

The identification of officers' leadership competencies in the face of current threats – an educational aspect

Agnieszka Taurogińska-Stich^{1*} , Andrzej Michaluk¹ ,
Joanna Martusewicz² 

¹ General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, Wrocław, Poland,
e-mail: agnieszka.tauroginska-stich@awl.edu.pl, andrzej.michaluk@awl.edu.pl

² Wrocław University of Economics and Business, Poland,
e-mail: joanna.martusewicz@ue.wroc.pl

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the results of a study on identifying and shaping the leadership competencies of cadets, taking into account current military challenges and crises that measurably affect how commanding officer cadres operate and how their subordinates perceive them. The authors highlight the need to shift the focus of cadet education in higher military education from activities oriented towards shaping the competencies of the platoon-company commander towards proposals that take into account the latest trends and lessons learned from the current armed conflict in Ukraine. This approach mainly addresses the challenges of “new generation warfare”, where the boundaries between war and peace are difficult to identify. The evolution of warfare we are seeing includes and will continue to include non-military activities extensively supported by sensors and reconnaissance systems, with the apparent dominance of information, but also the sowing of confusion and fear and the building of narratives focused on undermining the opponent’s morale. The requirements of modern warfare necessitate faster diagnosis of candidates’ leadership aptitude, even before recruitment to military universities, and then intensive improvement of their competencies, especially at the initial (adaptive) stage of training. This should result in improved matching of cadres to the real challenges of “new generation warfare”. In this article, the authors present multifaceted exploratory research on diagnosing and shaping leadership competencies in one of Poland’s military universities.

KEYWORDS

leadership, Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, command, process of adaptation to military service, competence model

* Corresponding author



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Introduction

Full-scale wars, but also military crises, e.g. “hybrid wars” which we have been facing in recent years¹, are a clear signal to the Polish Armed Forces that it is necessary to accelerate the changes in the models of education of future officers. Today, the professional education of Land Forces officer-leaders involves completing 5-year curricula, which include the formation of managerial and leadership (civilian-military) as well as specialist-military competencies necessary to exercise command at the tactical level. Some authors suggest that this education should be complemented by character improvement and the formation of intellectual, moral and civic attitudes as well as a sense of responsibility for one’s actions (Shields, 2011). These components are extremely helpful in shaping the leadership competencies of future military officers (Mueller, 2012; Kołodziejczyk, Cieślarczyk, 2019). This is mainly about combining an ambitious, comprehensible and clearly defined educational goal, which – as a rule – should be a challenge for all parties of the educational process, taking into account the needs of the armed forces, which must be ready for the urgency and pace of modern warfare, and dominating the communication layer to promote the image of an army that is strong, victorious, resistant to the breaking of morale and characterised by high motivation of its soldiers to fight (Bartosiak, Budzisz, 2022).

An analysis of the literature on higher military education demonstrates that any army’s effective functioning and image are determined by its officer cadre (Kozerański, 2002; Ryan et al., 2012; Berling, Smith-Windsor, 2017; Adair, 2007, 2011, 2016, 2019), the quality of which is directly dependent on Professional Military Education, a clearly focused mode of education and competencies fit for future command duties (Wierzbic, Taurogińska-Stich, 2022). This process is similar to that in higher education, where the absolute priority should be to match the competencies to the needs articulated by employers (Jeruszka, 2016)².

According to the authors of this study, **a kind of paradigm for introducing changes in the education of future military officers should be**

¹ This refers to the full-scale Russo-Ukrainian war, ongoing since 24 February 2022, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current financial, energy and climate crises.

² This role in universities is fulfilled by programme councils that bring together teaching specialists and business representatives interested in attracting graduates. In military universities, these councils include representatives of the commands of the military branches and services and selected military units.

an educational goal to be attained by officer corps candidates during second-cycle studies and defined by the armed forces, considering, in particular, the shaping of leadership competencies by an active, committed and cooperative team of academic teachers and commanders of training units with a positive attitude towards the relevant educational activities.

1. Leadership and its importance in military education

The extensive subject literature and the normative documents of the armed forces of NATO member states indicate that command requires high leadership skills to ensure the necessary security standards (Thiede, 2004; Kolditz, 2009; *FM 6-22. Leader Development*, 2015; NATO Standardization Office, 2017; Taylor, 2018; Creveled van, 2020). The United States Army in particular sets a clear direction in this regard, indicating that effective leadership is based on highly developed leadership competencies and the well-shaped character of the military leader (*West Point Leadership Center*, n.d.). Indeed, leadership and command have been deemed equal: "Command = Leadership + Management" (Fiedler, 2011; *ADP 6-22. Army Leadership and the Profession*, 2019).

Developing leadership competencies in military universities is a task that is central to command in both peacetime and war. By its nature, war is a time of chaos, so the need for an officer-commander is to have the skills to make decisions competently, wisely and morally in all circumstances, with the morality aspect playing a special role (Bartone et al., 2002; Peterson, Seligman, 2004). Defining clear requirements in this respect is an important argument for adopting the conclusions formulated by M. van Creveled (2020) in analysing command systems in action. This will also be a fundamental aspect in educating Poland's future commanders-leaders.

The educational need to improve leadership competencies in cadets stems from the real needs of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland contained in many normative documents³. Introducing leadership

³ The many normative documents on leadership competencies include Standard Kształcenia dla kandydatów na oficerów (The Education Standard for Officer Candidates), https://www.dz.urz.mon.gov.pl/zasoby/dziennik/pozycje/tresc-aktow/pdf/2020/07/poz_107_dec_nr_88-sig.pdf [Retrieved: 20 February 2023]; Programu Rozwoju Sił Zbrojnych na lata 2017-2026 (Armed Forces Development Programme 2017-2026), <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/program-rozwoju-sil-zbrojnych-rp> [Retrieved: 20 February 2022]; Strategia Rozwoju Systemu Bezpieczeństwa Narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej

functions into command studies strengthens competencies in personal development, morality and impact on morale, as well as emotional intelligence and understanding of human behaviour. An analysis of the curricula of selected military universities around the world has shown that most of them include leadership-related educational content; nevertheless, how this content is delivered varies (Wierzbic, Taurogińska-Stich, 2022). Vital parts of this process include identifying a “starting point” in the formation of competencies and assuming that leadership development will be about diagnosis, improvement and competency matching (Adair, 2007, 2011; Michaluk, Kacała, 2013; Jeruszka, 2016). The decision to introduce the practice of individual diagnosis of officer candidates aims to achieve the highest possible level of officer performance and the best possible adjustment to the hardships of military service (Callina et al., 2017). The essence of this approach is to identify the expected competency profiles of candidates, establish their baseline, identify attitudes and motives for entering military education and service and prepare a leadership competency model targeting the most important initial stage of learning at a military university, i.e. initial adaptation (Kolditz, 2009; Ryan et al., 2012; Taurogińska-Stich, 2021).

The education of officer candidates in military universities should also aim to improve their ability to deal with non-military activities related to information analysis and verification, resilience to “information noise”, and psychological operations oriented towards breaking soldiers’ morale. Another vital element of this change is building the capacity for decentralisation of command, self-reliance in action, increased personal responsibility of commanders, flexible decision-making and critical thinking related to handling the growing capabilities of artificial intelligence. According to the assumed model, the education of future commanders should focus on leadership competencies, strong patriotic attitudes and high morale, with an awareness of contemporary strategic realities of military security (Bartosiak, Budzisz, 2022).

2022 (Republic of Poland National Security System Development Strategy 2022), https://www.bbn.gov.pl/ftp/dok/01/strategia_rozwoju_systemu_bezpieczenstwa_narodowego_rp_2022.pdf [Retrieved: 20 February 2023].

2. Qualitative analysis of the aptitudes of military university candidates

The introduction of individual diagnosis to effectively shape leadership competencies while learning command requires military universities to adopt innovative solutions in cadet recruitment and adaptation in the initial period of their military university education. This change aims to introduce a procedure for diagnosing the candidates' leadership aptitudes, followed by their development and alignment with future duties. Two key areas were identified in the research conducted (Kulczycki et al., 2015). The first concerned establishing how to select appropriate leadership competencies, measure them during recruitment and apply them in the adaptation process to shape them further. The second is oriented towards studying the leadership aptitudes of military university candidates and the leadership competencies they acquire during the period of adaptation to service in the military university⁴.

In the assumptions for the research project, it was determined that the actions taken would depend on the following psychosocial parameters (Michaluk et al., 2016):

- awareness of one's competencies (knowledge, skills, experience, etc., including confidence);
- belief in success (optimism);
- perseverance in pursuing a goal;
- creativity (creative behaviours and attitudes, openness to new solutions);
- ambition;
- ability to motivate others;
- assertiveness (self-reliance);
- sense of abundance (willingness to delegate tasks and authority);
- social competencies (openness to others, sociability);
- preferred leadership style (in general – task-oriented or people-oriented).

The research was conducted using the author's tool (questionnaire) and psychological tests, which were carried out as part of the statutory research projects, according to the diagram in Figure 1.

⁴ This particularly applies to the first year of study, when cadets may still resign without additional financial consequences if they reevaluate their interests or their skills are deemed inadequate.

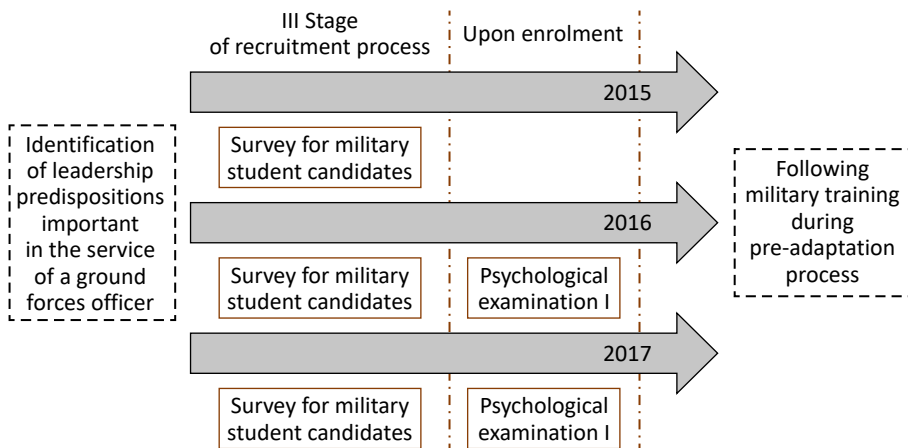


Fig. 1. Diagram of research procedures

Source: own elaboration.

The questionnaire research focused on identifying the candidates' perceptions of military service, the extent of awareness and opinions of its course, conscious beliefs about leadership attitudes and conduct in an officer's service, determining motives for deciding to choose an officer's profession, the prevalence of interest in military issues and previous trends in considering them. The point of reference was the declarative answers based on which it was also possible to indicate the tendency to accept the conditions of service, values, goals and principles of community life in the service, motives for action, leadership expressed through tendencies relating to the ways of interacting, as well as a focus on self-control and self-evaluation. The first phase of the survey was conducted in years 2015-2017 among 766 candidates applying for military studies (in 2015 – 200 respondents, with a limit of 126 spots; in 2016 – 246 respondents, with a limit of 230 spots; in 2017 – 320 respondents, with a limit of 333 spots). The survey took place during the third (final) stage of the military university recruitment process, after passing the entry fitness exam but before the final interview. The survey was voluntary and independent of the recruitment process. To increase the quantity and quality of the data collected, a six-point importance scale was used for the diagnosis, i.e. from 0 to 5, where: 0 – difficult to say, 1 – unimportant, 2 – not very important, 3 – moderately important, 4 – very important, 5 – essential. The survey questions were divided into groups A to G. The gender structure of the survey population was as follows: men – 75%, women – 25%.

The young cadets' perceptions and intentional declarations in the subsequent years were very similar. The most frequent answers indicated by the respondents were "essential" and "very important", as shown in Table 1, 2 and 3 selected for graphic presentation.

Table 1. Question set A – student/cadet survey

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
2017	0	3%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
	1	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	2	6%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	15%	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
	3	20%	0%	9%	6%	6%	7%	1%	8%	55%	11%	4%	4%	3%	6%	18%
	4	60%	30%	51%	48%	34%	36%	34%	43%	16%	63%	38%	58%	51%	38%	47%
	5	9%	69%	38%	45%	59%	56%	64%	48%	5%	23%	57%	35%	46%	55%	32%
2016	0	2%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	2%
	1	3%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	2	7%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	3	17%	0%	9%	7%	7%	7%	1%	8%	56%	10%	4%	4%	3%	6%	18%
	4	61%	31%	51%	47%	35%	37%	36%	41%	17%	64%	37%	61%	50%	38%	47%
	5	10%	69%	38%	46%	59%	55%	63%	50%	5%	24%	59%	34%	47%	56%	33%
2015	0	3%	0%	1%	0%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	1%	0%	1%	0%	0%	3%
	1	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	2	6%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1%	15%	1%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
	3	22%	0%	10%	4%	4%	5%	1%	6%	55%	10%	4%	4%	3%	5%	16%
	4	58%	25%	49%	47%	32%	34%	32%	42%	16%	63%	38%	55%	50%	38%	48%
	5	11%	74%	39%	49%	63%	60%	67%	51%	5%	25%	58%	39%	47%	55%	33%

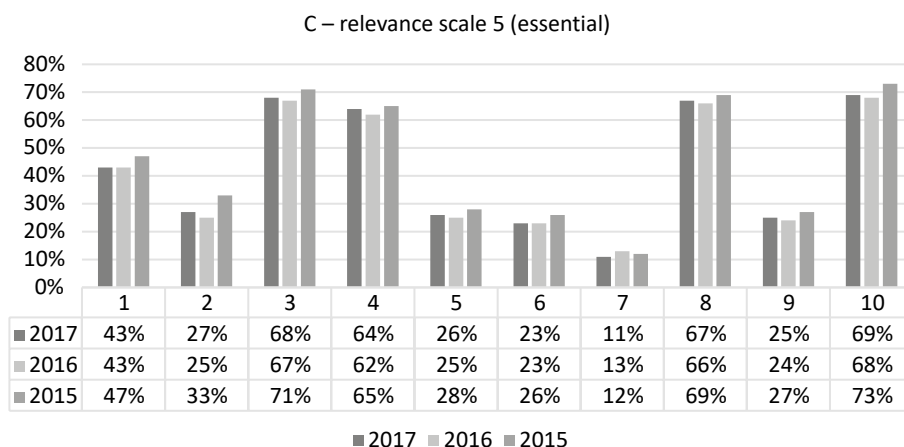
Set A includes the following questions to check whether the respondents:

1. Believe that people are inherently good and show them respect and support.
2. Can manage emotions, fear, anxiety and trepidation.
3. See effort as the path to success.

4. Are characterised by the consistency of words and actions.
5. Are reliable and honours agreements.
6. Are truthful and tell the truth responsibly.
7. Are not afraid of challenges and hard work when convinced of their necessity.
8. Have self-esteem (know their capabilities) and trust themselves.
9. Have a sense of humour and are “social butterflies”.
10. Can accept constructive criticism.
11. Take care of physical fitness and lead a hygienic lifestyle.
12. Never undermine others when doing something for themselves.
13. Can take the brunt of their team’s failure.
14. Have an aptitude for leadership (charisma).
15. Are modest and do not elevate themselves above other team members.

Source: own elaboration.

Table 2. Question set C – student/cadet candidate survey

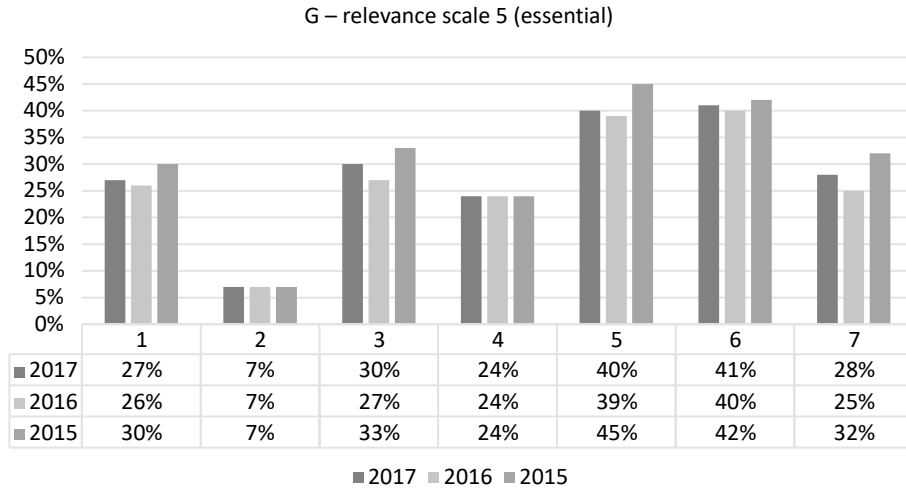


Set C includes the following questions to check whether the respondents:

1. Can admit a mistake and face the consequences of failure.
2. Demonstrate understanding of the hardships of serving others, regardless of status.
3. Can make decisions under difficult and complex conditions related to weather, low/high temperature, loneliness, noise/silence, isolation and difficult terrain.
4. Can anticipate the consequences of decisions made (positive/negative) and are characterised by cause-and-effect thinking.
5. Can manage themselves and formulate their life goals in the next stages of life.
6. Can solve tasks creatively (through innovative, out-of-the-box thinking).
7. Can gather people who share their views to achieve their goals.
8. Can make the right decisions under the pressure of time deficit, information deficit, hunger, thirst, insomnia, fatigue, risk to life and health, etc.
9. Set ever new goals for themselves, pursuing their life career programme.
10. Can behave loyally towards their superiors and team members.

Source: own elaboration.

Table 3. Question set G – student/cadet candidate survey



Set G includes the following questions to check whether the high school students surveyed:

1. Have had the experience of completing tasks in stressful circumstances.
2. Have encountered disloyal behaviour towards superiors and team members (peer group).
3. Have been in situations where they had to show courage.
4. Have been in situations where they had to advocate respect for the structures of a democratic state and the law.
5. Have ever been responsible for resources entrusted to them (people, equipment, supplies, etc.).
6. Have been in situations where they had to provide selfless assistance to their team members, including others in need of help or support.
7. Have taken the initiative to act for a specific purpose and showed generosity in doing so.

Source: own elaboration.

The collected responses showed that military university applicants generally understood the specifics of the command process in a way typical of the early adulthood stage, with limitations due to the lack of personal experience. The highly similar responses of military university applicants (in the subsequent years: 2015, 2016 and 2017) regarding the cadets' leadership competencies allow us to conclude that the respondents' knowledge and perceptions of the learning environment at the military university are similar. Their knowledge is based on the ideas circulating in society and the media or presented as part of the University's promotional activities aimed at high school students. The analysis also warrants a conclusion that candidates see a weak link between officer service and the ability to build relationship capital, as well as achieve personal, emotional and intellectual development (e.g. creative thinking). Officers are

mainly associated with the profession of a soldier who obeys orders rather than shaping them.

3. Psychological analysis of the aptitudes of military university candidates

The psychological research conducted at the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces (MULF) during the initial weeks of the service of students/cadets in 2016 and 2017 aimed to diagnose selected leadership aptitude parameters. Standardised psychological tests issued by Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych (PTP) (The Psychological Testing Laboratory) were used in the diagnostic practice, i.e. Kwestionariusz Nadziei Podstawowej BHI-12 (Basic Hope Questionnaire), Kwestionariusz Nadziei na Sukces (KNS) (Hope for Success Questionnaire), Popularny Kwestionariusz Inteligencji Emocjonalnej (PKIE) (Popular Questionnaire of Emotional Intelligence), Lista Przymiotnikowa (ACL) (Adjective Check List) and Wielowymiarowy Kwestionariusz Samooceny (MSEI) (Multidimensional Self-Esteem Inventory) (Michaluk et al., 2016).

A total of 220 first-year cadets took part in the survey during the initial period of the basic training programme in the selected specialities, i.e.: 102 in September 2016 and 118 in August 2017, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Characteristics of the study group. Total respondents: $N = 102$ (2016); $N = 118$ (2017)

Feature	Mean (SD)	Median (quartiles)	
2016 – Age (years)	19.93 (1.89)	20 (19-21)	
2017 – Age (years)	20.54 (2.29)	20 (19-21.5)	
Feature		<i>N</i>	Percentage
2016 – Gender	Women	15	14,71%
	Men	87	85,29%
2017 – Gender	Women	7	5,93%
	Men	111	94,07%

Source: own elaboration based on (Michaluk et al., 2016; Węłyczko et al., 2017).

The study sample was compared to the general population. The results were verified using the chi-squared test for $p < 0.05$ and it was found that there were statistically significant differences between the study groups and the general population. In most cases, the study group results in terms of leadership aptitudes possessed were higher than in the general population.

For the detailed study, the MSEI-ZP Questionnaire was used, covering such issues as self-esteem and its general level, as well as eight components relating to specific aspects of human functioning: competencies, the feeling of being loved, popularity, leadership skills, self-control, moral self-acceptance, physical attractiveness and vitality, evaluation of self-image coherence (awareness of self-knowledge) and the level of need for social approval. Again, scores in the study group were higher than in the general population (Table 5).

The MSEI-ZP Questionnaire sten scores for the first-year cadets in 2017 showed similar trends and tendencies to the 2016 group survey (Table 6).

The presented results prove that the leadership skills of 2016-2017 candidates to the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land

Table 5. MSEI-ZP Questionnaire sten scores for the group of first-year cadets (2016)

MSEI-ZP Questionnaire				
Sten	Number of people	Percentage	Theoretical percentage	<i>p</i>
1	0	0.00%	2.28%	$p < 0.001$
2	0	0.00%	4.41%	
3	0	0.00%	9.18%	
4	0	0.00%	14.99%	
5	7	7.00%	19.15%	
6	18	18.00%	19.15%	
7	14	14.00%	14.99%	
8	31	31.00%	9.18%	
9	13	13.00%	4.41%	
10	17	17.00%	2.28%	

Source: (Michaluk et al., 2016; Wełyczko et al., 2017).

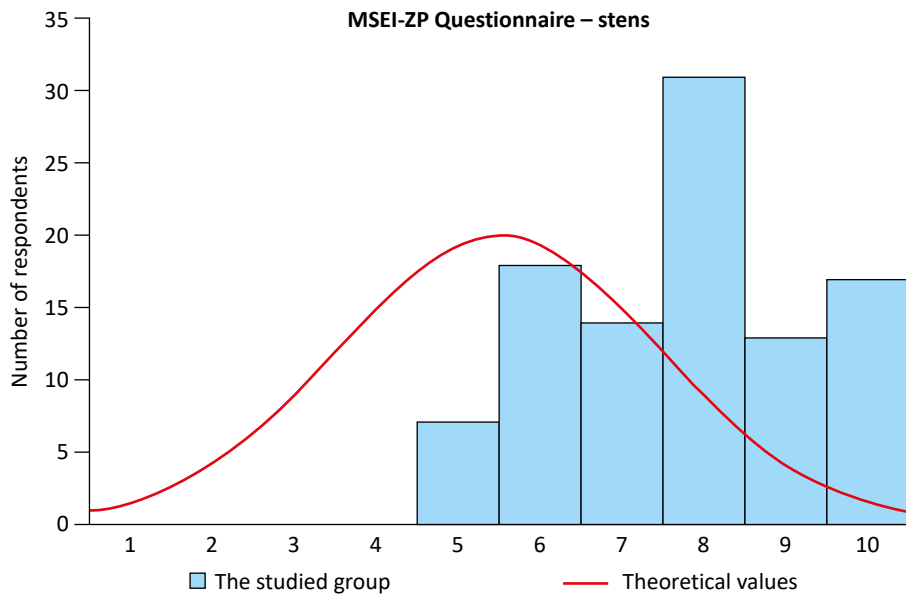


Fig. 2. Comparison of MSEI-ZP Questionnaire test scores for the group of cadets with the general population

Source: (Michaluk et al., 2016; Wełyczko et al., 2017).

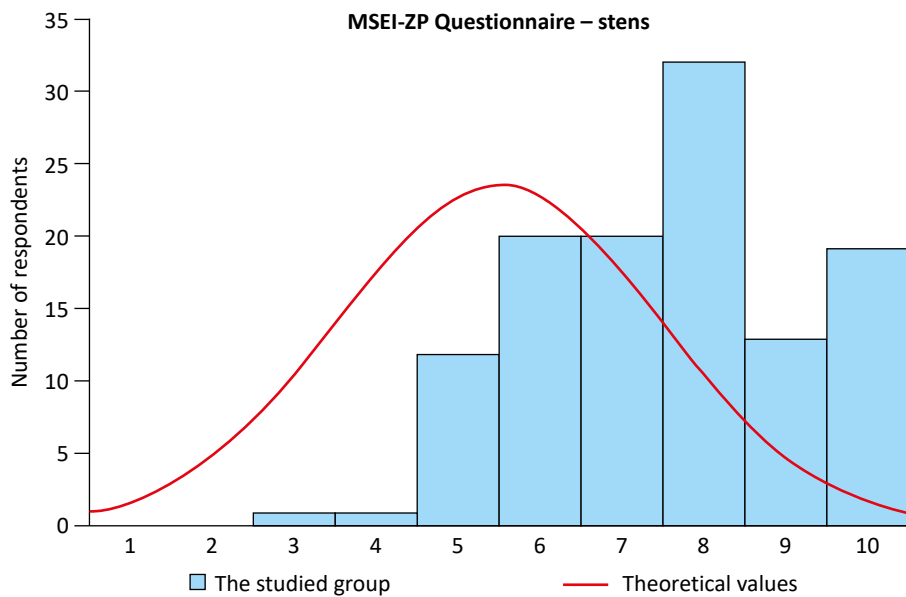


Fig. 3. Comparison of MSEI-ZP Questionnaire test scores for the group of cadets with the general population

Source: (Wełyczko et al., 2017).

Table 6. MSEI-ZP Questionnaire sten scores for the group of first-year cadets (2017)

MSEI-ZP Questionnaire				
Sten	Number of people	Percentage	Theoretical percentage	<i>p</i>
1	0	0.00%	2.28%	$p < 0.001$
2	0	0.00%	4.41%	
3	1	0.85%	9.18%	
4	1	0.85%	14.99%	
5	12	10.17%	19.15%	
6	20	16.95%	19.15%	
7	20	16.95%	14.99%	
8	32	27.12%	9.18%	
9	13	11.02%	4.41%	
10	19	16.10%	2.28%	

Source: (Wełyczko et al., 2017).

Forces, defined as relevant to the needs of the Polish Armed Forces, were generally higher than those of the general population. This confirms the trend from 2016. The analysis of the research showed that both university candidates and cadets at the early stages of their education have a declaratively sufficient level of motivation to accept the conditions of education at the military university (intellectual and military development), to develop morale-building values in service, as well as an attitude to achieve self-control in issues of self-assessment and self-discipline which, according to the authors of this study, provides excellent opportunities for effective matching of student/cadet competencies with future service.

4. Analysis of leadership competencies in the military university

A diagnosis of the candidates' leadership competencies during their recruitment to the military university, using the tools mentioned in the first part of the study, will be justified if the educational paradigm currently in force in the adaptation process at the military university is updated.

The authors note that the changes in this respect should include the introduction by the university of innovative competence-shaping solutions, followed by the verification of their effectiveness through monitoring and control. The idea is to take specific measures aimed at introducing:

- a targeted, in-depth diagnosis of the aptitudes of accepted candidates concerning specific leadership competencies, which would be the starting point for building other competencies necessary for military service,
- the identification of competency deficits in students/cadets and their subsequent rectification in the further process of shaping the student/cadet's character.

This task needs to be grounded in the theoretical assumptions of competence formation in the specific environment of higher military education. In this regard, the authors used the trait and competence activation theory (Holland, 1985; Tett, Guterman, 2000; Tett, Burnett, 2003), which assumes that it is reasonable to combine situational specificity with personality-oriented work analysis, team building and motivation to act. One possibility to ensure high diagnostic accuracy is the Assessment Centre and Development Centre (AC/DC) method. This process is based on reflective cognition (Kahneman, 2022), which increases the chance of objectively assessing the traits, experiences and fit of the given person to the anticipated job, which is crucial for developing and shaping leadership readiness and dealing with challenges more effectively (Skarlicki, Rupp, 2010). The authors recognise that the method needs to be refined, nevertheless a realistic model of inference accuracy offers hope for high effectiveness in shaping student/cadet characters (Funder, 1995; Letzring et al., 2006).

Applying the AC/DC method in a military university requires the prior design of a model of the desired cadet leadership competencies. The authors used the results of a competency workshop in which experts (experienced commanders and officers in teaching positions at the military university) identified the following set of leadership competencies: **values, self-discipline habit, pro-statehood sentiments, stress resistance, responsibility, loyalty, commitment, courage, development orientation, communication skills**. According to them, the recommended set of competencies is characterised by a high degree of versatility and the possibility of continuous improvement (for example, in subsequent years of study). The outcome of this study is **a model of leadership competencies of candidates for land forces officers at the initial adaptation stage**, which is presented in Figure 4.

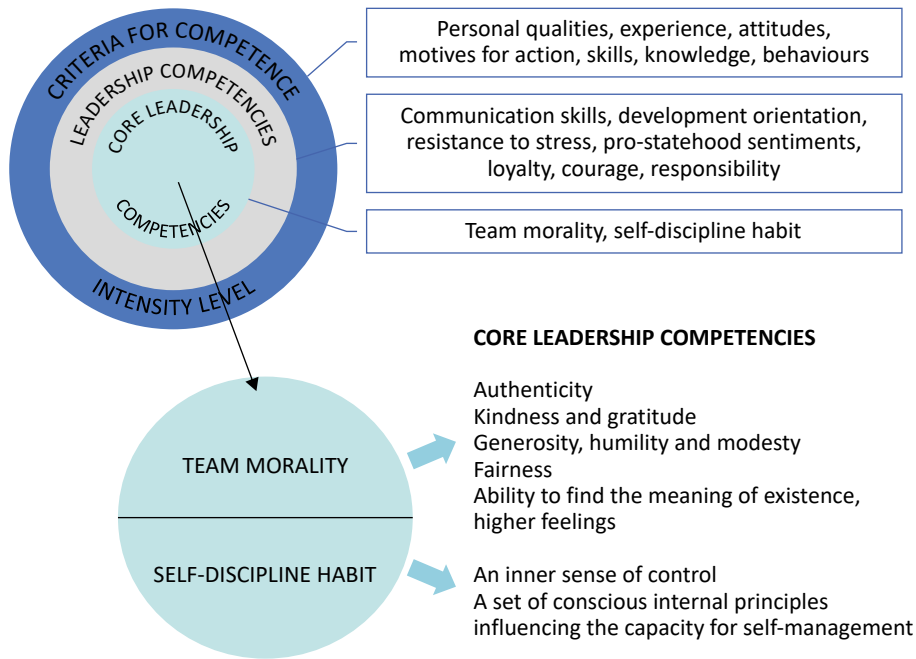


Fig. 4. A model of leadership competencies of land forces officer candidates at the initial adaptation stage

Source: (Taurogińska-Stich, 2021).

The model is designed to fit the needs of a modern military. At its centre are the Core Leadership Competencies, which include Team Morale and the Self-Discipline Habit. This includes maintaining team morale in the evolving environment of military service. The model's most important feature appears to be its behavioural operationalisation. Each competency has been defined and characterised in detail. A desired (realistic) level of competencies for first-year cadets in relation to national and international military security requirements has also been identified. Focusing on shaping the Core Leadership Competencies first is a deliberate effort geared towards the most sensitive educational area during university education, which fundamentally affects the acquisition of skills to defend against hostile psychological operations.

Summary and conclusions

Reviewing the available normative documents, university organisational structures, diagnostic surveys and expert opinions on shaping leadership competencies made it possible to propose several systemic solutions. The following conclusions were drawn:

- the shaping of student/cadet leadership competencies, which takes place in the teaching, command and educational divisions of the military university, is implemented separately (autonomously), without the necessary coordination of these activities,
- the degree to which leadership competence development is achieved corresponds to the classical educational activities and is declarative,
- the military university does not currently have a coherent concept for measuring and regulating this process (from recruitment to adaptation to military service to further training), and as such, the measurable effects of achieving the assumed goals of leadership competence development cannot be reliably established,
- activities improving the leadership competencies of cadets should be part of the entire training process, but should first include the recruitment and initial adaptation process.

The pillar of these activities will be further research that will provide scientifically valid guidance for improving the methods of measuring cadet leadership competencies and identifying methods by which these processes can be improved in subsequent years of study. Considering the above, it is proposed that education process tasks should target the 6 stages shown in Figure 5, with the most important activities to include the recruitment and initial adaptation process.

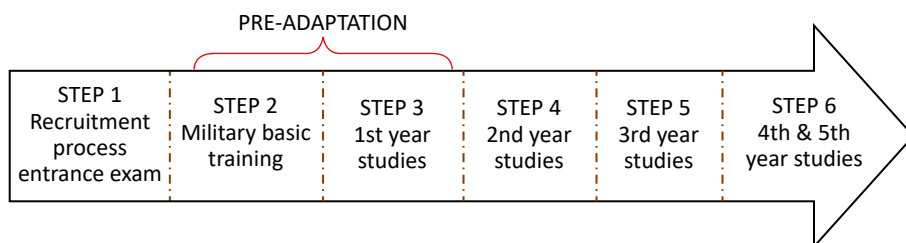


Fig. 5. Proposed tasks of the Faculty of Management and Leadership of the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces in the 6-stage educational process

Source: own elaboration.

Another suggestion arising from the research is to incorporate the leadership competencies presented in the model in such a way that they will fit into the curricula (Table 7).

Table 7. Selected subjects in the 2022 Edition curriculum

Subjects in the 2022 Edition curriculum	Hours	ECTS credits
Semester 1		
1.1. Personal development methods and techniques	30	3
Semester 2		
2.1. Ethics	30	3
2.2. Educational activities and disciplinary prevention	8	0
2.3. Command leadership	8	0
1st year total	76	6

Source: own elaboration based on subjects in the 2022 Edition curriculum of the General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces.

As evidenced by the minimum educational standards, at a time of numerous challenges facing military education, nurturing the leadership competencies of officers is critical to their performance in carrying out their primary goals and objectives. Nonetheless, the established educational outcomes in knowledge, skills and social competencies categories do not fully exhaust the needs in this regard but only set a minimum benchmark. The educational curricula establish that a future officer: “recognises, diagnoses and solves problems related to the commanded unit, using elements of leadership; effectively leads human resources, communicates, negotiates and persuades in a compact group” (Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Obrony Narodowej, 2020). In contrast, in the social competencies category, a prospective officer: “understands the role of the unit commander, is aware of the importance of leadership, self-improvement and professional development of subordinates, responsibility for the command and training of subordinates, entrusted military equipment, maintenance of high discipline and combat readiness and timely completion of tasks (Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Obrony Narodowej, 2020). The emphasis on including leadership education for future officers is much higher; this conclusion is based on the fact that virtually every component of the military education

curriculum related to tactical operations ends with the phrase: "Use of leadership skills" (Dziennik Urzędowy Ministra Obrony Narodowej, 2020).

The problem of shaping the leadership competencies of students/cadets, taking into account the current military challenges, crises and the surrounding reality, requires the adoption by the military university of innovative principles in terms of their diagnosis and improvement. The research and analysis presented in the article show that one of the options for ensuring high diagnostic and improvement effectiveness is the AC/DC method, which is an appropriate model of inference accuracy based on reflective cognition. However, a prerequisite for this type of method is establishing a starting point in the form of a competency model, which would then be used to determine a set of competencies and the desired saturation levels at the stage of entry into the military university. In this case, it is also necessary to have professionally trained staff, i.e. certified assessors of the AC/DC method, and ensure strict adherence to international standards and ethical principles in applying this method (Joiner, 2000).

The proposed model of leadership competencies of land forces officer candidates at the initial adaptation stage matches the profile of what can be described as a "New Model Army officer", prepared for a war based largely on psychological operations aimed at breaking the soldier's morale. Introducing individual diagnosis into the process of recruitment and initial adaptation seems to be an effective way of selecting student/cadet candidates. The authors believe that the indicated psychometric tests seem to be sufficient and the university is capable of utilising them. On the other hand, it is not excluded that using the proposed questionnaire with questions about the level of awareness of the military officer profession, supplemented with behavioural questions, would significantly increase the cognitive value of the tool. The authors do not exclude that the success of the proposed changes may require systemic solutions with a model document that would ensure the high quality of implementation, monitoring and improvement activities.

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Diagnozowanie kompetencji przywódczych oficerów w dobie aktualnych zagrożeń – aspekt edukacyjny

STRESZCZENIE

W artykule opisano wyniki badań dotyczące diagnozowania i kształtowania kompetencji przywódczych podchorążych (studentów/kadetów) przy uwzględnieniu aktualnych wyzwań militarnych oraz kryzysów, które w wymierny sposób wpływają na sposób działania dowódczej kadry oficerskiej i jej postrzeganie przez podwładnych. Autorzy zwrócili uwagę na konieczność przesunięcia punktu ciężkości w edukacji podchorążych w wyższym szkolnictwie wojskowym z działań zorientowanych na kształtowanie kompetencji dowódcy plutonu-kompanii w kierunku propozycji uwzględniających najnowsze trendy i treści będące konsekwencjami doświadczeń aktualnego konfliktu zbrojnego w Ukrainie. To podejście wychodzi głównie naprzeciw wyzwaniom wojny „nowej generacji”, gdzie granice pomiędzy wojną a pokojem są trudne do identyfikacji. Ewolucja działań zbrojnych, jaką obserwujemy obecnie, obejmuje i będzie obejmowała również działania pozamilitarne nasycone sensorami, systemami rozpoznawczymi o widocznej dominacji informacji, ale także siania zamętu i strachu, budowania narracji zorientowanej na złamanie morale przeciwnika. Wymagania współczesnej wojny wymuszają szybsze diagnozowanie predyspozycji przywódczych kandydatów, jeszcze przed rekrutacją do akademii wojskowych, a następnie intensywne doskonalenie ich kompetencji, zwłaszcza w początkowym (adaptacyjnym) etapie kształcenia. Takie działania winny skutkować lepszym dopasowaniem kadr do realnych wyzwań „wojny nowej generacji”. W artykule autorzy przedstawili wieloaspektowe badania eksploracyjne dotyczące diagnozowania i kształtowania kompetencji przywódczych zrealizowane w jednej z wojskowych uczelni w Polsce.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE przywództwo, Siły Zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, dowodzenie, proces adaptacji do służby wojskowej, model kompetencji

Biographical note

Agnieszka Taurogińska-Stich, PhD – Assistant, Department of Leadership, General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces. Her main research interests focus on leadership, command leadership and designing competence systems for professional military education as well as security education. Member of the Polish Association of Assessment Centre/Development Centre Assessors Secretary of the Certification Council of Assessment Centre/Development Centre Schools.

Col. (ret.) Andrzej Michaluk, PhD Eng. – Assistant Professor, Department of Leadership, General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces. His main area of research interest is leadership in command, management and design of educational programmes for the Armed Forces. Author of articles, textbooks and scientific monographs. Holder and participant of several research grants.

Joanna Martusewicz, PhD – Assistant Professor, Department of Transformation and Development of Organization, Wrocław University of Economics and Business. Her main research interests focus on leadership, management system design and business excellence models. Author of several dozen articles, textbooks and scientific monographs. Participant and holder of several scientific grants.

ORCID

Agnieszka Taurogińska-Stich  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1734-3398>

Andrzej Michaluk  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8839-4790>

Joanna Martusewicz  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2643-3683>

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Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.