

EDUCATIONAL PORTALS: PROBLEMS OF DEVELOPMENT

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In the end of 2002 the first federal educational portals were developed within the frameworks of the Federal Target Program «REOIS». In 2003 «federal portal building» continued so that by now the system has emerged that contains 16 portals, the federal portal «Russian education» (<http://www.edu.ru>) among them, which plays the leading role and has universal character. As for the rest of the portals, each of them has a special profile and target group. The system of educational portals has been working for 2 years, and one can analyse how far the developed informational systems correspond to the development task and whether they are viable or not.

The development task of the system of educational portals can be defined as «creating and developing a unified educational informational area». Thus, it is necessary to find out whether the system is unified and whether it is developing.

The task of unification is provided to a great extent by the portal «Russian education», which mainly determines the common methodology and technique of portal development. The analysis of the portal structure dynamics of its evolution makes it possible to claim that As for other federal portals, the picture is not so optimistic. One has to state that some profile portals has had no progress since their emergency. It may be related to «Russian general educational portal» (<http://school.edu.ru>), which might have become the site for professional communication of the community of teachers working in the system of general education as well as the source of information for school children. The portal has a well-developed structure; it includes regional segments and toolkit for self-inserting the data about their resources by the regional representatives. Unfortunately, the potential of the portal has not been realized. Only the regions - co-developers of the portal have introduced their resources. But even here the resources added after 2003 are practically absent. A similar situation can be observed in other portals. One can suggest that the portal activity is maintained by its developers looking at the news line. For example, the latest news at the Educational portal on support of educational process in the CIS countries (<http://www.sng.edu.ru/>) is dated by 28.12.2004.

For the portal to develop it is necessary for the services it suggests to be in demand (portal developing can be stimulated by target funding, of course; however, as one can see in the example with federal portals, the ceasing of funding results in the portal development slowdown or stop). The portal's being in demand provides a moral stimulus for its developers to continue working and makes it possible to raise the issue of portal commercialization or funding by the educational authorities. The portal's being in demand can be proved by the visiting statistics, without which one can not say what sections are visited and how often are they visited. In this respect the portal «Additional education for children» is impressive. It has the section «visiting statistics» (<http://www.vidod.edu.ru/stats/>), but it contains nothing but zeros. If the statistics is not accessible or reliable, it is useless to discuss the quality of the portal.

An educational portal should fulfill two basic functions: to systematize educational resources (or their meta-descriptions) and to organize educational programs making use of these resources. It is educational programs that should stimulate using resources; the resources not involved into educational programs are taking risk of being uncalled. Unfortunately, the educational component is not realized in any of federal portals.

When portal services do not include functioning educational programs the portal turns into an informational one or resource storage. Such portals can exist, but they are required to have a well-developed structure, navigation system; the resources should be selected by highly qualified experts. Otherwise we are taking the risk of getting a random selection of resources the quality of which does not correspond to educational tasks.

The educational program being realized, a teacher plays the role of an expert, who can recommend the portal resources as additional material to deeper reveal the content of the subject under study. Though the recommendation may be subjective they are given by professionals. If the resources are used for self-education, their quality should be ensured by the experts of the portal, and subjectivity of the selection should be excluded.

We think that the most promising way of development of the system of educational portals is the combination of the system of federal portals accumulating educational resources and providing general guidance with the dispersed system of regional portals providing the realization of educational programs.