

EXAMINED INTERACTIONS IN A CHANGING MILITARY EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

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ABSTRACT

Making organizational changes is a serious challenge for everyone who is in one way or another connected with that process. Military education is closely concerned the current reform in Bulgarian army. This paper discusses the ways the Military Academy environment is accepted and also the way the students meet the challenges of the educational process. Using multiple correlation and behavior regressive analysis the tendency of interrelation between the general and component satisfaction with the students' personality traits and academic success is traced. On this reason, some ideas are suggested for the successful carrying out the purposes of the reform.

INTRODUCTION

Making organizational changes is a serious challenge for everyone who is one way or another connected with that process. The changes brake the equilibrium of the organization in K.Levin's (1951) concept /unfreezing/, which is the reason for many problems in the movement toward a new status and reaching again a new and again stable functioning condition /refreezing/. In analogous cases, the managing body is the factor that has to control the operational efficiency of what is being carried out by stimulating the accelerating forces, minimizing the restrictive ones and keeping the constructive vector of change. This means that the managing of the organization changes requires exact and in-time information about things going on with the people and finding relative approaches to balance the innovation processes when looking for a higher efficiency for the organization.

In this paper we study the interaction and the effect of the personal features on the degree of satisfaction and the academic efficiency of different student categories in a Military academy in a period of organizational and technological changes within the military education system.

FRAMEWORK

In some contemporary researches on organization psychology the behavior mechanism of the individual is shown when the working situation is changing. It turns out that people get too sensitive to changes, especially if not engaged in the process which regulates their attitude towards the organization in either positive or negative direction. From this point of view it is easy to understand why the professional attitude proves to be the main purpose of the organizational changes and why the attempts to work reorganization create principle mechanisms for improving the professional satisfaction. The satisfaction with one's activities will give results if the work helps to form personal values and standards. However, when the work blocks the creation of such personal characteristics, non-satisfaction occurs (Gordon, 1993).

The opinion that satisfaction is a sign of adaptation to the working process and of utilizing the personal potential in the team-work process is worth paying attention to. In certain conditions satisfaction affects the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of performance, responsibility, discipline, innovation abilities and creativity (Radoslavova, 1987).

METHOD/PROCEDURE

146 cadets were surveyed out of three cadet units. They were asked to give an opinion and assessment on the situation and their own behavior and it was explained to them that the research is connected with the reforms carried out at the Military academy. Their current scores were taken as the basic index of the personal academic activity in the Military academy environment.

The data was collected by several methods, one of them being the multidimensional card of satisfaction, the Likert type, our own invention. We used it to measure the following variables: total satisfaction, needs satisfaction, satisfaction from the learning process organization, satisfaction from the internal relations, level of support satisfaction, level of challenges satisfaction, balance level of interaction.

The second part of the scale is built on the principle of the semantic differential and measures the cognitive-emotional attitude towards separate elements of the inside environment of the Military academy. The following subscales are included: acceptance-rejection of the learning process; satisfaction with the management; satisfaction with the commanders; satisfaction with the military lecturers and satisfaction with the civilian lecturers at the Military academy.

The prevailing part of the scales and sub-scales showed from satisfactory to a very high degree of consistent reliability (Alpha from .51 to .96).

Low is the reliability of the needs satisfaction sub-scale (Alpha = .38), the balance sub-scale (Alpha=.40) and the interrelations satisfaction sub-scale (Alpha=.45).

The next empirical information collection method was the multi-measure personality questionnaire. The questionnaire is designed to diagnose personal characteristics and states that

are of primary importance for the social adjustment process and for the behavior control and was adapted to the Bulgarian cultural environment by A. Velichkov. It contains the scales: Neurotism (Alpha=.75), spontaneous aggressiveness (Alpha=.63), lowered self evaluation (Alpha=.78), nervousness (Alpha=.64), sociability (Alpha=.65), stability (Alpha=.55), reactive aggressiveness (Alpha=.58), shyness (Alpha=.64), openness (Alpha=.57), extraversion/introversion (Alpha=.47), emotional liability (Alpha=.48), manhood/womanhood (Alpha=.49).

A scale for measuring the locus of control - an adapted version of the classical test of Rotter with additions from the tri-factor test of Reid - Weir and some items of other improved methods of the construct measuring (Velichkov, Lukarski, Radoslavova, Russeva, Genova, 1987). The test shows a summary of the anticipations of the individuals regarding the exerted personal control over the environment and the situations (Alpha=.73).

RESULTS

Most representative concerning the comprehension of the organizational changes situation are the levels of the general and component satisfaction. This is well illustrated in fig. 1, where five of the variables are in the negative part of the continuance of satisfaction and seven variables are in its positive part, i.e. they have values higher than 3.0. In this sense there is a certain amount of dissatisfaction regarding the general environment parameters (M = .284, SD = .58), with satisfying the basic needs (M = 2.35, SD = .62), with the learning process organization (M = 2.64, SD = .85), the level of challenges (M = 2.64, SD = .85) and the satisfaction with the administrative services (M = 2.85, SD = .83).

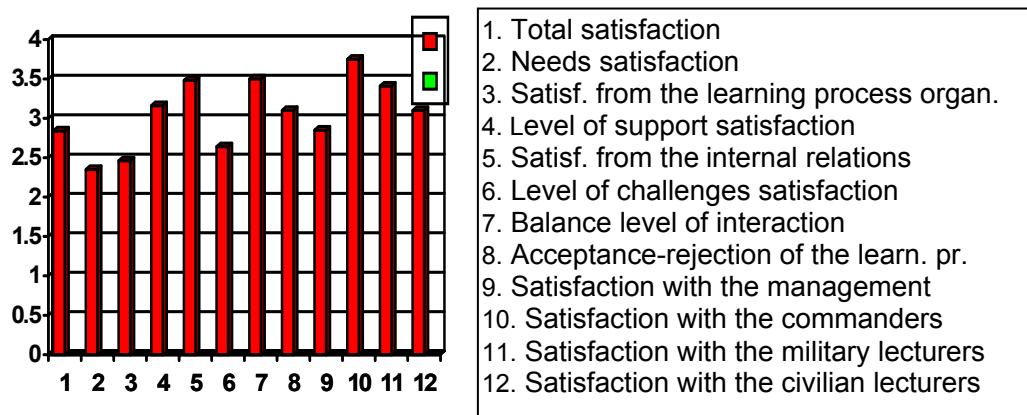


Figure 1. Levels of the cadets' satisfaction with the conditions and the activities at the Military Academies.

The analysis won't be complete if we do not show the dependence of one variable on the other. The general satisfaction correlates weakly and negatively with the neurotism ($r = -.31$, $p < .001$), with the spontaneous aggressiveness ($r = -.25$, $p < .001$), moderately with the depressive's ($r = -.42$, $p < .001$), with the nervousness ($r = -.36$, $p < .001$), with the shyness ($r = -.35$, $p < .001$), openness ($r = -.30$, $p < .001$), the emotional liability ($r = -.42$, $p < .001$) and with the locus of control ($r = -.40$, $p < .001$). Positive but weak is the connection between the general satisfaction and the sociability ($r = .36$, $p < .001$), with the stability ($r = -.29$, $p < .001$) and with manhood/womanhood ($r = .41$, $p < .001$).

Similar are the tendencies in the relations between the rest of the satisfaction aspects and the features with the exception of the correlation's between the scoring in class and the personal features, the scoring and the different ways to demonstrate satisfaction ($p > .05$). We found out that the high scores were in a statistically important but still weak correlation only with the balancing ($r = .29$, $p < .001$).

The acts regression analysis shows that the scoring at school is affected only by the balancing ($R^2 = .09$, $T = 3.760$, $p < .001$), and the level of general satisfaction with the cadets is a result of the effect of a number of variables. In the order of importance, they are as follows: in the first place is the basic needs satisfaction in the Military academy environment ($R^2 = .76$, $T =$

6.162, $p < .001$), the level of challenges ($R^2 = .81$, $T = 5.914$, $p < .001$), the level of support ($R^2 = .85$, $T = 3.142$, $p < .021$), the satisfaction with the learning process at the Academy ($R^2 = .86$, $T = 4.057$, $p < .001$) and finally the balancing ($R^2 = .87$, $T = 2.625$, $p < .009$). The general satisfaction is affected by some personal features, e.g. shyness ($R^2 = .87$, $T = -3.643$, $p < .001$) and emotional liability ($R^2 = .86$, $T = 2.541$, $p < .012$). The balancing is under the effect of the general satisfaction ($R^2 = .13$, $T = 2.631$) and the satisfaction with the civilian lecturers ($R^2 = .23$, $T = 2.032$, $p < .044$).

DISCUSSION

The correlation and regression analysis showed connections and tendencies close to the anticipated, found out in other researches of ours. The negative correlations of the satisfaction with personal features like neurotism, spontaneous aggressiveness, depressiveness and nervousness show that in certain conditions the individuals with similar characteristic features are most vulnerable as far as satisfaction is concerned which requires special attention for those people in the process of reforms so that the adjustment is ensured. On the other hand, the positive although weak correlation between satisfaction and sociability, stability and manhood shows that the cadets with higher adjustment potential are inclined to overcome that problem, which is one more argument in favour of the necessity to take into consideration the personal characteristic features when choosing the applicants for the Military academies.

Our expectations that we will find a more profound correlation and interference between the school scoring and satisfaction as well as between the high scoring and personal features were not justified. It turned out that the most important factor for the high scoring at the Military academies is the balance or the cadets' ability to get into efficient and harmonic connections with the environment of the military establishment.

The analysis showed a curious ranging according to the priority degree of the different variables which mostly affect the level of general satisfaction in the military academy environment. All that gives enough information to the administration people about the management of the changes at the military academies who should apply equal care and skills to operate the organizational and environmental as well as the personal characteristics of the students when carrying out the purposes stated.

The analysis pointed out the necessity to assess not only the factors of learning importance but more so of developing the personal potential of the future officers who will then work on solving the problems in the field of national defense as well as participating in the peace-keeping missions in the region and in the world. This requires taking into consideration the traditional national virtues that co-exist in harmony with the contemporary values and attitudes of a NATO person within the Bulgarian officer's personality so that they make and keep the peace and the achievements of the modern civilization.

CONCLUSION

The changes at the military academies and in the military education system are accompanied with a number of problems and all that directly affects the cadets' level of satisfaction with the conditions and, of course, with the activities. This brings us to the conclusion that there would be, in that environment, better learning results and the necessary adjustment comfort with the cadets only in case that their basic needs are satisfied, the work of their immediate commanders is improved as well as a moderate teaching pressure and challenges are imposed on them when learning given programs. Our observations showed that the effect from the innovations and changes at the military academies would be guaranteed to a much higher degree if the managers could put more trust into the services of the specialists on the behaviour applied disciplines and to utilize them with readiness and correctness.

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