"POSTMODERN PARADIGM" AND THE CHALLENGES OF CHANGE IN
EDUCATION WITHIN THE MILITARY HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: Military organizations, armies in particular, evolve as the world changes. Contrary to some unilateral views, we consider that this change is possible and that it is based on the amplification of interdependence influences of two major factors: the depth of scientific knowledge and the quality of human resource. Knowledge is no longer eternal or universal. In modern societies, knowledge is equivalent to science and is important in itself. People seek optimal ways to acquire "knowledge" and "science" in as many areas, considering that in this way they will be recognized as educated persons. In a postmodernist society, knowledge has to be functional, useful; the purpose of learning is not only to "know" and to store a range of information from different fields so as to demonstrate how "educated you are, but also "to do" and "to make use of" what you know, and to "implement what you have acquired to your and other people’s advantage.

Keywords: knowledge, postmodernist education, contemporary school, competence, education, teaching, learning, social change, education system, training and professional development.

One of the challenges already launched in the contemporary society is the need to rethink the school, the formal education, as well as the non-formal and informal ones, in their various forms of articulation.

1. Characteristics of the challenges to contemporary education
As subsystem of the educational macro-system, the military education system, through its varied educational offer, helps to structure training and (self) development of military personnel, preparing them to meet the new demands of the combat environment and to become demanding beneficiaries of lifelong education. As Professor Emil Paun notes, "contemporary school works, to a large extent in the open space defined by the paradigm of modernity," and postmodernist influences are still shy in educational practice, even if theoretical signs pointing to the trends brought about by postmodernism are becoming more and more apparent [1]. Postmodernism is not just a philosophical movement, it can also be found in education, architecture, graphics, the art of dance, in music, art and literary theory. As philosophical current, postmodernism is deeply rooted in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, Martin Heidegger and Georg Simmel, only to become consecrated in the second half of the twentieth century through the works of Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard [2], Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard and Richard Rorty. [3]

As a general cultural phenomenon, postmodernism regards knowledge as a product of the interaction between our ideas and experiences about the world and life. Knowledge is no longer eternal or universal. Rejecting rigid forms, promoting reflexivity, spontaneity and
decentralization, postmodernism is concerned with organizing knowledge. In modern societies, knowledge is equivalent to science and is important in itself. People seek optimal ways to acquire "knowledge" and "science" in as many areas, considering that in this way they will be recognized as educated people. In a postmodernist society, knowledge has to be functional and useful, the purpose of learning being not only to "know" and store a range of information from different fields in order to demonstrate how "educated you are", but also to "do" and to "make use of" what you know, to "apply" what you have gained in your others' benefit. To know what to do with what you learn is a major desideratum of postmodernist education. Current postulates of postmodernism on education require that the individual should come in touch with the real world with all its contradictions and with its complexity, failures, and imbalances in order to find optimal solutions and reconstruction methods [4]. Speaking of postmodernist education goals, Annette Gough [5] specifies that it is necessary to recognize and stimulate development of cognitive constructs of education, whose origin is in the social, inquiring on their socio-genetic process. She firmly states that we need a postmodernist science of education, one that is democratic and recognizes the social constructs and multicultural nature of science in its global context. We also need a pedagogy that draws attention to the direct process in which knowledge is produced and recognized, and in which knowledge agents are concrete, visible and socially in place. Groups of students in the postmodernist vision are viewed by Peter Appelbaun [6] as genuine research communities demonstrating the importance of the social for learning. The goal is not necessarily to train students in giving answers to the above mentioned questions and problems but to help them find ways to rise questions and criticize problems. Learning communities from the postmodernist school require that hierarchy strengthening practices should be abandoned in favour of power spreading and decentralizing strategies.

2. "Social change" and "postmodernism" in military higher education

Competence and change articulate the reference framework of the in-depth processes that define both the rhythms and trends of the global society and the renewals of military structures and actions. The contemporary horizon of change brings together in increasingly concentrated flows the economic, political, social, military, cultural, informational, individual and organizational transformations. The postmodernist teacher is in a partnership relationship with his students, negotiating learning objectives and assessment forms and procedures. He treats the group of students as a group of the real world, analyzing its explicit and implicit rules and valorising the real world as an endless scene of learning situations. In the postmodernist school rankings are no longer valued, greater emphasis being placed on the responsibility of the learner, as a source of motivation. Individual and motivational features are observed and valued, educational alternatives being subsequently built upon. Teaching methods use personal expression, reflective and critical attitudes, individual and also group autonomy stimulating learning through cooperation, to induce personal development through self conscience raising actions in small groups. The postmodernist University, through the education and training it is responsible for, focuses not only on investing students with a system of knowledge but also on guiding and stimulating them in terms of cognitive, emotional, and social development, and the practice of acquired skills in different contexts, in order to enable them to become perfectly integrated into the social life and work. Prospects for the development of
internal mechanisms of knowledge find an appropriate materialization in situations where the individual is exposed to real problem-solving situations. Students should be requested to come in touch with reality as often as possible, and to make prompt and appropriate decisions.

The postmodernist individual is "relaxed and flexible, oriented on emotions, feelings and inner feelings, showing an attitude of the "be yourself" type [7]. The didactic approaches should be twofold: as subjects of their own training and as agents of social influence and thus of self-education.

The purpose of postmodernist education sciences is - as Matthew Weinstein (2001) stated - not only to understand science but also to experience the excitement of studying; it is education which should keep people in a continuous problematic state in which they permanently ask questions and seek answers.

The postmodernist school should prepare social agents able to give a diagnostic, intervene and change the existential framework.

The postmodernist education policy states the need to emphasize concerns to ensure the development and training of capacities, skills, intellectual and practical abilities. Postmodernism requires both the school and the individual persons to give answers to the questions such as the following:

“What will you do after you graduate?”
“How will you use what you have learned?”
“How will you improve your life by applying what you know?”

Usefulness is one of the keywords of postmodernist education. The postmodernist paradigm advances the idea that it is necessary to introduce new technologies in schools so that education can keep pace with the rapidly changing socio-economic environment and digitalization of culture. Postmodernist policy’s motto is "think globally, act locally" - without getting caught into details.

For most modern curriculum analysts and experts the classroom space seems to be a black box, poorly known and often ignored. Or in terms of postmodernism, what goes on in the classroom is the most important thing [ The idea is that, in the class, we are not only transmitting a given prefabricated curriculum but we are also developing, building and negotiating it on a daily basis "[8].

The implications of the postmodernist current upon educational practice aim to raise the awareness of students, from the earliest age in shaping and applying concepts about life and the surrounding reality. Learning and school should emphasize their applicative character, combining theory with practice, the abstract with the concrete. This is because teaching and learning of isolated facts, as well as of skills and capabilities becomes boring and meaningless in the absence of practice. The student/learner should as often as possible be offered the possibility to make connections between the knowledge acquired in school and that acquired in non-formal and formal manner, understanding their usefulness.

Another implication of postmodernism in the world of school is linked to the democratic and dialogued method adopted by teachers in their work with students. The trend proposed that "teachers and students should work together", as opposed to the practice by which the all-knowing teacher is the one who tells students what to learn. This style comes to dethrone the dominating, authoritarian, even dictatorial teaching style, still practiced in universities. Postmodernism promotes dialogue methods, favouring the processes of mentoring and negotiation. The teacher-learner collaborative relation does not entail less respect for the teacher, but it does stress the need for redimensioning the relationship, by considering the two-way flow of the educational-training process as a reciprocal relationship since teachers can also learn from their students.
The activism of students drawn by the strategies employed by the teacher in the teaching-learning activity emerges as an imperative of postmodernist orientation in education. The postmodernist school should know how to motivate students to learn and how to facilitate the learning process, by organizing and developing interactive work strategies and by emphasizing the usefulness of knowledge and by raising the awareness of students that they have to acquire this knowledge if they want to make a living for themselves. Educational agents should be interested in what their students want to learn and in what they can do with this knowledge. The role of the teacher is not to cram students with different knowledge, but to show them what to do with it. If we are unable to speak of practice, we are also unable to speak of theory. Education should consider them both and combine them effectively.

The postmodernist educator is a seeker, a passionate producer and a distributor of localized knowledge. He becomes a teacher-researcher, and thus a thinker who reflects on educational practice, conscious of its responsibility to inculcate investigative and reflective practice into his students.

The following are characteristic of postmodernism: "seeking and accepting alternatives, (education) options, giving up the border between sciences), ambivalence, discontinuity, decentralization, fragmentation, tolerance, uncertainty, interculturality, globalism, indetermination, immanence, individualism, deconstruction, humanizing technology, promotion of new values, communication diversification etc."

[9] The materialization of the postmodernist vision in education may take the form of "new education", of methodological alternatives to teaching-learning-assessment, of decentralized decision-making and curriculum, of democratic conduct development, of effective communication at all levels, and of education re-technologization.

The training-educational practice may be reconsidered from a postmodernist perspective in terms of educational strategies, curriculum and educational communication [10]. Elements of postmodernism are: structural and functional decentralization of management, flexible curriculum, personalized approach to strategies, introduction of new types of education.

3. Educational determinations of the training and advanced training system of Land Force officers

Training and educating military personnel in general, and officers, in particular, is one of the priority directions of action in the transformation process and adaptation of the Romanian military organization to the conceptual and operational developments both in the European and national educational field, and in the military field. The principles underlying this trend are detailed in the Doctrine of Armed Forces’ Training [11] and refer, essentially, to the following:

- the military education system is part of the national education system;
- the educational process must satisfy the operational needs of the army and achieve interoperability with the armies of NATO member states and at the same time be correlated with personnel’s functional tasks and instruction;
- the formative objective is represented by the competencies of military leaders, which are set by the beneficiary (army units).

This ensures that the army, through the professional, cultural and social behaviour of servicemen, will become an elite corps of the Romanian society.

The system of military education was based on the analytical procedures and diagnostics provided by the educational policy of the Ministry of Defence and in conjunction with the overall transformation of society and of the Romanian Army.
To that end, the internal and external pressures as well as their development trends have been considered:

- Romania’s irreversible option for integration into Euro-Atlantic structures;
- general reorganization of the army according to branches with a concomitant substantial reduction in its number;
- reorganization of the national education system;
- option of all modern armies to train officers at the university level, with emphasis on training officers as military leaders.

Moreover, the transformation of military education started from the premise that, in a sense of Euro-Atlantic integration, integration through education is one of the first steps.

Given these determinations five key actions have been established:

– thorough documentation of Western military education systems realizing an inventory of models by identifying the evolution trends at the horizon of the next millennium;
– assessing the status and performance capacity of the Romanian military education system;
– defining the new philosophy of the system in line with developments in the army, in the society and in the world;
– identifying the main pressures in environments (military, social-national, international) that forced the system to adapt;
– conceiving the basic options and directions of action to simultaneously achieve two objectives: modernizing the education and achieving compatibility with Western military personnel training systems.

In doing so, two goals have been simultaneously achieved:

– designing a system to meet current and future interests of the Romanian Army;
– developing a system compatible with that of NATO member states.

And as the elementary rule of effective action requires an identification of priorities, the system philosophy emerged, and included the basic choices and the "model of the final product”.

The officer model has been designed based on competences (warrior, leader, educator and citizen—all of which are subordinated to the future military leader profile) – and on three dimensions: to be, to know and to do, and on maximum and widely accepted NATO standards. We will briefly introduce some theoretical benchmarks aiming to fulfilling our projective approach.

Pedagogical design presumes organizing (structuring) the "actions and operations that ensure the functionality of the system and of the overall educational process, specifically/intermediate and practical/operational as finalities developed in terms of education policy [12]."

From a systemic perspective, this activity involves the proactive definition of objectives, contents, learning strategies, assessment tests and identification of relationships between them.

The postmodernist approach to education implies a curricular design model involving, as opposed to the traditional model, the transition to the basic organizational structure based on content explicitly defined organizational structure, the value of which resides in explicit and implicit objectives and methodologies. The principles of this pedagogical design model are:

- the principle of society needs’ analysis;
- the principle of learner needs’ analysis;
- the principle of training contents’ analysis.

The officer profile initially identifies the existing competences effectively applied and corollary, the structure of the set of specific functions. It is however necessary and useful that the analytical approach is extended by:
– a historical analysis: questions in the past tense to operate in key moments of the military action;
– a prospective analysis: questions in the future tense on possible and probable future developments on the plans vital to practice;
– developments in the global and regional geopolitical context;
– developments in the logic and means of combat waging (military action);
– combined analysis of the military profession (historical and prospective praxis).

Upon identifying the competences and functions allocated to the officer at an institutional level, a socio-professional model shall be built in stages. The officer model (outcome of the correlation between the human, social, and professional models) sums up the specific roles and functions of military action, which take the form of officer competences, and represent the strategic norm both of the graduate profile and of the educational system of training (building up, specialization and improvement).

“The architecture of the professional model depicts in a verisimilar way a structure comprising:

- general-human competences (expressing the generic potentiality of the professional agent, not through "diffuse embodiments" and “opaque backgrounds”, but through structures suited to the specificity and finality of each professional category);
- social and historical competences, legitimate through the need to adapt professions to the socio-historical context of professional action (with the same observation that need each profession should be emphasized separately as needed);
- professional competences directly linked to "the specific detail" of professional action.

At the latter level, the architecture of the professional model requires and includes further in-depth analysis and clarifications on the following aspects:

a. as there are no "isolated professions, each profession is included into a "professional class ", the first professional competence covering the horizon of the professional category, knowledge and competences common to all professional agents, regardless of the particular profession;

b. the specificity of each profession is its ultimate "hard core": the vectorial homogenization of tasks support the particular constituency of tasks (sometimes even unique). The professional model will by all means include a particular professional competence, with an increased specialized content;

c. as centred on tools as it may be (physical and technical) the profession is not uniquely human. Professions belong to groups of professional action, situation involving the competence of professional agents to relate and influence each other and the entire group (the power of personal influence);

The validation of the officer socio-professional model is performed based on criteria such as completeness, primordiality and sustainability. Thus, it is generally accepted that the officer professional profile is obtained by synergistically linking the following defining competences:

a) war fighter competence;
b) teacher competence;
c) military leader competence;
d) Romanian citizen-officer competence;
e) specialist competence.

Expressing competences through capacities provides the methodological framework for the security strategy at the level of educational finalities by operationalizing competences and capacities capacity through turning objectives and educational into educational objectives and contents.

4. Conclusions

The impact of these goals of postmodernist education on military higher education is overwhelming, calling upon the military
education to constantly lie at the interference between two main lines of change: global social change (with its implications of redefining the power relations in the society, redefining the world's geo-strategic position and functionally redimensioning the education) and changes in the science and art of war, in the logic and the instrument of military action.

The curricular projection of officers’ building up and professional development process is the result of specific approaches to bridge the formative developments, be them evident or probable, in the following fields: social-global, military and educational Realizing the quantitative leap from the scope of formative process’s management theory and practice, so obvious in recent years, requires evaluations and reconsiderations consistent with the realities of the reference fields. Consequently, the process of officer training can not be reduced down to the requirement to manage only the cases and situations officers may encounter in their career as officers. Officers would rather be offered an education in the broadest sense of the word, which is the foundation for their subsequent professional development in the military career. Therefore, the academies of each force category offer a multidisciplinary education nature able to prepare the students as people of thought and action, creative and critical thinkers, able to find suitable answers of an obvious ethical ethos, to the challenges they will face throughout their careers.

In keeping with the changes and developments of the military system and mindset, the process of regenerating the human resource specialized in leading military organizations, of a genuine value, places the "Nicolae Bălcescu" Land Forces Academy and the Romanian military organization altogether to a high level of national and international recognition. Competence is the strategic norm designing both the officer profile and the officer educational training system for training (building up, specialization and improvement).

To conclude, this is possible only through an educational and training system which is constantly upgraded and improved training, and which is designed to ensure the development of the transformation process according to precise goals and objectives, rigorously formulated through a series of specific activities, through which knowledge is acquired, mature thinking is reached, judgement ability is refined, values are assumed and characters are built up.

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