Introducing the Concept of Distance Learning for Public Servants Training in Regional Institutes of National Academy of Public Administration in Ukraine

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Abstract

Challenges in the public sector of Ukraine that is inherent in reforms, transformation and changing agendas entail the need for continuous training, re-skilling and increased professionalism of public servants which hardly could be achieved in the traditional classroom learning environment. The main aim of this article is to examine the implementation of the Distance Learning (DL) project and the new model of collaborative relationships between (a) the training contractor (Institutional Strengthening Project (Ukraine) (ISP(U)) at London Metropolitan University), (b) the training provider (Distance Learning Department at National University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute” (NTU KhPI)) and (c) four Regional Institutes (RI’s) of National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) (in Dnipropetrov’sk, Kharkiv, L’viv and Odesa) that evolved over the years. In response to the changing needs of Regional Institutes in 2002 the ISP (U) has shifted the focus of its activities from the capacity building to the implementation of acquired skills and methodologies through the design and development of the pilot DL programme for the in-service training:

- closer co-operation and good communication channels were established across four Regional Institutes involving different sets of practitioners and academic staff;
- using the intensive workshops the concept of integrated VLE “Web-Class KhPI” was introduced to the selected members of RI’s staff by the specialists of DL Department from NTUKhPI;
- in co-ordination with senior management of RI’s and DL specialists of NTUKhPI the strategy for the development of 16 IST modules in correspondence with the accredited professional programme for in-service training (approved by the Main Civil Service Agency of Ukraine) was developed by the ISP(U);
- based on the adopted strategy 16 design teams were selected to develop individual DL modules (each of the teams consisting of academic content designer(s), DL methodologies specialist and web–designer);
- Ukrainian experts form DL Department at NTUKhPI have developed and conducted two tailored distance learning courses for IST DL module designers and tutors;
- over the period of four weeks each of the RI’s piloted four DL modules developed by their teams of designers;
- evaluation of the developed DL modules was conducted by the team of independent experts from NAPA and Oblast IST centres;
- the study materials for 16 IST DL modules were integrated into the VLE “Web-Class KhPI” and produced in printed and CD versions.

This article explores the benefits, preconditions and challenges of applying DL technologies to the training of public servants in Ukraine and applies the methodologies of the case study analysis to the successful implementation of the DL pilot project at four Regional Institutes of NAPA. It is likely to be of use for those, who are considering to develop new DL programmes, in the area of public servants training, and would be interested in looking at major risks, opportunities and lessons identified by this initiative. The first part of the article (Chapter 1) will examine existing shortfalls in the training provision within the Ukrainian public sector, which now are being widely quoted as one of the major impediments to the public administration reform. Chapter 2 will look at the potential benefits that distance learning technologies can offer for the training of public servants through its intrinsic advantages. Then it will go over the major challenges that the development of DL technologies in the IST system of Ukraine has highlighted. Chapter 3 and 4 will briefly review the evolution of DL technologies, which has taken place at NAPA and KhNTU over the last few years. In Chapter 5 the analysis will be concentrating on the successful implementation of the pilot DL project undertaken by four Regional Institutes of NAPA in designing, piloting and implementing distance learning study materials for skills development and re-training of local executives (grades 5-7). The concluding Chapter contains the list of issues, lessons and limitations, which the development teams have met in their

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work and assesses the sustainability of this project. It will also consider the different models of distance
learning implementation, which could be applied in the future.

Introduction

Modern democratic societies require service-oriented, reliable and innovative government at all levels. Practically all governments increasingly use modern information technologies to support their functioning. Most of the developed democracies in Europe and Northern America have launched comprehensive e-Government strategies, initiatives and projects aimed at the implementation and use of information and communication technologies in public administration. The new member countries of the European Community, and those that are left out but are aspiring to join, are trying to catch up with this evolution, understanding its underpinning importance for future development. Successful implementation of the e-Government strategies can improve services, strengthen capacity of public administration, reinforce democracy, and increase their productivity, effectiveness and efficiency.

In recent years, the main efforts have been invested into improving the quality and efficiency of service delivery, mainly through different e-based front office initiatives. However, quite often the important element is missing, namely the grasp of the potential benefit that ICT can bring to enhance the institutional capacity of the government in policy and decision making and its implementation. The development and continuous upgrading of civil and public servants’ administrative skills is one of the conditions for an increase in public service efficiency. Unfortunately, quite often the existing e-Government strategies fall short in appreciating the potential benefits that ICT technologies can bring to the capacity building of public sector through new flexible modes of training of its personnel, which effectively incorporate the elements of distance learning and knowledge management.

Chapter 1. Public Administration Reform in Ukraine - New Start?

1.1. European Choice Strategy

Over the last twelve years since Ukraine achieved its independence the administrative functions of the governmental structures have been undergoing continuous transformations, redefinition of the objectives, and increased functional sophistication. The challenges of the quadruple transformation (economic, democratic, national and political) have put the Ukrainian system of public administration to the test. Local authorities and local governments have been particularly stretches since, as it quite often happens, the impact of economic decline is stronger on the periphery (namely outside the capital). The signs of economic recovery, which became evident at the turn of the millennium, have put the public administration reform back on the government’s agenda.

Despite wide political disagreements over the direction of the country’s political development in broader terms, on April 16, 2003 the Ukrainian Parliament approved, with a large majority the program of the Government. This ambitious document provides a fair degree of continuity with respect to the programs of past administrations. Central to this program, and several Presidential Programs previously issued, is the idea of European Choice, which commits the country to move in the direction of the European market institutions. The program comprises a number of actions to shore up reform in the next eighteen months, and a more complex institutional development agenda to be addressed over the medium term. The Government plans to continue ongoing parallel efforts to strengthen the capacity and accountability of its public actions. Renewed emphasis is given to civil service and public administration reform, seeking foremost to approach EU standards.

Since the appointment of the new leadership the Main Civil Service Agency (MSCA) of Ukraine has conducted a series of consultations and negotiations, both within the different sections of the government and outside with a broad spectrum of stakeholders that represent international donor community with the aim of revitalising the reform agenda. In 2003 the joint World Bank/DFID/MCSA assessment of the public sector has been conducted (in accordance with the EU methodology that is used for the annual evaluation of the public administration system in a candidate country) on its correspondence to the European standards of governance. The new Presidential Strategy on modernising the Ukrainian system of Public Administration has now prioritised the problematic areas that require urgent intervention of the government to bring them in line with the EU standards. (Presidential Decree N 278/2004 from 05.03.2004)
1.2. Inadequate Quality of Training – One of the Main Challenges to Public Administration Reform in Ukraine

The need for the development of strategies and structures that establish flexible continuous professional development and education within the broader terms of career development of the public servants is becoming clearly recognised by the government. Following World Bank’s assessment the Head of the MCSA has identified quality of training within the IST system both in terms of its content and methodologies as widely inadequate (MCSA, 04.03.2004).

The administration reform could hardly be successful without a “critical mass” of well qualified civil and public servants in place. At the same time the training of civil servants is a complex issue that could not be analysed independently from public administration reform. The structural transformations that are taking hold in the Ukrainian economy coupled with the broader geopolitical changes caused by the EU expansion have to be addressed by the adequate adjustments in the public sector management and the creation of a new managerial elite, especially on a local level. Increasing role of the market mechanism in the functioning of the national economy, implementation of the broad programme of privatisation, economic deregulation of the agricultural sector, development of inter-budgetary relations, development of civil society etc. have brought to light the increased demand for a new matrix of skills and competencies required from the new breed of public servants (Illyasov, et al. 1999), (Mostovyi and Melnykov, 2001):

- communication and presentation skills;
- conflict management, ability to deal effectively with superiors, colleagues, and customers;
- office management skills (people management, resource management, financial management, time management etc);
- knowledge management skills (knowledge sharing and transferability, collection and storage of data);
- information technology skills (ECDL, internet technologies);
- strategic planning, policy analysis and change management skills;
- economic management and regeneration skills and competences;
- adherence to the principles of democratic governance (rule of law, accountability, transparency, effectiveness, efficiency and ethical awareness);
- knowledge of European integration.

The existing system of IST is suffering from a number of the serious pitfalls. Despite a well developed network of public sector training, which encompasses the NAPA, its four RIs, 27 local IST centres, 54 sectoral IST training centres and a score of HE institutions, the quality of training is quite varied. A majority of the IST centres are located in small oblast level cities (with the population 100,000 – 500,000 inhabitants and a limited number of the established HE institutions). They experience critical shortages of the qualified trainers, teaching materials, or even library resources. Apart from the Academy (along with its four RIs) and a handful of established Universities that are accredited to provide such training, the majority of training services fall short of the government’s requirements and are either too superficial, academic, or widely inadequate. Quite often even the better-equipped training institutions can hardly cope with the sheer numbers of students they have to cover. The statistics are quite compelling. Among 240, 528 of public and civil servants currently in government’s employment only 6606 possess adequate qualifications on the degree level. The number of those who undergone any professional in-service training within last 6 years is just above 10% (25,700). (MCSA, 01.01.2004). The introduction of a high quality Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to a significant number of public servants is even more problematic bearing in mind the limited availability of resources. According to the state budget the total amount earmarked to be spent by the government and local authorities on the IST in 2004 equals 82.541m. Hryvnas (13.75m. Euro). (MCSA, 04.03.2004) This amount was steadily on the increase over the last three years, however the audit conducted recently by MCSA suggested that the training had very limited effect on the skills that are required from civil and public servants today. Policy analysis, strategic planning and budget planning still remain among the weakest areas of their professional competencies.

The public sector workers face an ever increasing burden of the workload, which is caused by the high level of personnel turnover (17-25% over the last three years), lack of regulations defining their status, inadequate system of evaluation, motivation and promotion and therefore they can hardly afford four weeks of full time classroom training. Hence, there is a vicious circle between ever increasing demands on the capacity of the public administration which has to be staffed with a substantial number of adequately trained personnel on the one hand and a limited supply of high quality training matching the existing challenges of transformation on
the other hand, combined with inadequate resourcing (financial, human and time) to enable increased supply of training.

Chapter 2. The Role of Distance Education in Enhancing Institutional Training Capacity of the Government.

2.1 Potential Advantages of Distance Learning for the In-Service Training

Challenges in the Public Sector of Ukraine that is inherent in reforms, transformation and changing agendas require continuous training, re-skilling and increased professionalism of public servants, which could hardly be achieved in the traditional classroom learning environments. Distance learning technologies can offer a viable solution to those challenges through their intrinsic advantages. The following are the key driving motives for the increasing use of distance learning by western organisations that will also apply to the Ukrainian IST system: (Drobot, 2002):

- **Flexible study time**: The personnel within the governmental organisation can be offered different learning schedule to suit their working priorities. This eliminates the need to fill in the gaps when staff are sent for lengthy four week face-to-face training sessions;
- **Student-centred approach**: The methodology of delivery can more easily accommodate the diverse learning needs of students in terms of varied cognitive characteristics, functional requirements, age group, etc. It nurtures proactive self-study skills that require a more systematic and structured approach to processing the information;
- **Easy multiplication of the training provision**: Possibility of differentiated and granulated multiplication through smaller modules within shorter period of time;
- **Increased speed in implementing changes**: Distribution of the learning process within system is faster and easier to implement in times of transformation and constant change;
- **Unified content distribution**: Possibility of quick geographical distribution of standardised content regardless of distances, or dispersion;
- **Smaller logistic costs**: Reduced travel and accommodation costs combined with reduced time of employees absence from work and increased productivity time gained;
- **ICT congruent**: Distance learning ideology is easy to combine with various existing ICT technologies, although it is equally adaptable even to the minimal technological requirements.

2.2. Major Challenges for the Introduction of Distance Learning Technologies

Unfortunately, the potential importance of the distance learning for the public sector training has never been fully embraced by the government. Despite being mentioned in the number of legal and policy documents, which outline the provision of training in public administration, it is still being regarded only as a new version of the part-time study mode. For example the Comprehensive Programme of the Public Servants Training (which was adopted by the President on 09.11.2000) has decreed: “to utilise modern technologies which introduce flexibility and individualisation into delivery of training through the distance, part-time and external modes of studies.” This narrow view of distance learning is similarly reflected in the Law on Higher Education. The apparent lack of legal provisions outlining the status of distance education and its equitable place in the whole system of education clearly inhibits the further development of distance learning.

Distance learning brings a new set of requirements to the entire training process. Since there is no direct link between the trainer and the student (for most of the time) the requirements from course designers, course tutors and course administrators are more complex. There are totally new requirements for the distance-learning student as well, namely the capacity to communicate effectively with the tutor and his/her peers and the need for strong self-motivation for development. On the whole distance learning is a more structured and a better planned process which due to existing distance between student and teacher requires specifically designed study materials, new interactive methods of teaching, new methods of communication (electronic and other) and a new system of organisation and management. Subsequently, the implementation of the distance learning process requires the revision of the existing “philosophy” of education. In the former Soviet system of education, which Ukraine naturally inherited, the encyclopaedic concept of learning was prevalent. Traditionally, the students are required to gain a broad range of theoretical and academic knowledge that has only limited application outside the academic and scientific world. The distance learning process by its nature requires quite a different approach. “Learning through doing”, practical application of knowledge, independence and self-reliance, creative and critical reflection on experience are the corner stones of the
distance learning “philosophy”. Hence, in order to be effectively employed this process will require a major shift in the existing ideology of higher and continuous training. (Peters, 2001), (Rogers 2001).

Another serious impediment is a mixed success in local government’s programme of ICT modernisation. Despite the fact that now all 27 regional administrations are connected to the public administration Internet network in some cities the networks capacity remains limited. The situation is worse on a local level (town, rayon and village administrations and local self-government). The majority of administrative units on this level can only boast of a limited access to e-mail facilities. However, the dynamics of change since the start of the Government’s Programme (of an integrated government computer network “Staff”) is in general terms quite encouraging and it has already been suggested by some government experts as the most likely channel for the development of distance learning within the public administration. (Soroko,1997). MCSA have taken a step in this direction and are considering establishing a portal that will serve as an expert information database of legal documents, directives and instructions that regulate the functioning of the Ukrainian public administration. (MCSA,04.03.2004). In practical terms there are already some other educational and sectoral networks in place that can be used for the same purpose.

Chapter 3. Distance Learning at National Academy of Public Administration

3.1. Early Stages of the Distance Learning Development

Since 1998 Institutional Strengthening Project (Ukraine) (ISP(U)) at London Metropolitan University (previously University of North London) had been involved in the development of Distance Learning technologies at NAPA. In February 1998, after the initial visit by ISP(U), NAPA embarked upon a project of developing a Distance Learning approach for the training of public servants. The early stages of the development (1998-2001) focused on staff development and team building activities. In order to present a multi-dimensional perspective on DL policy the expertise of a few renowned British DL institutions had been used (Open Learning Foundation, Hoxton Bibliotech and others). In 1999 the four members of NAPA’s DL development teams visited London for an intensive two-week training programme. The main drive of the training activities initially focused on the transfer of expertise in modern distance learning methods to a small, but committed group of academic enthusiasts that were willing to go beyond the traditional methods of lecturing. The academics were encouraged to experiment in their teaching practice with new adult training methodologies, which stimulated students’ independent thinking, active participatory approach, case studies and self-motivation. (Andretta, 1999)

As the result of the intense programme of seminars and training activities that took place in this period there was a broad network of distance learning specialists established across four RIs. By 2001 the self-study materials for five part-time MPA DL modules were successfully designed, evaluated and piloted. The ISP(U) involvement led to a major reassessment of the DL technologies among the Academy’s teaching and managerial staff. 14 permanent participants of the ISP(U) training workshops became the Academy’s own DL experts, who acted as the agents of change within the institution. In 2000 the World Bank’s grant, supported by the Canadian Government, led to the establishment of the ‘state of art’ Distance Learning Centre (DLC) at the Academy’s base in Kyiv. In the following year the World Bank GDLN project and the ISP(U) agreed to support the joint development of 7 MPA DL modules under the leadership of the DLC team in Kyiv. Five DL specialists who were trained within the programme of the ISP(U) activities were directly involved in the development of 3 MPA DL modules.

3.2. Building Broader Partnerships.

The ISP(U) felt that it would concur with the needs of the Academy’s IST centres and adapt their training methods to incorporate the new opportunities offered by information technologies, which would in turn support the strengthening of local government training. In a brief discussion on the existing experience of MPA DL development at the Academy, senior managers from RIs expressed the opinion that the Project should aim at the creation of a comprehensive IST programme rather than individual modules. The IST programme had long been considered by the ISP(U) as potentially the most promising area to test the knowledge and skills acquired previously by the Academy’s DL specialists. First off all, as mentioned earlier there had always been a great shortage of supply in this area of training which the ISP(U) wanted to address. Additionally, because the IST programme was considerably smaller in terms of scope and duration (14 modules in four weeks – little study materials available) in comparison to the MPA programme (35 modules in 18 months with lots of study materials available) it highlighted an opportunity to develop a new and coherent DL IST programme within the lifespan of the ISP(U) project. In response to the changing needs of
RIs in 2002 the ISP(U) decided to refocus on the implementation of DL training skills and methodologies and initiated the development of a pilot DL programme for the IST. This initiative also coincided with several recently adopted laws (The Presidential Decree on ‘A comprehensive programme of training for Civil and Public Service’, ‘A strategy for the creation and development of a system of distance learning in the regions of Ukraine’) which highlighted the necessity of introducing DL in the process of public servants training. However, there were a number of issues that needed to be addressed before the ISP(U) development programme could begin.

One of the major challenges facing the project team could be described as ‘disjointed incrementalism’, namely, the existence of low level co-operation and coherence between different agencies that were tasked with providing the IST services. In 2001 the MSCA had started the process of reforming the system throughout Ukraine and was working towards a unified IST Programme delivery. Following the initial consultations the MSCA developed recommendations for a new IST curriculum, which was subsequently approved by the MCSA’s Academic-Methodological Council on 4 March 2003. RIs played central roles in this development process, as in practice they often act as the regional hubs of IST expertise. Four of the Oblast IST centres, located at the RIs of Academy, have dual subordination to the MCSA and the NAPA, whilst 23 others have dual subordination to MCSA and Oblast State Administrations and are financed by local budgets. Hence, broader consultations were needed in order to bring other players on board. Following initial discussions with RIs management the ISP(U) conducted a number of meetings and consultations with the representatives of Oblast IST centres, specialists from MCSA and IST specialists from within the Academy. The results of the consultations were reflected in the IST DL Strategy.

Even within the Academy itself there was (1) a lack of a wider strategic approach towards implementation of the DL project on the one hand and (2) apprehension of undertaking yet another responsibilities on top of their busy schedules on the other hand. While the first issue was caused by a limited support from senior management of the Academy, the second issue pointed to the need for a reward system to ensure full commitment of the staff to the project. To address these issues during the DL seminar in L’viv two different groups were created – ‘Management Group’ and ‘Working Group’. ‘Management Group’ composed of Deputy Directors from all four RIs were appointed responsible for the development of strategy for the DL IST development. ‘Working Group’ included the most active regular participants of the previous ISP(U) training activities. ISP(U) was involved in the workings of both groups and closely consulted with them on a broad range of issues.

All earlier training conducted within the programme of the ISP(U) activities was mostly focused on the ideological, developmental, methodological and teaching aspects of the DL introduction, but excluded most of the technological issues (VLE, Web design). In order to address these shortcomings the ISP(U) invited the experts from DL Laboratory at Kharkiv National Technical University to the participation in the project.

Chapter 4. National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”

4.1. Distance Learning Expertise of Kharkiv National Technical University

Kharkiv National Technical University “KPI” (KNTU) has been one of the first HE institutions to successfully introduce DL courses into its curriculum. The DL Laboratory, which had been established there in 1997 soon became the hub of DL expertise with its reputation extending well beyond its own University. In 1999 it organised its first fully interactive web-based DL course (“Introduction to the DL technologies”), which was attended by 47 university teachers from all over Ukraine. In 2001 when the Department successfully developed and tested its own virtual learning environment (“Web Class KhPI”) the DL was brought to a new level.

Since then the DL development at the KNTU has been going from strength to strength. The Laboratory has developed a number of DL courses for the professional development of university lecturers: “Practical Course of DL Development”, “Introduction to Pedagogical Approaches”, “Web Design Technologies”, “Tutor’s Practicum”, etc. All these courses were successfully used during the summer (2001, 2002) and winter (2002, 2003) schools organised by the Laboratory for more than 1000 HEI lecturers from Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and Belarus. At the beginning of 2002 the broad development programme of training for the University’s teaching staff had been established. Over 120 lectures have successfully completed this course and created 40 new DL modules, which are now being actively used in teaching. On the basis of its experience the DL Laboratory has produced a number of research publications and textbooks, which are exploring different
aspects of DL. In January 2004 a DL Laboratory was expanded into a new DL Department in order to strengthen the University’s capacity in DL expertise and further incorporate it into the curriculum.

NTUKhPI together with NAPA have recently become the co-founders of the Ukrainian DL Academy, which is expected to become an important vehicle for the development of distance education across Ukraine with the use of their existing skills and expertise in DL design and implementation.

4.2 Virtual Learning Environment “Web Class KhPI”

In 2001 the fully integrated VLE “Web Class KhPI” has been successfully developed at KNTU for the use in DL design and delivery. The main principles of its construction are typical of any VLE of this kind (Learning Space, Virtual-U Software, COSE, Prometei). It is intended to support design, teaching, learning and administration of the DL process. At the moment the advanced features of the VLE, which are constantly being upgraded incorporate:

- content management system with flexible tools to fit various content need;
- elements of assessment management system, which enables the mapping of study schedules and assessments and the building of up to 7 different types of tests and questions;
- flexible managed learning environment, which enables teachers, trainers and learners to successfully follow flexible study programmes.

“Web Class KhPI” allows learning to be active and focussed on ‘learning through doing’ by using the resources both inside and outside VLE, including graphical and media objects and references to traditional non-electronic resources. This allows learners and trainers to:

- make the learning process student-centred through a highly structured output driven approach with emphasis on the learning opportunities and the resources needed to enable the students to carry them out;
- mix traditional and e-learning by allowing www-based and traditional non-electronic resources and lecture programmes to be referenced in the context of specific learning opportunities;
- view resources in the context of the interactive learning activity with an emphasis on “learning through doing” and on the clear link between assessment and learning activity;
- use the VLE as simultaneously design, delivery and administrative mechanism;
- make the learning process to be collaborative by allowing the sharing of content between tutors, learners and peer groups providing a valuable feedback and collaboration tool;
- maintain active communication between learner, tutor, resource author, and peer group, through different channels of communication including chat rooms, forums and embedded e-mails (chat rooms have a number of advanced feature including statistical analysis and search/sort tools).

The principal components of the VLE are:

- mapping of the curriculum into elements (or ‘chunks’) that can be assessed and recorded;
- tracking of student activity and achievement against these elements;
- support of online learning, including access to learning resources, assessment and guidance;
- online tutor support;
- peer group support;
- general communications, including e-mail, group discussion and web access;
- links to other systems, both in-house and externally.

VLE may be used to support a range of learning context, ranging from conventional, classroom delivery to off-line, distance learning and on-line learning. It is based on the client server technology and uses Windows Server and Internet Information Server (IIS) protocols. The client for the VLE can be any typical browser that is compatible with Microsoft Explorer 4.0, or higher. The system is dynamically adjustable to different language interface (Ukrainian, Russian, English).

There are three different categories of the user’s access rights: author of the course, tutor and learner. Learner has a choice either of following a standard study rout designed by the teacher, or to decided to chose
individualised one using course-menu tool. Additional routes are available with the reference to the Internet resources, which are located in the Library. Learner interface also supports fully searchable terms glossary.

Tutor in addition to the functional environment that is available to a student can add, or remove files, create conferences and monitor learning process. The environment available for an author of the course provides additional functional instruments that let author to plan weekly study activities through filling in appropriate form, which includes content annotation, learning objectives, keywords, definitions, resource references and study plan to achieve defined learning objectives. Each chapter is build in a highly structured way and includes graphical logos of definitions, self assessment questions, questions to be discussed with tutor, examples, additional information, internal and external references and summary to the chapter. In addition author can create complex system of assessment and self-assessment from the variety of available options.

The course administration is being performed through the Tutor Centre, which allows tutor to follow students’ registration, conduct weekly planning, perform student’s rating analysis and monitor students’ online visits and the results of their work. This information can be easily made available to all users if a tutor decides so, for example by publishing results of students’ assessment.

Chapter 5. Developing Distance Learning for In-Service Training

5.1 Distance Learning Strategy

Following the consultations that took place in May 2002 – March 2003 the Strategy for the development of 16 IST DL modules was developed by the ISP(U), which was later approved by the Management Group. It was agreed that the modules would be developed in correspondence with the MCSA Professional IST Programme, which is intended for the public servants of the middle rank that do not possess professional qualifications in the area of Public Administration. The leading IST specialists from Institutions that are certified to provide training in the public sector have developed fundamental requirements to the content, duration and methodology of its delivery. (MCSA, 04.03.2003)

The hybrid model of DL delivery was adapted which combined both the elements of face-to-face classroom teaching and Internet based e-learning. The strategy envisaged the development of DL courses for IST at the Regional Institutes of NAPA directed towards the creation of a comprehensive but flexible educational model. The structure of the study programme would incorporate a brief opening face-to-face session on introduction to the DL technologies, followed by a self-study period (several months) with prearranged interactive tutorial sessions on certain days of the week (through e-forum, chat, e-mail, or traditional methods of communication). Each DL module would cover 6-8 major topics and consist of following components: a) web-element, b) student’s learning guidelines, c) student’s textbook, d) tutor teaching guidelines and e) multimedia elements if needed.

Based on the structure of the MSCA IST Programme the Strategy set up to develop 16 DL IST modules (8 core modules and 8 specialised), covering a broad range of subjects on the political, legal, economic, managerial, financial and other aspects of Public Administration. As part of the strategy the terms of references for the design teams were identified which outlined specific requirements to the volume, content, structure and methodologies of the DL modules. The specific emphasis was made on the DL materials to be well structured, easily adaptable to the learners’ needs, practical, interactive, simple to use as self-study and self-assessment tools. Additionally they had to take into the account the development needs for the new sort of skills and competencies required from the public servants. The design of the DL modules should envisage an in-built flexibility reflecting the requirements of the different categories/specialisation of public servants. The Strategy has also underlined the importance for the assessments to have a complex multilevel character (entry profile test, self assessment tests/questions, final tests) and to incorporate a wide range of question types, for example true/false, multiple choices, fill in the blank, ordering, matching, and essays. The final testing of students’ knowledge would be carried out in a traditional class environment on completion of the course.

The strategy also identified:
- the timeframe for the design and testing of DL materials;
- the general principles for the division of work among the Regional Institutes;
- the general principles for the selection of development teams;
- the approximate cost of developing one module and the number of modules to be developed;
- the location, dates and aims of future DL seminars;
- the general procedures for the management, monitoring and development of DL materials.
5.2. Implementation of the Strategy

Based on the adopted strategy 16 design teams were selected to develop individual DL modules. Each team consisted of academic content designer, DL methodology specialist and web–designer. The contracts between the selected teams and ISP(U) were signed outlining the general contractual obligations for both sides and the timeframe for the completion of the work. Following multilateral consultations through the Management and Working Group a uniform approach for the design, methodology, presentation and structure of modules was developed. The content designers who were invited to participate in the development completed three-month on-line training through the KhNTU’s “Practical DL Design Course”: [http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/rlde/adn2003/default.asp?ukr](http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/rlde/adn2003/default.asp?ukr). It helped the teaching staff who had not been previously involved in the DL training activities, to be effectively introduced to the DL technology and learn the basic characteristics of the VLE.

Simultaneously the content designers started their work on putting together the first draft of DL materials. The on-line training course was scheduled to continuously provide the ongoing support to the design teams as the work evolved. The practical tasks within the course were intentionally linked to their staged progress. Such combination of the on-line training with simulations application of acquired skills proved to be quite fruitful. Within the space of three months the design teams produced the introduction to their modules, clear content structure and were half way through their first drafts. The active use of mailing groups, chat rooms and forums stimulated active communication across four RIs and sparked a few lively discussions on a number of issues, which emerged in the course of their design work. By the next training workshop in May 2003 most of the teams were able to submit the draft version of their modules for evaluation and comments by KhNTU DL experts and the ISP(U). Each team prepared a brief presentation on the progress of the work, which were followed by active discussions on common mistakes in the content, structure, methodology and design. The experts identified that one of the most challenging tasks that the design team came against was their ability to produce realistic weekly study plans.

Over the summer the results of the evaluation were incorporated into the next version of the modules. In August the ISP(U) together with the three experts from KhNTU DL Laboratory carried out the on site visits to all four RIs and conducted the extensive evaluation of the content, design and methodologies. In early September the modules were redrafted following experts’ comments.

Between September and November the experts from DL Laboratory at NTUKhPI developed and conducted a tailored three-month on-line learning course for the IST DL module tutors. The tutor training course: [http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/techn1/tu101/default.asp?ukr](http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/techn1/tu101/default.asp?ukr) included extensive analysis of the communication tools available in the DL, review of the organisational activities that should be completed before the start of the DL course, report on the development of the dynamic rating system that would reflect learners’ activities. A major part of practical exercises was focussed on various aspects related to the communications in the DL and piloting of the developed modules. Unfortunately, the tutor training course proved to be an insurmountable obstacle to a large proportion of the IRs staff – only 11 of 20 trainers successfully completed minimum requirements. There were some suggestions that such a course should be preceded by the introductory course on the use of the Internet technologies.

Over the period of four weeks each of the RIs piloted four DL modules developed by their design teams in combined face-to-face and on-line mode through the NTUKhPI website: [http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/pru/pu01/default.asp?ukr](http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/pru/pu01/default.asp?ukr), [http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/pru/pu02/default.asp?ukr](http://dl.kpi.kharkov.ua/pru/pu02/default.asp?ukr). Pilot implementation of modules was carried out both at the RIs and selected Oblast IST Centres. Each RI had chosen two groups of 10-20 learners composed of broad-spectrum selection of specialist from local government officials, senior MPA students, IST trainers and RIs staff. For the delivery of the pilot courses, which lasted four weeks each, the team model was applied. The training team consisted of two tutors (one leading and one junior) and content designers. The experienced tutors from NTUKhPI were monitoring and evaluating the progress of tutors’ work during the piloting of DL modules. The complex matrix evaluation scheme was used to identify best tutors. One of the training teams managed to set up a very active communication in their pilot group (9 learners – 120 emails, 184 messages through the chat rooms, 66 messages through the forum, 70 messages through the mailing group, 127 attempts at on-line self-tests). The majority of learners who completed the post-course on-line evaluation gave a very positive feedback about their DL experience.
The content evaluation of the developed DL modules was conducted by the team of independent experts from NAPA and Oblast IST centres according to the agreed criteria. The evaluation of design and methodology was conducted by a specially created group of experts consisting of a number of leading methodologists and web designers from NTUKhPI and NAPA. The feedback and recommendations gathered through piloting and evaluation were communicated back to the design teams and were taken into account in fine-tuning of the modules. The final results of the design teams work were assessed by the Management Group, which made its recommendations on the content, methodology and design of the courses.

By January 2004 the printed version of the study materials for all 16 DL IST modules consisting of (a) student’s learning guidelines, b) student’s textbooks, e) tutor teaching guidelines was produced, edited, and published. The electronic study materials, with additional learning resources, electronic self-test and search facilities were included into the CD ROM version. The on-line version of the study materials, which has been integrated into the VLE “Web Class KhPI” is still being tested and shall be soon distributed to the Distance Learning Centres at four RIs.

The intellectual property rights of the developed DL products will belong to four Regional Institutes and will be freely available for dissemination within the system of Oblast In-Service Training Centres.

5.3. Turning Innovation Into Change - Models for Future Development

Having successfully completed design and publication stage the RIs have to develop a new system, which will ensure the sustainability of DL education in the short-term perspective. The important issues that have to be addressed by the RIs are:

- to initiate further consultations between NAPA, Ministry of Education, MCSA and Oblast IST Centres in order to develop appropriate normative documents that will establish the legal basis for the functioning of the DL in the IST system;
- to embed the staff activities on the development and implementation of the DL education into their timetabling and remuneration scheme;
- to adopt the appropriate policies that will ensure the retention of the staff that posses practical knowledge of training, planning, designing and delivering DL courses;
- to promote the development of the regular workshops that should address the professional training needs of the content designers working on updating existing and designing new DL materials;
- to initiate the system of continues training and upgrading of tutors’ skills to expand the expertise base in provision of DL training;
- to develop appropriate support systems that will enable them to deal with administrative, technical and other and non-teaching issues within the DL;
- to continue the work on updating existing and designing new specialised modules in order to be able to address the existing skill shortages in Ukrainian system of Public Administration;
- to develop data storage and electronic library systems that will strengthen the resource base of the DL;
- to create a multilevel system (reaction-absorption-behaviour-results) of the DL effectiveness evaluation that will provide continuous feedback to design teams. (Ingram, 2001)

There are also some other important issues that have to be addressed by RIs in the medium-long term. In order to ensure prompt response to the local training needs RIs will have to turn their attention to the localised delivery of the DL programmes. The development and accreditation of local distance learning centres capable of delivering DL programmes to a wider audience and providing localised tutorial support is bound to dominate RIs institutional development agenda in the future. The aim of the accreditation is to establish national standards for the delivery of DL, while allowing for some variation in tuition and assessment arrangements. For example, there could be minimum standards concerning the experience of the tutorial team, support for learners and quality assurance systems, but centres would have to have some flexibility over how much tuition they offer and in what form. The in-course assignments then can be set and marked locally, though they must comply with national guidelines. Structurally such distributed system may incorporate quite varied models of delivery ranging from broad spectrum of partnership arrangements with oblast IST centres and other HE institutions to the direct distribution of training provision to local authorities. (Baker, Henderson, 1995)

Chapter 6. Lessons and Conclusions
As this paper has shown, the DL programme reflects an innovative approach to the delivery of the IST curriculum, where the focus is on the importance of providing practical applications for the theoretical framework of modern public administration. The use of distance learning technologies can bring in the added value to the delivery of public servants training through its intrinsic qualities: flexible study time, student-centred approach, possibility of differentiated and granulated multiplication through smaller modules, amplified dynamism in reacting to the changing environments, possibility of geographical distribution of standardised content, reduced logistic costs. Obviously, the classical face-to-face training will not cease to exist in the IST system as it provides certain qualities and amenities brought by the close psychological contact between student and teacher that can hardly be achieved through any other means. The existing evidence suggests that hybrid model, which combines learning in the classroom and learning on the distance, can yield the best results both in terms of its quality and effectiveness and in terms of practical considerations. Innovations in DL training delivery are supplemented by the potential benefit that ICT can bring to the system of public service training in broader terms. However, it is important to keep in mind the need for the use of appropriate technologies to support curriculum delivery. Substantial proportion of local government authorities in Ukraine still lacks appropriate information and communication infrastructure and would, therefore, not support a full implementation of computerised practices. Hence, the parallel development of paper based, CD and on-line components is required.

The piloting of the developed DL modules generated generally positive feedback from the local government officials, students of public administration, IST trainers and the staff of the Academy. It highlighted the growing interest, support and understanding among the professional community of the existing benefits in applying DL technologies to the sector of public service training. This growing interest is likely to be further strengthened by the revitalisation of the public administration reform agenda and the implementation of the Government’s European Choice strategy. But if achievements are to be established and continuing development facilitated each stage of the new development must be accompanied by corresponding institutional adjustment. The reality is that these adjustments are not totally predictable. They are a series of pragmatic shifts made in response to changing perceptions of how the return from the human and physical resource invested in the new initiative can be maximised and tensions between conflicting interest groups eased.

This article has considered legal environment, institutional elements, leadership, structures, curricula and staff, which have had an identifiable effect on the implementation of DL development at four Regional Institutes of Ukrainian National Academy of Public Administration.

One of the main conclusions to emerge from the implementation of this project is the need for frequent mediation between different interest groups that are involved in the innovative change. Building lasting partnerships in order to promote the “mood of co-operation” both inside and outside the institutions that embarked on such a development is of prevailing importance.

Another key prerequisite for any innovation, which is directly linked to the “partnership building”, is the presence of executive leadership within organisation. It could be a personal leadership, or a group (Management Group) leadership, but in consistence with the literature on organisational change it should be both “charismatic” (which possesses “ability to generate energy, create commitment, and direct individuals towards new objectives, values or aspirations “) and “instrumental” (which “can ensure that people really do act in a manner consistent with their new goals”. (Nadler, Tushman, 1990)

The involvement of the local experts from NTUKhPI has had a profound beneficial effect on the DL development at NAPA. In the short run it provided the managerial and academic staff at RIs with the local example that DL technologies could be successfully implemented despite the existence of the same sort of organisational limitations. In the strategic terms it has initiated the establishment of the stable partnership relationships between some of the RIs and NTUKhPI, which hopefully will extend well beyond this project. The “learning through doing approach” to designing and piloting DL materials via on-line staff development workshops, where structure and principles of VLE (theory) spilled over immediately into on-line communication from within the environment (practice); structure and design of DL modules (theory) translated into module planning, design and integration into the VLE (practice); DL pedagogical considerations and tutorial planning led directly to the piloting of modules (practice), has generated genuine interest in the DL technologies among the RIs’ staff. Thanks to that atmosphere it has become possible to clarify, explore, suggest and discuss issues in an increasingly creative way – for example, creating quality
criteria for the structure of learning materials, generating a typology of student’s guides; teasing out what is meant by a tutor assignment briefing and much else.

DL is about people, and making it happen is entirely related to people. Hence, all the staffing issues are bound to dominate any DL development. Committed staff will proselytise their view of the DL curriculum, gathering converts and creating groups of staff with a shared understanding. Academic staff need to see the practical and educational advantages of developing DL systems. They need to have confidence that the curriculum for which they are responsible can be transmitted effectively through DL. Many teachers at RIs fear that the new methodologies being advanced will replace them and make them redundant. Such doubts and reservations cannot be ignored. It is a fact that relatively few manage to set their sights on the beneficial consequences of a shift towards DL approaches – a different kind of job, more rewarding, more creative and more supportive of students. Anxieties about “working oneself out of a job” were defused by the design work. Participants saw how labour-intensive the development of distance learning materials and systems would need to be. Discussion of matters like high-quality learner support, editing, updating and developing new courses and materials for new target groups all delivered a similar message. However, personal anxieties still remain about time-scheduling, time-scales and salary calculations, which will have to be addressed through institutional discussions and negotiations, the conclusions of which should be reflected in the appropriate institutional regulations. RIs will need to establish policies and set up the necessary structures at institutional, faculty and department level that would allow teaching staff to plan and deliver DL programmes.

This case-study of the DL development at RIs of NAPA does not profess that DL technologies will instantly provide universal panacea for all the problems that IST system in Ukraine is facing. However, the experience of the ISP(U) DL project has been, broadly speaking, a very positive one both in terms of stimulating the institutional changes and achieving tangible outcomes. Yet in order to make maximum possible use of the DL technologies additional inputs are required in terms of planning, managing, staffing and resourcing.
Glossary of Abbreviations

CPD        Continuos Professional Development
DFID       Department for International Development
DL         Distance Learning
ECDL       European Computer Driving License
ICT        Information Computer Technology
ISP(U)     Institutional Strengthening Project (Ukraine)
IST        In-Service Training
MCSA       Main Civil Service Agency (Ukraine)
NAPA       National Academy of Public Administration
NTUKhPI    National Technical University “Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute”
RI         Regional Institute of National Academy of Public Administration
VLE        Virtual Learning Environment

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