Chapter II

Online Multimedia Educational Application for Teaching Multimedia Contents: An Experiment with Students in Higher Education

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Abstract

This chapter describes an experiment undertaken with higher education level students, which consists of utilizing an online multimedia educational application as an aid in teaching organizational multimedia. This course is taught to fourth year students at the Escola Superior de Ciências Empresariais (Higher School of Management Sciences, Setúbal, Portugal).
where the first author teaches. This chapter also describes the educational software model used for the planning, development and evaluation of the above-mentioned application. This model is the result of the integration of the model presented in the first author’s Master’s thesis with methods, methodologies and guidelines proposed by others. As for the resulting application, the manner in which it was applied and its evaluation are also presented in this document. The results obtained are then interpreted and future developments proposed.

Introduction

The use of information technology currently plays an important part in the day-to-day of the majority of public and private institutions. The traditional educational system also has had to adapt to this new way of doing things (Chambel et al., 1998) and has benefited significantly from the contribution of these types of technological applications (Azevedo, 1997; Hartley, 1999; McCarthy, 1995). Likewise, the reigning “professional philosophy” has also evolved towards the notion of life-long learning (Ryan et al., 2000). Professional careers are becoming increasingly demanding, implying a rapid adaptation to new circumstances and constant acceleration in education, preferably without dismissing employees (Abbey, 2000; Chute et al., 1999). All this leads us to e-learning: a teaching method which utilizes Internet technologies to supply, at a distance, a range of solutions for the acquisition and/or updating of knowledge (Machado, 2001; Rosenberg, 2001; Ryan et al., 2000).

The main reason for the growing popularity of this teaching method is the fact that it combines the advantages of using information technology in education (Azevedo, 1997) with the advantages of distance learning (Machado, 2001; Rosenberg, 2001), namely, access to information using the new instructional model “anytime, anyplace and anybody” (Aggarwal, 2000). This was, therefore, the main reason for choosing to develop and use an Online Multimedia Educational Application (OMEA) to serve as an aid in the teaching of Organizational Multimedia, a course taken by fourth year students at the Higher School of Management Sciences. As this is a compulsory course, the classes tended to be very heterogeneous, bringing together students from five different academic areas. Given that the students had different schedules and study constraints, this naturally implied a few difficulties when teaching the
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