
DEVELOPING FUTURE MILITARY OFFICERS' LEADERSHIP COMPETENCE IN THE MILITARY ACADEMIES: PEDAGOGICAL TECHNIQUES AND CONDITIONS

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Abstract

The article identifies and describes the pedagogical techniques and conditions used to ensure the future officers' LC development during their training in the military academies. The training includes two basic stages. The first stage provides a special leadership course with active non-simulation techniques (problem-based lecture, seminar-discussion, "round table") and active simulation techniques (solving situational tasks (case techniques (analysis of a specific situation), "action maze," "brainstorming," role-playing method, as well as psychophysiological training). The second stage of training includes an after-action review technique. It enables cadets to learn from mistakes based on lessons learnt from training operational activities. The pedagogical conditions include the development of future officers' sustainable interest and motivation for leadership activities; use of modern active pedagogical techniques with elements of problem-solving and competitiveness in solving quasi-professional tasks; ensuring the individualization of professional training; acquiring practical leadership experience during all types of classroom and extracurricular activities. The article explains in detail the ways of ensuring these pedagogical conditions.

Key words: leadership competence, military officers, military academies, model of leadership development, pedagogical techniques, pedagogical conditions, after-action review.

Introduction

Effectiveness in the performance of professional tasks by officers in real conditions of full-scale armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine much depends on their level of leadership competence (LC) development. The officers' LC is a dynamic combination of knowledge, skills, abilities, ways of thinking, views, values, and professionally significant individual qualities of their personality that determine his/her ability and readiness to influence the will and behavior of other subjects of professional activity to ensure more effective accomplishment of service tasks. The development of future officers' LC during their professional training in military academies is a scientifically grounded system of organizing and stimulating their active engagement through education and training in the military academies, which ensures qualitative changes in all LC components.

The features of an officer as a leader include the abilities to: implement new approaches and ideas in professional activities and directly execute tasks in combat situations; act unconventionally and not according to templates, demonstrating creativity and ingenuity while maintaining vigilance and discipline; not only assign tasks to other subjects of professional activity but also inspire and motivate them to accomplish these tasks and achieve new goals in professional activities based on positive emotions, setting impulses and maintaining their activity; act within identified areas but set

their own goals and determine their own ways to achieve these goals; rely directly on people – other subjects of professional activity, trust them; have their own strategy (vision) for accomplishing professional tasks and achieving professional success; enthusiastically implement new ideas and methods for achieving professional goals; make decisions and inevitably turn them into reality. An officer's leadership is based on his/her authority as a subject of professional activity, the presence of followers, professional interpersonal interaction that determines his/her leadership behavior (actions), which contribute to the effective performance of professional tasks.

This level can be improved within a scientifically grounded model that includes techniques, principles, and pedagogical conditions.

Research context

Problems of leadership have always been under the study of many scholars, namely the sociologists, political scientists and psychologists. B. Bass & R. Stogdill (1990) and B. Bass (1998) in their classical works have provided definitions on basic terms and concepts of leadership. The best modern practical guide on leadership has been developed by K. Ferguson (2023).

In the military area leadership has always been an important subject. ADP 6-22, Army Leadership and the Profession (2019), defines and details the essential principles of Army leadership in the Army profession. It specifies the different levels of leadership (direct, organizational, and strategic) and outlines the attributes and key leadership competencies required of leaders at all ranks and in all groups. Military academies of all countries of the world focus primarily on training military officers as leaders.

Besides wide research context of the topic of leadership the methodological foundations for developing future officers' LC during their training in military academies have not been substantiated. The aim of the article is to identify and describe the pedagogical techniques and conditions used to ensure the future officers' LC development.

Theoretical framework and methodology

The LC development occurs within the framework of the author's model. The driving force behind the implementation of this model is the societal demand, particularly from the Armed Forces of Ukraine, for officers with well-developed LC. The foundation of the author's model is based on the understanding of modeling processes in pedagogy, viewed as the study of pedagogical objects (phenomena) through the reproduction of conceptual, procedural, structural-content, and conceptual characteristics and specific aspects of the educational process within a defined sociocultural space at general educational, professionally oriented, or other levels.

The conceptual-target block involves formulating the goal of future officers' LC development. This is one of the most important characteristics of the educational process. The goal achievement process is presented as planning a sequence of actions (i.e., specific tasks) to obtain the final result.

The development of LC is based on methodological approaches, namely: synergistic, competency-based, subject-activity, and andragogical. The development itself is founded on principles that ensure the didactic process as a harmonious unity of pedagogical influences on the personality of the future specialist—the subject of military activity, where the leadership activity is at its core. The content block of the model comprises LC components such as motivational-personal, cognitive-professional, procedural-activity, and emotional. The content of these components is determined by the LC peculiarities, which manifests in the officer's professional activities. The basis of our model is the methodology for developing LC. This is a system of methods, techniques, and tools, as well as the sequence of their application at specific stages of the educational process aimed

at developing future officers' LC. This process does not occur separately from the development of other professional competencies as it is integrated into the overall educational process.

The diagnostic block of the model defines the following levels of the future officers' LC development as low, medium, and high. These are represented in corresponding descriptors, which describe the degrees of the officer's ability to perform leadership activities in professional settings. Only medium and high levels enable them to perform professional tasks effectively. A low level indicates the need for additional training aimed at developing LC. The determination of LC development levels is carried out using diagnostic tools based on evaluation criteria and indicators.

Result

We propose the application of active pedagogical techniques that promote comprehensive LC development, creative and independent thinking, the formation of an active educational-cognitive position, and unconventional (non-standard) actions in professional activities.

During the stages of training in military academies, a special leadership course is proposed, which includes active non-simulation methods (problem-based lecture, seminar-discussion, "round table") and active simulation methods (solving situational tasks (case method (analysis of a specific situation), "action maze," "brainstorming," role-playing method, as well as psychophysiological training).

In the final stage of training, an after-action review is used, providing opportunities to learn from mistakes based on the experience gained during the execution of training operational activities. After completing the simulated training operational activities, a debriefing takes place. Attention is focused on key aspects that collectively indicate the trainees' ability to apply LC in solving professional tasks.

We have substantiated the pedagogical conditions for the development of future officers' LC in the military academies. By these, we mean a system of specially created factors influencing the external and internal circumstances of their professional development process, implemented in educational activities in the military academies, considering the personal parameters of all its participants.

These conditions encompass organizational, pedagogical, and psychological aspects of the future officers' LC development as a pedagogical phenomenon. The pedagogical conditions are systemic and comprehensively cover all stages, content, methods, and means of their professional training in military academies. In this regard, they include methodological and theoretical, as well as methodological and practical aspects of developing future officers' LC.

The pedagogical conditions for the development of future officers' LC include:

developing a sustainable interest and motivation for leadership activities in future officers;
use of modern active pedagogical techniques that include elements of problem-solving and competitiveness in solving quasi-professional tasks;

ensuring the individualization of professional training for trainees, which promotes the expression of initiative and independence in decision-making, as well as the creation of an individual style of leadership activity for future officers;

acquiring practical leadership experience by future officers during all types of classroom and extracurricular activities: training sessions, tactical-specialized exercises, military-specialized games, and probations in the troops.

Discussion

Let us delve into the pedagogical techniques and conditions for developing future officers' LC. Traditionally, each topic in the proposed course begins with a problem-based lecture. Unlike conventional lectures, problem-based lectures do not convey learning material as ready-made facts

but encourage cadets to actively collaborate with the instructor and independently assimilate the material. It is important for participants not just to reproduce information but to discover new knowledge. This stimulates their thinking, develops a personal attitude toward the subject matter, and overall, the problem-based lecture ensures the introduction of theoretical material for the course topics and directs trainees toward further practical development of LC components. Each problem-based lecture includes methods such as interactive discussions involving the audience, small group discussions, and group discussions to address key concepts and terms of each topic.

In addition to lectures, the proposed pedagogical techniques incorporate seminar discussions. A seminar discussion involves an active dialogue among participants, developing practical experience in jointly discussing and resolving theoretical leadership problems, and future officers' leadership thinking. The seminar discussion comprises three learning issues, with each issue involving an introductory statement by the instructor, group discussion, and presentation of group results. Individual presentations by participants are also possible. The seminar discussion concludes with a general summary.

This type of seminar allows for equal and active participation of students in discussing theoretical issues, evaluating, and justifying decisions. The discussion creates a specific psychological environment distinct from interaction with the instructor, which enhances the creative intellectual abilities of future officers, reduces communication barriers, and increases communication effectiveness.

The "round table" technique has also proven effective. In the proposed course, this technique is used to organize discussions of complex theoretical leadership issues and to share experiences. During classes, cadets prepare reports and presentations as experts, which are then discussed and analyzed by the participants.

The leadership course also extensively uses the brainstorming technique. Using it, the cadets as future leaders in a group attempt to generate as many ideas as possible to solve a particular problem. The group works on generating new ideas, creating an atmosphere of freedom, interaction, and collaboration. All suggestions are welcomed, and criticism is prohibited. Only after all ideas have been collected are they evaluated to select the best solution.

The "action maze" technique is quite effective, providing a certain amount of information to participants, often in the form of a detailed description of a complex incident or situational leadership task within the professional scope. This information can include essential data needed to solve the educational problem as well as additional information requiring for solving the task.

Alongside the above techniques, the leadership course uses the case method (case study analysis). This method involves solving specific problem situations (cases). Participants solve problems arising during professional tasks, requiring the use of their LC. They are given complex situations to analyze, often revealing insufficient information for task resolution. This stimulates their search and development of the ability to make well-founded decisions.

Among simulation techniques in the proposed leadership course, the role-playing method is used. This technique is distinguished by its ability to introduce participants to a specific didactic situation that maximally recreates leadership behavior and requires task resolution; assigns specific roles to actual positions in professional situations; and distributes these roles among participants and instructors. The role-playing technique, like all simulation techniques, involves quasi-professional tasks. These are creative tasks developed based on practical situations future officers will encounter in their professional activities.

The most effective form of this technique is role-playing, which most accurately recreates the manifestation of leadership behavior by participants in their future professional activities or specific aspects of these activities, as well as most comprehensively models the system of professional relationships arising during professional tasks. The essence of role-playing is to recreate

the material and social content of professional activities, model the main conditions and relationship systems characteristic of leadership behavior.

Since officers' professional activities are carried out under constant stress, countering this is necessary. Thus, the methodology includes psychophysiological training, a set of various techniques for the harmonious development of the mental and physiological characteristics of future officers, aimed at improving self-regulation, cognitive abilities, emotional stability, and endurance. The main task of the training is stress management, reducing the risk of burnout, and increasing the ability to remain calm in extreme situations. It also ensures control over one's state, develops self-confidence, and ensures the effective performance of professional tasks. Additionally, it enhances emotional intelligence, improves attention and concentration, and develops flexible thinking and adaptability.

In the final stage of training the after-action review technique is used, where attention is focused on key aspects in the form of questions to cadets:

1. What was planned? What did we expect from the event? Participants discuss the initial plan or goal of the event they executed, ensuring all participants correctly understand the event's purpose.

2. How was the event actually executed? What really happened? Participants discuss their involvement, actions taken, and how they were performed, evaluating the event's effectiveness and efforts made.

3. Why did everything happen the way it did? Participants analyze what worked well, what went wrong, and why, providing insights into the lessons learned from the event.

4. What will we do next to correct mistakes and improve event execution? Participants, guided by the instructor, discuss how to improve the situation in the future.

The above described techniques must be supported by the pedagogical conditions.

The first one is developing a sustainable interest and motivation for leadership activities in future officers. It is achieved through the creation and maintenance of a strong interest in leadership as a conscious necessity during the educational process. This interest shapes the trainees' attitude towards the role of a leader in the execution of professional tasks. Interest generates motivation, which in turn acts as a "trigger mechanism" leading to changes in cadet behavior, ensuring their emergence as leaders.

To ensure this condition, two main areas are outlined:

1. Prioritization of candidates for the military academies: candidates demonstrating a high level of motivation for service in the Armed Forces of Ukraine and an understanding that the effectiveness of their professional tasks and military career depends on the development of their LC are given priority.

2. Development and enhancement of motivation for leadership activities: this is achieved through the application of effective pedagogical interventions.

The first area is realized through professional psychological selection. The successful implementation of the second area depends on the organization of the educational process in military academies, including both classroom and extracurricular activities managed by academic staff and their direct supervisors. A suitable level of interest and motivation is maintained through quasi-professional tasks that accurately simulate the conditions of real professional tasks, wherein the officer acts as a leader due to a methodically and didactically justified necessity. It is crucial that these tasks fully or partially replicate combat situations, allowing the trainee the freedom to demonstrate their leadership qualities successfully.

Interest is further sustained by the achievement of practical goals, as adult trainees recognize the purpose behind their tasks. Additionally, this pedagogical condition is supported by the leadership behavior of academic staff and their supervisors, as well as patriotic and cultural-educational events highlighting the lives and activities of distinguished military leaders.

The second condition is the use of modern active pedagogical techniques that include elements of problem-solving and competitiveness in solving quasi-professional tasks. Incorporating elements of problem-solving and competition in the resolution of quasi-professional tasks involve the artificial creation of challenges. These techniques help trainees understand that solving these tasks is possible only through targeted collective actions or, conversely, through autonomous work. The development of LC begins with the activation of cognitive activities. The initial point of such activation is the problem itself. Cadets activate their thinking processes when there is a need to understand something, encountering cognitive difficulty. The quest to solve the problem stimulates their communication and professional problem-solving, enabling them to display creativity and ingenuity and develop skills for working in real combat situations, thus exhibiting leadership behavior. This condition envisages competitive learning environment. Competition ensures better performance in quasi-professional tasks. Creating a competitive environment involves setting conditions where trainees strive to complete tasks faster and more efficiently. This is often incentivized with promised rewards (moral or material) upon completion of educational tasks. Such competition fosters quicker and better development of LC. Competitive conditions can be created in game-based learning activities.

The third condition ensures the individualization of professional training allowing cadets to show initiative and independence in decision-making. This involves considering individual characteristics and abilities in all methods and forms of professional training, regardless of the uniformity of the educational-professional program and the composition of the training group. Ideally, this pedagogical condition should create an individual style of leadership for future officers—a system of optimal techniques based on individual psychological characteristics used by trainees for successful development and application of LC, and readiness for its application in service activities. Understanding the essence of an individual style of leadership is based on the following principles:

- it is a set of educational and professional activities characteristic of each cadet, aiding them in overcoming difficulties related to the development of LC;

- it consists of heterogeneous components that often depend on and complement each other;

- it can change over time and is influenced by various factors, with andragogical characteristics of the cadet being pivotal;

- its diagnostic methods are not perfect.

- it cannot be considered better or worse but is merely a reflection of each cadet's individuality.

- each cadet should know the features of their individual leadership style and strive to expand its capabilities.

The fourth condition is acquiring practical leadership experience by future officers during all types of classroom and extracurricular activities: training sessions, tactical-specialized exercises, military-specialized games, and probations in the troops. Given that LC is an interdisciplinary and trans-subjective personal formation, this condition ensures its development not only during specific educational sessions or topics but throughout all types of professional training, particularly practical training (military probations) and practical classes.

Practical training allows cadets to comprehend leadership phenomena and facts, patterns, and principles, acquiring leadership experience. Feedback analysis from cadets after probations and practical sessions indicates that many issues they face are due to a lack of experience and professional skills, rather than an absence of natural abilities. The majority of cadets benefit significantly from practice in terms of gaining practical experience. Practice helps cadets identify which traits, skills, and abilities are necessary for effective leadership and outlines paths for self-improvement.

During practical training, trainees gain hands-on experience through role-playing by creating (modeling) regular (irregular) situations from professional practice where officers' leadership activities play a crucial role. This pedagogical condition addresses the professionally oriented complexity of decision-making under acute time constraints, intellectual and emotional pressure. These activities develop systemic vision in cadets, enabling them to understand the role of each educational component in the structure of their LC, teaching them to independently acquire, update, and organize new knowledge related to leadership, and adapt to future service conditions.

The pedagogical conditions for the development of the future officers' LC exist in harmonious unity, creating a coherent organizational, methodological, and psychological environment.

Conclusions

In this article we have identified and described the pedagogical techniques and conditions used to ensure the future officers' LC development. To foster the future officers' a specialized leadership course has been developed. This course employs active non-simulation methods, such as problem-based lectures (to introduce theoretical concepts and encourage cadets to independently assimilate material), seminar-discussions (an active dialogue to gain practical experience in collaborative discussion and resolution of theoretical leadership issues, fostering leadership thinking), and "round table" discussions (for organizing discussions on complex theoretical leadership issues and exchanging experiences). Additionally, active simulation methods are used, including brainstorming (to generate various strategies and approaches for solving leadership problems), "action maze" (for solving tasks through the analysis of extensive supplementary information), case method (for resolving specific problem situations), role-playing (for solving problematic situations by simulating professional communication processes), and psychophysiological training (to develop cadets' mental and physiological characteristics aimed at enhancing self-regulation, cognitive processes, emotional resilience, and endurance under stressful professional conditions). At the final stage, an analysis of the conducted actions is proposed (learning from mistakes based on the experience gained during training operational activities).

We have also substantiated the pedagogical conditions for developing future officers' LC. These conditions are characterized by systematicity and comprehensiveness, encompassing all stages, content, methods, and tools of professional training for the cadets of the military academies. They include methodological, theoretical, methodical, and practical aspects of developing their LC.

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