

Use of Internet Resources as a Means of Spiritual Education of Classical University Students

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Abstract

The article deals with the problem of finding new means of spiritual education of high school students. An attempt was made to prove that Internet resources can be involved in the educational process, not only as educational supply, but also as a means of spiritual education. It is noted that students should be formed with interest to Internet resources that contain information capable of enriching the spiritual world of the individual. The leading role in the mentioned process is given to the tutor of a student group. Among the Internet resources that have a significant educational influence, what should be pointed out are digital libraries, virtual museums, and Internet versions of educational channels, social networks, and websites of educational institutions. The author emphasizes that the effectiveness of the use of Internet resources as a means of spiritual education of students is possible in the case of compliance with a number of educational conditions.

Keywords: spiritual education, spiritual development of the individual, means of education, teaching census, Internet resources, educational content of the website

Introduction

Building of a civil society involves orientation to the priorities of spirituality and morality. In the mentioned process particular importance is centered on the problem of renewal of the higher education system as the leading center of spiritual culture of the nation.

The educational paradigm of a higher education institution should be directed at developing students' sense of national dignity, belonging to the famous Ukrainian nation. Young people must consciously focus on the ideals of goodness and beauty, truth and justice, compassion and human dignity. Eternal values should become an inner activity motive and the core of the human's spiritual world, which unite feelings, thoughts and will into a single unit.

In view of the diversity and multidimensionality the problem of spiritual formation of the individual has been reflected in a number of humanities. Thus, the concept of spirituality is reflected in scientific ideas of philosophers who consider spirituality as a sphere of reality understanding (V. Baranivskyi, L. Sokhan, L. Oleksiuk, V. Suhatovskyi, V. Sherdakov); psychologists who analyze psychological roots of spiritual values (I. Bekh, O. Zelichenko, H. Kostiuk); teachers who explore the essence of spiritual development of the individual, pedagogical conditions of spiritual education of students – O. Brezhneva, A. Marusenko, L. Moskaliova, N. Pysmenna, H. Shevchenko, T. Shkliarova. Domestic and foreign research on scientific achievements shows the need to create a theoretically grounded and methodologically varied system of spiritual education of the individual. Our research is based on the statement of H. Shevchenko, who says: “moral education of students is a priority direction in the educational work of the institute. It is aimed at improving the status of spirituality and morality in the whole system of educational activities of higher education institutions and aims at the formation of spirituality as a fundamental feature of the individual, which determines their position, behavior, attitude to themselves and the surrounding world” (Shevchenko, 2014, p. 3).

At the same time, the analysis of resources shows insufficient attention paid to the implementation in the educational process of higher education institutions of new educational means oriented to spiritual growth of contemporary students. In particular, this concerns network resources as the latest measurement of storage and information transmission. Traditionally, the pedagogical science pays great attention to educational possibilities of Internet space. (Zhaldak et al., 2014). As for its involvement in the educational process, there arises a very skeptical attitude. Usually the Internet is associated with negative factors affecting the spiritual world of the individual.

The purpose of the study was to determine the pedagogical potential of Internet resources and the conditions of their use as a means of students' spiritual education at higher education institutions.

Research Methodology

Means of education are an integral part of the implementation of any form of educational process organization, e.g., different out-of-class and extracurricular art activities, classes at clubs, groups, tourism, amateur talent groups, and different kinds of work. They involve a system of educational means capable to promote educational influences on the individual.

Solving difficult cognitive and practical tasks based on the student's own desires allows him to train his will, perseverance, determination in accordance with the ideal. Through reflection the student is periodically able to correlate the results of self-education with life objectives and deeply-rooted ideals.

When looking for effective means of spiritual education we refer to Internet resources in view of their semantic content, ease of access, and multi-variant use. In order to become a valuable means of education it should not only determine the pedagogical census, but also the forms of organization and methods of education in which it will be involved. Internet resources selected by the teacher for use in the educational process of students are not an exception. In research on problems of students' spiritual and moral education, L. Moskalova indicates that the work of tutors with students should cover a complex of educational cases aimed at deepening and improvement of theoretical and practical preparation in the sphere of future professional activity. The scientist identifies a number of key directions of work:

- attending scientific conferences, concerts and mass performances, participation in social events and auctions and analysis of the conducted programs;
- working with archival and regulatory documents, primary sources, educational and teaching and methodological books, textbooks, additional literature, electronic versions of textbooks;
- improvement of professional activity practical skills (conversations, dialogues, discussions, lectures and seminars with analysis of specific pedagogical situations, situations of moral choice, training activities of moral action and acts, etc.);
- search, scientific research activity in the educational process of moral and ethical culture (Moskaleva, 2009, p. 361).

From our point of view, involvement of Internet resources will contribute to the implementation of almost each of the indicated directions. Such resources primarily include: digital libraries, virtual museums, Internet versions of educational channels, social networks, and education institution websites.

A modern electronic library is a large-scale service based on documents stored in digital form, access to which is provided through the network to a large number of users.

An electronic library is a distributed informational system that enables storing and using of different collections of electronic documents (texts, graphics, audio, and video) through a global network of data transmission in a convenient form for the end-user.

Apart from electronic documents the objects of processing in the electronic library are also databases, maps, user maps, links to other digital libraries, etc.

The main functions of the electronic library include:

- meeting informational needs of the users (society);
- providing information services (search, annotations, information about new incoming, etc.);
- organizing information so that it is convenient to use (cataloguing and convenient navigation);
- managing information location and transmitting the information to the users and their intermediaries;
- ensuring the integration of information resources.

Most electronic libraries allow for downloading books in the fb2, txt, doc, mp3 formats and other formats absolutely free of charge. All the reader needs is to visit the selected electronic library, to find a suitable book and download it.

A decisive advantage of digital libraries is the availability of the audio versions of primary resources, which allows for acquainting students with the best examples of spiritual culture, and thus contributing to their spiritual development. However, it is not enough for the contemporary teacher to give the students a list of recommended works for review. It is important to consider methodological ways and means to activate the reader's interest and desire to ponder questions of personal and individual, nation-state, general planetary dimension.

For example, when teaching a course of "Philosophy" the theme "World philosophical process" can be enriched with deep analysis of moral qualities of the individual represented in the work "Confessions" by the religious thinker of the Middle Ages, St. Augustine (Augustine Aurelii, 2008). While studying his works, in accordance with the theme of the program, it should be noted that he was one of the first to draw attention to the problem of the formation of the individual. For methodological provision of "Philosophy" (for independent study and in practical classes) we can use the printed version, but we consider it as more interesting for students to work with small fragments of an audio book. In order to attract the students' attention before listening to each fragment it is advisable to ask the following questions:

1. What features of human beings does St. Augustine define as unacceptable?
2. Under what conditions, according to St. Augustine, do the child's moral features appear?
3. Which children's actions does St. Augustine consider as innocent, which are negative for adults?
4. What were the challenges St. Augustine faced when he was at school?
5. Why did parents in those days approve of teachers' violence towards children?
6. Explain St. Augustine's statement: "Any disorder in the soul is its punishment."
7. Analyze St. Augustine's attitude to the requirements of education.
8. What way of children education and upbringing does St. Augustine define as correct?
9. Which novels studied at schools did St. Augustine subject to harsh criticism? What moral traits are promoted in them?
10. What are the rules that St. Augustine compares with the rules of conduct?
11. Describe the author's attitude to such features as dishonesty, arrogance, disbelief, anger.

It should be noted that the educational work through audio books is a new phenomenon, so it is important to organize the very process of active listening. The reader's speech, the sound effects which are part of the message, carry in it features such as: the reader's mood, his attitude to the content, to an imaginary conversation partner or imaginary listener. Intonation, expressive reading, compliance with orthoepic norms and logical stresses evoke special emotions.

Museums, churches and monasteries are increasingly offering virtual tours. So teachers (first of all tutors of academic groups) should plan and regularly conduct such trips during the academic year. In addition to the generally recognized advantages of the pedagogical influence, it is important to choose the websites of museums, churches and monasteries, which contain information not only about the history and significant events of parochial life but also provide an opportunity to communicate with art historians, artists, and priests in the "question and answer" mode. In the case of the desire and financial capacity of students, the teacher together with the group can visit the websites of travel agencies and pilgrim services that organize trips to the places of prominence. Special part of the aforementioned Internet resources is live communication of travel participants, and making new friends.

Nowadays it is difficult to overestimate the role of social networks in which there is active communication and creation of communities according to interest.

In the pedagogical context, it is important to orient students to intellectually rich and morally healthy communication. Staying in social networks has not become a kind of entertainment, but a way of demonstrating our own life position. Examples are Internet communities of charitable orientation. They unite people who want to do good actions, to serve to a neighbor, to create conditions for charity in different dimensions – spiritual and material. The task of the teacher is to motivate students for charitable actions. However, this must be preceded by hard work that involves the study of the relevant Internet resources, maintaining contact with coordinators, warning students about possible risks in the virtual space.

For interesting and useful leisure, the tutor together with students can choose Internet resources with specially selected films, photos, music, lessons developments of contest winners, video materials and presentations that complement and expand the knowledge in different training courses. The informational potential of cultural and educational television resources should be explored first. For example, we can provide some Internet versions of Ukrainian TV channels:

1. Academy – <http://odessa36.tv/>
2. Hlas – <http://glas.org.ua/>
3. Kievan Rus – <http://kievrus.com/>
4. Kozak TV – http://ua.guzei.com/tv/watch.php?online_tv_id=3707
5. Culture – <http://cultureua.com/>
6. Museums of Ukraine – <http://museumua.blogspot.com/>

The Internet version of educational television channels contributes not only to expanding the audience (mostly because they work at regional level), but also provides availability of television programs at the time convenient for the viewer. Collective watching and discussion in the circle of group mates will provide the tutor with additional opportunities for educational cooperation. As this form of students' leisure time is optimal for the free exchange of thoughts, development of spiritual needs, and the formation of selectivity when consuming television production (not watching everything that is shown on TV, but choosing what is interesting, useful, and pleasant).

It must be admitted that today there are few educational channels on domestic television which are not compensated by volume and varieties of programs presented in the Internet versions. As for using foreign counterparts, it is a problem of discursive character, which requires a separate study.

The determinative level of spiritual development is the individual's desire for constant self-education. Therefore, it is important to acquaint students with the Internet resources that allow them to expand their educational horizon. The websites of educational institutions allow not only for receiving general information

about the institution, but also provide access to methodological and scientific resources. The websites of famous domestic and foreign higher education institutions provide the opportunity to study online and get additional education. At the same time, through such resources students have an opportunity to get acquainted with new editions, to learn about the organization of academic competitions, contests, conferences, and social projects.

Research Results

In order to identify the best educational conditions for using Internet resources as a means of spiritual education of students, a program has been developed titled “Man does not live by bread alone”. The program contains themes and content of educational activities that will take place in the academic group during one academic year. In order to activate the students’ and tutor’s attention to the problems of spiritual content for each class the purpose and task of the meeting were described, Internet resources that will be used during the meeting were suggested, and also a number of methodological recommendations according to their use were provided. The program provides lists of Internet resources for students’ self-study with further discussion in the circle of group mates.

The experimental program was approved during the 2013/2014 academic year at the pedagogical institute and the institute of natural sciences of Vasyl Stefanyk Precarpathian National University (Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine). The experiment included eight academic groups on a voluntary basis (total number of 216 students), who together with their tutors implemented the suggested program.

The diagnostic procedure of the education level consisted of three steps:

- collecting diagnostic information;
- estimation of spiritual problematic interest level;
- drawing general conclusions.

For the purpose different diagnostic techniques were used such as questionnaires and direct observation of students in conditions of professional training in higher education institutions. The study was divided into two types: 1) psychological and pedagogical testing, where the procedure standardization was reached and the quantitative assessment of education level was provided; 2) a comprehensive review, where quality characteristics of the student were checked.

At the same time, the group tutors were diagnosed on the use of the Internet resources as a means of spiritual education. For this purpose, preliminary and final conversations were conducted. If necessary, tutors were provided with individual

and group consultations by the experimenter through involvement of teachers of science.

Within the article we will show only separate data that confirms the level of the students' interest in the Internet resources proposed in the program.

The obtained data showed great interest of 74% of the students in the foundations of digital libraries. However, only 21% indicated their advantage in education. 73% of the respondents noted that thanks to the advice of the tutor they began to read works of world classics in audio format, 44% admitted they regularly studied the electronic resources of libraries in text format. The students stated that now they exchanged their views on reading more frequently and tried to learn the source of philosophy and world religions.

Virtual museum attracted the attention of 76% of the respondents. 68% of them indicated that they were interested in virtual trips in the circle of group mates and tutor participation. 32% said they searched the museum websites independently for further collective review.

A special interest was excited in the students by Internet versions of educational TV channels. 68% of the respondents explained their interest by their moral and ethical content, 31% – by a variety of subjects, 19% – by the availability of content. However, the students complained about their lack of time to watch interesting films and programs collectively. At the same time, the tutors saw something positive in this because young people were learning to schedule their time rationally, to plan review and discussion of the programs seen with friends.

72% of the subjects tried to discuss problems of spirituality in social networks. 28% admitted the fact that they started discussion first. 52% stated that they joined previously “open topics”. During the conversation, the students admitted with regret to the fact that in social networks the partners did not usually intend to communicate on vitally important moral or ethical themes. Thus, according to the respondents' conviction, today social networks mostly perform an entertaining function. At the same time, they expressed their willingness to join the Internet communities for spiritually rich communication.

The fewest students were interested in websites of other educational institutions. Only 35% of the students admitted that on the websites of national higher education institutions they could find information that would contribute to their spiritual growth. Usually these are the websites of educational institutions of different denominations. 22% could find audio-video material relevant to the discussion on the problems of spiritual content. 14% had a desire to publish their scientific and journalistic work in periodicals presented on the higher education institutions' websites. No one paid attention to the ability to get parallel education

through distant studying. The question about communication with students from other universities received a positive response (83%), but most respondents recognized that it was of utilitarian nature.

During the final conversation, the tutors who worked on the program “Man does not live by bread alone” recognized its timeliness and importance in the spiritual education of students and the formation of their information culture. According to the teachers, they managed to interest the student audience in Internet resources that will help to expand their outlook, humanize their world view, and formation of spiritual values. The students showed initiative to collectively review the suggested content and tried to independently find their own resources, which would become an occasion for the following thematic meetings of the academic group.

It is symptomatic that during the thematic meetings the students repeatedly expressed their willingness to create their own Internet projects in order to attract public attention to issues of spirituality, morality, and self-improvement.

Discussion

The generalization of empirical research allowed for drawing the conclusion that the effective use of Internet resources as a means of spiritual education of students was possible in compliance with a number of pedagogical conditions:

- determining the specific tasks that the teacher plans to solve involving Internet resources in the educational process;
- establishing pedagogical census of each Internet resource proposed to student audience;
- selection of appropriate forms and methods of educational work relevant to the use of Internet resources (conversation, discussion, competitions, etc.);
- informing students about Internet resources that are worth their attention;
- selection of techniques for diagnosing the involvement efficiency of Internet resources as a means of spiritual education;
- systematic character of the use of Internet resources in planning and implementation of educational work by the academic group tutor;
- encouraging students both in independent and collective processing of Internet resources;
- encouraging students to create their own Internet resources that would distinguish by intellectual coloring, public utility, and moral orientation (with appropriate professional help of teachers of informatics).

Conclusions

Higher education institution students' use of Internet resources as a means of spiritual education involves activation of various forms and methods of interaction between teachers and students, in which the formation and development of leading personality traits takes place, which create spiritual originality and affirm the moral imperative of the individual. Searching for and implementing in educational work Internet resources enriched by moral content are designed to encourage students to use network resources which meet the needs and demands of highly-educated noble man. This should be the initial step in rejection of resources that promote bad habits, cruelty, tastelessness and diminish the universal spiritual values.

The question of methodological provision of spiritual education requires further research; as well as the questions of pedagogical potential of interaction with students in an interactive way, leading factors in exercising reflection of moral and ethical experience, creating a complex of diagnostic techniques for the interpretation and forecasting of spiritual development of the student, creating thematic databases of Internet resources worth including in the educational process of higher education institution.

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