed to meet the most of the aforementioned requirements. The website is used to offer a blended type of learning, which combines the modes of the web-based distance learning with the traditional in-class learning, when students are to use internet facilities to communicate with the teacher.

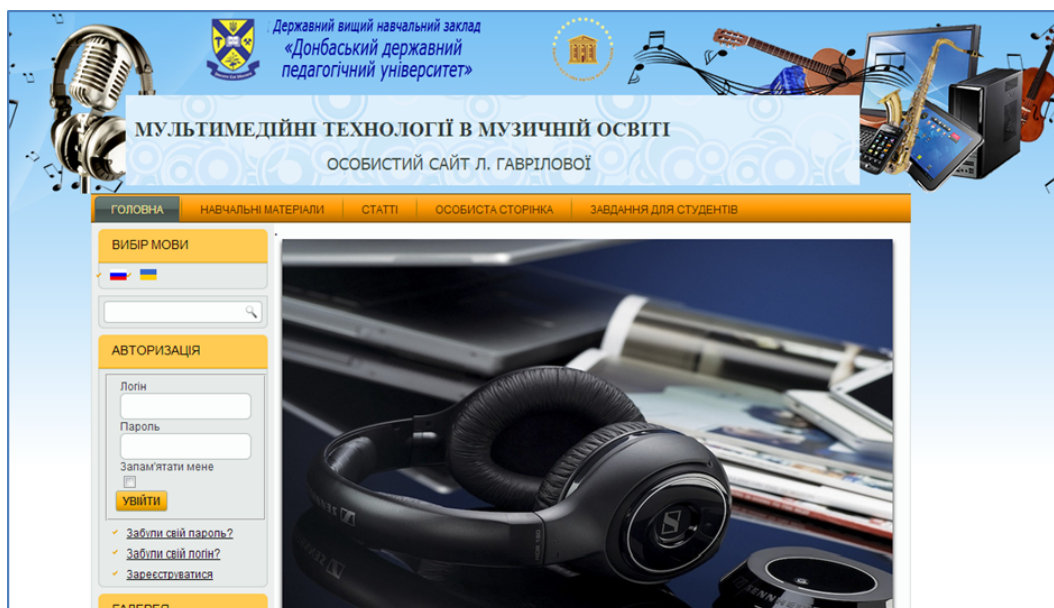


Figure 1 The Home Page of the EWS “Multimedia Technologies in Music Education” (ukr), The Navigation Bar with the Buttons of the Main Menu Sections

Now it is time to proceed to the structure of the site. The site “Multimedia technologies in Music Education” includes five sections. The Home page provides access to the learning materials, which consist of:

(1) Electronic instruction set of the course “Multimedia Technologies in Art Education”, offered as an optional subject to the primary school teaching students of State institution of higher education “Donbas State Pedagogical University”, included to the undergraduate curriculum of the specialty 6.010102 — Primary education; the set “Multimedia Technologies in Art Education” comprises the syllabus, the comprehensive instructional outline, the practical lessons schedule, tasks for student individual work, electronic version of the course treatise.

(2) Multimedia learning facilities for the course “History of Ukrainian Music”, comprised as an optional subject in the undergraduate curriculum of specialization “Music”. The website contains the multimedia materials on the history of Ukrainian music including the course synopsis; the extended instructional outline of the course; music items for individual listening, grouped according to the topics of practical lessons, and downloadable in mp3 format; selected multimedia presentations of course topics. For advanced learning of certain aspects of the history of Ukrainian music there is a hyperlink to the online course treatise “Ukrainian Spiritual Music”.

(3) Learning materials for the vocational course “History of music art” (section “Russian music”) including multimedia course book “History of Russian music: from ancient times to the early 20th century” with a hyperlink for downloading the file, the course instructions and guidelines.

(4) Learning and instructional materials for the course “Integral Study of the Discipline Art” including the course outlines and synopsis, electronic versions of two study books, and multimedia presentations. The course is compulsory for all specializations of the primary school teaching department.

Another section of the site “Multimedia Technologies in Music Education” comprises the digital copies of the author’s articles published in academic journals. The articles address the problems of implementation of the aforementioned study books as multimedia learning facilities in art education (“The electronic course book

‘Ukrainian spiritual music’: contents, structure, instructions for use in higher pedagogical education”, “Multimedia aids use for learning history of music”, and others. These articles can be used as supplementary instructional guidelines to multimedia course books “History of Music Art” and “Ukrainian Spiritual Music”. The articles offer recommendations concerning installation of multimedia learning aids, their structure, navigation rules, etc.

The section “Tasks for Students” contains assignments for online assessment of students’ knowledge and skills required by the courses “History of Music Art” and “History of Ukrainian Music”; a set of quizzes offering to guess a musical clip.

“Personal Page” introduces the profile of the author of the site, her scientific achievements, gives contact information.

In addition to the main menu every page contains a sidebar menu comprising language selection, search box, registration and authorization tools. The visitors of the site are also offered to see a virtual gallery of paintings by Picasso, Brack, Malevich, and other famous artists, which exhibit original views on music, or to listen to pieces of classical music online.

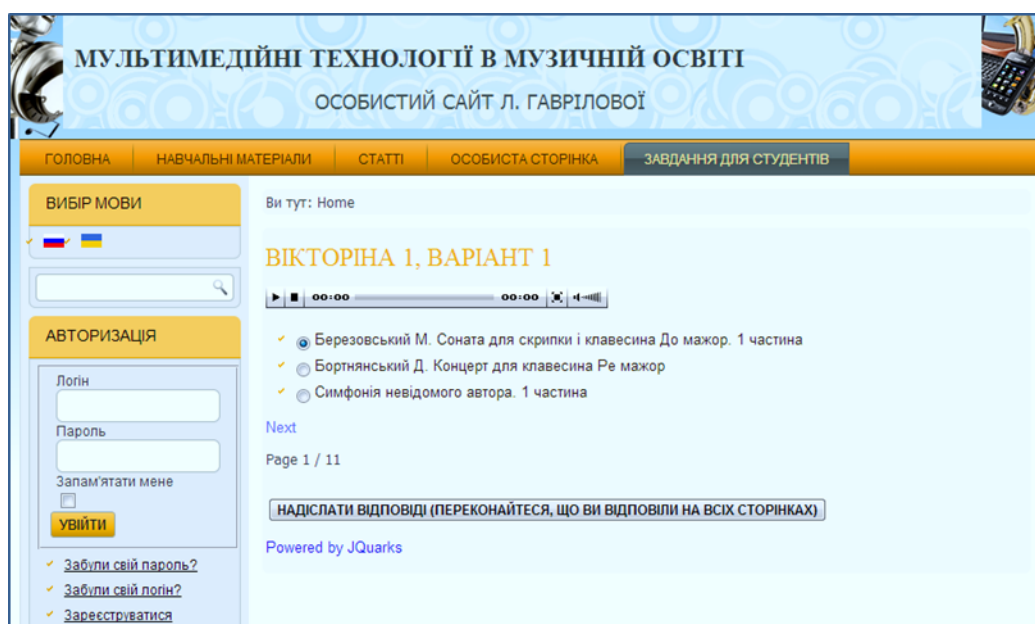


Figure 2 The Section “Tasks for students”: Online Quiz in “History of Ukrainian Music” (ukr)

The website “Multimedia Technologies in Music Education” is used for learning artistic courses:

- (1) To upload, systematize, store and employ various text and multimedia learning materials.
- (2) To provide online test assessment and offer audition quizzes in history of music.
- (3) To provide courseware and guide students’ individual work.

Teaching of art courses involves complex use of materials from the site for in-class activities and individual learning practice of the users.

The website offers materials facilitating teaching techniques of accomplishing a number of goals. Reproductions, photos, music fragments and video clips compiled in multimedia presentations help draw students’ attention to the basic categories of music theory and illustrate conceptual diversity between various trends of music art.

The slideshow about Ukrainian Lavras (Kiev-Pechersk Lavra, Pochayiv Lavra, and Sviatogorsk Lavra) from the electronic course book “Ukrainian spiritual music” comprises 5-minute clips informing about the past and the present history of Ukrainian religious centers and their musical traditions helps strengthen emotional impact on students and offers additional information on history of Ukrainian music.

To increase didactic efficacy the aforementioned multimedia aids we suggest a technique, which enables activation of students’ attention. Before showing the presentation the lecturer offers students a list of questions on the main items of the topic.

Such teaching techniques allow to intensify dynamics of lectures.

Use of the EWS makes us incorporate creative tasks for individual work in new forms, offer them to students, and assess their performance.

Practical experience in teaching the art courses proves efficiency of the following tasks, requiring students to master skills in managing software.

(1) Completion of an analytical transcript of a musical composition, which assumes analysis and interpretation of a musical piece by a Russian or Ukrainian composer from the primary school curriculum. To render learning assistance the website offers electronic study books on music analysis, scores, and audio materials. Students are recommended to use the multimedia course book “Ukrainian Spiritual Music”. This task requires students to argue for their interpretation of the musical pieces, to identify the elements of musical form, structural and dramatic features of music composition. Music analysis should be adapted to the demands of primary schoolchildren — the students’ future pupils. The students should be able to inspire pupils to understand and interpret music.

(2) Creation of a multimedia presentation about an opera by a Ukrainian or Russian composer, which involves selective and creative activities with audio and video materials, photos and reproductions, texts, and scores, etc. Presentations may be in MS Power Point. The students may design presentations as advertisement booklet in MS Publisher, or video clip in AVI, etc. Conceptual scenarios for presentations may vary from general outlines of opera history to exposition of the current issues of opera art. Presentations may also focus on opera characters, genre specifics or peculiarities of staging. Thus students are offered a wide variety of choices for their creative work. Emerging questions can be discussed with the instructor through e-mail or Skype.

(3) Creation of a multimedia profile of a composer. Students are offered to make a draft on the composer’s biography, complete an outline of his creative evolution, select multimedia materials for their presentations. To successfully perform the task students ought to actualize the acquired skills in managing audio and audio information resources.

(4) Preparation of such multimedia aids as audio and video clips, pictures and reproductions in Nero Wave Editor or Nero Vision for lessons of music and art in primary school.

(5) Completion of multimedia tests for intermediate or final assessment of pupils’ knowledge in artistic subjects. The tests may be performed in MS Power Point, MyTestX, UniTest System, and other test constructing software.

The aforementioned tasks subsume under creative assignments for individual work, since their performance requires students to employ their personal experience and creative imagination.

In addition to these tasks the students are offered a variety of traditional techniques, which are performed through schematized algorithms and concern logical processing of text resources:

- to complete a biographical outline of a composer’s life, to define the main periods of a composer’s creative

evolution, to reflect aesthetic character of that progress, to reveal the most important events in a composer's life;

- to compile a list of a composer's works provided with genre classification and references on original or instructional literature;
- to draw up a chronological table indicating development of a certain genre within a specific historical period.

When completed, the works are sent to the instructor's e-mail address. The best projects are showed and discussed on seminars.

Formative and summative assessment of theoretical knowledge and listening skills acquired by students within the artistic courses is performed online through the test provided by the site "Multimedia Technologies in Music Education". The test records are delivered to the network administrator's page. The test fulfillment is limited in time to intensify students' activities and their attention.

4. Conclusion

During the academic year 2012-2013 the educational website "Multimedia Technologies in Music Education" was employed in practice of teaching various courses: music history, music theory, and other art-related disciplines at Donbas State Pedagogical University. Practical observation and theoretical consideration have resulted in the following positions:

(1) Use of the website multimedia resources and interaction tools in teaching such courses as "History of Music Art", "History of Ukrainian Music", "Multimedia Technologies in Art Education", "Integral Study of the Discipline "Art" enables enhancing students' proficiency and technological competences.

(2) Specifics of musicological disciplines require interaction between the instructor and the students, which can be facilitated by the EWS in blending web-based and traditional face-to-face activities. The courses oriented towards teacher training (e.g., "Multimedia technologies in art education", "Integral Study of the Discipline "Art") may be effectively adapted to online learning environments without any face-to-face communication.

(3) The instructional approaches considered in this research are valid in achieving the following teaching goals:

- enhancing apprehension and understanding of the learning materials in the courses on music history and music education;
- involving students in active forms of individual learning activities;
- arousing students' interest in vocational subjects.

Web-based learning activities help reinforce development of ICT-competences of the students, improve their internet-using skills, and make them follow transformations of evolving learning environments. Practical results of our research suggest the further proceedings: to supplement the site "Multimedia Technologies in Music Education" with sections comprising the courses "Analysis of Music Composition" and "Music Theory and Solfeggio"; to continue improving instructional approaches to EWS use at a pedagogical university.

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