Distance-Learning for Advanced Military Education:
Using Wargame Simulation Course as an Example

Huan-Chao Keh, Tamkang University, Taiwan
Kuei-Min Wang, Shih Chien University, Taiwan
Shu-Shen Wai, Tamkang University, Taiwan
Jiung-yao Huang, National Taipei University, Taiwan
Lin Hui, Tamkang University, Taiwan
Ji-Jen Wu, Tamkang University, Taiwan

ABSTRACT

Distance learning in advanced military education can assist officers around the world to become more skilled and qualified for future challenges. Through well-chosen technology, the efficiency of distance-learning can be improved significantly. In this paper we present the architecture of Advanced Military Education – Distance Learning (AME-DL) prototype for advanced military distance-learning, it combines advanced e-learning tool, simulation technology, and Web technology to provide a set of military learning and training subjects that can be accessed easily anywhere, anytime through a Web browser: The major goal of AME-DL is to provide a common standard framework for military training program, and the major contribution for such a prototype is to reduce training cost while providing high quality learning experience.

Keywords: distance-learning; MOSS2007; modeling; sharepoint learning kit; simulation

INTRODUCTION

During the past several decades, the proliferation of the technological advancements has led to numerous educational institutions to choose Distance-Learning (DL) as an alternative approach to provide qualified education and to generate revenues. DL is beneficial for both the students and educational institutions because it meets the needs of most students and reduces the cost of educational institutions. Furthermore, such a program is even more applicable
for military personnel since the major issue
in military training is the territorial disper-
sion of military personnel which enforces
officers to be gathered in training camps
to attend the lessons. As a result, DL is the
most desirable solution for military officers
who have to be available to deploy anytime
and anywhere.

The general public, however, often
views DL as a byproduct of the technol-
gy evolution and equates the success
of DL with computer technology such as
audio/video streaming and collaboration
groupware. They fail to realize that DL
is more than a set of computer hardware;
instead it is a whole package with multiple
factors. In order to fully understand
the concept of DL and to design a successful
curriculum, we first need to define the
term “Distance-Learning.” The American
Council on Education characterizes DL as
“separation of place and/or time between
instructor and learner, among learners,
and/or between learners and learning re-
sources” (Mitelstedt, 2001). This definition
has nothing that can be constructed to make
DL synonymous with technology. Thus, we
can see that DL requires much more than
just a fast Internet connection and a few
sets of compact discs. The central focus
of a successful DL program should be on
the development and continuous evaluation
of a total package that integrates instruc-
tor training, facility design, support staff
contribution, courseware development, and
student expectation. Technology can acted
as the central vital vassal that links all the
factors together to reduce development cost,
and to achieve the goal of providing quality
education to military personnel anywhere
and anytime.

DL has gained acceptance in the United
States military for its capacity in saving
training cost as well as reducing the time a
military staff spends away from his/her unit,
and for its efficiency in increasing training
readiness. In November 1997, the Depart-
ment of Defense (DoD) and the White
House Office of Science and Technology
Policy launched the Advanced Distributed
Learning initiative. This initiative was de-
dsigned to create an environment for dynamic
and cost effective learning software in order
to meet the education and training needs of
the military in the 21st century. The Depart-
ment of Defense’s vision is to “ensure that
DoD personnel have access to the highest
quality education and training that fan be
tailored to their needs and delivered cost
effectively, anytime and anywhere” (Carol,
2000). The strategy is to study and utilize
emerging network-based technologies to
create common standards that will enable
reusability and interoperability of learning
content, for example, reusability between
applications and platforms in order to lower
development costs. Another major goal of
Advanced Distributed Learning initiative
is to promote widespread collaboration
that can satisfy common needs, enhance
existing product development cycle, and
establish a corresponding implementation
process (Mitelstedt, 2001).

This article will first describe the current
situation of military advanced education;
then introduce the proposed AME-DL pro-
totype, which is based on Microsoft Office
SharePoint Server (MOSS) 2007. All the
 technological terminologies and underline
concepts will be summarized in this article
for the audience to become familiar with
this network infrastructure. It will explain
the merits that AME-DL can bring and how
training officers, course administrators,
and so on can customize military training
classes utilizing this infrastructure. It will
also provide recommendations to Ministry
of National Defense as to the direction it
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