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PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE OF THE NCO CORPS

A TISZTHELYETTES KÉPZÉS MÚLTJA, JELENE ÉS JÖVŐJE

The author introduces the past and present of the training of the non-commissioned officers (NCO) of the Hungarian Defence Forces, and the career of the contracted enlisted NCOs in the context of the state-approved military vocational training and adult education. It is also presented the modification of the military vocational training system as part of the reform for 2011-12.

A szerző bemutatja a Magyar Honvédség tiszthelyettes képzése múltját és jelenét, valamint a szerződéses legénységi állomány tiszthelyettesi előmenetelét az államilag elismert katonai szakképzés és a felnőttképzés tükrében. Bemutatásra kerül a képzési rendszer módosítása a magyar szakképzés 2011/12-es átalakítása részeként.

INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of the past is necessary to shape the future. The NCOs are the backbone of the army, the training system of this category fundamentally determines the military capabilities and applicability.

The state-approved vocational and the internal training of the Hungarian Defence Forces follow the non-commissioned officers through their entire career. The progress of the career is provided since 1995, by a state-approved school-based vocational training and adult education system in the form of secondary and advanced level vocational training and internal training system.

The implementation process of the training system according to the principles of the adult education training took ten years. The state-approved non-commissioned officer school-based correspondent training's entering had started with the contracted enlisted NCO promotion course which was an internal sergeant training followed by the adult education under the laws vocational training in September 2008.

A HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE HUNGARIAN SUB-OFFICER OR NCO TRAINING

Sub-Officer or NCO: these two names are applied for the same category. Until 1941, it was called sub-officer and later on non-commissioned officer, and again from 2012 sub-officer is the term applied by laws.

The story of the sub-officer training schools¹ goes back until the age of the Compromise in 1869. In that very year, it was necessary to take the measures in order to establish a recruit drill sergeant's corps.

Sub-officer training schools were set up, at the beginning for each division, later on regional-basis, and from 1875 for each regiment. They were not forgotten after being placed in reserve forces. In 1873 already actions were taken to appoint them into jobs in the state offices, making their career more attractive.

In 1924 as an independent training school was established in Veszprém-Jutas, named the Kinizsi Pál Royal Hungarian Army Troop Sub-officer Training School which trained sub-officers/NCOs until the end of the 2nd World War.²

¹ The Military history of Hungary 2nd part, Zrínyi Press Bp. 1985.

² József Eszenyi: The Royal Hungarian Army Sub-officer cops 1920-1944, Bp., Püski Press, 1994

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After the second World War there was no NCO corps at all in the Hungarian Army. This category was re-founded in 1957. In Szentendre, the Hungarian People's Army NCO School was established. From the middle of the 60's the NCO training was conducted in the Training Centres. After the two year long training, the NCOs deserved a qualification, which was recognised and useful just within the Army. From the 70's however the educational leaders of the Army recognised the social expectation to open the NCO training system to the civil society. Based on this recognition, the new 3+1 year long, school-based, vocational training based specialist NCO training was commenced in 1975, on one particular area at Szabadszállás. In the training, the content (1 year) was integrated demanded by the Army into the Vocational Training (3 years) under the rule of the National Vocational Qualifications Register. The graduates passed their final military exam along with the state vocational exams.³ The new phase of the development started in 1984 with the beginning of the 4- year long secondary school training on eight different specialities in eight garrisons. This training was entailed with state maturity exam and NCO qualification test. The two year long training courses of the commanders continued to be conducted in the Training Centres not being bounded to the state examination system. After the graduation each branch and service organised a 3-6-month long complementary training in order to help the junior NCOs to prepare for the first position and to start their career.

THE NCO EDUCATION SYSTEM IN THE STATE CERTIFIED VOCATIONAL TRAINING SYSTEM

After the system changes several steps have been made to commence the reorganisation of the Hungarian Army. In doing so the NCOs and warrant officers got more important role, their duties expanded, their area of responsibilities widened. They received an essential role in training, in the management of the daily routine of the subunits, and the in the operation of the technique.

In 1991, the Training Centres had been abolished and the 2-year long commander courses were moved to the Military Colleges. However the prerequisite of the NCO training was a maturity exam, but state recognised qualification was not given. The four plus one training system initiated in the Military Secondary School (4 year technical secondary school and a successive one-year technicians and NCO training). In the 90's, a unified ownership, management and entrance examination system⁴ was developed.

The transformation of the NCO training had some social, economic and military needs basis. Among these the process in the education was predominant. The public education act pushed the overall education time to the 10th grade, so the vocational training, like NCO training, only on completion of the secondary school was allowed to start.

The new National Qualification Register (Országos Képzési Jegyzék, OKJ) allowed to record professions, after professional and administrative check-ups and that were published in the law. In 1993, based on the decision made by the Hungarian Ministry of Defence and the military needs, 21 military qualifications were recorded into the National Qualification Register. After this, the military vocational training became entirely part of the state vocational training.

Imre Barna: The formation of the institute sub-officer training in the Royal Hungarian Army 1924-1954, *New Military Review* 1992/4

³ István Major: The four year long NCO training has future, *Home Defense* 1980/5. pp. 12-21.

⁴ Dr. László Závodny: The situation of our NCO training and the tasks of its development, *Vocational education* 1998/4. pp. 14-19

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In 1995, the medium-term plan of the transformation of the Hungarian Army⁵ was developed. Decision was made in March 1996 about the renewal of the NCO training system. The number of the NCO training institutions was radically reduced; the content and the length of the training was transformed. Due to the service laws, adopted in 1996, favourable changes occurred in the internal life of the military.⁶

According to these decisions the Minister of Defence established - with the concentration of the former NCO training centres and institutions, as their legal successor - new NCO Vocational Schools in Budapest, Szolnok, and Szentendre in 1996. In these institutions took place military vocational training recognised by the state, on 15 specialities with 400 people.⁷ The training based on the maturity examination released within a short period of time, technically and military properly prepared, professional NCOs. These institutes took part ,in addition to the NCO training, in the courses based training of the non-military NCO graduates (attended non-military training institutes), in the coaching for the maturity examination, in the training of the reserve commanders and in the language training.

The NCO training fully integrated into the national vocational training system and adopted and applied its every statute.

THE ONE INSTITUTIONAL NCO TRAINING

The attendant Army reform followed the NATO join, the shift towards the full professional Army had huge impact on the NCO training as well. In 1999, decision was made about the establishment of the concentrated NCO vocational training School that was able to provide effective and advanced training.⁸ The transformation of the institute took nearly two years and - as a legal successor of the three previous NCO Vocational School - with the effect of 1st of August the primary condition of the stand-alone NCO training school was established in Szentendre (at the same location were founded the first Centralised NCO Training School on 1st of June 1957.). The institute was called Hungarian Army Centralised NCO Training School adopted the name of Pál Kinizsi in 2003 (MH KPTSZI. Magyar Honvédség Kinizsi Pál Tiszthelyettes Szakképző Iskola).

In 2004, the review of the NCO training system and the development of the requirements for the XXI. century Army, was an essential part of the transition to a voluntary (full professional) military force. The one-year long basic education of the NCOs and the additional training, namely warrant officer training went on as part of the national vocational training, in modular system on three specialities (within these on different branches).

In summary, from 1995 the NCOs received military vocational training which, based on the quality and content of it, was recognised by the state itself. This was a very positive aspect, since the qualifications issued by the NCO Vocational Schools were legally recognised by the society as well. The quality of the training was strengthened by the maturity examination as an input prerequisite. The content of the training was determined by the officials of the military speciality - so called delegated chamber authority - meanwhile the educational experts determined the framework of the training in order to meet the requirements of the national vocational training.

⁵ 88/1995. (VII. 6.) Parliamentary Resolution "about the direction of the long and medium term transformation and number of the Hungarian Army"

⁶ 1996. XLIII (Hszt.) Act on the service state of the professional members of the armed forces

⁷ The 1/1997. (I.9.) MoD regulation about the release of the examination requirements of the military professional qualification.

⁸ Dr. János Tompa - Zoltán Kovács: The past, present and future of the NCO corps SVKI Defense Studies No 29. Budapest, 1999. ISSN 1216-4704 p. 66-74

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At the development process of the training content it was also an expectation that beside the military knowledge the qualification sufficient to fulfil further related jobs and occupations. For instance, the military qualification for military instructor with the ISCO number 3419 equals with training technician, this way the qualification was applicable in the civil life as well. The problem was that from 2003, the military qualifications were no more equal just related to further civil jobs. Like the Army NCO I. logistical branch, NBC technicians, the related job were gas station operator, seller

The number of the military vocational qualifications was dropped from the 1997 to 2002 from 41 to 23 and then it was further reduced in 2003 to four and in 2005 to three.⁹

THE NCO CAREER OF THE ENLISTED INDIVIDUALS

The NATO membership, the transformation of the MoD and the redundancies¹⁰, regenerated the demand to alter the „traditional” full time NCO training. The transformation of the Army impose new requirement against the NCO corps, new career structure in order to accomplish the voluntary full-professional Army. These changes had obviously huge effect on the NCO training. In the new Table of Organisation (ToO) appeared new NCO positions in growing number: section commander, gunner, operators, drivers, storekeeper, registrar, etc., from the rank of sergeant up to chief master warrant officer. The increasing number of the contracted enlisted soldier, their excellent professional performance made urgent to open the NCO career for them.

In 1999, the 6-month long contracted NCO training programme (sergeant school) was worked out, which was just as an interior training giving military training and opening to the promotion to the rank of sergeant. The target audience of the training was soldiers with all the experience, motivation, physical, psychological, and communication skills necessary to be appointed to NCO positions, which does not bounded to secondary school qualification. This interior training entitled only to fill up NCO positions which do not required secondary school qualification. For the chosen NCOs with a minimum of two year practical experience, a six week long military leadership course was ordered from 2004. This interior training authorized the contracted soldier only to fill up NCO positions, which does not required secondary school qualification.¹¹

From the academic year 2002/2003 for the contracted enlisted soldiers with maturity exam in the school NCO basic training system was organised correspondent career training.

The human resource directives of the MoD declared since „The basis of the recruitment of the NCO corps is in the first place the internal (enlisted personnel) recruitment. Throughout the selection process is based on the performance, professional knowledge and the experience.”

In addition to the training for the candidate with maturity exam, from September 2009 started in the Hungarian Army Pál Kinizsi NCO Vocational Training School, the training for the candidate with some civil vocational qualification but without maturity exam. This training is not just based on the working experience, but recognises it also and with eight week long additional training ensured the effective bringing up to the full strength of the NCO position according to the expectation of the commanders.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE NCO TRAINING SYSTEM

⁹ The 37/2003. (XII. 27.) Ministry of Education regulation „about the National Qualification Register” determined three different military vocational qualification: „Army NCO I.”, „Army NCO II.” and „Army WO” and it was not changed significantly in the new 1/2006. (II. 17.) Ministry of Education regulation neither.

¹⁰ In 1999 the ToO of the Army contained 10710 NCO, this number in 2009 was 8220.

¹¹ No 128/1999. and, 11/2003. Chief of Defense Staff command

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The restructuring NCO training is still the centre of attention. According to the human resources strategy says: „The soldiers are providing a special public service and the military career is part of the public service. The Hungarian Army provides career for the professional soldiers and takes care of them after the retirement. For the contracted soldiers the Army provides a career containing the support of the successful reintegration into the labour market.”... „In the classic military career model ... The dominant base of the reinforcement of the sub officers are the enlisted men with experiences, underwent organisational socialization with maturity exam, with the minimum rank of corporal. The other base is the candidates at least with maturity exam, passing the full-time NCO training for that speciality is not fillable from enlisted soldiers or their expertise is not obtainable from civilian training institute.”¹²

Two different systems were elaborated in 2011 for the transformation of the training:

I. Course type interior sub officer training

II. New State-approved military vocational training

As part of the career model of the contracted enlisted soldiers already in the Army, the training for the enlisted soldiers with maturity exam is realised in two parts from September 2011: the first three month is a basic training, the second is a 3-6-month long specialised vocational course. The preparation for the specialised position is based on the knowledge of the basic course. After the successful completion of the two courses the soldier might be appointed to the position.

An intense three-month long course type specialized training provides the promotion for the master sergeant to warrant officer.

In the state-approved vocational training system, the training of the youth who choose the sub-officer career can be realized in the frame of a two-year long, school-type, full-time training. This training form must be reserved mainly for the specialist working on electronics, and specialised technical areas. The high-quality, high-tech devices needs well-trained professionals, especially in position where no more a professional reinforcements from enlisted category is.

SUMMARY

The transformation of the civil vocational and adult training had a huge impact on the military vocational training system and on the NCO training system of the Hungarian Army. The tendency is further strengthened that enlisted soldiers with the proper motivation and precondition for the NCO career will be good NCO. The Army will gain experienced, motivated soldier, cost-effective and efficient training, with the provision of the promotion for these soldiers.

The knowledge of the past/ancient time is essential to the forming of future. The NCOs are the backbone of the Army, and the training system of this category determines the aptitude and adaptability of the army.

I recommend the aforesaid to everybody concerned in case of better interest.

12 No 79/2001. (VII. 29., HK. 12) Hungarian Army regulation for the human resource strategy 2012-2021. page 4, and 6-8.

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Kulcsszó: felkészítés, képzés, kiképzés, előmenetel, tiszthelyettes képzés

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