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Digital Campus as Electronic Image of the University

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Abstract

This article is devoted to the problem of improving the quality of university education. It discusses the problem of using virtual educational technology. Digital Campus of the Southern Federal University is demonstrated as an example of virtual educational area. Digital Campus "Incampus" includes all available information resources connected with training, social and administrative activities. It allows using electronic libraries of textbooks, giving consultations, creating students' e-portfolio. The Digital Campus system allows the students to progress at their own rates. Tutors serve as guides during the study of the students. Active cooperation with the invited users from the other universities allows studying and implementing the best experience, conducting joint programs, publishing educational materials. All these form an electronic image of the Southern Federal University and develop identity of university. The author concludes that the use of Digital Campus in teaching encourages students' self-education and reflection. All these increase the effectiveness of studying.

Key words: Digital Campus, electronic image, virtual educational area, e-portfolio

Introduction

Education in the modern world is undergoing significant changes. A number of researchers (Collin, K., 2009; Filiettas, L., 2011; Gänzle, S., King, C., Meister, S., 2009; Hökkä, P., Eteläpelto, A., Rasku-Puttonen, H., 2012; Moriarty, B., Danaher, P., A., Danaher, G., 2008; Nerland, M., Jensen, K., 2007; Nyström, S., 2009; Vähäsantanen, K., Eteläpelto, A., 2009) believes that society requires an innovative system of education. The aim of new system is to form the students' ability to project thinking, self-education and reflection. In this connection, the program of social and economical development of Russia determines the main purpose of the development of the system of higher education. The most important factor is the quality of training process. The realities of modern academic life are active cooperation with international specialists and commercial organizations, students' participation in international educational and scientific projects, effective implementation of the education process of the international standards of information technology. Russia's integration into the international scientific and educational space is impossible without restructuring of the system of training. Educational structure requires developing innovative strategies in order to prepare contemporary professionals. The notion of "innovation" is used in the context of different reforms and expected changes. The forms of innovation are new information technologies. Implementation of information technologies in higher education is becoming more popular nowadays. The fact is that a great number of universities use and develop new information resources. Professors and lecturers use teaching tools, which they create using benefits of computer technologies. A lot of attention is paid to the participants of the educational process who create and / or use virtual educational areas or educational portals.

Digital Campus of the Southern Federal University is demonstrated as an example of virtual educational area. The fact is that the role of the Southern Federal University is to preserve and to accumulate moral, cultural and scientific values of the Russian society and the cultural environment in the South of Russia. The purpose of creating of Digital Campus is developing a unique information space. It provides image of the leading modern university. Digital Campus helps to strengthen the leading position of Rostov Scientific Educational Community in the South of Russia.

Digital Campus is a social and an educational network. Diplomas of the winners at such exhibitions as "Global Education - Education without Borders", 11th "Educational Week - 2009", "IT-Leader 2009" confirm a high quality of the resource.

The organizers of the resource Digital Campus of the Southern Federal University (SFU) conduct the work connected with the promoting of this resource and attracting a great number of users from the staff and the university students. The number of the users of Digital Campus has increased, according to the statistics, five times since 2009. Digital Campus "Incampus" includes all available information resources connected with training, social and administrative activities. It allows using electronic libraries of textbooks, giving consultations, creating students' e- portfolio. It also (Incampus) helps to gain total interaction between the professors, lectures and the students.

Method

Digital Campus of the Southern Federal University is used to motivate the students for their independent work and to improve the quality of preparation of their reports, term papers and dissertations.

Using the Digital Campus of the Southern Federal University in the educational process of the university helps:

- to individualize educational plans;
- to focus on the creative and independent component of the educational process;
- to develop research component;
- to focus on the abilities and motivation of the students.

The use of Digital Campus has certain advantages for the organization of the educational process.

Fast Feedback: All the students of the university have a quick access to all the materials and assignments of Digital Campus. If the test requires a written response, students can see an example of how the response should be done. Computer and Internet access are two things, which the students need for submission of their homework assignments. The students receive e-mail notifications and observe the results of their homework assignments as soon as professors or lectures check them. The results of the assignments are viewed confidentially.

Variety of Means of Communication: Digital Campus provides several tools, which allow the students to communicate. The major tools are discussions, virtual classrooms, and e-mail. The function of discussion provides exchanging messages among the students, professors and lectures. The virtual classroom is a synchronous environment, which supports text-based chat and allows conducting live interaction among the participants. Digital Campus provides the

opportunity of sending e-mails to an individual student, to the groups of students, and to all the students.

Tracking of Evaluation: Digital Campus system stores all the results of the students in the statistics section. Professors and lectures can see statistics for all the students or for an individual student in their profile area. They can also get statistics of the activity of the students or of an individual student from the administrator of Digital Campus. Students can also track their own progress in their personal profile area.

Developing of Skills: There are several additional skills, which are provided by the use of Digital Campus. These skills include self-organization, time-management, self-education, self-discipline. Using Digital Campus also helps to develop computer skills, which are useful for their personal life and career.

Discussion

Digital Campus has the following structure.

The Registration Process: It is necessary to fill in the registration form of Digital Campus in order to get a password from the administrator of Digital Campus. It is necessary to fill in the following items: the status of a person (a student, a lecture, a professor, a graduate, a postgraduate or an invited user); name, surname, date of birth, and e-mail. The administrator of Digital Campus sends a password after the registration. If there are problems with the registration process, a person should contact to the administrator using the following address: auth@incampus.ru.

The screenshot shows the user profile page for Olga Vladimirovna Galustyan. The page layout includes a navigation bar at the top with links for 'Главная', 'Профиль', 'Друзья', 'Сообщения', 'Календарь', and 'Поиск'. The profile header displays the user's name and status as 'Преподаватель' (Teacher) at 'ИЯ', 'ЕГФ', and 'ТТИ'. Below this, there are sections for 'Основная информация' (Basic information), 'Личная информация' (Personal information), 'Контактная информация' (Contact information), and 'Образование' (Education). The 'Образование' section lists her highest education as 'ТТИИ' (TII) and her current status as 'Кандидат наук' (Candidate of Sciences). A 'Друзья' (Friends) section shows a list of 43 friends, including Olga Zhdanova, Igor Tolchev, and Nadzha Martynova. There is also a 'Друзья он-лайн' (Online friends) section showing 1 friend online.

Figure 1 – Option Profile

The user of Digital Campus enters the Main Page after the registration.

This page displays schedule of the participant of Digital Campus:

1. Schedule for the current term.
2. Events of Digital Campus.

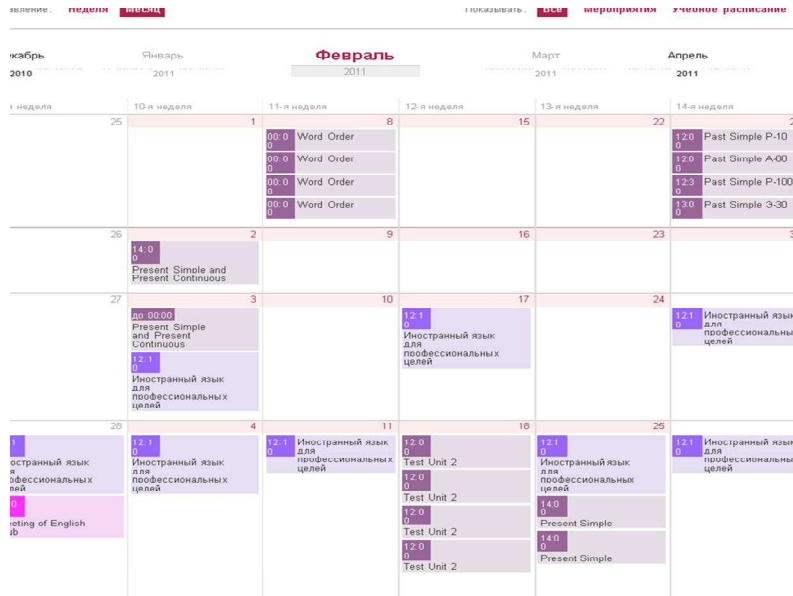


Figure 2 – Option my Calendar

Option Profile reveals general information about the user such as name, surname, current position at university, information concerning work or study experience, contacting information (Figure 1).

Option Messages gives the opportunity to send and to receive messages from the users of Digital Campus.

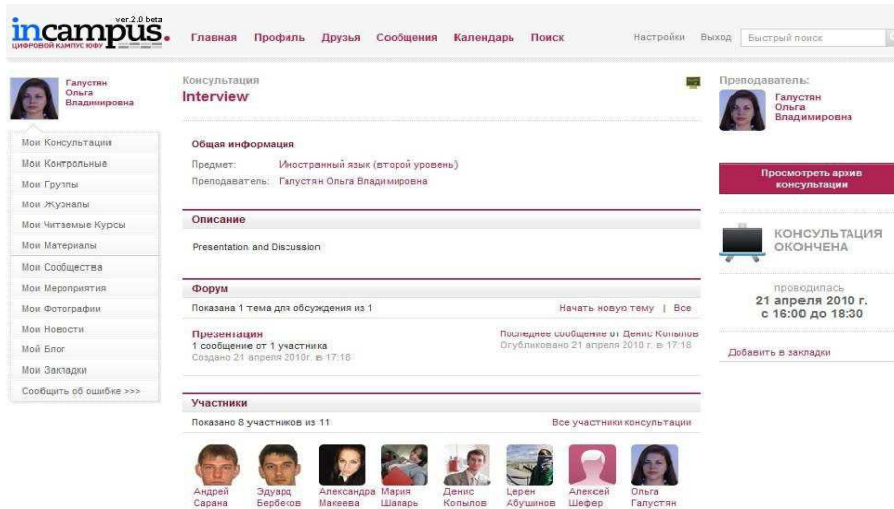


Figure 3 – Option Consultation

Option my Calendar informs about the activities: such as lectures, practical classes, counseling, tests, seminars, exams, festivals. A variety of activities is marked with the different colors (Figure 2).

Option Search allows searching any professor, lecture, student of SFU, community, event, etc.

Option Materials allows uploading additional materials (texts of the lectures, textbooks, articles, assignments for laboratory works, presentations) for the students.

Option Consultation: A lecturer can conduct on-line consultations in addition to the classroom consultations. A lecturer fills in the following items: name of consultation: description, subject, the date and the time of the beginning and the end of the consultation. A lecturer selects a group and adds the participants of the event. The profile of virtual consultation is reflected in Figure 3.

Option Communities: This option contains information about the communities in which a professor, a lecturer or a student is a member or an administrator. The purpose of creating a virtual community is to intensify training activities of the students. The profile of virtual community is reflected in Figure 4.

English Language Lovers

Общая информация:
 Тип: Общие интересы - Университет
 Описание: You are welcome in our community "English Language Lovers". We offer you regular and organized discussions (talk-classes) that enable Russian students to progress their spoken English and get rid of the language barrier. One strict rule in our group is to use English language for communication.

Контактная информация:
 Адрес: Таганрог, Ростовская область, Россия
 E-mail: Olga.Galustyan@gmail.com jinkaz@bk.ru

Новости
 Показано 2 новости из 2 [Добавить новость](#) | [Все новости](#)

Christmas
 17 декабря 2010 г. в 18:59 | [Редактировать](#) | [Удалить](#)
 Dear English Language Lovers!
 The Department of Foreign languages of Taganrog Institute of Technology of South Federal University is inviting everyone to the meeting devoted to Christmas.
 The meeting will take place in Building "B", at 4 pm, December, 24.
[Оставить комментарий](#)

English Club
 17 октября 2010 г. в 23:17 | [Редактировать](#) | [Удалить](#)
 Dear English Language Lovers!

Тип сообщества
 Это закрытое сообщество. Администраторы должны утвердить запрос на вступление в сообщество. Любой может просматривать информацию о сообществе, но только участники группы могут читать сообщения на Стене, Обсуждения, Материалы и фотографии

Администрация
 Галустян Ольга Владимировна
 Кирилленко Евгений Алексеевич

Figure 4 – Option Communities

Option Assignment: The basic resource of Digital Campus is Option Assignment. It helps to evaluate students' assignments in the interactive form. This option helps to improve teaching process. Digital Campus allows the lecturers to work with the students who participate at the scientific conferences, write thesis, participate in workshops, discussions, role-playing games, international competitions and projects in the interactive form. A lecturer fills in the following items in the system: the title of the task (for example, "Composition"); the description of the task (for example, "Write an essay on one of the following topics: "Generation Gap - Myth or Reality? Why Do They Youths' Problems Appear?"). A lecturer chooses subject (for example, "Foreign Language" or "Foreign Language for Professional Purposes"); the range of dates given for the task. A lecturer selects the group of participants and the evaluation form (pass / fail or the grading system). Here are the examples of the topics for the essays which can be given to the students as their assignments: "Up-to-date Technologies Make the World a Little Village", "The Social Networking Services", "What are the Pros and Cons of Living in a Consumerist Society", etc. The profile of Option Assignment is revealed in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – Option Assignment

Electronic Portfolio: Electronic portfolio (or e-portfolio) is a collection of individual academic achievements of the students. Application of electronic portfolio is becoming more and more popular in education. Many educational institutions use electronic portfolio in their practice. Portfolio is a way of recording, collecting and evaluating individual student's achievements during a certain period of his/her training (Mazachova, N., 2006; Vavrus, L., 1990; Winter, F., 2005). Student's portfolio is an archive of educational, creative, public affairs during studying at university. Student's portfolio is characterized by purposeful and systematic evaluation and self-evaluation of his/ her educational achievements.

The main purpose of e-portfolio is stimulating the development of creative abilities of the students who achieve good results in their learning process, participate in the social life of the institution. Electronic portfolio is method of motivating the students for their active work. E-portfolio helps to control the quality of students' work through the management of their educational activities during the whole period of study. E-portfolio is not only a collection of student's works of the course but also a tool of monitoring academic achievements. Evaluation of academic achievements takes place during the whole period of studying. There are basic requirements for e- portfolio:

- 1) E-portfolio includes business and personal information about the student.
- 2) E-portfolio captures all the achievements of the student such as term papers, reports at scientific conferences, etc.
- 3) E-portfolio is updated regularly taking into account the progress in studying.
- 4) E-portfolio contains both print and electronic versions.

The fact is that there isn't a strict structure of e-portfolio, but we recommend including the following sections into it:

- 1) Summary.
- 2) The list of works.
- 3) The list of achievements (diplomas, certificates, awards, prizes).

- 4) The list of extracurricular activities such as taking part at conferences, competitions, festivals, and trainings.
- 5) Projects.
- 6) Grants and scholarships.
- 7) Additional educational courses.
- 8) Reviews, references.
- 9) Recommendations of professors and lectures (e.g. participating at the conferences, publishing articles, etc.).
- 10) Foresight planning for the further development in studying.

Analysis of the contemporary works on portfolio in education shows that the researchers see it as much more than just an alternative way of evaluating the educational achievements of the students (Billet, S., Pavlova, M., 2005; Billet, S., 2010; Collins, J., 2009; Ogburn, J., 2011; Scalon, L., 2008). They see it as a form of educational philosophy, which is connected with the idea of learning throughout life (lifelong learning).

The use of e-portfolio requires regular interaction among the professors, the lecturers and the students. Digital Campus realizes this function. The task of professors and lecturers is informing the students concerning the participation in competitions, clubs, festivals, and conferences. Professors and lecturers help the students to prepare their application forms for various competitions and projects. The result of creating of electronic portfolio is development of reflection, self-organization, and self-management. These aspects are useful in construction of the future professional career.

Conclusion

The use of the educational portal is necessary for the work of contemporary professors and lecturers. The most important thing is informational structure for all the participants of the educational process. Digital Campus gives sufficient information for an adequate understanding, participation, adaptation, and implementation. The use of information technologies promotes the development of new forms and methods of traditional activities of the students. The use of Digital Campus allows not only to improve the efficiency of training but also to encourage self-education and reflection of the students.

The benefits of this system include not only an access to diverse means of didactic presentations but also a method of motivation for learning. The Digital Campus system provides an opportunity for the students to use familiar environment of Internet for educational purposes, which develops the students' organizational, communicative, and time-management skills. The Digital Campus system allows the students to progress at their own rates. Tutors serve as guides during the studying process of the students. Active cooperation with the invited users from the other universities allows studying and implementing the best experience, conducting joint programs, publishing educational materials. All these form an electronic image of the Southern Federal University and develop identity of the university. The author concludes that the use of Digital Campus in teaching encourages students' self-education and reflection. All these increase the effectiveness of studying.

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