

## ***Shaping leadership at the Military University of Land Forces in Wroclaw - recommendations for improving the process***

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**Abstract:** In the previous research, it was determined how leadership competencies are shaped in selected foreign military academies, ie the American Military Academy West Point (USMA) and Theresian Military Academy in Austria (TMA). This article presents the methods and ways of shaping leadership competencies at the Military University of Land Forces in Wroclaw (MULF). The collected data were the basis for comparing the education process of candidates for officers between MULF and selected foreign universities. Thanks to this, areas that can be improved by implementing solutions taken from foreign universities, with the use of certain modifications taking into account the specificity of the Polish Armed Forces, were identified.

**Keywords:** education, training, management, leadership.

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### **Introduction**

Shaping leadership competencies is currently a very popular topic of many not only military conferences (Ackoff, 1999 and Dusya, at al., 2022). On the one hand, education and human capital development are of particular importance as they are the productive power of the knowledge economy (Gad, 2021 and Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). But, on the other hand, the reality at Polish military academies does not always coincide with the ideals outlined in the latest studies in this field (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2019 Leskaj, 2017). Therefore, it was decided to take a closer look at this topic and verify the currently used methods,

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forms and didactic tools in terms of shaping the competencies of leaders in selected military academies in order to improve the currently functioning solutions at the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces (MULF) in Poland. In the academies studied so far, the training strategy consists of:

- in the first period creating leadership competencies and general knowledge in academic subjects and general military knowledge;
- in the last stage or after graduation, the formation of specialised competencies;
- the acquisition of leadership competencies through real command within the subunit (in the junior years) and within command functions within the academy structure.

The personnel implementing the educational process in the academies under study are selected in terms of competence, experience and character. It consists not only of academic teachers, but also of experienced officers and non-commissioned officers from combat units who periodically undertake service in the academies as part of their military career. The motivational system is mainly based on supporting cadets in the learning process, i.e., reinforcing positive qualities and pointing out areas where knowledge or skill gaps need to be filled. Mistakes made are treated as lessons for improvement and future performance.

### **1. Literature review**

Leadership is currently perceived as the most effective way of managing people, and the experiences and solutions used in the army are implemented in civilian organizations, where managers also manage subordinate personnel (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). A real leader, unlike a formal supervisor without leadership competencies, is distinguished by having informal authority, he should also be characterized by commitment during the implementation of tasks, trust and credibility among group members, reliability in fulfilling assigned tasks and the ability to create organizational potential (Penc, 1997).

Another issue that should be briefly explained is the distinction between the concepts of management, command and leadership - Table 1 (Kotter, 2005). Depending on the context and the research sector, individual forms of management are identified as specific to civilian or uniformed organizations. In civilian enterprises, the debate concerns mainly management and, more and more, leadership, while the command is regarded as a typically military form of exercising power. The conditions of command, leadership, and management have much in common as they all pursue a goal, albeit in different ways (Gardner, et al. 2010). Management can be carried out without taking into account the basic principles of leadership, but then it becomes a repetitive process and routine administration. Major General Robison, former commander of the Royal Marines commando training centre, said (Fielder, 2011):

- command as power or authority achieved by rank, position and experience,
- leadership as an art, using personality traits, knowledge, competences, skills and behaviour to influence and inspire others to pursue their ambitions and achieve success,

- management as a field of science that consists in applying certain functions necessary to achieve the goal. It is also often associated with economic activity.

**Table 1. Comparison of management and leadership**

Management	Leadership
Definition of goals, intentions, and tasks	Communicating vision and mission
Setting strategies and policies	Inspiring and agreeing on values
Providing structure and support systems	Developing a magnificent environment
Agreeing on time frames, developing schedules	Clarifying expectations and aspirations
Planning, adjusting and organizing resources	Complete involvement of people in projects
Setting parameters and control	Developing high-performance ethics
Managing knowledge and information	Identifying, using, and developing talents

*Source: on the basis of (Kotter, 2005)*

Moreover, leadership should be perceived as a factor supporting command and using elements of management, enabling the achievement of greater effectiveness in directing the organisation. It should be based on the concept of transformational leadership, otherwise known as charismatic leadership. According to the authors, such a leadership style will allow achieving above-average results in leading an organisation. Effective leadership in the military should consider leadership competencies not as an additional and extraordinary feature or skill of an officer, but as a basis for the development of other competencies.

The previous part of the research established that knowledge of the essence of management and leadership enables the implementation of human resource management solutions and methods from civilian to military organisations and vice versa. Therefore, civilian subjects in military studies deliberately include the subject of management, as they are intended to equip future officers with general knowledge about managing people in organisations at different levels. In this way, commanders can implement best practices taken from civilian organisations, which are considered to be very well managed.

## **2. Research methodology**

In the previous research, it was determined how leadership competences are shaped in selected foreign military academies, ie. the American Military Academy West Point (USMA) and Theresian Military Academy in Austria (TMA). The main aim of this article is to present methods and ways of shaping leadership competences at the General Tadeusz Kosciuszko Military University of Land Forces in Wrocław (MULF). The collected data were the basis for comparing the education process of candidates for officers between MULF and selected foreign universities. This should make it possible to improve the currently functioning solutions at the MULF.

The conditions, relationships and dependencies existing in the MULF, influencing the selection and shaping of leadership competences, were examined, taking into

account the issues of: the recruitment process, study program, methods and techniques of education and training, and the organization of the education model. In the research process, the researchers tried to find answers to the following research questions: How does the selection and education process verify the predisposition and characteristics of candidates for the MULF? What methods and solutions are used in the process of shaping leadership competences of cadets in the MULF? How to improve the process of shaping leadership competences in the MULF taking into account proven models from foreign academies?

Among the research methods, the analysis of the scientific and normative documents was used, among others: training programs, methodologies, guides, study regulations. It made possible to conduct a quantitative and qualitative analysis of their content. This allowed us to identify of key principles and assumptions directly influencing the effectiveness of training selected leadership competences. Additionally, numerous interviews and talks with the command and teaching staff of the studied academies were carried out, which allowed for more accurate conclusions and recommendations. At each stage of the research, the collected material was confronted with the authors' own experiences at various levels of command in the Polish Armed Forces, thus verifying its reliability and adequacy to the adopted assumptions and goals.

### **3. Shaping leadership competences at the MULF**

MULF is a military academy whose traditions date back to the period of the First Republic of Poland, when in 1765 a Knights' School was established in Warsaw by King Stanisław August Poniatowski. Its graduates included around 600 officers, who were later national heroes such as Jakub Jasiński, Józef Sowiński and the Academy's patron, General Tadeusz Kościuszko. The Military University of Technology is also an academic school, which over the years has become known as the 'forge of generals' and has an established position in both the military and civilian system of higher education in Poland. The priority and long-term area of the Academy's international activity is the creation of new and strengthening of current relations with military universities of NATO and EU member states at various levels, with a focus on the exchange of experience and the creation of an international community of higher military education. The priority task of the Academy is to prepare a professional platoon commander with leadership competences by shaping patriotic attitudes in the future Polish intelligentsia based on the glorious traditions of the Polish Armed Forces and Polish military education (<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/awl/>).

The main purpose of training is to prepare cadets for service in the position of platoon leader or equivalent position in the structures of the Polish Armed Forces and to provide conditions for the acquisition of skills and competencies needed to perform tasks in military units. These tasks will mainly consist of: commanding, organizing and conducting training and educational activities. Military studies enable the

acquisition of specialist knowledge and skills needed for daily service in the first duty positions envisaged for second lieutenants.

Studies at MULF are realised in two stages, i.e., first degree studies - bachelor's degree and second-degree studies - master's degree. First degree studies are realized in the field of command or logistics. Students can choose from the following specializations: armoured-mechanized, aero mobile, rocket and artillery, general reconnaissance, anti-aircraft artillery, reconnaissance and decontamination.

The training process is of a professional nature, which is realised on the basis of programmes covering theoretical knowledge and practical skills preparing to command a subdivision. Cadets learn theory and strategy of management, national and international security, international relations, general history and history of warfare, as well as many civilian subjects from the area of management science. Additionally, cadets in the logistics major learn about supply chain management, accounting, procurement and finance, and military economics.

Completion of the Bachelor's degree enables the student to acquire theoretical knowledge, which in combination with practical skills, acquired during professional practice lasting a total of 6 months, and social competences provides good preparation for command positions in military units and institutions. The duration of the studies is about 3800 hours, which is 6 academic semesters.

Second degree studies are realized in the field of Management. The main objective of these studies is to prepare cadets to take up their first duty position and act as platoon leader. The acquired specialist knowledge and skills are the foundation of an officer's development and, as his/her career progresses, are supplemented by numerous training courses and courses required for higher positions. The curriculum of the second-degree programme includes the study of management science, quality and related sciences as well as specialist subjects in line with the previously chosen military specialisation, which remains unchanged from the end of the first year of first-degree studies until officer promotion. Education at this stage leads to the acquisition and improvement of selected skills and qualities related to the future profession. In the course of master's studies, comprising about 2,000 hours and lasting 4 semesters, each cadet is obliged to complete a 12-week professional practice, which is carried out at the Academy and military units of the Polish Armed Forces.

There are also military first-degree engineering studies in the field of Security Engineering, which belong to technical sciences and constitute the first stage of education for cadets in the field of military engineering. The education process consists of two stages, including engineering studies lasting 7 semesters and 3-semester master's studies, which makes up a 5-year study period. During the studies, specialist military training is carried out at Training Centres and Field Training Centres.

The recruitment process of applicants for studies at AWL consists of 3 main stages: preliminary, basic and final proceedings, which last one day. The preliminary examination consists of an analysis of documents provided by the candidate for

officer cadet, including a certificate of no criminal record and Polish citizenship, physical and mental capacity for professional military service, completion of 18 years of age and a secondary school graduation certificate.

The main proceedings include an analysis of the results of the maturity certificate and a physical fitness test. The qualifying points, which are the basis for admission and the place on the list of those qualified, are determined on the basis of:

- the result of the secondary school leaving examination,
- the physical fitness tests.

The final proceedings include an interview with persons who have obtained positive results in the previous stages. During the interview the following features and predispositions are evaluated:

- presented attitude,
- motivation for military service,
- achievements and qualifications useful in military service,
- other elements, such as performing preparatory service.

Based on the total number of points obtained in all stages of the recruitment process, a list of students admitted to the programme is drawn up. The place on the ranking list decides about qualification to the studies. Qualified candidates begin basic training, which is standardised across the Polish Armed Forces and consists of familiarisation and individual training lasting 13 weeks in total.

The main tasks of the basic training include: learning the basic conditions of service, regulations, drill, shooting training, developing physical fitness, verifying psychophysical abilities in order to determine the predispositions of the trainees for further service, including predispositions for further training within a specific military specialty. The first stage of training is crowned with a solemn military oath. The actual training process for military students begins with the ceremonial matriculation day of the new academic year. Each year consists of two semesters, after which everyone takes an examination session in civil and military subjects and a physical fitness test. The undergraduate curriculum for the Management major includes the following academic subjects related to leadership:

- Social communication;
- Shaping patriotic attitudes in the army;
- Management module I;
- Fundamentals of pedagogy;
- Techniques of mental work;
- Educational activities in the army;
- Security of tactical operations;
- Training activities in the army;
- History of the art of war;
- Shaping patriotic attitudes in the army;
- Organisation science;
- Leadership in command;
- Methodology of tactical training;

- Psychology basics;
- Command practice;
- Training in motivational techniques;
- Operations and operational techniques.

Military subjects include: basics of command, command of subunits, tactics (in accordance with the specialty), topography, theory and practice of shooting, drill and regulations and others. During their studies, cadets extend theoretical knowledge gained at the Academy and use it during practical classes (on equipment) carried out at training centres according to their specialty. This usually lasts one month and constitutes learning the practical use of equipment, including combat shooting.

Additionally, military students participate in international military exercises, performing various roles in the exercise leadership and staffs of the units participating in the exercise. In the process of the 5-year training, the cadets participate in at least 2 training grounds with their command staff and lecturers from their respective specialties. The first of them is organised in the third year and is a summary of specialist training carried out during the first-degree studies, while the second training takes place in the penultimate semester of the second-degree studies. Over the years, the incentive system in place at AWL has changed. Each school company took into account different criteria when ranking military students. In order to unify the rules in force during the evaluation of cadets, a uniform Motivational System was introduced, whose assumptions read as follows: "The motivational system based on ranking is conducted at the level of the subdivision in order to identify the best cadets in service activities, taking into account academic performance, grades in training, discipline and extra-service activities. Conducting an ongoing ranking is intended to identify both outstanding and outliers, and thus stimulate cadets to full engagement in on- and off-duty activities. To determine a cadet's place in the ranking, the following data are needed (MULF, 2020):

- the average of marks from credits and examinations in a given period or semester,
- number of points from the opinion of the platoon commander and squad leader/assistant platoon leader/company commander,
- degree of activity and commitment,
- number and type of discipline violations,
- type of service functions performed."

Cadets in their third year of training are obliged to do command training, during which they act as assistant platoon commanders and squad commanders. They conduct basic training for first year cadets at the AWL and other military units, e.g. Training Centres. The cadets conduct classes in the basics of military craft, regulations and drill along with full-time platoon commanders as assistant platoon leaders and squad leaders. Command practice is a didactic rigor that culminates in an individual evaluation of command attitude, knowledge and skills. The evaluation criteria are presented in Table 2.

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**Table 2. Criteria for the assessment of cadets during command practice**

Selected personal characteristics	Evaluation			
	Fulfils requirements above expectations	Fulfils requirements	Fulfils requirements below expectations	Does not meet requirements
Leadership qualities				
Organisational skills				
Responsibility				
Motivation and commitment				
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>				
<b>SELECTED SOLDIERING QUALITIES</b>				
Ability to act				
Care of equipment and armament				
Performance of assigned tasks				
Resistance to stress and fatigue				
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>				
<b>SELECTED PRACTICAL AND SPECIALISED SKILLS</b>				
Knowledge of tactics and types of troops				
Knowledge of military terminology				
Execution of command documents				
Knowledge and use of military equipment				
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>				
<b>COMMAND SKILLS</b>				
Tactical imagination				
Tasking				
Accuracy of solutions adopted				
Ability to assess subordinates				
<b>GENERAL ASSESSMENT</b>				

*Source: on the basis of (MULF, 2015)*

In the process of training cadets one of the main and key directions of development is the formation of leadership competencies. In the case of the "Management" course of study, students acquire managerial competences that broaden their perspective and create an opportunity to implement, with some modification, the techniques, tools and methods used by managers in corporations to command a subdivision. The assumption is that throughout the period of study, everyone should serve at least



once as a squad leader or assistant platoon leader. However, due to the small number of shifts in functions, not all cadets have the opportunity to command their fellow cadets. During the final period of study, cadet interviews are conducted, which cadets enter according to their ranking in their specialty. Those ranked first have a greater range of choices for their place of service after promotion. After defending their thesis, students do their final training in military units where they will be placed after promotion to first officer rank.

#### **4. Comparison of the methods of shaping leadership competencies**

In order to identify the differences between the method of shaping the leadership competences of future officers at MULF and foreign academies, a comparative analysis of study programs was carried out, and the results are presented in Table 3. First, the verification of a given competence during studies was carried out. Then, it was determined which organizational solutions, methods and forms of education influenced them to the greatest extent. The comparison allowed for the identification of differences in terms of solutions having a key impact on the development of leadership competencies, which allowed us to draw up conclusions.

**Table 3. Comparison of the methods and solutions of shaping leadership competencies at MULF and chosen foreign academies**

AREAS	USMA	TMA	MULF
<b>FEATURES</b>			
Self-discipline			
Initiative	Cadet positions within the university structure	Numerous practical classes, freedom of action, simulators	x
Intelligence			x
Common sense			
Responsibility	Senior cadets command junior cadets and perform functions in the university structure	Senior cadets are in charge of junior cadets	Cadets hold leadership positions in their own platoon
High physical fitness	A large number of activities related to sport and physical fitness, a test	A large number of activities related to sport and physical fitness, a test	Physical fitness tests every semester, field athletics
Creativity	Free choice of subjects, activities in the form of workshops	Realistic situations during training which require creative solutions	
A desire for self-improvement	Code of honour, selection of subjects, trips abroad and	Selection of subjects, trips abroad and	Incentive system based on ranking

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AREAS	USMA	TMA	MULF
	specialisations based on ranking	specialisations based on ranking	
Enthusiasm			
Resistance to stress			
Empathy	Leadership of junior cadets by senior cadets	Leadership of junior cadets by senior cadets	
Tolerance			
<b>Skills</b>			
Influencing others	Acting as commander and taking care of junior cadets	Acting as commander	Acting as commander
Inspiring others	Peer support, group activities	Peer support, group activities	Group activities
Solving problems			
Decisions making			
Teamwork			
Creating a vision			
Motivating colleagues	Acting in a leadership capacity within their own subdivision	Acting in a leadership capacity within their own subdivision	Acting in a leadership capacity within their own subdivision
<b>Attitude</b>			
Honesty			x
Caring			
Consistency			
Flexibility			
Communicativeness			
Openness to suggestions			
Taking responsibility and looking after the team	Senior cadets command junior cadets and hold positions within the university structure	Senior cadets command junior cadets	Cadets have a function in the sub-division but there is no responsibility attached to it
Resoluteness			
- specific competencies are shaped X - specific competencies are not shaped at all or this fact cannot be clearly stated			

*Source: Author's contribution*

Based on the all above considerations and the content of Table 2, it is clear that the process of development aimed at acquiring certain skills and qualities of a true leader is not only education. The specificity of military studies means that they are not only the fulfilment of didactic rigors, namely the completion of first- and second-degree studies and passing the officer's exam but also the acquisition by cadets of the mindset of a true leader, which is perfected throughout life. This also includes a healthy lifestyle, linked to maintaining an above-average level of physical fitness, the acquisition of knowledge and the ongoing development of skills.

To sum up, the formation of leadership competences at MULF, similarly to at foreign academies, is a process carried out throughout the entire period of study. It is a combination of education, gaining experience and practical skills as well as a number of activities contributing to the formation of a true leader personality. All activities undertaken by the command, teaching and administrative staff are aimed at enabling the desired result to be achieved, however, it is the individual attitude of students and their willingness to become a real leader that matters most.

Some common elements can be observed in the compared academies, such as basic training, accommodation in barracks, command functions and internships in units. The analysis of the study programs and the implemented undertakings allowed us to identify structural and curricular solutions, as well as methods and tools used for the formation of leadership competences. As a result, it was observed that some of them could be, as a whole or after modifications, adopted in order to improve the process of cadets' training at AWL. It was found that the following could be improved, through the implementation of solutions taken from the researched academies:

- recruitment process,
- education,
- practical formation of command and leadership skills,
- command and teaching staff,
- motivation system.

#### **4.1. Recruitment process**

At foreign universities, common stages in the recruitment process can be distinguished, such as submitting documents with results after high school, medical tests and physical fitness tests, and an interview. In addition, at TMA, the recruitment process consists of more stages, verifying leadership predispositions and motivation for service. In the studied academies, qualifying candidates to participate in basic training is a further part of the recruitment process. The result is that those who do not meet the basic training criteria are rejected. In the case of USMA, recruitment is such an important stage in the education of a future officer that high-ranking state officials (two senators) must give their recommendation for the certain candidate to start military studies at the Academy.

At MULF, the recruitment process consists of 3 elements and includes medical examinations, an analysis of the results of the secondary school-leaving examination,

physical fitness tests and a short interview. There are no criteria that take into account leadership competences and motivation to service. It can be assumed that the result of the lack of verification of the motivation for the service are the subsequent numerous resignations of the first-year cadets (it seems to be that the reason may be the disproportion between the ideas about the service and the reality). The current form of recruitment does not sufficiently verify the motivation to serve as the only tool that can verify it to some extent is too much short job interviews. Leadership predispositions are not tested at the beginning or during studies, which may lead to certain competency shortages among graduates. In MULF, the high school graduate becomes already a cadet on the first day of basic training, when he signs the relevant documents. From that moment on, his skills and knowledge are only verified in terms of academic and military subjects. It is obvious that checking the motivation and personality traits during the recruitment process would enable the assessment of the effectiveness of the incentive system and indicate the areas that should be improved to the greatest extent during the studies.

#### **4.2. Education**

In the surveyed military academies of Austria and the USA, the choice of a military specialization takes place only at the final stage of training or after the end of the academy. A longer period of academic education and general military training allows for universal education and the acquisition of competences in the field of leadership and commanding. In the compared academies, cadets are free to choose their preferred academic subjects. There are compulsory and uniform subjects for everyone, but the remaining (additional subjects) are selected on the basis of achieved results and ranking.

At MULF, cadets are assigned to a chosen military specialty too early, since already in the first year of their studies. In most cases, this specialty is continued during studies and usually in a later military career. It is true that the first year of studies mostly consists of general military subjects, but the remaining 4 years are basically only specialized training. The consequence of this is the limited possibility of acquiring general military knowledge in the first stage of training. It also has a negative impact on the acquisition of leadership knowledge and skills, as later, due to too many specialist hours, there is not much time left for it.

#### **4.3. Practical development of leadership skills**

In researched foreign military academies, the command structure in school divisions is based mainly on cadets of older years. They perform command functions at the level of teams and platoons in junior years and in their own subunits throughout their studies.

In MULF, cadets perform command functions at the level of their own squad, platoon and as commander during basic training and command practice. Contrary to

the compared academies, cadets perform duties as a platoon commander as an understudies as part of command practice in military units. As part of these practices, they are supervised and assessed by the appropriate platoon commanders. Holding such a function for a month makes it possible to familiarize with the tasks and responsibilities of a platoon commander, however, commanding practice is carried out alongside the core training cycle of the unit and is not a priority. As a result, in the case of internships during the training of units carried out on the training grounds, cadets perform tasks not related to the position of platoon commander.

As already mentioned, in USMA and TMA only some of the subjects are common and compulsory, and the cadets have a lot of opportunities to independently shape the education process by selecting subjects and activities from the pool of optional classes. On the contrary, in MULF, cadets cannot choose specific subjects or activities during their studies, they are imposed in advance. Therefore, there is a lack of both organizational and educational solutions, where cadets could show initiative and thus develop leadership predispositions.

#### **4.4. Command and teaching staff**

At foreign universities, the method of selecting lecturers and commanders of school subunits is strictly defined and their competences, skills and experience are taken into account. Typically, such positions are serviced by non-commissioned officers and officers who had internships in line units and foreign missions, and in teaching and research positions, additionally an academic degree. It is not possible to stay at the academy immediately after graduation. It also seems important in this matter that after completing their term of office (predetermined) at the position at the academy, they return to the unit. Soldiers who have completed their military service play a special role in the educational process, not only being part of the permanent teaching staff, but also giving guest lectures (very often organized), and during exercises (not only tactical) as experts.

In MULF, a relatively large part of the commanding staff of school subunits are officers who, immediately after graduation, began their service as the commander of a platoon of cadets. Unfortunately, too many lecturers have little combat experience as they pursue most of their academy career. There is also, as in foreign academies, no clearly defined length of stay (term of office) at the academy.

#### **4.5. Motivation system**

Cadets in foreign academies, due to their functions, have the right to make mistakes and are not punished for it, and they are even encouraged to experiment. The staff and lecturers primarily support the cadets, thanks to which they engage in extra-curricular activities and know that they can always count on the support of their mentors.

Recently, the "Incentive System based on the ranking of cadets in school units" has been recently introduced in MULF. His proposition, however, is based mainly on punishments and rewards and therefore does not meet the basic assumptions of the philosophy of leadership. Such solutions do not trigger internal motivation in cadets, but only teach them to follow the rules and the ability to avoid punishments. The missing element in this system is the lack of assessment of the level of cadets' motivation at the recruitment stage, during studies and at the end of education, just before the officer's promotion.

## **5. Recommendations**

After identifying the areas where improvement should be introduced, recommendations were formulated, which are presented in order from the most important:

1) *In the process of education.* Following the example of foreign academies, the first stage of training (at least the first 3 years of study) should concern general military knowledge (command, tactics, shooting training, combat security and fire support, drills, regulations, medical support) and leadership skills. Only the second stage, after the third year of studies, should include a selection of a military specialization based on a ranking list and the continuation of shaping leadership qualities and academic education, as well as the commencement of specialist education.

2) *In the selection of the commanding and teaching staff.* The selection of the commanding and academic staff should be carried out on the basis of guidelines regarding knowledge, competences, experience, and character, which are subject to verification at the commencement of the term of office. Drawing on good practices from foreign academies, selected officers with knowledge and skills acquired in the linear unit could, before taking the next higher position, complete one term of service as lecturers at MULF. Such teaching experience in their career should be treated to their advantage, and the academy would gain faculty with fresh military experience to conduct hands-on training with cadets. Another solution could be the use of experienced officers and non-commissioned officers as advisers and mentors during practical classes, even during short stays in academies, treated as a teaching practice for them.

3) *"Esprit de corps".* Introducing a code of ethics for all university employees and soldiers, which would provide for clear rules of conduct and behaviour. Immediate and strict enforcement of the provisions of the code, which should be regarded as the most important document along with the study regulations. Everyone should be able to report non-compliance with the provisions of the code or regulations by other persons in the form of a report to the disciplinary officer. The report of a cadet and a professional soldier should be treated equally because they all follow the same rules. People who conceal blameworthy events should be treated on an equal footing with those who commit a blameworthy act and removed from the academic

community (this applies to military and civilian students as well as military staff and civilian employees of MULF).

4) *Implementation of a new incentive system.* In the motivational system, one of the key criteria should be peer opinion and the opinion of a superior appointed from among senior cadets. Reliable feedback would be a set of guidelines for areas in which to make up for gaps in knowledge or skills and to identify competencies that are already at a high level.

It is also necessary to verify the level of motivation during recruitment, during education and before promotion, and on this basis to determine the development of the cadet and his level of motivation during the studies. The incentive system should be created based on the main motivators of cadets and enable the realization of passion, not only related directly to duty. Additional extra-curricular activities, such as sports, science and improvement in other fields, should be supported by the Academy in the form of providing conditions for development and additionally scored.

5) *Developing leadership skills in practice.* An exemplary system could look like this: 2nd-year cadets are team commanders during basic training, and later, rotating, perform the function of team commander for one semester in the 1st year. Third-year students are assistants of the platoon commander in the 1st and 2nd years of their studies. 4<sup>th</sup>-year cadets are double platoon commanders in lower years, while 5<sup>th</sup>-year students act as advisers for junior officers and are platoon commanders of cadets. Cadets from the 3rd year of age are involved in conducting classes, not only during basic training and command practice but also during program education. It could be organized in such a way that they prepare themselves on selected issues and, after their knowledge and skills are checked by the commander and the instructor, they act as instructors. In the final year of studies, they could be the organizers and managers of selected classes under the supervision of the lecturer. Assessment of such activities should be highly ranked in the hierarchy of assessing their leadership competences.

6) *Introducing new recruitment criteria.* Following the example of TMA, the recruitment process should, in addition to the existing criteria, consist of leadership predisposition tests, which would enable the selection of the best candidates. Basic training should be the next stage of recruitment that allows observation of volunteers under stressful conditions under mental and physical strain. In the event of failure to meet the assumptions contained in the basic training program and violations of discipline, the candidates should be removed from the list of qualified persons.

## **6. Conclusions**

The research was carried out on the basis of own observation as well as an analysis of the literature and normative documents regulating the curriculum and course of studies at MULF, USMA and TMA. This allowed for the presentation of conclusions

regarding the ability of the education system to shape the personality traits, skills and attitudes desired by the leader of the graduates of the studied academies.

This work emphasized the importance of shaping leadership competencies in leading military academies and allowed us to identify similarities and differences in order to find the most effective methods and ways of educating future officers (Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2019). Nowadays, the importance of leadership in the functioning of modern armies is emphasized and efforts are made to shape these competences in the most effective way in future commanders. The need for this is mainly due to the experience of recent armed conflicts, in which the victory was often not determined by the number and equipment of the army, but by the commanders as well as the morale and commitment of their soldiers. Today, effective leadership is a key pillar of the army's cohesion and efficiency and, at the same time, the main goal in the training of officers and non-commissioned officers. The proper and efficient process of leadership shaping allows for the creation of professional leaders, capable of taking responsibility for their sub-units and divisions as well as for the tasks they carry out.

The scope of activities undertaken to educate a good leader consists of a series of undertakings and should be manifested in all activities of the military education system. In selected military academies, various systems of officer preparation have been developed, in which common elements can be found, such as: a study program covering general and general military knowledge, a code of honor and the resulting clearly defined rules, detailed selection of staff and a large number of command practices.

The main research problem was: "How to effectively shape the leadership competences of candidates for officers in the process of education at a military academy?" The answer to this problem was expressed in the form of the following conclusions:

1. At MULF, as in leading foreign military academies, the formation of leadership competences is one of the main areas of development and interest of the university. The priority in educating candidates is leadership competencies, it is assumed that a modern commander must be a leader for his subordinates.
2. Shaping leadership competences in AWL should start from the moment of recruitment and continue throughout the entire period of study, up to officer promotion
3. The functioning of the personnel system in the Polish Armed Forces should be changed in such a way as to enable the influx of the best personnel with practical and combat experience to the academy, ensuring their tenure in positions and returning to line units.
4. It is necessary to change the current course of studies at AWL in such a way that in the first period of education (3 years) it covers leadership competences as well as general and military knowledge as a foundation for further specialist training. Specialist training should only start from the 4th year of studies.



5. It is necessary to introduce a code of ethics, the principles of which would be immediately enforced on all participants in the education process.
6. The new motivational system, taking into account the key motivators and the evaluation of functional persons (cadets) by their subordinates, would constitute another link in the modification of the current leadership shaping system in MULF.

During the analysis of the course of military studies at the MULF, it was found that currently steps are being taken to implement, similar to the leading foreign academies, an efficient system of shaping leadership competences. In the last few years, the academy started work on the implementation of new documents on the ethos and rules of conduct in the service of a commander and a military academic teacher. In addition, a new incentive system was introduced in sub-units based on proven solutions at foreign academies. This is a good step in improving the current system, and at the same time gives a signal that the current program did not fully meet the criteria for educating a leader.

The process of educating commanders is an ongoing process that must be constantly evaluated, modified, and developed in the light of new knowledge and lessons learned that comes from the recent military operations. The research carried out at work and the proposed solutions may help in identifying and implementing the best practices that work well in the best foreign academies. At the same time, they may contribute to supplementing the efforts already made in MULF to better educate leaders.

#### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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