METHODOLOGICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DEVELOPING THE MORAL PROFILE OF MILITARY STUDENTS

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Abstract: *The paper addresses some pedagogical problems that occur in the process of developing the moral profile of military students. A particular issue is that the educators (military instructors, officers or civilian teachers) have the official responsibility to build up the cadets' ethics, but they have no special training in this field and they are not given specific tasks. It is challenging for educators to design and formalize the optimal routes, the appropriate methods and tools for approaching the moral education, and also to find the most efficient ways to assess the results of this process. In this paper we present some theoretical guidelines related to the education in the ethical domain, some relevant pedagogical experiences of Romanian and foreigner officers, and also some "lessons learned" by military trainers. In order to contribute to the improvement of the quality of the cadets' forming process, we outline some teaching methods and pedagogical tools that have already proved their effectiveness in the development of the military moral profile, concurrently with their moral conscience and moral conduct.*

Keywords: moral profile, ethic values, military students, teaching methods

1. The necessity of moral development of future officers

Aiming to advocate for the strengthening of the character of future military professionals, the contemporary military system has the responsibility to harmonize the efforts of military trainers and also those of civilian and military teachers to reinforce the trust in the military profession. In this direction, the key tasks of the educators are the following:

- To support the army's huge efforts by preparing future officers as leaders of character;
- To deepen the concept, the strategy, and the doctrine of *army character development*;
- To integrate the concepts of army profession, army ethics and character development into the military training process, into the military leadership development and the cooperation into the civilian educational system;
- To assess the effectiveness of the educational efforts in the field of military ethics.

Military leaders strive to maintain the trust of civilian population through upholding the army ethics and abiding by desirable values, in order to accomplish their entrusted missions. The army ethics represents a set of laws, values and beliefs deeply embedded in the core of the professional culture and practiced by the members of the military organization. These values motivate and guide the conduct of all the individuals that are bound together by a common moral purpose. Thereby, the army ethics is the foundation of trust and the military professionals must properly understand how it guides a trustworthy behaviour.

For the cadets of the Land Forces Academy of Sibiu, the framework of army ethics and the relationship between its components are presented in the table below, which was designed after a framework created by the U.S. Center for the Army Profession and Ethic [1]:

Table no.1: The framework of army ethics of the cadets of the Land Forces Academy

	Legal foundations	Moral foundations
Army as profession (values/norms for institutional performance)	*Legal – at institutional level* • The Constitution of Romania; • Treaties to which Romania takes part; • Laws and principles of warfare; • The Law of the Military Status; • Military laws and regulations; • The University Charter of the Land Forces Academy; • The Regulation of Organizing and Functioning of the Land Forces Academy;	*Moral – at institutional level* • Deontology of the military profession; • Military organizational culture; • Code of university ethics; • Code of the Ethics of the Cadets Corps; • Trust relationships between the professionals • Supreme values assumed by the Land Forces Academy: Country, Honour, Duty; • Humanitarian and civic norms;
Individual as professional (values/norms for individual performance)	*Legal – at individual level* • Oath of: enlistment, commission, service; • Rules of engagement; • Officers' rules; • Regulations regarding the professional activity of cadets;	*Moral – at individual level* • Universal norms, basic human rights; • Personal creeds and mottos; • Values and creeds of military branches; • Humanitarian and civic norms; • The Warrior's Ethos etc.

The cadets are not entirely aware of the moral requirements they have to meet starting from the first day as students of academy. Therefore, an important role of each officer is to lead the moral consciousness and the moral behaviour of his subordinates, both at the individual and the group levels. The psychological mechanism of the moral functioning cannot be expressed by means of a perfectly consistent flowchart. Thus, moral issues offer a permanent field for debates, for sharing the individual experience and the results of the theoretical and empirical research of educators.

It is well-known that military institutions cannot function without very clear rules and regulations. So, a great amount of regulations, instructions, orders and specifications are sent from the upper echelons to the subordinate echelons. At first glance, we cannot speak about ethics in the military without coding in specific documents almost all the relations and military activities. Studying the officers' deontology, Octavian Tătar concluded [2]: "For every military, concepts like dignity, honour, courage, sincerity, honesty, mutual help, justice are not moral values according to which they adopt certain behaviours, but professional obligations whose violation is sanctioned in different ways. So, in the military organization, rules that normally belong to ethics became law rules, belonging to the legal field. For civilians, the sanction for moral deviation is the moral blame, but in the military this has been transformed into punishment, since the moral standard has been transformed into legal norms".

Army tends to establish a very strict moral normative system, which manifests itself in a specific way. Thus, some of the militaries may be unable to recognize the content and the meaning of the moral normativity, being in a position of extreme constraint, unable

to choose, and being dominated by norms. Other militaries, although very aware of moral normativity, do not apply it, are neutral or even opposed to it. In all three cases, the concerned people are not free from a moral point of view. But there is also a fourth type of situation: the militaries that are aware of moral norms, identified themselves with these and apply them.

2. Gained experience in the field of moral education of the military

In a study published in 2010, Liesbeth Gulpers examines the contradiction that often arises in the military between the requirements of efficiency in all activities, on the one hand, and the moral landmarks that guide the military behaviour, on the other hand. The afore-mentioned author emphasizes the state of "tension" that is experienced by individuals in such situations. She notes that "military ethicists suggest that moral military behaviour contributes to the effectiveness and success of military operations, especially in the context of irregular warfare" [3].

English scholars have published in the recent years a number of studies about the issue of military moral dilemmas that arise especially in irregular warfare situations. The term *asymmetric conflicts* is currently used to refer to military operations between two disproportionate forces, for example between a terrorist group and the regular army of a state, or between guerrilla warriors and the government forces. Carrick, Connelly and Robinson state that in case of a conventional war, "the aim of the military operation is clear, namely to defeat the enemy's armed forces in battle. Furthermore, one knows who the enemy is. This is often not the case in irregular warfare, and even when one does know who the enemy is, he may be not able to find him, as the enemy will be hiding among the civilian population" [4]. These and other factors mean that, ethically speaking, the military environment has become much more complex than usual. These asymmetric conflicts are often characterized by an *asymmetric morality*, as

the British general Alistair Irwin states. Maintaining high ethical standards in these particular types of conflicts is a matter of great operational importance.

As far as the ethic education of future officers is regarded, these expectations create great difficulties. The traditional values and virtues associated with "warriors", such as courage, comradeship, discipline or obedience should be accompanied by a set of new values, which help officers to accomplish their missions and to play their roles within the military organization. Different armed forces declare official values which provide a glimpse of what they consider to be the purpose of the building of the military character. In another study focused on military ethics, Paul Robinson [5] makes a comparison between some of these lists of virtues and raises some important questions about the extent to which these values are followed.

As a result of a partnership in research, the Josephson Institute of Ethics published, in 2013, some curricular documents related to character development, aiming to offer some didactic material for supporting teachers and trainers in this activity. In these documents, specialists in experiential education detailed a set of moral traits considered to be the pillars of a good character of a person, whether civilian or military professional. As a starting point, authors made a list of what a "person of character" means and what he is expected to do, going through the all the six pillars of character [6]: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. The documents also offer a valuable set of samples of activities in the moral education field.

In a collective publication from 2009, David Whetham [7] argues that in the academic education of future officers' character has an important role to play. The plan to form flexible and moral individuals who are able to think critically requires the military institutions to give those individuals sufficient practice in moral

reasoning so that they can take sound decisions. Peter Olsthoorne [8] has some important contributions to this pedagogical matter. He considers that the solution to the problem of forming the ethical behaviour of the officers is the promotion of the motivational power of praise and blame. Likewise, Asha Kasher [9] presents the way of forming the morality of the Israeli officers by the incorporation of ethics into the officers' conception about themselves as professionals. According to Kasher, an ethic programme is incorporated into the officers' professional development training, based on case studies, ethic lectures, and group discussions. By means of all these activities, officers are encouraged to approach the ethic training as a necessary part of their professional development rather than as an academic subject that, though interesting, has little direct bearing on their own roles and duties.

Some important information about the US Army' ways of developing the character of the military could be found in an Army Study Guide. Highlighting the role of military leaders to properly develop the positive traits of character of their subordinates, the guide presents a pedagogical path based on principles available in the army [10]:

- Leaders teach values, subordinates learn the organizational culture;
- Leaders reinforce values, subordinates comply;
- Leaders shape the ethical climate, subordinates internalize army values.

3. Methodological outlines

It is often assumed that if someone is an officer, he is also capable to teach ethics to their subordinates. This may not be always true.

Although most officers are very good trainers, the military training and the ethical education should not be considered similar. J. Joseph Miller [11] made a distinction that proves very useful for someone who teaches military ethics. He differentiates between the technician's methods (who asks "how" questions) and the

philosopher's methods (who ask "why" questions). Despite the fact that most of the officers are excellent technicians and instructors, things are different when it comes to ethics. These particular kinds of issues cannot be neatly "plugged" into the technician's algorithm. As a result, some pitfalls often occur in the field of military moral education.

Deepening the issue, Clinton Culp [12] concludes that pitfalls also occur in civilian schools and universities where technical practitioners start teaching applied ethics. The author does not imply that this cannot turn out properly, but it difficult to teach something that is tangential to the own area of expertise. Sometimes, the weakness of the teaching methods, usually based on discussions and case studies, is that they only look and sound like moral reasoning, but the approach and the conclusion of the debates often depend on the dominant personality in the group and not on moral reasoning.

As it was mentioned before, the methodological choice of civilian and military teachers in the moral education of military students is, to a great extent, problem-based and case study driven. The problems that students are confronting with are largely samples of morally ambiguous, questionable, and even reprehensible behaviour from the military field.

According to Paul Lawrence [13], a good case study is "the vehicle by which a chunk of reality is brought into the classroom to be worked over by the class and the instructor. A good case keeps the class discussion grounded upon some of the stubborn facts that must be faced in real life situations". As instructional strategy, case studies "bridge the gap between theory and practice and between the academy and the workplace" [14]. They also give students the opportunity to identify the parameters of a problem, to recognize and articulate the positions, to evaluate courses of action, and to argue different points of view.

The goal of a case study is that the students must be able to effectively transfer what

they have learned into practice. As Bernard Henderson [15] considers, "in order for the teacher to do this, they must have a framework within which to guide their delivery. In addition to this, if the teacher hopes to assist the student to think or at least analyze set cases in the same way, then the teacher must outline and deliver a conceptual framework so that the student may work with it as well".

A framework that teachers could use in order to analyze some cases with their students is based on a four-step approach. The approach to the cases is the same as the one when the teacher uses films to introduce the students to the subject. The students are thus in a position to look closely at the specific practice of the military profession they have embraced and the steps taken by them are followed more carefully. Henderson describes the four steps which make up the pedagogical framework for educators, in order to conduct a case study on ethical matters:

a) *The teacher encourages the future officers to make their own judgment on the case in question,* suggesting that they should simply take notes of how they feel after having read, seen or heard of the case: good, bad, right or wrong. This requirement encourages students to start from their intuitive response to the moral problem presented, and after that, to list all the issues in the case which they feel are morally relevant. Narrowing down their list, the students are asked to match the issues that can be identified as actions or decisions of the characters in the case with their clear consequences and to differentiate these from the factual information. Thus, the teacher encourages two things – first, the students' ability to identify morally relevant issues when they see them, and second, to focus their attention on the importance of human actions in morality.

b) *The teacher asks the students to gather all the relevant data, behaviors or events they can find to determine the positive moral value of the decision they have made.* What comes to light here is the difference between the views of the students. The teacher needs to be able to identify if the students differ on the issue of the moral case, then this is usually a difference of priorities. This is definitely due to the weight or importance they place on the identified moral issues. The differences of opinion regarding this issue must be managed properly if true discussion is to take place.

c) *Starting a group discussion: the teacher assists the students to reason through the moral matters that the hypothetical facts of the case point to.* While this step may require sorting the facts out, it will normally be a matter of clarifying the moral issues. During this activity, the teacher should not act as an expert, rather as a source of assistance for the students. According to Henderson, the discussion must be "a co-operative attempt to study a problem in such a way so as to gain a greater understanding of it and of the arguments that can be brought forward for and against particular solutions of it". At risk of oversimplifying the explanation provided for students, the teacher should set the moral principles first as criteria for assessing the rightness and wrongness of an action or of a decision. This should help the students to identify the source of tension often encountered in the military profession when having to take difficult moral decisions.

d) *The teacher demands that the students express the moral principles that guide their decisions and behavior in different professional situations evoked by the case.* The generality of the moral principles enables them to be applied in such a way so as to drive the reasoning process of the military students. With reference to the ethical principles and military laws and regulations, the

teacher can assist the students in finding a higher degree of consistency between what they believe, what they know from experience, and how they can act in a real situation with moral implications.

Using this possible approach to a case study in the field of ethics, the teaching of ethics could be seen as a joint intellectual activity where the teacher, in a speculative enterprise, attempts to assist the military students to better cope with the moral problems that they are likely to encounter during their professional life. Practitioners can see that the students start off from a basis of pre-systematic experience, then (in the company of the teacher) they learn how to make systematic generalizations, and in short time they arrive to post-systematic moral elucidation.

While there are many variations in the use of case studies, specialists from the US Army emphasize the importance of cooperation between cadets and recommend these six steps that could provide a general framework for instructors to lead a case-based discussion [16]:

a) *Instructors give students ample time to read or watch and think about the case*;

b) *Instructors introduce the case briefly and provide some guidelines for how the cadets approach it*. They clarify how the students should think about the case, breaking down the steps that students take in analyzing the case (e.g., "First, identify the constraints each character in the case was operating under and the opportunities s/he had. Second, evaluate the decisions each character made and their implications. Finally, explain what you would have done differently and why."). If the instructors would like students to disregard or focus on certain information, they must specify that as well (e.g., "I want you to ignore the political affiliation of the characters described and simply distinguish their positions on the subject.").

c) *Instructors create groups and monitor them to make sure everyone is involved*. Breaking the full class into smaller groups, individual students have more opportunities for participation and interaction. However, small groups can depart from the subject if the instructor does not provide the necessary structure. Thus, it is a good idea to make the task of the group very concrete and clear (e.g., "You are to identify three potential courses of action and outline the pros and cons of each from a public relations standpoint"). Instructors might also design roles within each group: for example, one individual might be charged with keeping the others on task and watching the time; a second individual's role might be to question the assumptions or interpretations of the group and probe for deeper analysis; a third individual's role might be to record the group's thoughts and report their decision to the class. Alternatively, group members could be assigned broad perspectives (e.g., liberal, conservative, libertarian) to represent, or they may be asked to speak for the various "stake-holders" that are present in the case study.

d) *Instructors ask groups to present their solutions or reasoning*. "If groups know they are responsible for producing something (a decision, rationale, analysis) to present to the class, they will approach the discussion with greater focus and seriousness". The students must write their conclusions on the board so that the teacher can return to them during the discussion that follows.

e) *Instructors ask questions for clarification and move discussion to another level*. One of the challenges for a case-based discussion leader is to guide the discussion and probe for deeper analysis without over-directing. As the discussion unfolds, the instructors should ask questions that

call for students to examine their own assumptions, substantiate their claims, provide illustrations, etc.

f) *Instructors synthesize the main ideas* and bring the various strands of the discussion back together at the end, so that students can see what they have learned and take those lessons with them.

4. Limits of the methodology used for the moral education of the military

Very often subordinates defer to authority in military situations, or at the very least there is a hesitancy to challenge authority. The military group is no exception. As soon as the teacher (military or civilians) indicates that "they" have the answer, the military students quickly seek the approved answer over the reasoned answer. Worse yet, the teacher "lectures" or "preaches" as if they were the gatekeepers of such knowledge.

Teaching ethics issues often occur outside the classroom, the university courses or the formal military training sessions. Yet these opportunities are largely left untouched. When a military student does something right or wrong, officers rarely connect their conduct to the organization's values and principles. In fact, for the military, the moral outlines are the Constitution of Romania, the military laws and regulations and all other documents, slogans and customs synthesized above in Table no 1. In C.A. Culp's opinion, "a pat on the back for a job well done, without mention that their conduct exemplified the organization's values, is often the case" [17]: When someone does something wrong, they are punished according to military rules; rarely do officers mention the violated moral values, thus the ethical education remains at the level of external behavior, without contributing more deeply to the development of the moral conscience of the persons concerned.

Evidence suggests that the majority of our day-to-day judgments and behaviors are intuitive; they appear in our consciousness, without us knowing how they got there.

Jonathan Haidt [18] puts forth his social intuitionist model of moral conduct where he suggests that moral reasoning is a post action rationalization of our intuitive behavior. Haidt gives four reasons why his model is an accurate model of moral conduct. First, there are dual processes that drive our conduct, both conscious and unconscious. Second, the subject acts more like a defense lawyer than a judge, and seeks to morally defend his actions. Third, often people cannot explain why they do the things they do; that is why everybody fabricates reasons, post action, when pressed for answers. Fourth, the author cites several studies that indicate the fact that moral actions are influenced by emotions to a greater extent than they are by moral reasoning.

After carrying out scientific research, many authors started to support the importance of intuition in influencing moral behavior. Thus, using their Implicit Association Test, Anthony Greenwald and his colleagues [19] bring into attention the growing evidence that intuition plays a greater role in the moral conduct of people than we thought previously.

5. Final considerations

Teachers and military trainers should seek ways to integrate intuitive ethics into training and education. In practical terms, this means that cadets need to participate in as many morally ambiguous situations as possible and they should be required to make intuitive moral judgments. Case studies can be integrated into existing training scenarios linking the implicit moral behavior and explicit moral actions with dialogue between student, peers, and the teacher to the values and principles of the organization.

While the army's intent is to increase the practical moral reasoning skills of junior officers, a curriculum that focuses on critical thinking skills, increasing moral sensitivity, moral empathy, and open mindedness while linking military rules and regulations to the organizations' values and principles would serve that purpose better.

When using group discussions during a case based methodology, the teacher must guide the students, keeping them on task, focusing on the relevant values and principles, and not allow groupthink to prevail over sound reasoning.

If the students do not trust the teacher, learning by discussing cases will not occur. Taking into account the undoubted respect for authority and hierarchy, the mere fact that the teacher is often a ranking officer can generate a barrier against open and honest dialogue with the cadets. Moving the class to a non-military setting, wearing civilian attire, and using a semicircle classroom set up may facilitate participation in the dialogue. The teacher must never tell what the answer to a debatable question is, because this usually ends up being the "approved" answer and, consequently, it is not the result of the students' critical thinking.

Teachers and trainers must not necessarily punish wrong ethical behavior while in training; rather they should spend time discussing and linking the core values to moral conduct. The military does a good job with character education, but there is room for improvement. Educators must take advantage of proven pedagogical methods in order to make those improvements.

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