CHARACTERISTICS OF PERSONNEL DISTANCE LEARNING PLATFORMS POSSIBILITIES IN THE STATE BORDER GUARD SERVICE OF UKRAINE

I. Bloshchynskyi
National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine
46, Shevchenka Str., Khmelnytskyi 29003 Ukraine
i.bloshch@gmail.com

Abstract. Possibilities of distance learning platforms for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine personnel training have been characterized in the article. European Commission’s border assistance mission to Moldova and Ukraine distance learning platform ILIAS and the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union distance learning platform Virtual Aula have been analyzed. Special attention was paid to revealing of possibilities of distance learning platform Moodle for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine personnel training. It enables to integrate European approach to education of law enforcement agents, to practice new methods of border guards’ training, provides online access to relevant information in the border area, which is the key to improving the important professional qualities of agents of law enforcement services in Europe, including Ukraine.

Keywords: distance learning platforms, State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, personnel.

Introduction

Modern pedagogic is characterized by rethinking and change of many views and approaches, rejection of some established traditions and stereotypes. Present situation requires teachers’ professionalism, expertise in modern educational technologies, ability of constant learning and self-improvement, creativity, certain pragmatism and rationalism. New approaches determine main task of social learning not only to educate, but also to teach future specialists how to acquire and constantly deepen the knowledge to form stable cognitive motivation.

It is necessary to update the content of education, increasing the role of fundamental knowledge and modern interdisciplinary skills, increasing the degree of integration of different subjects. Through the implementation of new organizational forms and practices distance learning (DL) in higher educational establishment will facilitate the formation and development of abilities to independent-searching, gathering and analyzing information, solving non-standard creative tasks, modeling and designing objects and phenomena of reality as well as own activities. The educational system of military and law enforcement agencies of Ukraine is integrated into the state educational system based on common legal and regulatory framework. Border agencies of the world use different DL platforms to improve staff training. State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (SBGSU) does not stand aside of this process, using learning platform MOODLE for implementation of DL.

The analysis of recent researches and publications. Many famous domestic and foreign researchers emphasized the growing role of DL means as the main direction of new informational technologies development (Hurevych, 2007; Polat et al., 2009). The ideas of DL implementation into pedagogical practice are investigated in the works of such scholars as (Andreev and Soldatkin, 1999; Kukharenko et al., 2008; Fedoruk, 2009), and others. Theoretical works regarding DL, include monographs of (Kozlakova, 2002; Gritsenko et al., 2004; Sysoeva, Aleksiu and Volovik, 2001); dissertations of (Sobayeva, 2001; Koicheva, 2004; Mushak, 2004; Khmel, 2006; Vladimiriska, 2006; Serdyukov, 1997).

Particularly noteworthy are the works of such scholars (Sviridyuk, 2007; Basova, 2000; Bodinenko, 2008; Domaskina, 2011; Zhevakina, 2009; Kirilenko, 2008; Kuzminsky, 2011; Mulina, 2001; Khutorskoi, 2012; Shunevych, 2008; Zhuklevska, 2005; Yatsenko 2009; Ovod, 2012; Karelina, 2005; Sharan 2010; Dolinsky, 2012; Oleinik, 2001; Stefanenko 2002; Kurland, Khmeliuk and Semenova 2005), they conducted investigations in the field of educational process organization in DL system at higher educational institutions.

The foreign educational experience reflected in the works of (Sahatelian, 2007; Reed, Frederickson and Clifford, 2006; Guri-Rosenblit, 2005; Moore, 1980; Keegan, 1993; Wedemeyer, 1981; Peters, 2010; Perry,
1976; Daniel, Mackintosh and Diehl, 2007) as well as in the works of other authors, requires careful study, analysis of search patterns and ways of using DL technology in Ukrainian educational practice. Present-day requirements led to creation of specialized educational portals and learning platforms for staff training in European police services, including Ukraine.

**Method**

Taking the foregoing into account the **purpose** of the article is to describe the possibilities of distance learning platforms for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine personnel training. To achieve this purpose the whole complex of research methods was used: theoretical methods of analysis, synthesis, substantiation, and generalization, systematization of theoretical and practical material of the research.

**Results**

The dynamics of forms and methods of border protection, introduction of advanced information technology (IT) into the basic levels of management and technical equipment of border units necessitate creation of a flexible system of ongoing training. Considering this, there is an urgent need for finding new ways to improve the quality of professional training in the field of security and protection of the state border, rethinking of national experience and generalization of foreign contribution in the field of border security and training that insure performing of the operational tasks at the border.

In the framework of cooperation with international organizations and law enforcement agencies the SBGSU established cooperation with the European Commission’s border assistance mission to Moldova and Ukraine (EUBAM), the European Agency for the Management of Operational Cooperation at the External Borders of the Member States of the European Union (FRONTEX), Europol, the World Customs Organization, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and others.

The main objective of EUBAM is to increase the capacity of border and customs authorities and other law enforcement and government agencies of Moldova and Ukraine. One of the ways of border guards training is the implementation of the ILIAS DL platform. This platform is designed to automate and implement elements of DL in the learning process. ILIAS has facilities for the development and publication of training courses, which allow creating and managing training groups. It is a full DL system that focuses on the use of the Internet. The course may form a group to work on the training module (EUBAM, 2015).

EUBAM uses ILIAS platform for DL in the international training course for heads (commanders) of border units in the study of the following modules: European Union (EU) Fundamentals, Schengen and cooperation; management and leadership; operational-search activities and investigation; border control and implementation of policies concerning foreigners; border security. Each module includes lessons with training materials, glossary and appendices. Each lesson includes sections and questions, which should be studied in the suggested order. In addition, there is a separate section called “Course Forum” where any student is able to communicate with a teacher or other students, ask for help in solving technical and other problems. Students can read received messages or write their own ones, attach photos (pictures) or files. If necessary, it is an option to receive e-mail information in response to the messages. After completing the modules students pass tests and write essays (works), which are aimed at improving writing skills and allow to individualize the learning process, increase self-esteem of students and evaluate their progress in writing, enable intercommunication between teachers and other students.

An important area of cooperation between Ukraine and the EU in the field of training and postgraduate training is border cooperation with FRONTEX agency, which involves SBGSU participation in joint operations at the border and training projects, exchange of information and implementation of joint risk analysis (SBGSU, 2015; FRONTEX, 2015). Training projects also cover issues such as introduction of unified training program for EU border guards (Common Core Curriculum) and common web platform called “Virtual Aula”, detection of stolen cars and counterfeit documents, dog handlers training and English language learning (Common Core Curriculum for Border Guard Basic training in the European Union, 2012).

The main purpose of “Virtual Aula” web platform, the creation of which was initiated in February 2010, is to provide professionals engaged in training of border guards (teachers, instructors, coaches, external experts on training, etc.) with the information about educational programs conducted in Europe. Structurally, this platform consists of the following modules: Module of cooperation with partner academies, Module of meetings management, projects Module, actions plan Module, Notice board Module, Module of mass media and Module with extended access rights for national administrators (Virtual Aula, 2015).
From the main menu authorized users can get detailed information on European countries, namely geopolitical data about the country; its law enforcement agencies responsible for border security; schools, where the training of border guards is provided; checkpoints across the state border. Information about training programs for border guards held by FRONTEX, EU participating countries, associated countries and Schengen countries which signed the working agreement are presented on the home page of the recently updated platform. Users can also post articles and receive feedback in the form of relevant comments from other users to discuss these articles. Additionally, there is a possibility to conduct interactive discussions on issues related to law enforcement domain.

Once users join Virtual Aula, they can not only communicate with their national administrators, but also to express themselves, sharing ideas and arguments, or post own comments on specific issues connected with the learning process. Articles, which users can access from the main page, are written by the experts of law enforcement agencies in Europe on border issues. The training section contains articles of Training Department Project Managers of FRONTEX agency, experts on border issues and training members responsible for the content posted by them. Virtual Aula platform gives the possibility to take the following DL courses: Masters studies, EU Border Guard canine teams training, English communication, Basic Border Guard training, Fundamental rights, Anti-trafficking in human beings, Schengen evaluators training, Guest officers training, Profile / intelligence gathering, Return operations, False or forged documents, Detection of stolen vehicles, European Border Guard Teams training.

To implement DL in the SBGSU Moodle learning platform (modular and dynamic, object-oriented educational environment, the software package for creating and conducting DL courses) is installed on the computers connected to Intranet local network. The server is geographically located at the National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine named after Bohdan Khmelnytskyi (NASBGSU) in city of Khmelnytskyi). A DL web portal with the necessary training information and reference resources, electronic library and registration form has been developed (gcdn.dpsu, 2015). This software is designed according to the standards of educational information systems and features a large number of tools that allow students to work at levels of student - student, student - teacher, teacher - student. The platform is easy to use, both for the teacher and for the trainees. Moodle system provides the ability for instructors to create courses of varied complexity and structure. For this purpose the system is provided with a large number of modules that allow users to host lectures, texts, Web pages, files of various formats, directories. Due to the fact that the system is protected from unwanted users, it is convenient to conduct such types of study as: chat, forum, etc.

The structure of distance learning courses (DLC) includes organizational-methodical; referencing; communicative; identification-supervising; educational components. In particular, the following courses for officers’ advanced training were conducted for: the chiefs of border protection divisions; multipliers concerning passport documents protection and possible methods of documents falsification; multipliers in the fields of Ukrainian legislation and the Schengen law in sphere of the border control; promotion reserve officers for the position of the chiefs of border protection divisions, deputy chiefs of border protection divisions, deputy chiefs of border detachments; a course on "Human rights" which was developed by the International Organization for Migration. Besides NASBGSU, DLCs for junior personnel are conducted on basis of three educational centers: Educational centre of personnel training, Marine protection training centre, Velyki Mosty Educational border detachment. Moodle learning environment also includes tools of management, self-learning, communication and evaluation of academic achievements of students.

Moodle learning environment provides all the basic communication mechanisms: perceptive (responsible for the perception); interactive (for the organization of interaction); communicative (responsible for the exchange of information). A successful and professional teacher serves as a catalyst for communication, providing quick feedback, takes into account a variety of learning styles, paying attention to the development not only intellectual but also moral qualities. It should be noted that the combination of the electronic environment and daily educational process has the following positive effects: simplifies the process of informing students about certain changes, additions, adjustments disciplines; increases the possibility of active involvement and use of methodical, literary base; accelerates feedback; thus independent activities of SBGSU personnel can be effectively aligned, adjusted and planned.

**Discussion**

Using the ILIAS, Virtual Aula and Moodle platforms enables to comprehend European approach to education of law enforcement agents, to practice new methods of border guards’ training, provides online
access to relevant information in the border area, which is the key to improving the important professional qualities of agents of law enforcement services in Europe, including Ukraine. This in turn involves the implementation of the basic principles of teaching: interactivity, individualization, adaptability, integration, visibility, dynamic and multi-access educational information, assessment of academic achievements of students.

Conclusions

The introduction of DLCs in SBGSU permits personnel of border units to raise their skills while performing service duties and contributes to significant savings of public funds. The use of these platforms allows activating the work of students and significantly increases the effectiveness of training courses, promotes better training of future border guard officers to professional activities, and provides unlimited access to educational information, expanding the range of interaction between teacher and students, contributes to the implementation of student-centered learning.

References


