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Concept of distance learning center

2021.

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Introduction

Distance Learning (ADL) is a modern method of education delivery that is becoming an important component of both civilian and military education as the era of rapid technological development has changed the labor market and created the need to develop new skills. Distance learning promotes a quality, modern and flexible learning environment, access to a wide range of information, which, itself, ensures an effective education process.

Distance learning incorporates technologies such as: distance interactive courses, webinars, forums, video tutorials and catalogs of electronic materials.

The purpose of this document is to determine (1) the needs / urgency of the introduction of distance learning in the Georgian Defense Forces; (2) goals / objectives; (3) accompanying measures; (4) financial part and (5) the expected results.

Distance learning is in line with Georgia's strategic documents on the importance of education and professional growth in the defense sector. For the demonstration purposes, the defense capabilities of the Georgian National Military Strategy highlight the growing modernization and professionalism of the defense forces. It states that "one of the priorities of the Ministry of Defense is to increase the professionalism of civilian and military personnel through the institutionalization of effective personnel management systems."

Teaching in the modern world implies the following classes:

- Traditional (classroom) face to face teaching ;
- Distance face to face teaching;
- Enriched face to face teaching;

National Military Strategy of Georgia 2014 p. 7.

- Blended classroom teaching;
- Distance teaching;
- Self-learner;

Urgency.

The urgency of the introduction of distance learning in the military in the modern era is due to several factors. Some of them can be reviewed as an example:

1. Dynamic changes in the development of military affairs require the constant improvement of the professional knowledge and skills that a professional military serviceman must possess. This requires increasing the role of continuous training in the defense forces;
2. Modern challenges require highly qualified personnel; It is advisable to use modern technologies to improve the qualification of the staff;
3. Knowledge of the military personnel of the contract army, modern, flexible and effective educational process is needed to improve the skills;
4. Distance learning will increase access to education and facilitate the continuous development of the military;
5. Distance learning enables flexible updating and delivery of learning processes and materials;
6. Distance learning reduces the costs of the learning process, administration, organization and provision of both financial and time and human resources;
7. Distance learning can also be considered for training the reserve as well. The inclusion of a distance learning component in the training of reserve forces will make the process more efficient.

Based on all of the above, distance learning has great potential for continuous, modern, flexible, effective and inexpensive learning.

Goals and Objectives of Introduction of Distance Learning (ADL). The main goal of the introduction, application and development of distance learning in the Defense Forces is to create a quality, modern and flexible training environment based on modern technologies and principles of distance learning.

The goals of the introduction of distance learning in the Defense Forces are:

- Raising the level of education and qualifications of military servicemen and civilian personnel;
- Knowledge retention and enhancement - According to international practice and experience, distance learning increases the retention rate of accumulated knowledge compared to traditional teaching methods. It also allows the Junkers / trainee to deepen their knowledge and receive a variety of information;
- Increasing access to education - The introduction of distance learning will also help improve access to education in military educational institutions. First of all, the possibility of increasing the number of course participants is noteworthy. In this regard, the advantage of distance learning directly responds to the circumstance observed in the process of professional growth of employees in the strategy of development of the civilian personnel management system - "When the number of participants exceeds the number of training programs or there is a limitation of financial resources,

²John Dexter Fletcher. *The Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) Vision and Getting From Here to There*. \No IDA/HQ-D-3212. INSTITUTE FOR DEFENSE ANALYSES ALEXANDRIA VA, 2005.

it becomes necessary to prioritize curriculum participants according to the needs of the departments. ” In addition, with the help of distance learning, course participants will be able to access the course materials at any time, with any convenient device (be it a laptop, tablet or mobile phone). Therefore, distance learning will allow participants to plan learning at different rates, according to individual capabilities and accessibility.

- Profitability of teaching - Another advantage of introducing distance learning is its profitability. Distance learning can save time as well as financial and human resources. In this regard, it is important to avoid multiple financial costs such as accommodation, meals, travel and remuneration for academic staff. In addition, based on international studies, it can be said that in some cases distance learning saves a learner's time compared to traditional methods. It should also be noted that distance learning does not require that course participants miss their work.
- Approximation to NATO Training Standards - The introduction of distance learning due to its modern significance will be another step forward in improving the compatibility of the Georgian Defense Forces with NATO training standards. It should also be noted that distance learning will help increase the level of readiness for international training and missions.

The following key objectives can be identified for the implementation of the set goals:

Civil Personnel Management System Development Strategy, 2013. p 15

⁴ *Ibid, op. cit*, Fletcher

1. Solve and provide educational-methodological, information and communication, material-technical, financial, legislative, organizational and personnel issues;
2. Raising the awareness of distance learning and studying the needs by presenting distance learning at all levels of the Ministry;
3. Creating distance courses relevant to the requirements of the Defense Forces;
4. The transition from fragmented use of distance learning to the systemic one;
5. Ensuring confidentiality and security.

It will be reasonable to discuss some of the listed tasks.

Legislative provision includes the following normative and legislative regulations:

- Regulation of interoperability between existing and distance learning;
- Regulation of copyright on materials and methodology developed for distance learning;
- Regulating access to distance learning resources, including confidential materials;
- Regulating the financial interests of the authors of the resources.

Training-methodological support includes:

- development of training materials for distance learning, sharing the experience of foreign partners (e.g. NATO Handbook);
- Cooperation with multilateral and bilateral partners, e.g. ALD Global partnership, NTG IT&ED, PfPC ADL working group, Deep;

- Train the trainers;
- Train subject experts;
- Preparation of teaching materials taking into account the modern requirements of distance learning.

Information and communication provision includes:

- Computer-technical support required for the creation of distance learning courses;
- Software required to create distance learning courses;
- Maintaining and ensuring safe and continuous work of the learning resource;
- Provide continuous connection to learning resources from anywhere;
- Providing systems for secure backup of materials;
- Video lab provision- hardware and software needed to create video, audio and photo material;
- Technical and software required for video conferencing and webinars.

Functions of distance learning center

The Distance Learning Center ensures the continuous and quality management of the training process at the National Defense Academy, as well as coordinates the development of distance learning opportunities in the Defense Forces and the sharing of experience by foreign partners. The center will develop an LMS (Learning Management System) platform. It will support the structural units of the Defense Forces and will create distance courses of different types and subjects according to their needs. It will also train specialists, teachers and subject experts (Train the Trainer).

Development of the LMS (Learning Management System) platform includes:

- The operation of the platform on the principle of continuous access;
- Development of the platform interface;
- Smooth and safe operation of the training platform.

Creating a distance learning course involves a number of fundamental tasks, such as: Finding a relevant expert in the subject, creating and processing course materials (including text, graphics, video and audio), creating a distance course, piloting and uploading to a learning platform.

The course development and maintenance include:

- Extracting the results of the participants, processing them and delivering them to the authorized stakeholders;
- Changing the content of courses according to modern challenges;
- Analysis of statistics of participants - xAPI (Experience Application programming Interface).

The Center for Defense Forces will conduct in-house research to identify new needs and create new courses based on research or update existing ones.

The Distance Learning Center will coordinate groups working in this direction throughout the Ministry, assisting them with the technical facilities and specialist services available at the Center.

Primary works required for the establishment of a distance learning center

The first steps to be taken to establish a distance learning center are:

- Setting goals at the level of the Defense Forces and the National Defense Academy to accurately and clearly define the process of introduction and development of distance learning;
- Formation and retraining of a working group;
- Conducting in-house consultations. The mentioned consultations will facilitate communication and work process efficiency. It will also be possible to define the roles of different structural units in the defense forces in the development of distance learning.
- Establishing supportive directions from partners;
- Solving technical issues - allocating/arranging workspace and providing relevant material and technical resources;
- Setting up video laboratories;
- Development of international cooperation.

Structure of primary works

Activity	Responsible
Setting goals at the level of the defense forces	- Temporary Working Group of the Defense Forces National Defence Academy
Conducting inter-agency consultations	- Temporary working group of the Defense Forces - National Defence Academy
Defining roles at the structural level	- Temporary working group of the Defense Forces - National Defence Academy
Allocation/arrangement of a working space	- National Defence Academy
Provision with material and technical resources	- National Defence Academy
Identify areas of support from partners	- National Defence Academy - Relevant services of the Defense forces
Development of international cooperation	- National Defence Academy - Relevant services of the Defense Forces

Potential directions of distance learning development

It is necessary to determine the current directions of the Defense Forces / National Defence Academy for the development of distance learning. In this regard, it would be appropriate to establish several conditional directions, for example:

- Creating courses tailored to the needs of the various structural units of the Defense Forces;
- Creating preparatory programs for career and professional development courses in the Defense Forces;

- Preparation
- of so-called "micro learning" courses for the military. These courses can be used by Junkers and personnel of the Academy, as well as in the Georgian Defence Forces;
- Due to the active development of Junkers/ trainee exchange projects at the Academy with Junkers/ trainees of defence higher education institutions of NATO member-countries. It is important for the National Defence Academy to create English language courses to enable Junkers to participate fully in exchange projects;
- Foreign Language Courses - Adding distance learning courses in line with international practice makes traditional foreign language courses more effective;
- Given that public schools across the region are actively using the elective civil defence course, it is possible that a number of its components will be supported by distance learning courses prepared by the National Defence Academy Distance Learning Center;
- Create appropriate courses for the reserve training system, which will further increase the level of reserve training.

The financial structure

At the initial stage, the following areas of expenditure can be defined in a general manner:

- Computer equipment;
- Software;
- Salary fund of main personnel;
- Remuneration of invited subject experts;
- Business trip expenses;

Expected results

As distance learning is an integral part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's training of military personnel, its introduction will help bring Georgia's defence forces closer to NATO training standards.

In addition, the introduction of such modern training methods will improve the readiness of Georgian Defence Forces servicemen for international training and missions.

It is expected that the development of distance learning will contribute to raising the level of both military and civilian education in the defense forces. It is also expected to improve the professional skills of the employees of different structural units in the Defence Forces.

Distance learning courses will eliminate the issue of limiting the number of course participants and as a result the Defence Forces will get more professional staff. It should also be noted that distance learning courses allow participants to have constant access to course materials, which will help them deepen and maintain their knowledge.

Based on international experience, it can be said that distance learning will reduce the cost of courses several times in the long run.

The establishment of a distance learning center at the National Defence Academy and its active involvement in the ongoing training process at the academy, at the undergraduate and graduate levels, will help increase the effectiveness of the teaching of military / civilian training components.

In addition, the introduction of social projects will increase the awareness and prestige of the National Defence Academy and the Defence Forces. Overall,

the introduction of distance learning in the Georgian Defence Forces will improve access to educational activities, raise the professional level of staff and help save time and financial resources.

Tasks and activities:

Task	Activity	Date
Development/implementation of the Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishment of a temporary working group; ● Sharing experience of foreign partners; ● Development/approval of the Concept. 	2020 2021.
Establishment of Distance Learning Center	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Making changes to staff list- approval of a new staff list; ● Finding subject experts, staffing the Center; ● Retraining of the Center specialists; ● Identification of support directions from foreign partners - appropriate support; ● Finding the necessary resources; ● Setting up video laboratories; Technical equipment; 	2020 2021.
Develop a strategy for the development of distance learning in the Defence Forces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishment of a temporary working group; ● Conducting presentations by the Center for stakeholders; ● SWOT Analysis; ● Inter-agency consultations; ● Formulating the strategic goals and tasks; ● Determining courses according to priorities; ● Development of the monitoring mechanisms 	2021.

	<p>of the Strategic Development Plan;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Forming the monitoring group; 	
Integrating the distance learning component into the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training of relevant specialists in the Defence Forces; ● Creating priority courses; ● Piloting the courses; ● Launching the courses. 	2021-2022.
Development of the LMS (Learning Management System) platform;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finding the web-resources; ● Install the selected platform and configure its settings; ● Integrate the video conferencing function on the selected platform. 	2021.
Development of the learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Analyze the initial results of the courses; ● Updating current courses; ● Creating courses tailored to the demand; ● Vocational training of specialists of the Distance Learning Center; 	2023 - 2025.
Creating preparatory courses for international training and missions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Determining priority courses; ● Finding/retraining of appropriate specialists; ● Providing with necessary resources; ● Involvement of foreign experts; ● Development/implementation of international courses. 	2024-2025.
<p><u>Analysis of participants' statistics</u></p> <p><u>Introduction of the system - xAPI (Experience API-Application Programming Interface)</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Finding relevant specialists for the program; ● Technical provision-arrangement of the system; ● integration of the system in the learning process; ● Creating adapted courses-tests, piloting and involvement in the teaching-examination process. 	2025-2026.

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