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DOI: 10.26410/SF_2/21/9

THE USE OF E-LEARNING IN THE EDUCATION OF SPECIALISTS ON SECURITY – LATVIAN SOLUTIONS

Abstract

In the issues of security and public order the demand for well-trained, specialized staff, has been growing for years. Experts are included in the program of many universities specializing, among others, in the field of state border protection and border traffic control. This also applies to the State Border Guard College, which educates high-class specialists in the Republic of Latvia. The purpose of the article is to present the solutions of distance education in one of the Latvian universities in terms of security. In the preparation of the article quantitative methods were exploited. The content of the article shows that for many years the State Border Guard College has been showing an increased interest in e-education and the search for opportunities to use information and communication technologies. As a result, the number of computers per student and online educational resources are widened. Hence, the skills of teachers in applying modern technologies in didactics grows. Progress in financial outlays, courses for teachers, ICT promotion and dissemination of e-learning technologies are a necessity arising from the development of the information society idea.

Keywords

security, public safety, public order, protection of the state border, education, education for security, e-learning

Introduction

Nowadays, security¹ is perceived through the prism of guaranteeing “conditions” that would ensure the existence of the own statehood, sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-intervention in internal affairs. Conditions enabling the development of personality and national identity, the own language, economy, science and other areas of life. It is therefore about shaping a situation that could ensure the implementation of the aims, values, aspirations of a given state or society, its permanent and vital interests. This may be achieved by eliminating the sources and causes of internal and external conflicts”².

The appropriate level of security³ optimizes the desired development of society.⁴ In order to ensure and maintain its high standards, it is necessary to recognize and diagnose accurately threats, as well as to create a legal and institutional system for the protection of values protected and guaranteed by law. To achieve the above, education is also needed, including education for security as well as e-learning.

In the realities of the 21st century, the need to acquire, complete knowledge and acquire new skills, and even

change jobs, has become a very common phenomenon. The knowledge acquired during education and later professional activity is subject to a constant process of depreciation. It is a natural process that leading to the loss of professional skills and, often, to the necessity to change a profession. Dynamically developing technologies, introduced in short intervals, new solutions, changes in the functioning of the organization lead to the loss of the ability to adapt to the new conditions⁵.

Research assumptions

During the organization of the research process, the general and specific meaning of the methodology⁶ was introduced. The research was carried in the following stages, which respectively included the phase⁷.

- conceptual (conceptualizing research) – discussion, confrontation, improvement, and changes;
- executive (research implementation) – which does not allow for changes and therefore was carried out strictly according to the established assumptions;
- final (finalizing the research) – which was the summary of the research effort.

¹ A. Babiński, *W poszukiwaniu definicji bezpieczeństwa publicznego*, „Zeszyty Naukowe Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej im. Witelona”, No. 35(2), Legnica 2020 r., p. 105.

² W. Malendowski, *Pokój i bezpieczeństwo międzynarodowe* [in:] W. Malendowski, Cz. Mojsiewicz (red.), *Stosunki międzynarodowe*, Wrocław 2000, p. 386.

³ More: B. Wiśniewski, *Przygotowania obronne resortu spraw wewnętrznych*, Szczytno 2014, p. 79.

⁴ B. Wiśniewski, R. Kowalski, J. Kozioł, M. Szyłkowska, *Bezpieczeństwo procesów decyzyjnych*, Wrocław 2018, p. 5.

⁵ T. Staniszewski, *Deprecjacja w środowisku pracy. Implikacje dla zawodu nauczyciela*, „Gospodarka. Rynek. Edukacja” 2014, No. 15/4, p. 47–56, <<http://bazhum.pl/bib/article/466030/>> [access: 23.02.2020].

⁶ A. Czupryński, *Właściwości badań naukowych bezpieczeństwa*, [in:] B. Wiśniewski (red.), *Bezpieczeństwo w teorii i badaniach naukowych*, Szczytno 2011, p. 117.

⁷ M. Cieślarczyk, *Metody, techniki i narzędzia badawcze oraz elementy statystyki stosowane w pracach magisterskich i doktorskich*, Warszawa 2003, p. 22–23.

In the course of the research process, knowledge derived from the literature on the subject was exploited. During the research, bibliographic method, also known as the method of source analysis was used. The main key of this method is to analyse the factual material contained in the source materials, legal acts or in the literature on the subject. Other theoretical methods will be accomplished to analyse the content sources.

Education and security – mutual relations

Education and safety⁸ are two closely related concepts and dependencies, in which strength and significance ranges are evidenced by the prism of the effectiveness of the projects undertaken in this area. It is worth noting that there is no specific form of safety education⁹.

Security is the subject to rapid and sometimes even chaotic changes. In other words, security as a process means the continuous activity of individuals, local communities, states, regions and international organizations¹⁰.

The modern world requires more and more from education. It focuses primarily on developing creativity and creative thinking. The global world is growing faster than ever before. The globalized influence of the mass media

is becoming an essential part of a young person, a new society. This was mainly due to the easy access to the Internet. Digitalisation, networking and fast flow of information create a new order in the world of a modern IT society. This forces education to adapt to contemporary realities and new generations. Therefore, it is reasonable that education puts a shall put the pressure on the transformation and adaptation of knowledge systems in such a way that they support and stimulate human activity¹¹.

Education is a broader concept than training. It refers to many institutions and socio-cultural processes which, through their actions, prepare and shape the personality of people in a specific intentional direction characterized by a certain system of preferred values¹². Therefore, it is important that education in the field of public safety is carried out by universities that are related to activities in this field. Such a university is – among others – the State Border Guard College, which educates in the spirit of security¹³.

In order to meet the requirements of today's society, which is surrounded by highly developed technology in its everyday life, it is necessary to give the possibility of using it also in this process. That is why many universities in Poland and abroad do their best to use modern technologies in the educational process. It is also very important that remote learning

⁸ More: *Współczesne postrzeganie bezpieczeństwa*, K. Jałoszyński, B. Wiśniewski, T. Wojtuszek (red. nauk.), Bielsko – Biała 2007, p. 176.

⁹ M. Plebańska, *Tajniki edukacji na odległość*, Warszawa 2011, p. 244.

¹⁰ *Bezpieczeństwo w teorii i badaniach naukowych Wydział II uzupełnione i uaktualnione*, B. Wiśniewski (red. nauk.), Wyższa Szkoła Policji w Szczytnie, Szczytno 2018, p. 15.

¹¹ *Bezpieczeństwo w teorii i badaniach naukowych*, Wydanie trzecie uzupełnione i poszerzone, B. Wiśniewski (red. nauk.), Szczytno 2021, p. 209.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 211.

¹³ M. Hejduk, *Doskonalenie kształcenia online w zakresie bezpieczeństwa publicznego w szkole wyższej*, Szczytno 2020.

has neither time nor distance limitations. The main advantage of the e-learning is the possibility of having it everywhere and at any time.

For years an increased interest in e-education and in the use of ICT can be observed in higher education, mainly at university level. The rate of computers per student, the state of internet educational resources and skills of teachers in using modern technologies are improving.

However, further expenditures in the field of teacher training, promotion of modern ICT and dissemination of e-learning technologies are necessary in the light of the development of the idea of the information society, which is also reflected in government initiatives for an e-education.

Until recently, it was thought that 20 years of education was a guarantee of a stable job for the average person until the end of their working life¹⁴. At present, a very important element in life-long education is the formation of internal readiness of modern society for very large changes connected with the development of every area of social life. Today such a readiness is quite difficult, as if by force of tradition, young people wonder what do they want to be in life and correlate this thought with a learned profession¹⁵.

¹⁴ W. Cellary, *Szansy młodzieży w gospodarce wobec globalnego społeczeństwa informacyjnego i gospodarki opartej na wiedzy. Polska w Unii Europejskiej wobec wyzwań Globalnego Społeczeństwa Informacyjnego*, Posiedzenie plenarne Komitetu PAN „Polska w Zjednoczonej Europie”, June 2004.

¹⁵ M. Dąbrowski, *Kształcenie zdalne w doskonaleniu osób dorosłych w zakresie nowych umiejętności zawodowych*, Katowice 2018, p. 308.

Characteristics of the Latvian solutions

State Border Guard College, located in Rezekne, has been functioning since 1992. It is a public university in Latvia functioning within the structures of the State Border Guard Service of the Republic of Latvia¹⁶ and is highly regarded in the Latvian academic environment.

The basic tasks of the school include the development and implementation of professional educational programmes at the level of first degree studies and their implementation, as well as providing opportunities for professional development in subsequent years of service and work of its graduates. The tasks of the university also include the promotion, coordination and conduct of research work in the field of security, including – mainly by virtue of its jurisdiction – in the area of public safety.

The university, which has a history of less than thirty years, already has a lot of valuable experience in security education, not only in the traditional form of teaching, but also in applying the distance learning methods and techniques.

In 2008, the e-learning system Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment)¹⁷ was introduced at the State Border Guard College. This system is designed to manage and implement e-learning courses. It mainly provides supplementary train-

¹⁶ <http://www.rs.gov.lv/>, [access: 24.03.2020 r.]

¹⁷ M. Spridzāns, J. Pavlovičs, *Elektroniskās apmācības attīstība Valsts robežsardzes koledža. Valsts policijas koledžas IV starptautiskās zinātniskās konference “Moderno tehnoloģiju izmantošana tiesībsardzības institūciju darbā”. un to darbinieku izglītošana” materiāli* — Rīga 2015, p. 203.

ing. The number of such courses is constantly increasing, as well as the trend of transferring traditional courses to the e-learning component¹⁸.

In early 2014, at the State Border Guard College, a concept on harnessing the potential of e-learning was adopted. Teachers were introduced to the Moodle system and e-course development both in theory and in practice. They were trained in structuring information and developing training resources and in best practices used in distance education¹⁹.

Interviews with State Border Guard College staff indicate that the IT and Communications Department manages and monitors the server on which the training platform is hosted. It does not only manages the users on the platform, but also works with the school staff and advising teachers on the technical and methodological issues necessary for the creation of online training. Of course, the whole process of remote education and the approval of the course is supervised by a committee appointed especially for this purpose.

It is important to note that the teachers at this university organise the courses themselves and are responsible for their content. Mostly courses for students are run in this form, but there are also courses for university staff, dog handlers, other border guard and civil guard services.

The interactive modules and electronic quizzes are used to improve stu-

dent learning to make the training more attractive.²⁰

The most common form of e-learning is a hybrid form, i.e. blended-learning. It is a form of learning, combining traditional classes with activities conducted remotely with the use of techniques and methods of distance education²¹.

As a compensation for the preparation of training in the form of e-learning, lecturers receive, among other things, additional days off work. E-learning not only allows to reduce financial expenses on training, but what is extremely significant, it allows not to take experts away from the workplace, which greatly facilitates service planning.

The Moodle system either includes electronic text documents, presentations, video, audio and electronic tests to facilitate the learning process. At the time of the inception of the platform, learners were only able to access the resources from the intranet and there was no way to access them from public networks, which was a great inconvenience. However, since the beginning of 2015, the Moodle system has also been available on public networks. The purchase of a new server was specifically dedicated to e-learning development. In addition, new computers were installed and better WI-FI coverage was provided, allowing learners to take full advantage of the e-environment²² During this time a number of training courses were held to prepare both lecturers and students for the new forms of teaching²³. All materi-

¹⁸ M. Spridzāns, *Peculiarities of teacher–student interaction in e-learning environment, State Border Guard College, Latvia* 2018, p. 144.

¹⁹ M. Spridzāns, J. Pavlovičs, *Perspectives on developing e-learning at the State Border Guard College of the Republic of Latvia, "Border Security and Management"* 2018, Vol 2, No. 7, p. 113.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ See, M. Hyla, *Przewodnik po e-learningu*, Kraków 2005.

²² *Ibidem*, p. 203.

²³ *Ibidem*, p. 143.

als that have been transferred to Moodle must be approved by the board, which includes appointed teachers. However, an important added value of e-learning is the feedback received from students after each course is completed, which includes suggestions as to what improvements should be made²⁴. The Moodle platform is also used to deliver a number of comprehensive courses, e.g. Specialised English Terminology, Administrative Documentation, Radiometric Control, Personnel Management. In addition, a number of hybrid courses are delivered on this system, e.g. Public Safety.

The concept of the e-learning system at the State Border Guard College envisages a gradual transformation of specific qualification courses in an e-environment. To this aim, teachers are reviewing whether the courses they attend and teach in a traditional format can be delivered remotely taking into account the confidentiality of information made available to the public²⁵. The key issues concerned the gradual reduction of workload of teachers and ensuring a balance between theory and practice. In order to overcome the lack of face-to-face interaction in the English e-course, more time was spent on telephone calls, but due to the shift patterns of the border guards, the scheduling of calls proved to be very complicated, resulting in the introduction of arrangements requiring a phone call to be made at least once every fortnight.

In order to improve e-learning at the university, several surveys were carried out and the results were deeply

analysed. It was obtained that 60% of the teachers confirm that e-learning is a useful way to improve their qualification system, but 80% of them admit that they lack in-depth knowledge about creating e-learning courses²⁶ and, moreover, they find it difficult to get rid of stereotypes and old habits.

The development of e-learning at the State Border Guard College was one of the priorities aimed at facilitating learning opportunities²⁷. The subject of e-learning development at the college was taken up by the Ministry of Interior, which planned to analyse ways of developing e-learning by finding common solutions and opportunities to standardise e-learning platforms among subordinate law enforcement training institutions. In order to find optimal solutions, research work was undertaken, which concerned, among others, ways of improving teacher-student interaction in the e-learning system for border guards. During their work and the implementation of the e-learning courses, several differences in communication between students and the lecturer were identified in comparison with traditional learning. The collected suggestions and best practice proposals for teacher-student interaction were presented to the university authorities to improve the effects of e-learning performance²⁸.

²⁴ Ibidem, p. 145.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 147.

²⁶ M. Spridzāns, J. Pavlovičs, *Perspectives on developing...*, wyd. cyt., p. 114.

²⁷ M. Spridzāns, J. Pavlovičs, *Elektroniskās apmācības at-tistība...*, wyd. cyt., p. 202.

²⁸ M. Spridzāns, *Peculiarities of teacher-student interaction in e-learning environment, State Border Guard College, Latvia 2018*, p.144.

It is worth mentioning that the results of the studies indicated that often the demands on teachers are higher for e-learning courses than for traditional teaching²⁹. These studies also indicate that without the participation of the teacher, distance communication tends to decrease and eventually disappear³⁰.

Prior to the introduction of the Moodle platform to schools, there were many initiatives aimed at spreading innovation in teaching. One of the first and more important events to confirm these initiatives was the organisation of international research conferences entitled *Innovations in Border Guard Vocational Training*. The first was in progress already in 2005. At present, there is a plethora of international meetings in the field of dissemination of modern technological solutions in the activities of colleges, in which the staff of the State Border Guard College participated. Many times the State Border College were also organizers of such undertakings, e.g. in January 2016 in Rezekne the annual meeting of the management of training institutions of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia was held, summarizing the cooperation in the field of training of border services. The meeting of the management of the formations responsible for the protection of state borders was a summary of their cooperation within the framework of initiatives implemented in 2015 and 2016 in selected areas concerning innovations in professional training of border service officers.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Ibidem, p. 155

Conclusions

In conclusion, it should be emphasised that the forms of distance learning at the State Border Guard College are developed and adapted to the needs of contemporary educational challenges³¹. However, the significance of the fact that the faculty of the college is permanently improving the process of remote education through the own work, self-education, not only in terms of content, but above all, in terms of methodology and technology, allowing for optimal use of modern technologies and research. Nowadays, by all means, it is worth to remember that didactics in a strictly old-fashioned way is insufficient. Distance learning, “using information technology in the form of e-learning platforms, does not generally require any specialised computer equipment (...) and the minimum hardware requirements are not excessive”³².

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³¹ More: *Bezpieczeństwo. Teoria-Badania-Praktyka*, red. nauk. A. Czupryński, B. Wiśniewski, J. Zboina, Józefów 2015, p. 41-42 oraz *Zarządzanie kryzysowe. Teoria, praktyka, konteksty, badania*, red. nauk. J. Stawnicka, B. Wiśniewski, R. Socha, Szczytno 2011, p. 58.

³² *Szkoły z e-learningiem w Polsce. Nauczanie na odległość w polskich szkołach*, <https://www.ourkids.net/pl/szkoly-e-learning.php#maincontent> [access: 16.02.2021].

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