

# E-Learning on ‘Combating Trafficking in Human Beings’ in Community of Practice

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**Abstract**—The task of our research is to study how to bring professional development training to the workplace and to establish a platform for exchange of experience between different categories of law enforcement officers and prosecutors from all over Ukraine involved in combating trafficking in human beings (THB). Two knowledge management methodologies are used to fulfill this task: eLearning and the Community of Practice. It was expected that eLearning would provide accessibility and flexibility of training, while the Community of Practice could accumulate best practice from all over the country and bring it to the officer’s workplace. In 2014-2016, two pilot e-courses “Combating Trafficking in Human Beings” were conducted for 40 learners in each course representing four categories of officers: counter-trafficking operational officers, pre-trial investigators, border guards and prosecutors. As a result of such piloting, the curriculum was designed, which comprises three modules: (1) updating knowledge on legislation and policy in combating THB; (2) understanding the specifics of work for each category of trainees; (3) advancement of practical skills outside the direct area of competence by implementing new media and selecting the meaningful circumstances in the legal domain. The peculiarity of the first two modules is self-paced learning offered to the participants when taking quizzes and tests or taking part in forum discussions. The use of constantly updated ratings – top 10 highest grades for each course activity– supports the competitive spirit between individual trainees. Besides, the e-course participants can monitor their own progress in the grade book and in the section of their course completion status. Flexibility and accessibility of the training is evaluated by the participants at the level of 3.9 (out of 4.0). In the third module different categories of the participants work together in mixed teams on a common practical task. First they are offered a case, which they have to analyze, find necessary and sufficient factors for designing a solution and write a court verdict using a given template. The participants feel high responsibility for successful performance of this activity because they know that the best verdicts are to be selected and published on the home page of the course together with expert’s feedback, so that they can learn from each other. As a result of combining two methodologies – eLearning and Community of Practice – we have transformed trainees’ behavior in the e-course from passive absorption to active immersion. Such immersion was observed in terms of the trainees’ mental state and emotions when performing learning activities. Thus, up to 50% of the participants are actively immersed (feel arousal, control and flow), are strongly motivated and excited while taking this useful e-course. Such result is our benchmark towards the creation of memorable

learning experience. The Community of Practice has been formed in order to exchange the best practice in the area of combating THB from the perspective of different categories of officers, for improving personal professional competencies, and for discussion of CTH policy issues

**Keywords**—Combating trafficking in human beings (THB), community of practice (CoP), eLearning, effect of immersion, knowledge management, professional development in workplace.

## I. INTRODUCTION

**T**HE key element in the art of knowledge management using web-based tools (eLearning) is the ability to create a specific place (or environment) where practitioners in combating THB:

- are involved in sharing experiences, generating ideas and finding new solutions to existing practical challenges;
- can choose their own learning trajectories for acquisition and development of necessary competences.

Academic mobility programs - on the one hand, and Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) - on the other, greatly expand the horizons on the way towards new educational products. People seek to diversify their life through immersion in various activities and obtaining various experiences that stimulate (positive) emotions. Educators are aware of the fact that emotions have the ‘power to open or close access to learning, memory, and the ability to make connections’. [1]

Today educational institutions face difficulties motivating students to acquire knowledge that may be relevant to their distant professional future, when everything around them is changing so dramatically and rapidly. And when it comes to knowledge management in terms of eLearning, then a tutor (trainer) should focus on the nearest future - "tomorrow", because this not very distant prospect arouses greater interest in trainees and stimulates idea generation process, which is a unifying element of any virtual learning environment.

The professional development at workplace demands products which consist of two components: an educational service and experience, where services are intangible while experiences are memorable. The specific topic-oriented virtual learning environment and effective Community of Practice (CoP) [2] where trainees are focused on the topic of combating THB, and their knowledge and experiences are concentrated, ideally satisfy this kind of demand.

Successful integration of CoP and eLearning in the virtual learning environment means that up-to-date knowledge and current experience are concentrated in one place and in the

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right time to become a value innovation in professional retraining.

## II. BACKGROUND

### *A. Initiative of Developing the e-Course for Law Enforcement Officers in Combating THB*

The e-course “Combatting trafficking in human beings: An interactive course for the law enforcement officers” (<http://www.leel.org.ua/>) was developed and implemented as a part of the effort to introduce eLearning for operational officers, investigators, border service officers and prosecutors in order to strengthen the capacity of Ukraine’s law enforcement agencies to identify and investigate trafficking crimes and to form a community of law enforcement practitioners to combat THB.

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Ukraine in cooperation with the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, National Academy of Prosecution of Ukraine, the State Border Service of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine and Ukrainian Distance Learning (UDL) System organized the online course in Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (CTH) for law enforcement officers and prosecutors.

The course was held as part of the project aimed at strengthening the capacity of the Government of Ukraine in combating trafficking in human beings, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Canada.

The main advantage of the e-course is its flexible schedule of knowledge construction in online training brought together with CoP collective experience to the workplace of trainees – professionals in the area of combating THB, who learn from the best practice and from each other’s experience.

### *B. Formation of the Community of Practice*

This eLearning environment is available only for registered members of the Community of Practice (CoP) who receive their passwords from the e-course organizers. The participants of the CoP are law enforcement officers and prosecutors of Ukraine specialized in identifying, documenting or solving crimes related to trafficking in human beings (TH), or who ensure the investigation or carry out procedural management in the criminal proceedings of such crimes.

Target audience of the e-course consists of four groups:

1. operational officers from directorates and departments (sectors) for combatting trafficking crimes, the oblast directorates and the Kyiv City Directorate of the National Police of Ukraine; staff member who are just starting to work in this field;
2. specialized investigators who carry out investigations as part of criminal proceedings in trafficking cases;
3. specialized prosecutors who provide procedural guidance in criminal proceedings in trafficking cases;
4. specialized border service officers.

Along with experienced specialists, the course provides for the training of novices who are just starting their professional activities in this field.

The basic value of the course lies in the formation of a

training CoP in which each specialist is ready to share his/her experience, communicate and cooperate in a team of professionals capable of finding and implementing new solutions that are necessary to effectively combat modern crime.

In order to ensure the sense of trust among the participants, the eLearning process is based on the following principles: professionalism, respect and tolerance for the views of others, lack of gender stereotypes, exchange of experiences, cooperation and discipline. Trainees registered in the CoP first have to read and agree with the following rules:

1. do not share information that constitutes State or official secrets;
2. take into account the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Personal Data Protection”;
3. refrain from disclosure of personal data when discussing cases that have already taken place;
4. respected persons of the opposite sex;
5. stick to the subject matter in forum discussions;
6. refrain from discussions on political or religious topics;
7. spend about 1 hour a day to study the training material, perform assignments and take tests, and communicate.

### *C. E-Course Objective and Tasks*

The *objective* of the e-course in combating THB is to offer trainees – representatives of law enforcement agencies and prosecution bodies an opportunity to:

- improve their knowledge of practical implementation of all legislatively granted powers to ensure effective investigation of criminal proceedings in trafficking cases;
- strengthen their practical skills and learn mechanisms necessary for effective documentation and investigation of trafficking crimes;
- expand their knowledge of procedural management in pretrial investigation and official prosecution in criminal proceedings in trafficking cases;
- learn about special aspects of working with trafficking survivors and their referral for the assistance;
- analyze, make recommendations and substantiate law enforcement practice regarding trafficking crimes;
- ask for advice in the framework of specific criminal proceedings;
- exchange experience and enhance the level of qualification among practicing law enforcement officials;
- become a catalyst for new approaches to combatting trafficking crimes.

Special objectives of the course are to:

- increase interaction among the staff of operational units, investigators and prosecutors in detecting and documenting trafficking crimes, their pretrial investigation and official prosecution in these proceedings;
- impart knowledge and train skills that are necessary for dealing with trafficking survivors in the framework of the national referral mechanism;
- achieve an understanding of the requirements and mechanisms of international cooperation to be implemented in practice.

#### D. E-course Curriculum

Training in the e-course takes 7 weeks. E-course modules are provided to separate groups (4 categories of trainees), then all trainees take part in the workshops (Internet-Monitoring Algorithms, and Determination of Offence and their Perspective in Court).

We use challenging workshops in the e-course in order to promote understanding of the key concepts and rules among trainees, to help them formulate questions and/or problems and generate solutions.

The workshops include a series of assignments and tests with open-ended questions. They encourage trainees to delve into the essence of the issue and provoke collaboration and co-creation among the participants. The suggested situation is very close to the real-life work conditions. And the trainees have to find the best possible solution within certain timeline and using limited resources, and – what is even more important – to act, try out and implement this solution in practice.

It is important to note that the e-course curriculum was developed based on the professional needs of each target group:

- for all participants: the Legal Basis of combating THB (e-course Module); Internet-Monitoring Algorithms, and Determination of Offence and their Perspective in Court (two e-course workshops);

- for prosecutors: the use of all the powers provided by the procedural law to ensure effective investigation of criminal proceedings and public prosecution in court;

- for officers at operational and investigative level: mechanisms of crime detection, documentation and investigation of crimes, special aspects of working with survivors and the authority to ensure effective investigation of criminal proceedings.

A virtual room for experts was created, where practitioners (trainees) have access to experts experienced in building the capacity of the national law enforcement agencies in combating THB and able to improve and strengthen the law enforcement practice, to analyze it from an academic perspective and to develop methodological recommendations.

### III. METHODOLOGICAL BASIS

It would be fair to say that the e-course is CoP-driven, i.e. it is developed in short order to address the emerging issues and practical tasks faced by the CoP participants. In the e-course, modular-based system is used where every module is a complete learning event with specific goals and a number of activities and resources that ‘bring’ trainees to the goal. All modules have recommended time limits, though learning activities within modules are flexible, without strict deadlines. Every learning event has a defined level of challenge, and trainees are informed about it and should be prepared and ready to overcome it using required support resources such as theoretical information, glossary, experts’ room (forum), e-sources etc. The modules are interrelated, which means the trainees can start the next module or sub-topic after they

successfully complete the previous one.

For running cognitive presence processes in the CoP, we apply ‘4A’ model (developed by UDL System and successfully implemented since 2009) [3], which describes four main stages in constructing the meaning: attention, actualization, attraction and action. This model is focused on guaranteeing cognitive presence of e-course trainees during every learning event, where:

1A – drawing attention to a specific learning event (module), understanding its place in the curriculum and role in overall e-course outcomes;

2A – actualizing the need for participating in this event through evaluation of one’s knowledge gap (to assess trainees’ readiness to perform – i.e., to overcome the specific level of challenge) and through setting achievable goals;

3A – attract: engaging trainees in interaction with support resources (training materials, experts, tutors), which help them get ready to perform and be aware of how their performance is evaluated;

4A – act: being involved in learning activities (forums, assignments, project tasks, glossaries, choices, quizzes, tests and other activities possible in VLE) where trainees demonstrate ability to apply knowledge, generate ideas, ask questions, give feedback, analyze, synthesize and evaluate, i.e. act as subjects in the process of creativity, cooperation and co-creation.

We have defined trainees’ immersion in a learning event [4] – experience-based eLearning context – as the process where CoP participants get new experience, which is supported by their existing experience and which helps them contribute to the continuous development of their life competences.

### IV. TRAINEES’ MENTAL STATE IN DIFFERENT LEARNING ACTIVITIES

#### A. Learning Events and Trainees’ Mental State

The e-course, though it has specific timeline, is offered in a self-paced mode, accessible 24/7. Each trainee has an opportunity to plan his/her own learning trajectory in terms of available resources and time. The trainees can get access to the materials and tools of the next module (or its sub-topic) only after all learning activities in the previous module (or sub-topic) are marked as completed (passed). If necessary, the trainees are able to go back and have another attempt in order to improve the score. We suggest viewing the main types of activities offered in terms of learning domains and the trainees’ mental state and emotions

The eLearning events involve both individual and team work and are focused on creating positive and meaningful learning experience in the trainees.

Upon completion of the e-course, during the final face-to-face workshop, the trainees were asked to mark their emotional and mental state while carrying out a certain learning activity, on the proposed scale of the mental state, according to Mihály Csikszentmihályi’s concept of flow [5]: ranging from apathy, – through unrest, anxiety, boredom and relaxation, - to control, excitement, joy and influx of ideas.



state.

### B. Trainees' Mental State while taking Tests

Figure 1 represents the distribution of trainees' answers when they assessed their mental state while being involved in various learning activities (events) of the e-course on CTH.

We use tests and trainees' rating updated after they pass each test to create a competitive environment between all trainees. The names of top ten trainees with the highest score are automatically updated in the rating located on the home page of the e-course. Trainees have unlimited number of attempts and limited time to pass the test, and they get an average score for all their attempts made. Besides, the e-course trainees could see their own progress in the grade book and in the section of their course completion status.

While taking the tests, the one third of trainees felt arousal, which means they were strongly motivated and could feel excitement and zeal to satisfy their emerged learning needs. 27% of trainees felt worry and unrest, which means that the level of challenge was high for them. 21% trainees felt that everything was under control. (Figure 1).

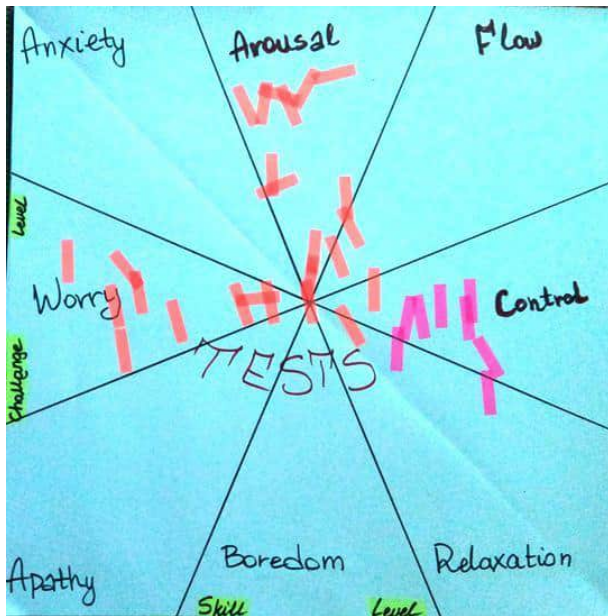


Fig. 1 Trainees' mental state in tests

### C. Trainees' Mental State while performing an individual task

In addition to tests in e-course modules, the trainees are offered individual task in the e-course workshop. They have to understand the subject (Internet-Monitoring Algorithms) and master their skills in IP-address Identification Techniques while performing the real-life task.

According to the trainees' survey (conducted among the best 10 trainees from each category), the majority of them (36%) followed certain regulations while fulfilling the task, so they kept the process under control and felt quite confident. One third of the trainees felt fear and worry, which means that the level of challenge was too high for them, and they were

stressed, worried and felt unrest. 24% of the trainees felt arousal while performing this task (Figure 2).

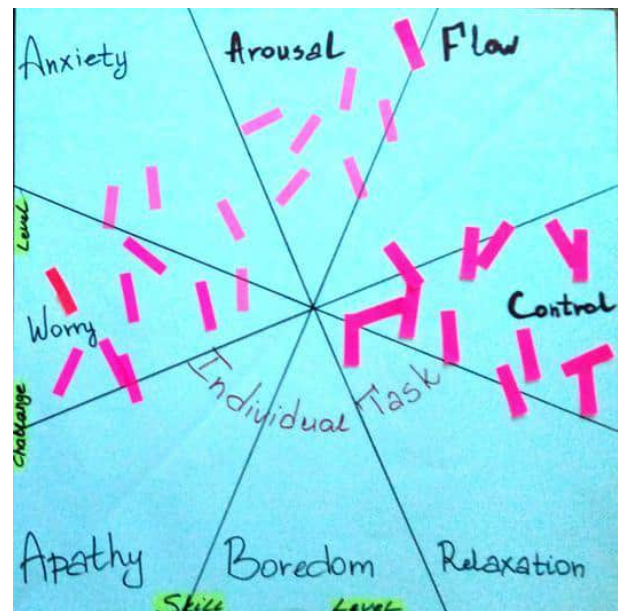


Fig. 2 Trainees' mental state in the individual task

### D. Trainees' Mental State while performing a group task

The e-course trainees had an opportunity to carry out a project "Determination of Offence and their Perspective in Court". First they were offered a case, which they had to analyze using different methods, to find necessary and sufficient factors for designing a solution and to write the project, using a given template.

The trainees felt high responsibility for successful performance of this activity because they were aware of the high weight of its score in the general course grade (Figure 3).

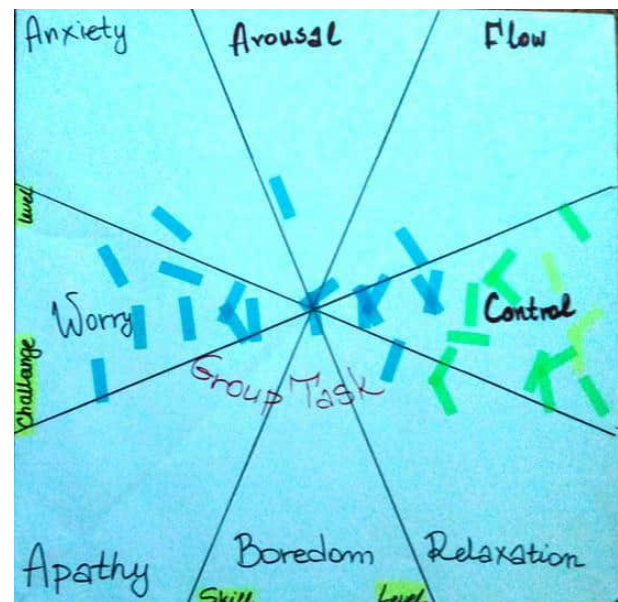


Fig. 3 Trainees' mental state in tests

Besides, the trainees knew that the best projects would be selected and published on the home page of the course together with experts' feedback: so that other trainees could get acquainted with their work and learn from each other.

While working on the project, the trainees divided in two parts: about a half of them felt worries because they were not sure they were performing the task correctly; another half of them were confident and had 'everything under control' as they were aware of the criteria against which the project was to be evaluated by experts and just followed the template. Here we saw the case when several trainees were completely immersed in writing the project and felt 'flow', which means they lost the count of time and were highly motivated to complete the project (Figure 3).

#### V.CONCLUSION

All the received statistical data in the e-course suggest that our idea to combine eLearning and CoP in the area of CTH has been realized as a new approach to professional development in the workplace.

Thus, up to 50% of the trainees are actively immersed (feel arousal, control and flow), are strongly motivated and excited while taking this useful e-course. Such result is our benchmark towards the creation of memorable learning experience. The CoP has been formed in order to exchange the best practice in the area of combating THB from the perspective of different categories of officers, for improving personal professional competencies, and for discussing the policy of the issues.

Having analyzed the results of the final survey of the CoP participants – graduates from the e-course, we can state that their immersion in the process of eLearning means entering highly focused mental state and living the 'second life' – feeling arousal, control and flow. Besides, we could observe the optimal balance between the level of challenge of the assignments and the level of knowledge and skills of the trainees who were ready to overcome this challenge successfully.

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