

**MULTIMEDIA IN HISTORY TEACHERS TRAINING:
THE USE OF LEARNING PLATFORM AS AN EXAMPLE
OF WWW.PRAKTYKI.WH.UMCS PROJECT¹**

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In times of globalization, teachers are also required to have computer media competency, expressed by the ability to use information and communication technologies to improve the teaching-educational processes. Teachers are required to process, acquire, and use rapidly increasing knowledge about the world and also to train students in these skills. In order to better prepare students for the profession, and thus increase the effectiveness of teaching practice, university researchers at the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS developed a new innovative teaching practice program in early 2010. An important part of the practice is to train future teachers in effective use of media, in particular information technology. Use of the latest multimedia, primarily the Moodle e-learning platform, serves these objectives.

Key words: multimedia in history teachers; Internet; learning platform; platform Moodle; website

In the nearest future modern technology will, undoubtedly, have an enormous impact on the educational system, including the most significant “information revolution”, this is why it is important to prepare and convince teachers of the need to use electronic multimedia in the learning process. We live in the world of computers, remarkable achievements in communication field, also in exuberant consumption, egocentrism, and in individualism. We are flooded with a variety of conveniences: the Internet, television, the radio, MP3, DVD, games, computer telephony integration, shopping malls, multiplex cinemas, theme parks, night clubs, festivals, and promotions. It is difficult to fascinate the youth with education in the world of “electronic gadgets”. We are all aware of the fact that school lessons must not be boring and that they ought to pose a threat to entertaining-consumerist activities. It is more and more difficult, however, to compete with “the colorful world” using traditional working methods. Therefore, teachers ought to be fluent in using modern technologies as well. Information technology – the computer and the Internet – will have a dramatic impact on the changes in education and on teachers’ practices. In order to properly and effectively use multimedia in the teaching learning process, teachers need to be properly trained.

The use of computers in the teaching process and learning history brings with it many new solutions and opportunities. This enables us to support the learning process with multimedia programs, the Internet, and with e-learning platforms. The use of computers, undoubtedly, makes lessons more attractive and the participating in lessons students not only acquire and improve their knowledge but also train their skills. We live in the world of technological achievements and the computer has become a primary tool in both our professional and personal life, and its role will still be increasing. In times of globalization teachers are also required media competence in computers expressed by the ability to use information and communication

¹ Article was drawn up as part of: www.praktyki.wh.umcs. Preparation and realization of a new program of the teaching practice at the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS.

technology in order to improve the teaching-educational processes. The teacher is required to processing, gaining, and using the rapidly increasing knowledge about the world and also to training these skills in students. The present requires rapid and non-traditional learning and teaching. Schools cannot remain indifferent to these issues, thus it is important for teachers to use modern tools in the learning process and to develop basic competence in students. Teachers ought to pay special attention to the issue of adequate training of teachers-to-be with a chance to use a computer in their future work. We have been a European Union member for seven years. The European Integration guarantees, among other things, the possibility of the free movement of high-skilled personnel between the EU. Many Poles have already used this possibility and, whether we like it or not, we ought to educate the youth in such a way that they have as equal opportunities in the labor market as graduates from other European countries. One of the tasks of the Union is to improve the quality of learning and the use of modern information technologies is to enhance this process. The aim is to prepare students for independent creative work and for continual training. NTI Network was created in most EU countries using the latest information and audiovisual tools. It serves as a useful teaching aid for students at all levels and it is adapted to every age group.²

In times of information technology those who easily locate reliable sources of information, process, and use them will play more important role. Knowledge, therefore, will be the most important value shared by all civilizations. It can be described as a new kind of power. The nearest school years will be marked by the widespread use of computer technology. Regardless of what men will devote themselves to, whether they will be actors, teachers, or doctors, they will have to acquire skills needed to use a computer in their activity.

One of the education policy priorities of the European Union is the widespread use of modern information technologies in the educational system. Today's youth must be implemented to independent work and to continual training, thus it is necessary to use the TI.³

Nowadays, is not too difficult to have access to knowledge and information. One just needs to have a computer, a modem, to cover the costs connected with using the telephone and the Internet and know foreign languages??, especially English. However, the problem often lies in the quality of this knowledge and information and young students' inability to properly assess it.

Is the computer only a tool which has replaced the typewriter? Will textbooks, notebooks, the library be expendable thanks to the Internet? Is this how you imagine the upcoming changes at schools?

Children and teenagers have computers at homes and schools. They surf the Internet all day. After classes they meet in Internet cafes. They talk only through the computer screen. They explore the works of national culture through the Internet. The traditional cinema or a museum will not exist for them. Therefore, the Information Society, in particular children and the youth will need a new educational system.

It should be emphasized that education and schools consist primary of a student and a teacher. The issue to be discussed when considering any changes or visions concerns the role of the student and the teacher and their mutual correlation in the educational system. The school has always been a place where you explore the secrets of knowledge. Throughout the entire history of our civilization the instruments through which knowledge was gained have been

² *Jak być dobrym nauczycielem i wychowawcą. Innowacyjne praktyki pedagogiczne szansą rozwoju oświaty.* Ryki 2010, p. 42 and others.

³ Ibidem.

changing. However, there has always been the student and the teacher, the one who seeks knowledge and the one who helps to find it.

The question that arises is how today's civilization and modern technologies may change schools? Are we able to predict the pace of these changes? Do we know what we strive for? The first question must be answered affirmatively, we do not know the answer for the other ones.

Thanks to new technologies acquiring information at schools will be much easier. Computer user-friendliness and the ability to use data contained in WWW websites will be of the greatest importance. The today's student more easily uses the computer and the Internet resources more frequently than lexicons, encyclopedias or atlases. The Internet has contributed to the emergence of vast amount of information that so far has never been so accessible and affordable. A very good command of English is the only major barrier for the Internet users.

One ought to draw attention to the role of the teacher once more. He or she must realize that his or her task is to direct students in such a way that they can skillfully use and process their acquired knowledge thanks to the access to reliable information. A properly trained teacher is the one who, thanks to increasing information technology, knows how to: complete a subject knowledge, gain knowledge enhancing their teaching skills, prepare oneself for the research work. As a result of the development of information technology the role of the teacher changes, he or she is no longer a person transmitting knowledge to students independently acquiring information under his or her guidance. Thanks to the Internet students will commit themselves to improving their knowledge and skills.⁴ One has to remember that teachers are in a worse position than students. Young people are much faster and better at learning the technique of obtaining information through the Internet than teachers who do not feel too comfortable in the information technology environment. However, both teachers and students – teachers-to-be are aware of the necessity of using modern technology in the teaching process.⁵

Free access to information is perceived both as the greatest value and the risk created by the Internet. Through the formation of favorable attitudes schools may in this case play a very important role. First of all, the teacher as a guardian ought to learn wise and critical usage of information contained in the Internet database. The development of electronic media has caused that we live in a world of "disinformation" rather than information. Unfortunately, the rapid development of media has also caused a reduction in the quality of these media. Therefore, the role of the teacher and each subject will not only concern learning the use of media but also concern the ability to collate such information. The modern teacher also needs to adopt appropriate methods of teaching, that does not mean, of course, rejecting the so-called traditional methods of teaching but applying the principle of polymethodicalness. For example, a project method is as if created to use information technology in teaching history. It is difficult to imagine this method without the use of a computer although it is not a new one. 90 % of the respondents of the Institute of History at UMCS, who used the computer in classes devoted to teaching history, identified the educational project as a method in which the computer can be used.⁶ This opinion is also confirmed by the teachers.⁷

⁴ ŚWIĘTOCHOWSKA, U.: *Systemy edukacyjne cywilizacji przełomu XX i XXI wieku*. Toruń 2001, p. 47 and others.

⁵ AUSZ, M.: *Opinie studentów na temat możliwości wykorzystania technologii informacyjnej w nauczaniu historii*. In: Prinke, R. T. (ed.): *Megabajty dziejów*. Informatyka w badaniach, popularyzacji i dydaktyce historii. Poznań 2007, 139–147.

⁶ Own research.

⁷ See AUSZ, M.: *Metody nauczania i multimedia. Możliwość zastosowania komputera w metodzie projektów*. In: Narojczyk, K. – Ryszewski, B. (edd.): *Metody komputerowe w badaniach i nauczaniu historii*. Olsztyn 2005, p. 157–162; AUSZ, M. – SZEWCZUK, D.: *Metoda projektu jako forma aktywizacji studentów na zajęciach z dydaktyki historii*. In: Jankowski, K. – Sitarska, B. – Tkaczuk, C. (edd.): *Jakość kształcenia w szkole wyższej*. Media

The role of school is, therefore, to prepare students to function in a new reality. The current method of transferring the encyclopedic knowledge and training simple cognitive skills attract less and less interest in the job market. Literacy and numeracy is nowadays not enough. The rapid development of the new knowledge necessitates the acquisition of a higher order cognitive skills, helpful in solving problems and making decisions. The new school must appropriately prepare educated people to be able to meet the new challenges of the information civilization. The aim of schools will be teaching students how to think faster and better.

The development of multimedia influenced the use of films in education. The main advantage of documentaries and feature films on history is that they allow students to approach the events and characters, enable the application of the principle of visuality in teaching. It causes the process of knowledge acquisition to become more dynamic and attractive. It is possible to activate students and generate a positive motivation. One should not forget that every teacher has a duty to prepare students for life in the modern world in reality of the dominance of multimedia transmission of information. Working with documentaries prepares students for life in such realities.

From the perspective of the historical education, typical documentaries shot in the middle of events it describes and didactic films consisting of fragments of documentaries may be perceived as documentaries. A feature film may also be regarded as a specific documentary (shot at a time and place we study or learn about). Fragments of such films can be used as an illustration of cognized content, one of the sources of knowledge introducing new material in the classroom, especially as a starting point for discussion or introduction (creating a situational problem) to a problematic lesson as well as an introduction to revision lessons.

In publications devoted to media education we find the following definition of a documentary: *“It is a film shot mostly during certain events which presents these events, is authentic, it shows real people not dressed up actors.”*⁸ Documentary films include: reportage – an account of real events but with the selection of events and completion of the author’s comment; newsreel – information about events at home and at dawn, a kind of a newspaper film; a type of an assembly film – resulting from editing archival material and a film about art – the presentation of works of art along with commentary.

A didactic film is adapted to a curriculum of a particular subject. It supports teachers in conducting lessons. Both an educational film (for the general public) popularizing education and science as well as a scientific film showing the results of scientific research as long as the content is useful to the objectives of a particular subject may be called a specific didactic film.

Documentaries are among the most effective of all teaching methods used in the historical education.⁹ Unfortunately, these are used rarely and in the wrong way at schools. Therefore, important educational goals associated with this source of knowledge are not achieved. The most common mistake in the usage of audiovisual media is its use “instead of” a traditional lesson, for example playing the film for 45 minutes. Another mistake is presenting a variety of materials to students without the explanation of its aims and the previous direction of observation. An important principle formulated by teachers which states that *“the effectiveness of the impact of the film [...] is conditioned not only through itself, but also through the methodology of its usage”* is far too often forgotten at schools.¹⁰

⁸ i metody wspomagające jakość kształcenia. Siedlce 2005, p. 100–107; AUSZ, A. – AUSZ, M.: *Metody nauczania historii a multimedia. Możliwości zastosowania komputera w metodzie projektów – teoria i praktyka*. Wiadomości Historyczne, 2011, No. 3, p. 21–29.

⁹ GAJDA, J.: *Swoistość mass mediów i ich oddziaływanie wychowawcze*. In: Gajda, J. – Juszczyk, S. – Siemieniecki, B. – Wenta, K.: *Edukacja medialna*. Toruń 2002, p. 97.

¹⁰ SUCHOŃSKI, A.: *Środki audiowizualne w nauczaniu i uczeniu się historii*. Warszawa 1987, p. 236.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 230.

The above-mentioned diagnosis is confirmed by the results of studies conducted since 2004 among history students and European interdepartmental historical-philosophical studies at UMCS in Lublin. It turned out that only half of the respondents had the opportunity to participate in a history lesson with the use of the documentary at least once at high school. However, only one third of this half participated in such lessons pretty regularly – once a semester or more. Only 8 % of the respondents during their teaching practice sat on at least one lesson with the use of the documentary or the didactic film. This proves that teachers rarely make use of an excellent means of teaching which is the documentary.¹¹

The answers also prove that the methodical use of this source of knowledge leaves much to be desired. Nearly all participants of lessons devoted to documentaries agreed on a particular model of a lesson: the presentation of the film took the entire lesson, the material was not divided into smaller fragments, after the projection there was not enough time to discuss its results, although sometimes teachers gave students tasks before the projection. Only a few students are able to recollect the correct, from the methodical viewpoint, use of documentaries in the classes. One in three students remembered any discussion after the projection and one in four had a task of writing a memo based on the film. Almost all felt that the content of movies coincided with the content of the manual and served to illustrate or repeat the textbook knowledge. Only every fifth student, among those who participated in the classes, used documentaries as a source of knowledge to work independently in the classroom.¹²

Therefore, it is not surprising that more than 70 % of students who participated in a documentary film projection at school associate it with the so-called “free lesson” from which there is nothing to gain. The others believed the documentary to be a source of knowledge which has a positive impact on the effects of learning and increases interest in the subject. The conclusion from the study is quite obvious. The teaching program for students specializing in teaching ought to give training in using the documentary. A teacher-to-be should not only have general theory on this topic but most of all have the necessary skills and ideas.

The teacher, prior to using audiovisual aids ought to prepare students by familiarizing them with the subject and by directing their attention to selected issues. Any use of the documentary requires some complements from the teacher. The image ought to be supplemented by an introductory commentary (a story, asking questions recalling issues already familiar to students and associated with the subject of the film). All materials ought to be carefully selected by the teacher in terms of relevance to the objectives of the lesson. Regardless of the type of audiovisual aids, presentations ought to be brief (up to 10–15 min. per lesson). The whole projection ought to be divided into short fragments corresponding to the discussed problems during the lesson. Students ought to be given observation tasks preferably in the form of questions the answer to which may be found in the documentary. After the presentation of each fragment it is necessary to discuss its results and draw conclusions¹³. The situation is even worse when using music in history lessons. It is used occasionally as an illustration and interest, in fact, teachers limit themselves to using music only at various ceremonies.

Encountering with the proper training is very important for teachers-to-be, this is why it is essential to have adequate preparation and teaching practice. The teaching practice is an important complement and an extension of the theory gained in the teaching classroom. It is

¹¹ Own research; see AUSZ, M. – OSIŃSKI, Z.: *Edukacyjne wykorzystanie dokumentu filmowego, a możliwości jakie stwarza technologia informacyjna*. In: Szczurowski, M. (ed.): *Dokument filmowy i telewizyjny*. Toruń 2004, p. 365.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 366.

¹³ *Ibidem*, p. 366–367.

a kind of test for teaching graduates often decisive when choosing this profession.¹⁴ During the teaching practice, students meet with a variety of teaching and educational problems. This is a period in which the student ought to know the practical application of teaching methods, teaching aids, etc. He or she should also pay attention to the use of information technology in practice.¹⁵

Let us now give an example of introducing multimedia in educating students and teachers and improving the teaching process. In order to better prepare students for the profession, and thus increase the effectiveness of the teaching practice, university research workers at the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS in early 2010 prepared a new innovative program of the teaching practice. An important part of the practice is to prepare teachers-to-be to make effective use of media, in particular information technology. The program has been carried out since the Autumn 2010 at the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS titled: *www.praktyki.wh.umcs. Preparation and realization of a new program of the teaching practice at the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS*. The realization of the project is scheduled for the period 1st September 2010 – 30th November 2014.¹⁶

The main goal of the project is to increase the quality and efficiency, to facilitate the realization of the teaching practice by students of the Faculty of Humanities at UMCS and the adequate preparation of students for the profession linked not only with the need to obtain appropriate academic preparation, but also with the need to use knowledge gained in practice. The creators of the project assumed that only the proper way of conducting the practice would enable students to optimally transfer the declarative knowledge into the procedural one. The use of the latest multimedia, primarily the e-learning platform Moodle serves these tasks.

Specific objectives of the project:

- 1) Designing new teaching practice programs for students of WH based on assumptions of constructivism, reflective practice, gender equality, and current standards of teacher training in Poland and EU countries, bringing a qualitative change in preparing students for the profession.
- 2) Creating opportunities to enhance knowledge and develop factual-methodological competence by teachers-tutors.
- 3) Acquainting students with the latest educational and teaching methods and examples of their application in the educational practice.
- 4) Including IT/ITC technology in the teaching process connected with the organization and implementation of the teaching practice with the use of the educational platform.¹⁷

¹⁴ On practice see MATERNICKI, J.: *Perspektywiczny model nauczyciela historii*. Wiadomości Historyczne, 1996, No. 1, p. 9–22; MAZUR, J. – ZIELECKI, A. (edd.): *Praktyczne kształcenie kandydatów na nauczycieli historii*. Rzeszów 1998; GARSTKA, T. – MARSZAŁEK, J.: *Nauczyciel na starcie*. Warszawa 2000; KRÓLIKOWSKI, J.: *Opiekun nauczyciela. Teoria, refleksja, praktyka. Poradnik*. Warszawa 2002; PERRY, R.: *Teoria i praktyka. Proces stawiania się nauczycielem*. Warszawa 2000; WALKIEWICZ, B. (ed.): *Praktyki pedagogiczne w systemie kształcenia nauczycieli*. Warszawa 2006.

¹⁵ AUSZ, M.: *Praktyki śródroczne jako element przygotowania studentów Instytutu Historii UMCS do wykonywania zawodu nauczyciela*. In: Kudła, L. – Nowarski, C. (edd.): *Dydaktyka historii jako dyscyplina akademicka wobec wyzwań współczesności*. Kraków 2008, p. 240–253; AUSZ, M. – SZEWCZUK, D.: *Praktyki śródroczne w Prywatnym Katolickim Liceum im. Ks. K. Gostyńskiego jako przykład realizacji zadań kształcenia zawodowego studentów historii UMCS w Lublinie*. In: Jankowski, K. – Sitarzka, B. – Tkaczuk, C. (edd.): *Jakość kształcenia w szkole wyższej. Media i metody wspomagające jakość kształcenia*. Siedlce 2005, p. 451–456.

¹⁶ The project is co-financed from the European Social Fund for ESF Human Capital Operational Programme 2007–2013, Priority III: High quality of education, Activities 3.3 Improving the quality of teaching, Sub-activities 3.3.2 Effective system of training teachers. For further information see website: <http://www.praktyki.wh.umcs.lublin.pl/>.

¹⁷ See website: <http://www.pwh.umcs.pl/> [cit. 2011-11-20].

5) Establishing permanent cooperation of the Faculty of Humanities with schools and leading organs.

As part of the project, objectives with the use of electronic multimedia, including information technology are also implemented, i.e.:

- a) starting www.praktyki.wh.umcs platform containing teaching and training materials for students and teachers connected with the teaching practice;
- b) completing 90 hours of training by 360 teachers, including 45 % of conducted classes through the e-learning method from the educational platform;
- c) running an interactive mentor self-study course on the Moodle platform;
- d) surveillance of classes and documenting them with the aid of the latest means (cameras and digital cameras) which allows for extensive and frequent analysis of evaluated lessons;
- e) the whole teaching practice is supported and controlled by the educational platform, all the materials necessary for the implementation of the practice are in an electronic version on the platform and at any time may be used by students-trainees and teachers.

As mentioned above, the platform also serves as a base in which documents on the teaching practice are held. Both teachers and students get the documents needed in the teaching practice beforehand, however, in the case of loss, damage you may at any time print the necessary documents. The use of the e-learning platform undoubtedly has many advantages: enhancing communication, saving time, (i.e. the part of the tasks is carried out by students at home), it is a knowledge base, etc. In conclusion, one ought to ask if there any problems with the use of the e-learning platform? Yes, but they result rather from the lack of broader experience by both teachers and students of e-learning trainings. Students complain, among others, at time-consuming courses. This is caused by the transformed content from traditional exercises on the platform. Lecturers often forget to change their work style. There are also technical problems, for example students, in spite of requests still use the explorer browser which does not work well with the Moodle platform.

However, we are aware that these are the typical problems when it comes to implementing this type of projects which, well conducted, will bring notable effects in improving the quality of education.

Resumé

Multimédia v přípravě učitelů dějepisu. Na příkladu projektu www.praktyki.wh.umcs

Studie se zabývá uplatněním médií v přípravě budoucích učitelů dějepisu. Využití počítačů ve výuce přináší nové možnosti, např. zapojením multimediálních programů, internetu nebo e-learningu, nepochybně vede k zatraktivnění výukových hodin a umožňuje studentům rozvíjet jejich schopnosti. Žijeme ve světě stále více ovládaném moderními počítačovými technologiemi, počítač se již stal důležitým komponentem našeho profesního i osobního života a jeho role stále roste. Ve věku globalizace klade výuka na učitele velké nároky na poli informačních technologií. Učitel je nucen zvládnout a využívat rostoucí objem informací o světě a rozvíjet tuto schopnost i v případě žáků. Současnost vyžaduje urychlení procesu výuky i učení, a proto je třeba v rámci didaktiky věnovat zvýšenou pozornost práci s počítačem. Studie přináší konkrétní příklad využití e-learningu při přípravě studentů v rámci jejich odborné praxe.