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Professional Training of Border Guards in Ukraine: Challenges and Opportunities Related to Emerging Security Threats

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Abstract

Professional training of border guards is closely connected with Ukraine's national development, its stability and economic prosperity. Due to emerging security threats, the training of future border guards in Ukraine has recently undergone radical changes including the reconsideration of professional competence. According to its reviewed profile, professional competence of border guards means integral unity of knowledge, skills, personal qualities, and values that help them perform their professional duties. Professional competence of border guards is the desired result of their training. The content of professional training for border guards is therefore an important aspect. Changes in the tasks facing the border agency has caused significant rethinking of training content for border guards, resulting in new subjects, sections, modules and topics. As information has to be transferred effectively to trainees, a range of teaching techniques was innovated in order to achieve the pedagogical intention. The innovative techniques include simulation technologies, horizontal learning, innovative lectures, training courses, information and communication technologies, interactive technologies, as well as game-based and project-based learning. These techniques are proven to be more effective in comparison to traditional methods. Despite some unresolved issues, the system of professional training for border guards in Ukraine has shown outstanding results. Further development and improvement will lead to the formation of professional competence of border guards at the desired high level.

Keywords: content, future border guard officers, professional competence, security threats, techniques.



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Introduction

Ukraine's National Border Agency was formed with the Independence of Ukraine in 1991, and marks the beginning of professional training for border guards in modern Ukraine. Since then, the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine has become a fully-fledged active subject of Ukraine's national security establishment, with its personnel responsible for the implementation of objectives related to state border defense and protection. The efficiency of these measures depends entirely upon the quality of professional training received by the border guards.

In 2003, Ukrainian border forces were fully transformed into a law enforcement agency with a designated special purpose, creating a modern European-styled border agency of the type which would guarantee the protection of national interests at the state borders of the Ukraine. Later, the Concept of Integrated Border Management was approved which significantly affected the professional training of border guards. As a result, a range of reforms were introduced, oriented towards the improvement of activities of border organs and units, bringing them into line with European standards through the implementation of innovative technical means and technologies within the system of border protection (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2010). This work brought a renewal of the regulatory framework; with a full transition to professional recruitment, extension of the border infrastructure, and the development of international cooperation and mutual working with other law enforcement agencies to enhance border violation counteractive measures. One of the significant changes in reforming the State Border Guard Service was to improve the existing system of professional training of border guards, which still possessed features dating back to the post-Soviet era. Mostly the reforms touched upon the process of formation of an integral system of continuing professional training of border agency personnel to perform tasks to the required high level. To date, the primary aim of this system is to provide maintenance of professional competence in accordance with the requirements of the country's border situation and international standards.

However, the events of 2014 saw the beginning of a new stage of development for the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, necessitating a level of fundamental change in accordance with appropriate responses to the security threats faced by the country; a hybrid war on the eastern border, armed conflict, threats to territorial integrity and independence at sea and on land, the spread of separatist movements, sporadic terrorist attacks, revitalization of trafficking in arms and drugs, illegal migration, and the threat of a fully-fledged war from the border of occupied Crimea and Azov. All these elements naturally brought political and economic destabilization to the region. At the same time, the border guards faced an intensification of border crossings due to the visa-free regime with the European Union to the west. Border guards failed to fully perform their functions, exposing a weak military component to their training, as well as a lack of technical equipment and material provision for integrated border management (State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, 2017b; Torichnyi, 2016).

In reality the task was even more difficult, as strengthening of the military component was insufficient alone as the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine was also required to transform into a European-styled law enforcement agency, delivering a high level of service at all ports of entry to ensure implementation of human rights and the rule of law, as well as

the efficient functioning of all state institutions. This brought about significant challenges for the system of professional training of border guards based on fundamental rethinking and improvement.

Requirements for professional training under new threats

The improvements have mostly been attributable to new tasks facing the Ukrainian border guards in recent years. In accordance with official documents, the primary mission of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine is to ensure integrity of the state border and the protection of sovereignty in its exclusive maritime (economic) zone. This includes border control and the admission of people, vehicles, cargo, and other possessions; the prevention and counteraction of border violations; investigative, intelligence, information and analytical activities; counteraction to organized trans-border crimes; the prevention of illegal migration; taking measures to fight terrorists and illegal armed groups in the border regions; security of Ukraine's diplomatic missions abroad; and guaranteeing the border regime. Considerable attention has been paid towards enhancing the level of operational effectiveness of the border units and their readiness to execute tasks concerning border defense in its area of responsibility, including the state border line as well as a conflict line with temporary uncontrolled regions. The implementation of modern approaches to the organization of border security, based on the experiences of other countries and considering the potential threats, have seen an improvement in the tactics used by the border units. Changes include new objects of border infrastructure and technical equipment, strengthened coordination with other law enforcement agencies, an extension to interagency, interstate and international cooperation in order to fulfil the mission and to prevent a wide range of border threats, the development of emergency response units and building of their operational and mobile capacities, and improvements to the system of recruitment and training of border guard personnel (State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, 2017a).

Successful fulfilment of these tasks is based on the establishment of a high level professional training system for border guards to be professional and competent experts of border-related matters. That means, receiving the correct level of fundamental training, and the professional knowledge and skills appropriate to an up-to-date border service. The agency should also realize missions and professional activities as part of an integrated system, to be professionally mobile and react flexibly to changes that occur in operational service, as well as to perform border control and admission through state borders at a sufficient level whilst preventing border violations.

Professional training and competence

Professional training is interpreted as a process of transfer of specialized knowledge and skills as well as qualities, experience, and rules of conduct necessary for efficient profession activity (Batyshev, 1999). Professional training is conducted at a higher or special educational establishment during advanced training courses or apprenticeships at border guard organs. Professional training is based on the analysis of professional competence of border guards formed during the educational process at the higher military educational establishment. It is clear that it requires the implementation of new techniques and technologies, tasks and content review to overcome existing drawbacks in the system of professional training.

Concerning the general notion of “professional competence,” it is defined as a combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes, working methods, and professionally essential qualities deemed necessary for the efficient execution of professional activities. Professional competence is a measure of professionalism, an essential condition for the successful performance of social and professional functions and all activities of daily living (Prykhodko & Yurchenko, 2012). Markova (1996) determined professional competence as individual characteristics of compliance with the requirements of a profession and the psychological state that gives possibility to be able to act independently and appropriately whilst gaining new knowledge and skills and to perform professional functions. Competence does not mean education; it is a combination of psychological qualities to teach future experts how to act responsibly and independently. The basis for evaluation of competence is an evaluation of the final result of the activity.

Notable significant contributions have been made to the development of professional competence by military experts as stated by Alagappa (2001), Barman and Konwar (2001), Bohdaniuk (2013), Cline (1943), Didenko (2014), and Yagupov and Svystun (2007). Analysis of professional training for border guards is impossible without a definition of professional competence as the desired result of their professional training. Didenko (2014) defined it as the central notion of restoration and modernization of the educational process. It is wider than a set of professional knowledge and skills as it relates to knowledge, both operational and technological, and the value and motivational aspects of activity. Professional competence of border guards is complicated, integrating a quality of personality that conditions the possibility to perform professional activities in general; moreover, professional competence and professionalism are the primary factors of subjective personal realization of border guards, while the stimulus of professional actualization and self-improvement in professional activities is consciousness and desire for self-perfection through achievements in professional activity.

Bohdaniuk (2013) considers professional competence as qualitative characteristics of the level of acquisition of officers of a profession – realization of commitments, understanding of own social role, evaluation of personal qualities and skills as future expert of border-related matters, balance between results of this evaluation and objective requirements to the professional activity, regulation of professional actualization, self-perfection, and development on the basis of the ratio derived. Thus, professional competence means the process of professional maturation, transitioning to a state which ensures the possibility to perform professional activities productively and efficiently, and to carry out professional duties and thereby reach positive results. Besides, the content of the notion of professional competence should include fundamental knowledge in the field of state border defense, as well as the practical skills necessary for future service and attained personal qualities.

Also, Bohdaniuk (2013) asserted the distinguishing features of professional competence of border guard officers in accordance with missions, tasks and results of their professional activities as the following: conditionality of missions and tasks with the social demands of society and their consolidations in legal basis; combination of various components in the tasks determining multitasking of professional activities; the integrative character of results of professional activities including operational capacity of border units; the psychological

readiness and qualitative change of personality of border guards; and the compliance of individual qualities and actions of border guards to set tasks and functions.

Professional competence of the military expert, therefore, is formed within the framework of comprehensive training in a holistic system of activity related to border security. The aim is to harmonize and create a fair balance between tasks and skills of border guards as the efficient activities of border guards depends on the level of their competence.

The higher military educational establishment is the primary institution where professional competence of border guards is formed, and is the most significant base for the training of future officers. Within this particular context, importance is given to increasing intellectual potential, the formation of necessary skills, professional flexibility and psychological adaptation as well as the improvement of motivation to productive activities (Yevesiukov, 2006). Moreover, we should consider the ability of border guards to perform their professional duties under extreme conditions or life-threatening situations that are currently more relevant.

Taking into consideration the emerging security threats and the extension of the mission of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, border guards today face a wider range of competence components. Table 1 shows the change in professional skills necessary to perform service duties at the required level following the events of 2014.

Table 1. Skills necessary for border guards to perform service duties

Skills required before 2014	Skills required after 2014
Border protection skills. Leadership skills. Knowledge of border-related matters. Border control including identification and verification of people, examination of cargo and transportation means. Psychological stability. Personal culture and ethics. Physical fitness. Analytical skills. Computer literacy. Technological competence. Legal competence. Cooperative skills. Conflict management skills. Organizational and pedagogical skills. Information processing skills. Use of small arms and means of defense. Decision-making skills. Taking responsibilities. Communication skills.	Border protection and defense skills. Leadership skills, rapid changing of role and responsibilities. Extended knowledge of border-related matters in a reduced period. Information processing skills and analysis of the sociopolitical situation. Objective and rapid risk analysis. Mobility and flexibility. Ability to perform service duties in life-threatening or tense situations. Heightened operational capability and military readiness. Use of small arms, heavy weapons and special equipment. Technological and military technical skills. Conflict management skills. Stress management skills. Rapid identification and prevention of threats. Decision-making skills. Taking responsibilities and adequate exposure to risk. Skills of counteracting to hybrid war.

	Life-saving skills. Communication skills. Inculcating a sense of pride in belonging to border service and own achievements.
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Due to the analysis of new skills, it is obvious that the professional competence profile has transformed, moving from special competence to military special competence (Torichnyi, 2016; Veretilnyk, 2016) considering the necessity to engage with insurgent groups and a tense border regime. These changes are necessarily therefore reflected in the process of educating Ukraine’s border guards.

Military educational establishment: general information

Currently, in the Ukraine, there is one higher military educational establishment oriented towards the training of future border guard officers – Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine. It is a multidisciplinary educational establishment where the border guards recruits are trained to a Bachelor’s or Master’s level. The Academy is comprised of five faculties, a Center of Excellence for Personnel, a graduate school as well as various administrative and support units. Officers are trained in the specializations of “State border protection and defense,” “Operational and service activity and management of border units,” “Law,” “Law-enforcement activity,” “Philology,” “Automotive sciences,” and two new specializations which were added after 2014; “Telecommunication” and “Psychology.” General information about the academy is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine

Characteristic	Description
Name of agency responsible	State Border Guard Service of Ukraine
Educational establishment	Bohdan Khmelnytskyi National Academy of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine (location: Khmelnytskyi)
Number of specializations	8
Duration of training	Bachelor’s: 4 years Master’s 1-2 years (Specialist was abolished in 2017)
Forms of training	Daytime instruction (all stages) Correspondence instruction (Master’s program only)
Theoretical & methodological principles of training	Competence approach, activity-oriented approach, person-centered approach
Number of cadets in groups	25-30
Peculiarities of training	Staged training, fixed training plan, system & multi-layered structure, continuity, practical importance of curricula, unified system of training for all specialties.
Final output	Required level of professional competence, personal qualities, professional mobility while solving tasks in peacetime and wartime.

Content of border guards' training

The main changes seen have been to the content of training due to the necessity to strengthen the training's military component. This has meant that professional training now includes both fundamental (general) training and professional (specialist) training. Since 2014, practical professional training, including an apprenticeship within border guard units, has increased by 50% and currently amounts to almost 72% of study time due to a compression of the general training block concerning the humanities and the cycle of socioeconomic and natural sciences (which makes up approximately 28% of total study time).

Due to the transition of border units and organs of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine to the military defense of certain sections of the state (administrative) border and control line, the professional training of border guards is now required to include training material concerning combat support of operational and service or combat actions. On this basis, Havryliuk (2017) analyzed changes to the content of the training, and noted that by 2016, certain types of combat support such as military engineering, radiation, chemical, and biological protection were being studied by cadets of all specialties. Topics related to intelligence, electronic warfare, and tactical disguise are studied under the subject of "General Tactics."

New specialist subjects and modules have been introduced to form skills sufficient for the successful execution of professional duties concerning emerging challenges and threats: to act and perform engineering tasks in various types of combat; to organize radiation, chemical and biological protection of units under different conditions; to investigate the engineering measures of the enemy and disguise possibilities of the area; to study the state and possibilities of routes; to analyze the nature of destruction and other obstacles as well as ways to overcome them; to use building materials located in the territory as engineering equipment; to know the characteristics of various types of weapons including weapons of mass destruction; to equip fire positions; to employ technical means of radiation and chemical intelligence and control; to establish mined explosive and non-explosive barriers; and to implement electronic warfare and tactical disguise (Havryliuk, 2016).

Apart from the training content, the formation of professional competence demands meeting the following principles: availability to intensify the cognitive activity of future border guard officers; sufficient complexity of training materials to contribute to the development of thinking, memory, emotional stability, and the formation of positive motivation to learning activities as well as future professional work (Bilavets, 2017).

In addition, training materials should cover classical notions concerning border studies and elements of recent advances in science, especially in the field of military equipment, weapons, and special means of control and surveillance. Significant attention should be paid to interdisciplinary links to realize the mechanism of knowledge integration, design-simulated learning situations and situations of interest for the students. Besides, according to Bilavets (2017), the military training component should cover experience of Anti-Terroristic Operation through the review of existing subjects such as "Tactics," "Border control" and "Physical training" and the development of new subjects such as "Military and Engineering Training," "Tactical Medicine," and "Automobiles and Military vehicles". In order to provide a logical sequence of subjects of study at the academy, a scientific and

methodological algorithm was developed that ensures efficient implementation of curriculum sections, modules, and topics through a revised structural and logical scheme.

Methodology of training

Changes to training content alone is not sufficient to train professional border guards. Greater attention should be paid towards the methods of training used during the teaching of fundamental and specialist subjects as traditional methods (lecture, seminar, practical lessons, group work, consultation, independent work) have proven somewhat ineffective.

Application of a range of innovative techniques may contribute to the pedagogical task of forming professional competence in the process of training future experts (Capacho, 2016; Chauhan, 2013; Dichaba & Mokhele, 2012; Remesh, 2013; Simplicio, 2000; Sujatha Devi, 2014; Torichnyi, 2016). A questionnaire applied to both instructors and cadets at the National Academy showed that less than half of instructors used innovative techniques on a regular basis during their instruction of future border guard officers in preference to traditional methods. Figure 1. shows the results of a questionnaire applied in 2016.

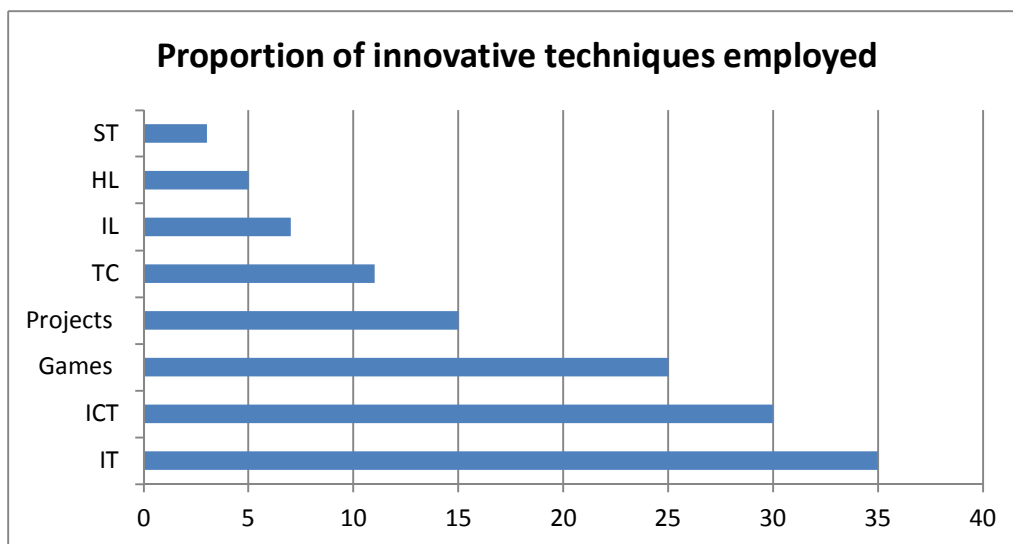


Figure 1. Innovative techniques used by instructors on a regular basis

(ST = Simulation Technologies; HL = Horizontal Learning; IL = Innovative Lectures;

TC = Training Courses; ICT = Information and Communication Technologies; IT = Interactive Technologies)

Despite the modest number of instructors, they emphasized numerous advantages of these innovative techniques in improving the process of professional training and leading to the formation of high level professional competence of future border guard officers. Table 3. shows the main advantages of these innovative techniques according to the instructors and cadets of the Academy.

Table 3. Main advantages of innovative techniques

Technique	Main advantages
Simulation technologies	<p>Rapid extension of knowledge and skills. Alternative type of apprenticeship. Possibility to play other role and perform different professional functions. Ensures cadets' flexibility and adaptability to new conditions. Builds psychological readiness. Teaches cadets to act independently. Contributes to the formation of leadership and problem-solving skills</p>
Horizontal learning	<p>Emotional mutual assistance. Transforms differences into possibilities. Ensures social and psychological comfort for those who are relearning. Creates an optimal learning environment. Teaches cadets to be active and independent. Encourages cadets to learn. Improves responsibility, discipline, and attention.</p>
Innovative lectures: video- or audio lectures	<p>Builds motivation and interest. Saves time. Guarantees the transfer of material to large groups. Gives the possibility to present various points of view.</p>
Training courses including cascade training	<p>Maintains an appropriate level of professional competence. Effective training of specific skills. Accomplishment of special tasks. Formation of leadership, communication and presentation skills. Wide use of proactive teaching methods. Possibility to form heterogeneous training teams.</p>
Project-based learning conducted independently in small groups or supervised by instructor	<p>Self-evaluation. Increases self-motivation. Encourages professional activity. Develops communicative, leadership, and decision-making skills. Forms cross-cultural skills. Forms independent learning skills.</p>
Games including war- gaming	<p>Develops communicative, leadership, and decision-making skills. Contributes to the formation of creativity. Encourages cadets to study. Demonstrates elements of professional activity. Cadets from all training teams can perform various roles. Possibilities for immediate feedback. Voluntarily participation.</p>

Technique	Main advantages
Information & communication technologies	Builds motivation and interest. Saves time. Guarantees the transfer of material to large groups. Ensures distant control of the learning process. Makes independent work more efficient and productive.
Interactive techniques	Self-evaluation. Time-saving. Training to specific professional assignments. Increases self-motivation. Encourages professional activity. Develops communicative, leadership, and decision-making skills. Forms cross-cultural skills.

Changes have included more extensive application of innovative techniques during mainly traditional lessons. These can be in the form of warm-up exercises, discussion, role-play, dialogue with the instructor, paired-working, brainstorming, tabletop exercises, flipped classroom, buzz groups, and meeting with experts, which all help to narrow the gap between theory and practice, to establish interdisciplinary links, and to encourage cadets to study.

Discussion

The system of professional training of border guards in the Ukraine is definitely improving. New security threats is one of the key elements from its development that has accelerated the transitional period. Nevertheless, certain issues still remain and need to be resolved to order to increase the efficiency of professional training of border guards. These issues are as follows:

Objective gap between theory and practice – This gap can be narrowed through more effective and regular application of innovative instructional techniques during lessons and apprenticeships.

Combination of fundamental (general) and professional (specialist) subjects – A higher education system that includes a universal block of instruction which all students are required to undergo, but without extending the training period duration.

Training level of instructors – New security threats create a number of challenges for teaching staff, necessitating some retraining for instructors.

Study and implementation of foreign experience – Special attention should be given towards examining the experience of other countries facing border conflicts.

Development of creativity – Military education pays insufficient attention to the creativity of cadets, but the non-standard situation of the Ukrainian borders requires more creative skills from border guards.

Informative and procedural approach to training – Training material needs to be informative and contain actual data that represents the current problems related to border matters.

Encouragement of self-perfection and continuous learning. Future border guards should understand that both equipment life and skills duration are shorter than their overall service duration; and therefore, continuing learning is required in order to keep pace with the current situation. To address the issue of continuing learning, more training courses for active duty personnel should be designed.

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