

## **DEVELOPING COMPETENCES AND ATTITUDES AMONG TERRITORIAL DEFENCE PERSONNEL**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This article presents aspects of developing the competences of the soldiers of Territorial Defence Forces (TDF) – albeit, due to the vastness of the subject matter, it only partially explores this topic. Particular attention has been paid to the wide spectrum of the competences of a Territorial Defence officer who performs the roles of a commander–educator and instructor, but the competences of the subordinate – a private soldier of this service of the Armed Forces have also been discussed. Additionally, this article indicates rather important aspects of forming soldiers’ personalities and, in consequence, also their attitudes (civic, patriotic, national defence-oriented etc.) which combine to form their professional–personal characteristics.

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

Like any educational process, the preparation of Territorial Defence personnel for service must include two entities. The first one is the teacher, who trains his/her subordinates, imparting to them the necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills and concurrently instilling suitable and expected social attitudes into them. The other entity is the soldier who undergoes educational changes in this process. His or her role is to absorb the knowledge and skills taught in the process of training (education). The teacher (the instructing officer: commander-educator) plays the roles of the commander, an educator and an instructor in this process. He or she must complete the adequate professional preparation which, together with his/her experience, determines his/her effectiveness in this area. However, it is not to be forgotten that the learner (the trainee or the subordinate undergoing the process of education or training) also has his/her own competences and needs, instilled into him/her at school prior to joining the armed forces.

A key question needs to be asked at this point: what competences will be possessed by the teacher (the trainer, commander-educator) and the learner (trainee) on completion of a given period of education (training) in a given institution: be it a military academy (in case of a newly commissioned officer) or a training session organized within the structures of the soldier's military unit.

The above questions are not simple, as it must be assumed that as a graduate of a military academy, the commander-educator-instructor will acquire new elements of professional experience, which will equip him/her with proper professional competences, and will also expand those competences which he/she has already gained. In other words, this new experience will increase the level of their professionalism. At the end of the same training cycle, the subordinate soldiers will possess the required competences, which they will be improving in the process of their further service. Each soldier, and each commander, must constantly strive towards reaching the highest level of professionalism in his/her military speciality. A given branch or arm of service often demands *specific professional preparation*, characteristic of a particular type of activities performed by soldiers or entire units.

In the light of the above, it should be assumed that both the instructing (teaching) commander-educator-instructor, and the instructed (learning) soldier must possess a certain scope of personal-professional characteristics allowing them to meet the above assumptions connected with acquiring and improving

their professional competences; and what is more, to perform the assigned tasks typical of the combat role and character of a given branch of the armed forces.

The purpose of this discussion is to pinpoint those personal-professional characteristics of the aforementioned entities – the participants of educational (didactic-pastoral) process in the Territorial Defence forces – which will enable the indication of the main determinants of personal-professional preparation of the subordinate soldiers, which, in turn, will justify the conclusion that soldiers and organizational structures who, according to their combat role, form Territorial Defence Forces, have been successfully and effectively prepared to perform their tasks.

## 2. DISCUSSION

An officer of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland should be prepared to perform the professional roles demanded by his/her post, which, at the beginning of the career, is usually that of a platoon leader. This involves, first of all, the aforementioned roles (functions) of a *commander*, *educator* and *instructor*. This triad indicates the basic determinants of his/her professional preparation for performing all tasks (i.e. carrying out instructions and orders) within his/her remit. They undoubtedly include *knowledge*, *skills* and *formal authority* necessary to perform a given action (which often demands particular and specific preparation). However, it is often forgotten that an officer of the armed forces must have an appropriately developed personality. Without meeting this precondition, even the fullest professional competences will be of little help, especially in relationship with the subordinates, who often have very high expectations in this regard. In essence, not only do they want to see a perfect commander and a professional of undisputable expertise, who is an authority on the work s/he directs, but they also expect leadership qualities. These qualities rely on the traits of character which showcase the commander's personality, ensuring that his/her subordinates will perceive him/her as the highest ethical authority and a role model, who can always be trusted – especially in dangerous situations, including life-threatening situations.

These high standards required of the commander make it necessary for him/her to possess many personal-professional traits allowing him to meet all the expectations not only of his/her subordinates, but also of the superiors.

In the context of the Territorial Defence Forces, which are being formed in Poland, it is important to indicate the major determinants influencing the commanders in this service of the Armed Forces, which only superficially resemble those in other branches of the military.

As it has been mentioned before, the **Territorial Defence Forces**<sup>1</sup> are a branch of the Armed Forces with the main task of preventing and/or eliminating the causes and results of threats on the homeland territory. They are predominantly tasked with maintaining readiness for performing missions of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. In particular they should:

- guarantee homeland defence and counteract armed aggression, and
- support protective subsystems in the areas of internal security and aid to the populace.<sup>2</sup>

Their structure covers the entire territory of the state and their main tasks are:<sup>3</sup>

- conducting actions with military or non-military means with active use of the potential of the local citizenry;
- participation in eliminating the results of threats and building local defence readiness on the entire territory of the state;
- conducting actions aimed at achieving the objective of an operation specified in operation planning documents or crisis management documents (these actions will be conducted separately or as joint operations);
- joint operations support;
- support for protection of local populace.

Several key questions need to be answered in the light of the above, among them the following:

- **How should TDF soldiers be educated so that their competences and task effectiveness allow them to discharge a wide scope of duties within the organizational structures to which they belong?**
- **How should they be prepared for the unique character of the overall role of TDF within the Polish Armed Forces?**
- **Which competences should the Territorial commanders have in order to meet all the requirements placed on them in the context of their personal-professional capabilities?**

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<sup>1</sup> While the main core of these forces has already been formed, and the key definitions of their role, tasks and functioning in the national defense system have been specified, the process of forming their structures is ongoing and will take several years to complete. It is estimated that the entire formation Territorial Defense Forces will be completed by 2021 r. Vide <http://www.mon.gov.pl/obrona-terytorialna/o-nas/plany-budowy-wot-q2016-12-27/> (accessed 23.07.2018).

<sup>2</sup> Vide Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej – Dowództwo Wojsk Obrony Terytorialnej, *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej w operacji – DD-3.40*, Warszawa 2018, p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 14.

## 2.1 TERRITORIAL DEFENCE OFFICERS

Among the key determinants of the professional preparation of TDF officers, there are the following:

- personality (shaped, formed) encompassing the desired traits of character and personality;
- social and professional competences;
- effectiveness in dealing with tasks and situations.

It is very important that commanders who begin to train soldiers – *immediately on graduating from the military academy* – are professionally prepared to perform every aspect of this task. If this condition is met, it can be assumed that they will train their subordinates well, so that they will be capable of performing any task in accordance with the combat role of their unit.

### 2.1.1 THE OFFICER'S PERSONALITY

Expectations towards the graduates of higher education vary. However, the personality of a Territorial Defence officer is unique and for this reason it should be properly developed (shaped) so that he/she should be capable of performing the roles described above.

In the light of the discoveries made by social science, especially by such disciplines as psychology, sociology, pedagogics, praxeology, and theory of management, as well as in the light of the vast body of experience gathered by commanders, it seems that, in the context of a graduate of a military institution of higher education, the following definition, coined by Lesław Węlyczko, is fully satisfying:

**The personality of an officer** (commander-educator-trainer) is a system of interrelated, rather durable traits (characteristics, values), predispositions and skills (abilities) which enable this officer to behave in desired ways in particular situations in peacetime (which includes humanitarian and peacekeeping missions), in response to threats (e.g. caused by terrorism or a natural disaster), and in war. These desired behaviours are supported by an appropriate body of knowledge and skills and are continually expanded by new experience and suitable competences which allow the officer to perform the role of not only a commander (leader) but also of an educator and a teacher (instructor) vis-à-vis his/her subordinate soldiers. Officer's personality is determined by his/her motivations, needs, attitudes, aspirations, self-knowledge, interests, skills, intelligence, temperament, character,

worldview and outlook on life. This personality must be self-aware and conscious of the on-going civilizational and cultural development inherent in the contemporary world.

Can anybody be a commander? As it turns out, no. A person's image and actions reflect his or her character. A vast body of empirical research has demonstrated that one of the more important – if not the *most* important personality trait of a commander – is his/her own self-image. It translates into the picture of the superior perceived by his/her subordinate soldiers. Their bearing, their attitude towards subordinates, the way in which they deal with their problems, their professionalism, dependability, honesty, fairness etc. are all noticed by the subordinates. In other words, servicemen and servicewomen often respect their superior if they see him/her as a role model. Even if the commander is not 'perfect' in all respects, he or she should possess enough self-awareness to notice and eliminate improper behaviour on his/her part – when he or she notices it himself/herself or when others do it for him/her.

A commander's personality, like anyone else's, changes to a lesser or greater extent, but its key determinants most likely remain intact. A commander's actions will vary according to external and interpersonal influences. The subordinates themselves often influence particular interactions of their superior who strives to act in accordance with binding regulations and etiquette. Seeing only these reactions, the soldiers may have incomplete or even untrue opinions of their commander, because they do not know all the motivations behind his/her behaviour.

Although they do not present the full picture, the aspects of a commander's personality depicted above suffice to illustrate the difficulty of forming the desired personality of an officer at a military academy so that he/she is ready to perform the roles he/she will be entrusted with on consecutive postings.

### 2.1.1.2 THE SOCIAL-PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCES OF A TERRITORIAL DEFENCE OFFICER

Different authors give varying definitions of *competences*. Taking into account the literature on this topic and the particular demands of this discussion, the authors have formulated their own definition, which follows:

**Competences** are a set of rights to perform actions specified by binding regulations; this set is supported by an appropriate combination of pro-

fessional knowledge and skills (predispositions, abilities and attributes) – which, combined, make up qualifications, or the ability to carry out professional tasks within one's remit – as well as by one's responsibility for one's actions and for the effects (results) of performed work – both in the professional-legal and the ethical-moral sense – i.e. the readiness to accept the consequences that follow the performed work.<sup>4</sup>

Given the fact that a Territorial Defence officer, especially one who is taking up his/her first post immediately after commission, must be professionally prepared to act not only as a commander but also as an educator and trainer, it is important to pinpoint the main factors determining his functioning in these roles.

- **Commander** is bound by the hierarchical structure in which he/she is both a subordinate and a superior, and he/she must be able to function properly within this structure. Having all the powers of a *commander* towards his/her subordinates, he/she can effectively and efficiently perform all tasks, and follow instructions and superiors' orders in varying situations relying on his/her competences related to:
  - » commanding;
  - » leadership;
  - » decision-making;
  - » planning and coordinating;
  - » organizing;
  - » training;
  - » motivating (stirring subordinates into action);
  - » controlling, assessing and modifying if necessary.
- **Educator** must be able to influence his/her subordinates and form their personalities in the desired ways. His/her didactic and pastoral abilities (including training-methodological ones) are the indispensable determinants, and also indicators, of his/her professionalism as an *educator*. These abilities are connected with the following actions and attitudes:

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<sup>4</sup> Vide H. Hamer, *Klucz do efektywności nauczania. Poradnik dla nauczycieli*, Warszawa 2004, p. 25-37; W. Strykowski W., J. Strykowska, J. Pielachowski, *Kompetencje nauczyciela szkoły współczesnej*, Poznań 2003, p. 24-32; Z. Bartkiewicz, M. Kowaluk, M. Samujło, *Posiedzenie Komitetu Nauk Pedagogicznych w dniu 13 listopada 1997 r.*, [in:] *Nauczyciel kompetentny: Terażniejszość i przyszłość*, Lublin 2007, p. 187.



- » getting deep knowledge of his/her subordinates;
  - » conducting individual and group conversations (social and interpersonal communication);
  - » helping, supporting, and imposing discipline;
  - » solving problems and dealing with difficult situations;
  - » solving conflicts;
  - » teaching assertiveness, reflectiveness and empathy;
  - » teaching partnership and respect for others, as well as proving with one's own behaviour that one meets the highest moral-ethical standards and is a fully-fledged professional;
  - » encouraging initiative and creativity of the subordinates, and teaching them to think and act independently, being innovative etc.
- **Instructor:** within this area, the officer will have equally high competences as in the roles of *commander* and *educator*. As a matter of fact, the didactic-educational (including training-methodological) skills in this role are among the most difficult ones to master. The officer in this role must show professionalism based on wide experience and learning by setting the best example. The officer imparts knowledge and skills to his/her subordinates, teaching them pragmatism, which is related in every aspect to the pedagogic preparation of the officer, identical to that of a teacher. Therefore, skills related to the following actions and attitudes are the indispensable determinants, and at the same time the indicators of professionalism, of an officer as an *instructor (teacher)*:
- » trainee-centred (learner-centred) approach;
  - » motivating and encouraging learning (including self-learning);
  - » controlling and assessment of the learning process and if necessary, modifying the teaching process by choosing new, more efficient forms and methods of teaching or self-study;
  - » showing a high level of training himself/herself and expecting it from the subordinates (the role of personal example, as mentioned above);
  - » appropriate demeanour and ability to communicate in a way which is understood by the learners (trainees);
  - » imparting knowledge in a clear, systematic way, so it is easily understood by the subordinates;
  - » demonstrating knowledge;
  - » solving training/pedagogical problems;
  - » practical training in exercise rooms, training areas etc.



### 2.1.3 TASK-SITUATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF A TERRITORIAL DEFENCE OFFICER

An *effective action* should be understood as one which results in achieving the goal or at least facilitates achieving this goal in the future.<sup>5</sup> As Kotarbiński wrote: “We define an action as effective if it leads to the desired result”.<sup>6</sup> Therefore, while discussing the task effectiveness of TDF officers, it has to be asserted that:

A Territorial Defence commander achieves task-situational effectiveness in his/her instructional-educational (didactic-pedagogical) work if he/she has reached the closest possible proximity of achieving the set goal.

The above leads to the conclusion that the task-situational effectiveness of Territorial officers is influenced by the following:

- their personalities;
- knowledge;
- skills;
- (professionalism).

Generally speaking, it is possible to indicate several determinants of the task effectiveness of a Territorial officer whose duty it is to train his/her subordinates and to instil in them social-personal characteristics which meet the expectations of the planners and practitioners of widely understood educational (didactic-pastoral, training-pastoral) activity in the armed forces:

1. An officer (commander-educator instructor) is task-effective when he/she can accomplish all tasks in his/her remit regardless of changing goals and circumstances. That means that officers who educate soldiers should:
  - be taught to identify problems;
  - learn not only knowledge and skills but also methods of thinking;
  - be trained in problem-solving;
  - learn to prove the correctness of their own choices;
  - be encouraged to self-reflect.
2. In order to be task-effective, an officer should be able to prepare his/her subordinate soldiers in such a way that they, in turn, are task-effective in service (while performing their roles) in their military units and outside.
3. Other indicators of task-effectiveness are the following: competence based on knowledge and skills, personality, and experience. All of them should be

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<sup>5</sup> *Encyklopedia organizacji i zarządzania*, Warszawa 1981, p. 471.

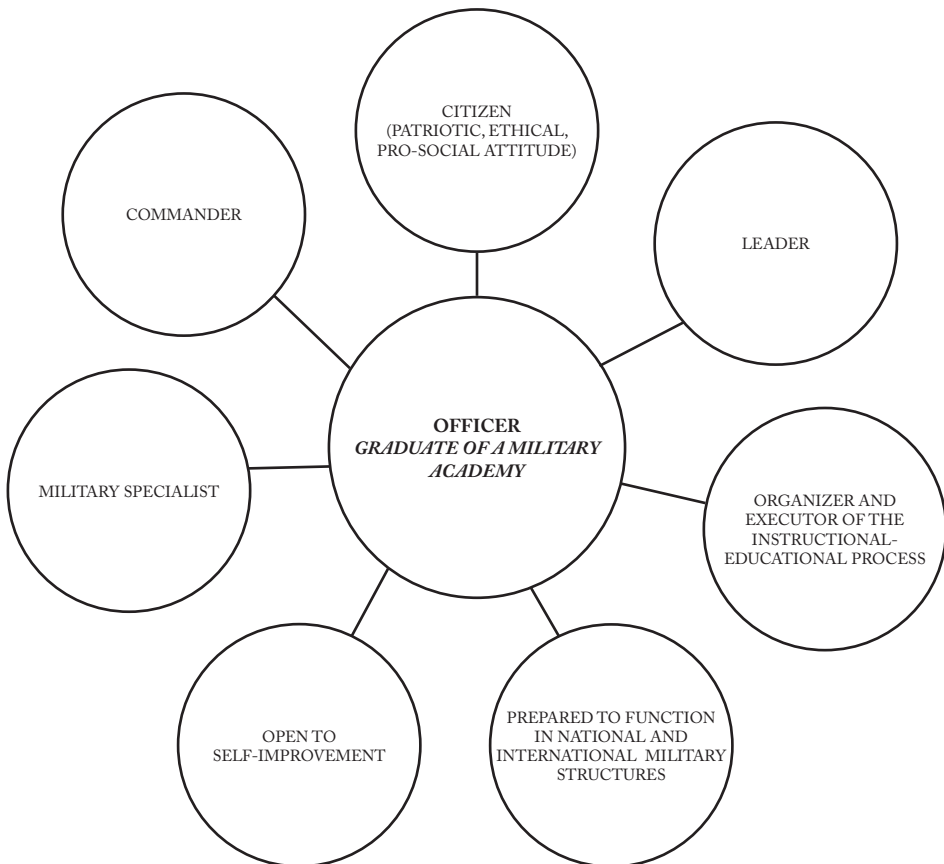
<sup>6</sup> T. Kotarbiński, *Traktat o dobrej robocie*, Łódź 1955, p. 115.

continually improved and enriched so that, with time, officers (commanders-educators-trainers) achieve professional mastery.

4. On the scale of importance, besides the officers' competences and their general, pedagogical-psychological and specialist knowledge, supported by continuously expanded experience, there has to be a place for motivation for work and service, as well as good manners. An external sign of a person's success is the social or professional *status*. An internal sign, on the other hand, is *satisfaction* and *motivation* for continued action. Lack of success means *stagnation*.
5. Task-effectiveness also depends on a group of external factors, for example, resources, institutional and environmental preconditions, the types of the performed tasks, subordinates' personalities, random incidents etc.

Figure 1 presents the desired personal-professional profile of a Territorial Defence officer and its elements (i.e. the determinants at work in this profile).

FIG.1. THE DETERMINANTS OF THE PERSONAL-PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF THE TERRITORIAL DEFENCE OFFICER. (SOURCE: AUTHOR'S OWN)



## 2.2 TERRITORIAL DEFENCE SOLDIERS

A Territorial Defence soldier must have a specific personality manifesting itself on different levels in his attitudes. Like any person living in the contemporary world, a soldier is a versatile creator who inspires themselves and their comrades to action and quest. He or she can learn not only through the purpose-built system of education. This person also acquires knowledge in practice, internalizing the best models observed among his/her commanders and also comrades (the best professionals). He or she is open to other people. Therefore it is not surprising that personality plays an important role in his/her life. In teaching soldiers, educational goals include creating situations in which soldiers can discover their own individualities, get to know themselves better and realize the particular, creative character of their unique profession. The above discussion illustrates the importance of the soldiers' self-awareness, which facilitates the process of acquiring knowledge in training, aids in self-assessment and also increases the superiors' and colleagues' acceptance for one's actions.

What activities must be undertaken in order to form proper and desired attitudes in soldiers? The main determinants in this area are the following:<sup>7</sup> **first**, building patriotism, bearing in mind that modern patriotism includes all progressive values of traditional Polish patriotism, such as willingness for self-sacrifice for one's homeland; emotional attachment to one's region, to the religious traditions and the culture of one's nation; pride in the heroic past of one's region and its unquestionable contribution to human civilization in general, as well as true willingness to mobilize during threat;

– **second**, shaping patriotic and national defence-oriented consciousness and attitudes, as they are not automatically inherited, but must be systematically built. Therefore, **while shaping and developing those national defence-oriented values, which are extremely valuable for the entire society, it is important to consider the following:**

- » the general state of knowledge on the most important values, which include the goals of national defence and the need to defend the Republic of Poland;
- » the assessment of social phenomena, including the processes encompassing civic duties of providing service to facilitate disaster relief, to improve defensive capability, and to help other human beings;

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<sup>7</sup> Vide: J. Kunikowski, *Kształtowanie postaw patriotyczno – obronnych młodzieży*, [in:] J. Kunikowski, R. Kalinowski, L. Wyszczelski (eds), *Wychowanie patriotyczno-obronne. Tradycje i współczesność*, Siedlce 2004, p. 84-85.

- » the recognition, acceptance and adoption of the standards of patriotism provided by the history of Poland and its struggles for independence.
- **third**, it ought to be remembered that the state of patriotic and national defence-oriented consciousness, especially in young people (in this case, soldiers), is determined by the general state of social knowledge and the level of importance attached to it by society, family, the church, and the military service. It should be remembered that if the level of this consciousness is high, it gives a realistic basis for a good preparation for life.

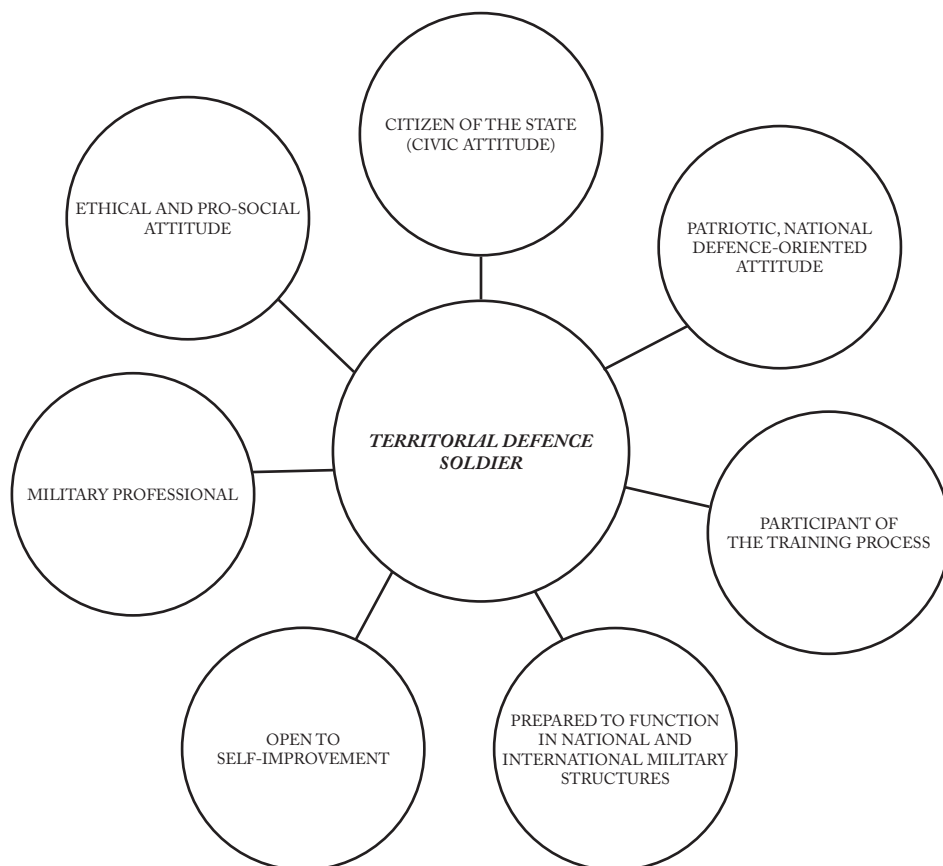
Taking into consideration the subjects presented so far, as well as the fact that Territorial Defence soldiers (just as the servicemen and servicewomen of other branches of the Polish Armed Forces) must be task-effective on their posts, it is important to remember about their social-professional competences meeting the demands of the military branch in which they serve. In other words, their theoretical and practical preparation necessary for doing the difficult job of a professional soldier can by no means be neglected.

**Instilling the desired patriotic and national defence-oriented attitudes, as well as civic self-awareness, into Territorial Defence personnel mainly depends on:**

- knowledge, educational-psychological skills and work experience that the commanders-educators of soldiers obtain in social and educational work in military units, but also on the direct and indirect influence of other social groups both within the armed forces and outside them;
- the thematic scope concerning civic education and military education, which must be reflected in training syllabi;
- soldiers' civic consciousness and ethical-moral values which must be developed in the civilian and family environment as well as in the military;
- broadly understood **modern methodology of teaching and instruction**, i.e.: carefully selected teaching content; a correct organisation of the didactic-educational process (especially, the selection of the most appropriate forms and methods of teaching or training); modern teaching aids, training facilities and infrastructure that allow for transferring knowledge and skills in various ways; and, finally, a continuous evaluation of the teaching process.

In the light of the above discussion on the aspects of the education of Territorial Defence personnel, their desired personal-professional profile can be presented as shown in Fig. 2.

FIG. 2. THE PERSONAL-PROFESSIONAL PROFILE OF THE TERRITORIAL DEFENCE SOLDIER. (SOURCE: AUTHOR'S OWN)



### 3. CONCLUSION

This article illustrates only those aspects of professionalism of a commander that begins his/her service on his/her first post, which are most important in the authors' opinion. This commander must be able to form personalities of his/her subordinate soldiers, and above all, impart knowledge to them and teach them specific skills, so that they are not only capable of performing all tasks related with their service but also function well in their private lives.

Additionally, the most important aspects of forming personalities of Territorial Defence soldiers have been presented, and the patriotic, national-defence oriented attitude was highlighted as the most important element of their characters.

It is to be expected that the task-effectiveness and competence-effectiveness of Territorial soldiers on their posts is mainly determined by:

- a properly prepared, planned, organized and executed educational (didactic) process whose participants (teachers and learners) are motivated enough to strive for achieving the expected teaching outcomes, which means that:
  - » **commanders/educators and instructors (teachers)** to the greatest extent possible (in accordance with the binding guidelines, existing orders, ordinances etc.) should endeavour to be effective in preparing and forming the personal-professional profiles of the trainee soldiers and imparting to them such professional knowledge (general and specialist) and skills that will render these soldiers task-effective and competence-effective on their respective posts in accordance with the combat role of the organizational structures which they form;
  - » **learners (trainees)** should have predispositions towards undertaking the task of becoming truly professional, valuable Territorial soldiers, and ought to be motivated enough for striving to achieve the best results in learning, training and discipline and to permanently present soldierly attitudes (i.e. civic, national-defence oriented, patriotic, moral-ethical, etc.), which will eventually prove that they are professionally prepared to carry out tasks assigned to them after completion of training – external motivation is not as important in this respect as the internal one;
- proper verification of the candidates for service in the Territorial Defence Forces (with the motivation to serve and learn as the major precondition);
- command and instructing cadres who are professionally prepared (i.e. have the desired didactic-educational abilities, expert knowledge and skills in their fields, and the necessary set of competences) to realize the educational process with Territorial Defence personnel;
- professionally prepared training (teaching) syllabus that contains the contents which are necessary and at the same time guarantee the preparation of Territorial soldiers according to their combat roles; they must be continually modified, especially with respect to civilizational challenges, new military technologies etc.,
- modern training and teaching infrastructure, ensuring imparting knowledge and skills in a professional way, utilizing the most modern developments in the fields of teaching and training technologies.

It should be remembered that forming personalities of Territorial soldiers is the result of a long-term, laborious educational process aimed at achieving this goal. However, those who have decided to link their future with this branch of Polish Armed Forces should remember that among the particularly important traits of each candidate there are: integrity, patriotism, self-respect and respect for others, moral empathy, justice, honesty, resoluteness, identification with

the homeland and its traditions, as well as respect for its history and its heroes, especially for those who fought for independent and sovereign Poland.

Recapitulating, and generalising the answers to the above questions, it should be said that:

Territorial defence soldiers ought to be educated in such a way that they are task-effective and competence-effective on their posts and within the organizational structures to which they belong. They must be able to perform a wide spectrum of tasks and enterprises resulting from the role of this branch of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland.

The educational (didactic-pastoral) process of preparing professionally trained Territorial Defence personnel is complex and demands maximum effort on the part of those who design and implement it.

The issues presented in this article form a limited segment of a wider area of knowledge, presenting only the most important aspects of preparing Territorial Defence personnel for duty in this branch of the armed forces. It should be assumed that with time, especially when the process of forming the structures of the Territorial Defence Forces has been completed, and with the appearance of new educational problems, new training and methodological solutions will be implemented in order to facilitate and further improve the process of preparing soldiers to competently discharge their duties within the structures of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. However, this will take the time and patience of those who design solutions for the newly formed branch of the Polish Armed Forces, i.e. the Territorial Defence.

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