



The Appearance of Military Fundamentals as Course in Secondary Education

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Abstract

The study provides insights into Military Fundamentals taught as eligible matriculation course at institutes of secondary education. Further it introduces the legal framework for teaching it, as well as the results of those empirical researches the author has been conducting among students of the course since 2010. The full voluntary military force has a ten-year history in Hungary. At the same time when the full voluntary force was introduced in peacetime, the Ministry of Defence searched for means to help orientate those youngsters who were interested in the military profession and could be attracted by the value system of a military force. In order to support this effort and provide a potential influx of the young generation into the ranks Military Fundamentals as course has been introduced to institutes of secondary education. The study contains the results of a questionnaire-based survey conducted at the end of the school years in 2011/2012 and 2012/2013. According to the survey the choice for Military Fundamentals is due to the preference of the 14-18 years old age group for military related topics. The possibility to matriculate is not attractive anymore despite the fact that it can play a role in a military oriented further education.

Keywords: secondary education, military service, military recruiting, education for national defence, Military Fundamentals, matriculation course

Introduction

The transformation of Hungary's security policy environment at the end of the 1990's demanded a military force that could play a more global role, was expeditionary in character, and more mobile for deployment purposes. This induced not only changes in the tasks armed forces had to carry out, but profoundly influenced also their structure and function. In recent years it became also clear that similarly to some adjacent countries and allies, in Hungary too dedication does not play a primary role anymore when joining the ranks. Other factors such as labour market conditions, demand and supply play an ever increasing role. Recently it became also clear that both the recruitment and retention of quality personnel is a great challenge for the Hungarian Defence Forces (Vilner-Jobbágy, 2008; 2009; Dr. Jobbágy-Vilner, 2010; 2011).

One prerequisite for the success of the voluntary principle is that the military force should attract those potential service members who possess a knowledge base in national defence and are familiar with the tasks carried out by military organisations. The suspension of the draft system in peace time (CV. Act of 2004) ended a period in which young generations could get first-hand experience in matters of national defence. At the same time the full voluntary military force was introduced, means had to be found to help orientate those youngsters who, by being interested in the military profession and attracted by the value system of the military force, were a substantive pool for recruitment purposes. Thus Military Fundamentals as an eligible matriculation course taught since 2005 at institutes of secondary education serves two purposes. First is to help build the identity of the 14-18 years age group in national defence, and second to provide the military force with a pool of potential candidates.

Legal Environment

The endeavour of the Ministry of Defence to maintain the full voluntary force and teaching Military Fundamentals as a course is made possible by acts and legal regulations. The suspension of the draft system in peace time does not mean that compulsory military service ceased to exist in the Constitution. The preparation of the Hungarian population for national defence remains still an important societal interest. According the Constitution each and every citizen is obliged to defend the country. In case of emergency or in preventive defence situation military service is compulsory for the adult part of the population, as is working obligation for defence purposes and citizen defence obligation.

The chapter on commanding national defence of the Act on National Defence, the Hungarian Defence Forces, and Measures to be Introduced in Emergency Situations (CXIII. Act of 2011) tasks the Government, that for the sake of national defence within the framework of public and higher education, it should take care of the execution of the program on educating for national defence. This act is closely linked to the Government Decree on the development of the voluntary reserve force of the Hungarian Defence

Forces, which tasks the minister of national resources¹ and the minister of defence to develop and introduce a program for citizen and national defence fundamentals in the institutions of elementary, secondary and higher education (Gov. Dec. 1029/2011).

The Human Strategy of the Hungarian Defence Forces for the timeframe 2012-2021 also emphasises the importance of educating for national defence. According to the document, to improve the societal acceptance of the military force, to indirectly support the military recruitment activity, and to strengthen education in citizen and national defence, the promotion of the courses Military Fundamentals and National Defence Fundamentals, already taught in the framework of secondary and higher education, must continue. As a strategic task the education program on national defence must be extended countrywide and specific military oriented secondary schools with hostels must be established (MoD Ord. 79/2011).

The act on national public education also stresses the patriotic education of the growing up generation. It declares that the ministers responsible for education and national defence should contribute to the education in national defence in the various institutes of education by issuing common programs, announcing tenders, and further educating teachers (CXC. Act of 2011). In order to meet the goals set in this act the National Basic Curriculum emphasises more than ever the promotion of a universal Hungarian tradition and a national consciousness (Gov. Dec. 110/2012).

Military Fundamentals in Secondary Public Education

The progressive ceasing of those institutes that were organically embedded into the Hungarian public education and offered military pre-education, the elaboration of a new type of education system for national defence became necessary and went hand in glove with the opening toward civil institutes of secondary education. Military Fundamentals as course taught for years in military institutes of secondary education became integrated into the courses of civil institutes of secondary education. After the accreditation procedure Military Fundamentals became an eligible matriculation course in 2005. The supporting gestor institute was the HDF Béni Balogh Ádám Military Secondary School and Hostel until its dissolution in 2007 (Magyar, 2010).

Due to the dissolution of the military secondary school in Győr and the appearance of a new gestor institute², and to the feedback of students participating in the course, a new book was necessary. After one year of preparatory work the book Military Fundamentals became significantly renewed both in terms of content, spirit and design (Magyar, 2010).

1 from 2012-től Minister of Human Resources

2 Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University (since 01 January 2012. National University of Public Service, Faculty of Military Science and Officer Education)

Currently students learn from a corrected and amended issue of this book printed in 2011 and the adjacent supporting workbook.

The teaching of the course does not aim at providing military training to students or recruiting them directly into the ranks. The intention is to fill terms such as patriotism and national defence with meaningful content and support those youngsters who are susceptible for the military profession, are attracted by military ideals and the military value system in general. Military Fundamentals as a course makes it possible for students to get familiar with the system of national defence, the organisation and working of the Hungarian Defence Forces, and the activities related to the training and everyday life of soldiers. They can learn certain fundamentals of modern warfare, the main characteristics of modern military technologies, aspects of survival, and means of orientation. They can get first-hand experience of the activities of contracted and reserve soldiers and obtain practical skills that enhance teamwork, self-discipline, and endurance (Czank-Kojanitz-Vörös (eds.), 2011).

Military Fundamentals is composed of 208 lecture hours. The preparation for upper matriculation requires another 68 lecture hours of specialisation. Practical preparation is necessary only in three out of the 20 topics addressed: map reading and terrain analysis, formal training, and medical training.

The course has an interdisciplinary character as it contains elements of social and natural sciences too. Teaching the course requires existing knowledge from the students in many fields as it contains aspects of history, geography, physics, and physical education. The course does not require only from the students a different approach, but also the teachers are required to have a different attitude and behaviour (Varga, 2011).

According to the detailed matriculation requirements students entering matriculation test are required to prove themselves in the simpler methodologies of gaining, organising and applying knowledge. It is also expected that students are able to replicate the content of certain topics, recognise important relationships among them, use appropriate military terminology, and demonstrate practical skills they acquired beforehand. Starting with 2013 students of Military Fundamentals have also the opportunity to pass the upper matriculation test. This possibility is primarily meant for those who would like to start studying at the military faculty of the National University of Public Service. The passing of the test at this level requires from the students the ability to gain, organise and apply knowledge in a more elaborate way, as well as more complex comparative and analytical skills (Hajdicsné, 2012).

The home page www.katonasuli.hu, which is under the responsibility of the MoD Department for Public Relations and War Memorial in terms of content, lists – as this study is being written – 63 institutes of public education countrywide where Military Fundamentals is listed as a course (Katonasuli.hu, 2014).

According to the Office of Education in the school year 2013/2014 during the May-June matriculation period, in day shift teaching order, school-based education system, two students passed the upper matriculation test (median result: 5) in Military Fundamentals, whereas normal matriculation test was passed by 146 students (median result: 3,32) with a much lower result (oktatas.hu, 2014).

The recently established military secondary school in Debrecen must be mentioned in relation to Military Fundamentals and educating for national defence. To prevent the further decrease of the number of students and to extend its teaching portfolio, the Gábor Dénes Electronic Technical School and Hostel decided in spring 2009 to introduce education in national defence. The intention of the school was supported by the municipality of Debrecen and the HDF 5. Bocskai István Infantry Brigade. They signed a co-operation agreement to support education in national defence that made the school possible to receive considerable support from the military organisation stationed nearby in teaching the practical aspects of the course (Berkecz, 2013).

Prior to this a club on national defence fundamentals started in September 2009 in the school. Military Fundamentals as a course was introduced on a facultative basis in the school year 2010/2011. Starting with next autumn, due to the increased number of the interested students, the course became regular and integrated into the curriculum. Since the school year 2012/2013 the entire education has become military oriented in character: the daily routine of the so called boarder company is regulated in a strict military manner including guided leisure time, physical activities, and limitation in terms of leaving the hostel (Madarász, 2014a).

The Ministry of Defence and the municipality of Debrecen signed an agreement in summer 2012. According to this agreement the sustaining rights of the school now belong to the Ministry of Defence. As the minister, after the signing of the agreement, during the opening ceremony of the new school year announced, the program on the education for national defence started (kormany.hu, 2012). The military character is also reflected in the name giving. Since 1 August 2014 the school bears the name of Károly Kratochvill, the commander of the former composite brigade and military district of Debrecen (hirado.hu, 2014).³

Research Results

Information and attitude surveys among the students of secondary education regarding national defence and the Hungarian Defence Forces are infinite small: only ad hoc based small group, small sample surveys exist (Varga, 2010; Bakos, 2013).

The author of this study has been conducting empirical research since 2010 in relation to Military Fundamentals taught at secondary schools. The aim of the research is to gather

³ On the topic see other studies of Madarász (2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2014c, 2014d).

and analyse information (military recruitment, marketing and PR activities, curriculum development, etc.) and based on the representative results gained support the official decision making process (Stummer, 2011, 2012, 2013; Stummer-Czank, 2011; Jobbágy-Stummer, 2010, 2011).

This chapter introduces the results of the survey conducted in the school years 2011/2012 and 2012/2013 among students learning Military Fundamentals. The primer data collection was done by self-filling in of paper based questionnaire in May 2012, which was repeated on-line at the end of the school year in 2013. Institutes of secondary education were selected according to region, type of task and class year. The questionnaires contained interval scales (Likert, ranking, and semantic differential) as well as multiple choice and open questions. The research, similar to those conducted previously, aimed at finding out the motivation that made the students of secondary education to choose Military Fundamentals as a course, what is their opinion about the curriculum, how well are they informed about the Hungarian Defence Forces and the military service, what source they get their information from, and do they show inclination to serve later as professional, contracted or reserve soldier.

For the survey conducted in 2012 out of the 15 schools contacted 12 responded by sending back the questionnaire, a year later the link of the questionnaire was made public by the teachers to the students in 17 schools of the 26 contacted. The way how to fill in the questionnaire significantly influenced the number of responses. In 2013 the number of responses were nearly halved when compared with the responses in 2012 (N2012=389, N2013=202).

The reason of the students for choosing the course was based mainly on three factors. First and most significant was the interest in military related topics (2012: 65%, 2013: 73%), second was plans related to the future (2012: 40%, 2013: 54%). More than a third of the students (2012: 38%, 2013: 43%) were motivated by increasing physical fitness as a result of participating in the practical aspects of Military Fundamentals. The possibility of matriculation motivated 10% of the students in 2012, and 21% in 2013 (Table 1).

Table 1: Motivation factors in selecting the course (%)

Motivation Factors	2012	2013
interest in military related topics	65	73
necessary for future plans	40	54
increasing physical fitness	38	43
information about the Hungarian Defence Forces	27	24
participations in missions abroad	25	30
soldiers earn much money	12	16
other	14	7
suggested by friends	12	14
matriculation in the course	10	21
family tradition	8	15
suggested by teacher	8	6
matriculation can be easier than in other courses	7	9

Source: own survey

Two-third of the population sampled (2012: 70%, 2013: 65%) has minimal previous information about the Hungarian Defence Forces. Nearly one-fifth (19%) of the students stated both in 2012 and 2013 that before selecting the course they had no information at all about the Hungarian Defence Forces. A smaller fraction (2012: 12%, 2013: 16%) however, stated that it had been fairly informed about the topic even before picking up Military Fundamentals.

Among those who already had some sort of information it was interesting to find out the sources from which they obtained information about the Hungarian Defence Forces. It became clear that among students of secondary education, similar to the younger generation at large, the Internet has gained considerable ground over other media as more than half of those who answered (2012: 52%, 2013: 60%) named it as the primary source. Another important source of information (2012: 51%, 2013: 60%) is formed by the family members/friends (Table 2).

Table 2: Sources of information about the Hungarian Defence Forces (%)

Sources of Information	2012	2013
Internet pages	52	60
family members/friends	51	60
radio/television	54	45
printed media	24	29
HDF publications	15	19
primary school	8	8
other	3	3

Source: own survey

After analysing the responses it became clear that nearly two-third (2012: 64%, 2013: 65%) of the students considers choosing the military profession after passing matriculation. One-third however, does not want to become a soldier (2013: 30%).

One-third of the students sampled would like to study further at the National University of Public Service, Faculty of Military Science and Officer Education (2012: 32%, 2013: 33%). Far less (2012: 16%, 2013: 17%) planned to join the NCO Academy of the Hungarian Defence Forces to serve later as non-commissioned officer. Voluntary reserve as a possibility to join the ranks after matriculation (2013: 5%) was mentioned only by a small fraction (Table 3).

Table 3: Plans of students after matriculation (%)

Plans After Matriculation	2012	2013
HDF officer ⁴	32	33
HDF NCO ⁵	16	17
HDF enlisted personnel	16	15
HDF reserve status ⁶	-	5
does not want to become soldier	7	30
nk/na ⁷	30	-

Source: own survey

Conclusion

In the face of the research results it can be stated that selecting Military Fundamentals as a course is mainly due to the special interest of the 14-18 years old age group in military related topics. It must also be stated that in this age youngsters are open toward the military and the choosing of the military profession. This is supported by the fact that the number of students who would like to study as student of the university or get training at the academy is increasing. Matriculation on the other hand is not an attractive opportunity, although it can play a role when joining military higher or further education. It is not negligible that the young generation often uses stereotype-like information from family members and friends rather than from various communication attempts of the defence sector.

The author of this study plans further empirical research related to Military Fundamentals with the aim to contribute to the relevant military decision making process.

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⁴ National University of Public Service, Faculty of Military Science and Officer Education

⁵ Hungarian Defence Forces NCO Academy

⁶ This category was introduced only in 2013

⁷ In the paper-based questionnaire it was not included, but in the on-line survey it was an option.

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