

**MOTIVATION IN THE TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS,  
AS A MANAGEMENT IMPROVEMENT MEANS IN  
THE MILITARY HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**ABSTRACT**

*The issue of the „organization-management-external environment relationship” is a permanent concern for each manager and among the elements underlying this interdependence there is also the motivation of the members of the respective organization. It is well known that the analysis of motivation dynamics is an important starting point of how the organization manages to identify the ways to achieve the expected results, especially in the conditions of an unprecedented speed characterizing the contemporary market. If an educational organization is concerned, things can be much more complicated considering that it has to meet both the demands of corporate clients, such as potential employers/organizations, for a certain type of competent human resource, and the demands of individual clients, such as students, regarding the quality of the educational process. Thus, this study seeks to identify the sources of motivation of the students of ”Nicolae Bălcescu” Land Forces Academy and to generate possible solutions for the improvement of the educational management at the level of the analyzed institution.*

**KEYWORDS:** *motivation, learning, educational management*

**JEL CLASSIFICATION:** *H11*

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**1. BACKGROUND**

Management, along its evolution as a science or as a practical process, has had and has as its central element the human resource, recognized as the most valuable resource at the disposal of an organization in its struggle for efficiency or profit. Management research has sought to identify explanations or discover methods/techniques to make the future as predictable as possible. If in the case of material, financial or technological resources, the degree of predictability can be reasonable, in the case of human resources, the situation is somewhere at the opposite end. Social sciences offer a number of explanations of human behavior, but the complexity of the factors that influence it is so numerous or dynamic that it is very difficult to determine some predictability of it, generally or in connection with the objectives of an organization (Burduș & Popa, 2016; Nicolescu et al., 2016; Nicolescu & Nicolescu, 2001; Popa et al., 2015).

Another important aspect to be taken into account is, generally speaking, the current dominated technological wave, which is predominantly characterized by IT technologies. Although it may appear to be peripheral, it has more than topical implications because the young generation, as the main subject or direct beneficiary of the educational act, is intensively and implicitly focused on the use and assimilation of these technologies. Things seem so advanced in this segment that, for

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example, in the e-learning field there are already concerns to find the best ways to design and adapt educational technology using such platforms to the trainee's personality profile. Returning to the subject presented by the title of the article, one might say that the first setting to be discussed would be the appreciation of the degree of modernity (the use of a computer-based didactic infrastructure) of an educational system, the motivation approach obviously assuming different strategies. Continuing the reasoning, at the level of the relationship between the two categories of stakeholders, learner and teacher, there are, given the characteristic functional interdependence, different valences and nuances of the approach, based on the personality profile.

The actuality of the subject is also borne out by the existing imbalances between the educational institution's potential in terms of intentionality on the performance of the specific processes and the requirements of the labor market, finding the most appropriate way of motivating the involved parties in relation to the assumed goals, significantly reducing the gap. At micro level, there is also legitimacy in questions like: Is the student input for teacher's motivation to perform or Is the teacher input for the student's motivation to perform, bidirectional analysis having the added benefit of robustness in finding possible sources of motivation for learning.

No less relevant to be challenged for investigating the actual resources of motivation is the specificity of the field. In this respect, for defense educational institutions, the activities for which the students/trainees are trained, having a sufficiently large theoretical framework allowing them to further develop their acquired competencies, is nevertheless an essentially practical one, irrespective of the military specialization. Although there are examples of good practice in the field (Academy of Saint Cyr, West Point Academy etc.), the difference in approach is the national specificity, even if we are talking about a strongly standardized environment, and the organizational culture specific to the institution.

At the macro level of the analysis, we consider to have in mind in this scientific approach also the theory of organizational fields, in which we find as a characteristic element, the following useful concept: the organizational field, approached as a social structure consisting of networks and institutions where cooperative behaviors facilitate the consistency between cultural capital (institutions, norms) and social capital generated by social networks. As underlined by Mihai Păunescu (2006), the stabilization of the fields is the structuring of the relations between actors corroborated with the emergence of institutionalized practices that imply the convergence of the perceptions of the social actors on the environment.

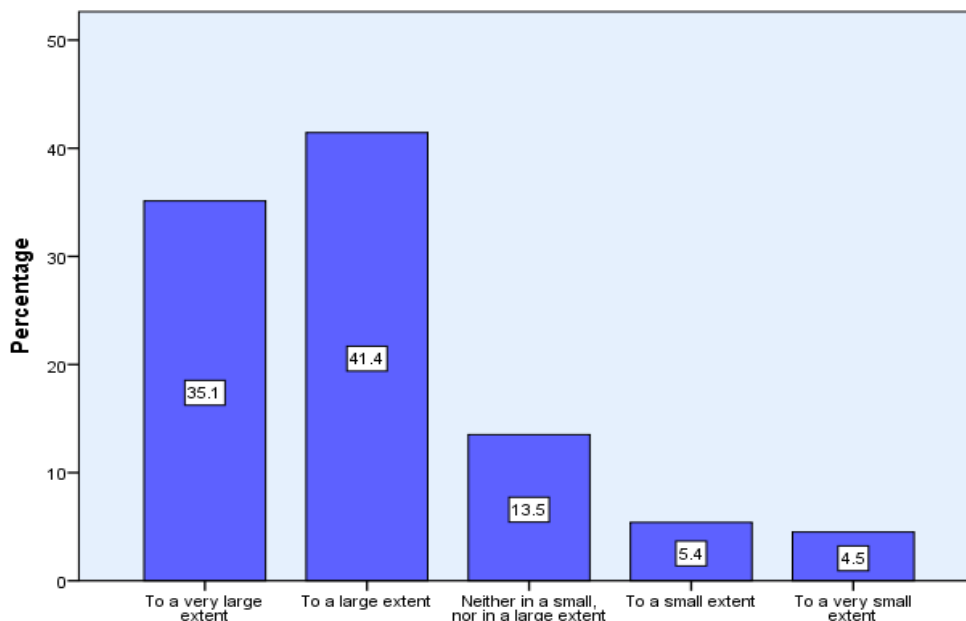
The contemporary educational process is and must be approached from the point of view of ensuring a continually growing quality, predictable and sustained qualitative growth (Cicea et al., 2007). Thus, we believe that this goal cannot be achieved without proper, realistic and dedicated management. Without minimizing the influences generated by the other factors of the educational management process, we will further analyze the specificities of the motivation of the direct beneficiaries of this process: military students.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD AND MAIN RESULTS OBTAINED**

Starting from the idea that the real, useful and relevant information for the adequacy of the decisions and the functionalities of the educational management is that obtained from the source, in this case the contemporary military student, we conducted a sociological survey. This research method, which consists in collecting data on certain subjects, usually by means of the "question-response" technique, has the advantage that the gathering of information is methodically, standardized and results in representative quantifiable results on: attitudes, behaviors and individual/collective views of people, etc.

We chose to use the questionnaire addressed to students in the final, third year of study, with all students in the third year of study (111 students), so the sample is representative. The main argument for a possible question, "Why only third year military students?" is that

students/graduates have been able to build a complete picture of the educational process itself and of the requirements of their first job with regard to the set of knowledge/skills/qualifications. Another important element, in our opinion, is that the questionnaire was applied after the students completed the examination session, precisely in order to obtain their most realistic views.



**Figure 1. Subjects' views on satisfaction with the choice of university specialization**

*Source: authors*

The educational offer of the Land Forces Academy (LFA) in connection with university curricula/specializations is correlated with military branches and specialties, and essential information on the location and role of each branch/military specialty is presented to the candidates during the recruitment process (by the Recruitment Information Offices). The fact that 76.5% of the subjects are satisfied with the choice made at the time of admission to the LFA means that they had pertinent information about the correlation of the volume of knowledge - effort to accumulate them. However, the percentage of 23.5%, although low, is not a satisfying one, because the urge and the desire of a student to acquire knowledge is certainly affected by the satisfaction of choosing a training in a field that he does not entirely agree with.

*Solution:* In the recruitment process, detail the educational requirements specific to each study program/academic specialization; promotional materials or information transmitted also refer to the main disciplines/subjects studied and their usefulness in the future branch/military specialty.

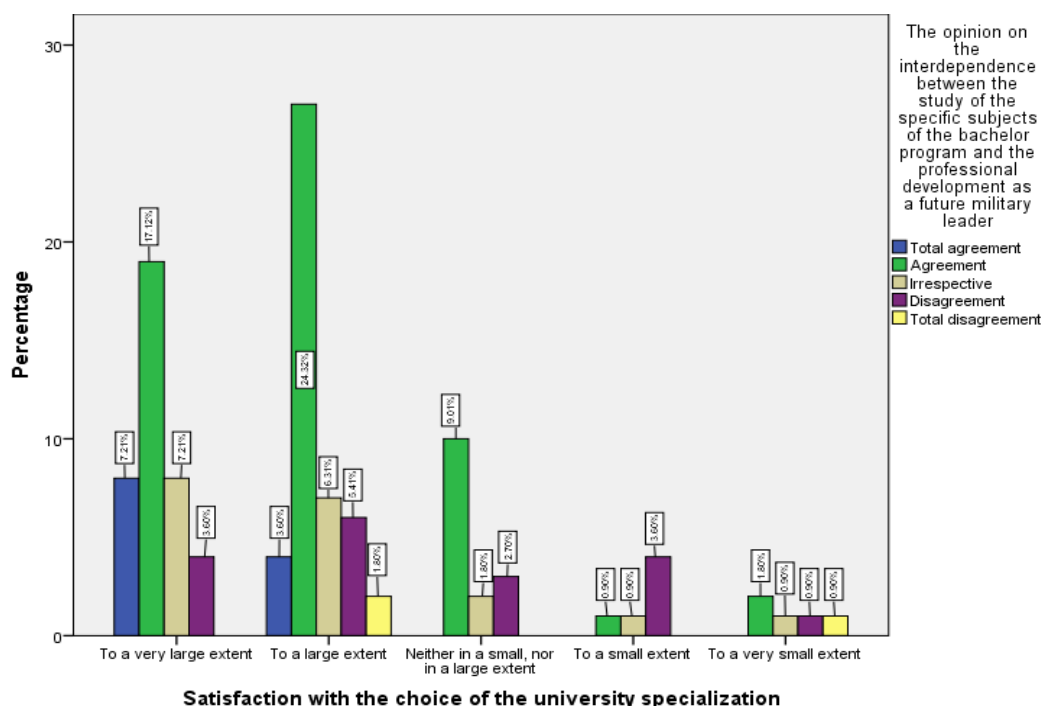
**Table 1. The opinion on the interdependence between studying the subjects of the bachelor's degree program and professional development as a future military leader**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Total agreement	12	10.8	10.8	10.8
	Agreement	59	53.2	53.2	64.0
	Irrespective	19	17.1	17.1	81.1
	Disagreement	18	16.2	16.2	97.3
	Total disagreement	3	2.7	2.7	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

*Source: authors*

We believe that an important factor in the motivational level of military students in the learning process is their perception of the importance of the content of the subjects covered in the study program for the future profession, that of the military leader. As it can be seen in table no. 1, only 64% of the subjects have a positive view of the fact that the portfolio of disciplines in the curriculum helps them develop their military leadership skill. It means that for the 36% of the subjects, this negative perception has most likely led to a reduced or consistent involvement in the learning process, thus implicitly, to inappropriate motivation.

*Solution:* It is necessary that each teacher, both in didactic teaching activities and in practical activities (seminars, laboratories, etc.), should emphasize the contribution of the subject to building military leadership competence over time horizons or levels of the military hierarchy.



**Figure 2. "The opinions of the subjects regarding the satisfaction with the choice of the university specialization" correlated with "The opinion on the interdependence between the study of the specific subjects of the bachelor program and the professional development as a future military leader"**

*Source:* authors

However, by correlating the answers to the two questions referred to above and although 52.25% of the total respondents are positive answers (in terms of satisfaction with the choice of the study program and the degree of interdependence between the study/learning for specific disciplines and the development as a future military leader), it can be noticed that the difference of 24.25% of the respondents satisfied with the choice of the study program are either indifferent or have a negative opinion on the connection between the disciplines studied and the process of becoming a military leader. Looking at motivation in the learning process, we feel that it is not at a favorable level to achieve satisfactory performance because it is heavily affected by the lack of a realistic perception of the usefulness of the information gathered over the years of study for the future profession (that of an officer).

*Solution:* Year/study group or platoon tutors can hold formal/informal meetings with military students to explain/detail the correlations between the objectives of the study program, the competencies of the graduates, the contribution of each discipline to the completion of the assumed

competencies, as well as how these knowledge/skills/abilities with the help of each discipline support the activities of the officer in the first 5-10 years of their career.

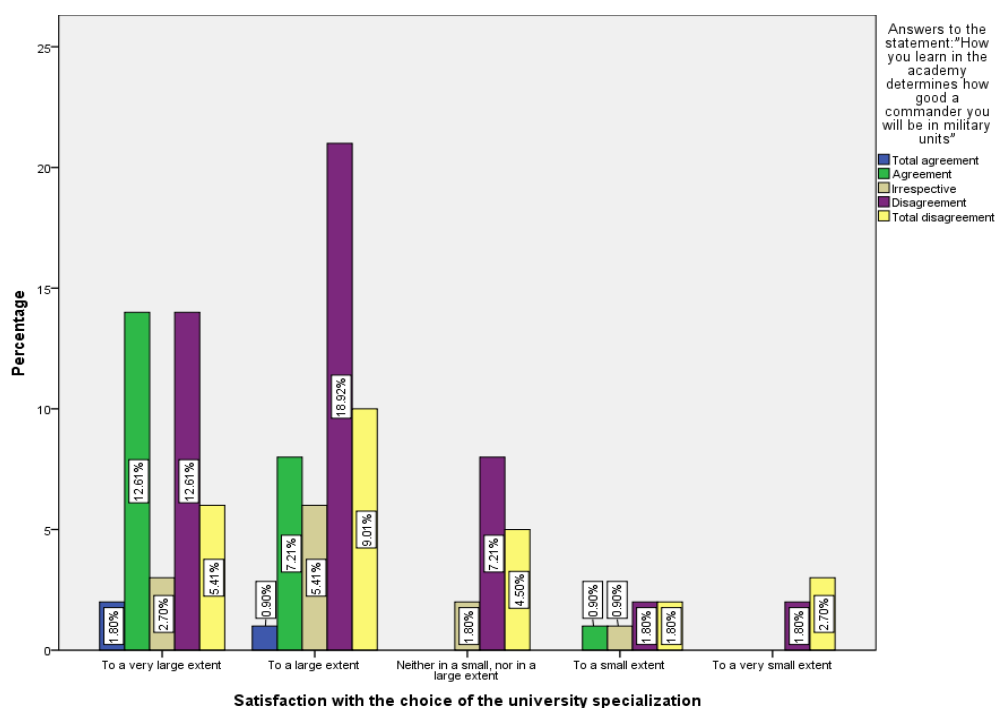
**Table 2. Subjects' answers to the statement: "How you learn in the academy determines how good commandants you will be in the military units"**

		Frequency	Percentage	Valid Percentage	Cumulative Percentage
Valid	Total agreement	3	2.7	2.7	2.7
	Agreement	23	20.7	20.7	23.4
	Irrespective	12	10.8	10.8	34.2
	Disagreement	47	42.3	42.3	76.6
	Total disagreement	26	23.4	23.4	100.0
	Total	111	100.0	100.0	

Source: authors

Looking for the causes that lead to a low level of motivation of the military student in teaching-learning, we found that 76.5% of subjects considered that a direct causal link could not be achieved at the level of performance in education - the quality level of the subunit/unit commanding officer, considering that the military leader is a whole constituted more of features than knowledge.

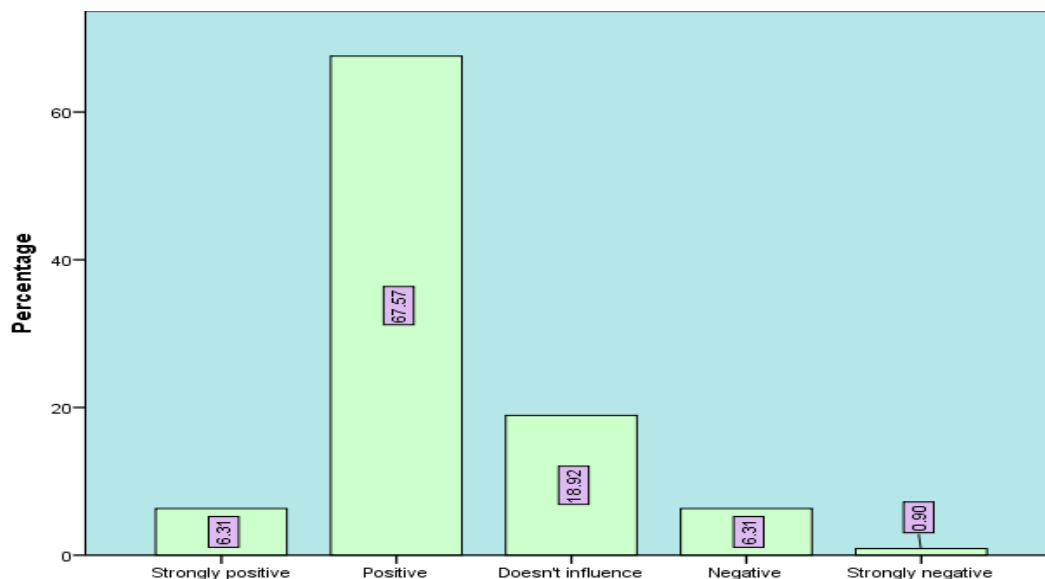
*Solution:* In the formal/informal meetings mentioned above, academic staff/military instructors/subunit commanders need to raise awareness among military students of the need to learn not only to achieve results that are favorable to their distribution to military units after graduating from the LFA, but also in order to benefit them in the activities specific to the positions they will occupy in the respective military units.



**Figure 3. "The opinions of the subjects regarding the satisfaction with the choice of the university specialization" correlated with the subjects' answers to the statement: "How you learn in the academy determines how good a commander you will be in military units"**

Source: authors

The elements of divergence that we found in the previous correlation are also maintained in the correlation of the level of satisfaction with the choice of the university specialization with the opinion on how the way of learning in the LFA influences the quality of the act of command of the future officer. Thus, only 22.52% of the participants in this survey are satisfied with the choice of university specialization and consider that knowledge acquired during these university studies contribute to their completion as future commanders. Interestingly, there is a significant percentage of subjects, 53.98%, although satisfied with the chosen study program, do not consider the knowledge acquired in these studies to be relevant for the future officer/commander profession. *Solution:* We believe that this situation needs to be further explored in later research to identify the real resources of this perception among military students.



**Figure 4. The opinion on how military organizational culture influences the individual performance of the military student**

*Source:* authors

The context, the conditions and the elements of the military organizational culture make their mark on the way and the level of the results obtained by the military students, which is acknowledged by 73.88% of the respondents. Rigorousness, value system, exigency, responsibility, etc. are just a few of the elements of military organizational culture that direct military students over the three years of study.

*Solution:* The motivational process in the teaching and learning activities of the LFA must rely more heavily on the support provided by the components of the military organizational culture, by their wider explication and promotion.

### 3. CONCLUSIONS

As has been emphasized, we have started from the idea that the basic information package for optimizing the performance of educational management should include mainly information from the source, in this case from the educational process, with individuals passing through different training courses (but with different educational and life experiences, different expectations, and last but not least, different motivations), information to be transformed into knowledge.

Although only the main elements of the research were exposed, we consider, by the theoretical and factual significance (a minimum set of solutions was proposed) of the analyzed results, that the study undertaken has not only local value for the host institution of the present scientific approach,

but some observations can be extrapolated to be considered for the other higher education institutions in the national defense system. Given the fundamental characteristics of the military environment (highly standardized, a system of own values deriving from assumed missions, institutionalized norms within hierarchical structures, recognized in time for bureaucratic functionality, in terms of managerial practice, etc.) one can consider applying such an instrument in all military universities, annually, in order to determine in this way elements that complete conclusions regarding the state of military higher education, the final beneficiaries of such an analysis being the educational managers. We also advance the idea of the necessity of setting up interdisciplinary centers at national level, besides the large university centers, in which to integrate, besides the specialized psycho-pedagogical training for a didactic career, the training of the educational managers (as a bachelor's degree specialization, regardless of the basics of the initial training). It is a pertinent way to improve the performance of the system, by which the student-teacher interaction can be valued at a higher level.

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