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STRUCTURAL AND CONTENT-RELATED FEATURES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM OF THE US MILITARY ACADEMY

СТРУКТУРНО-ЗМІСТОВІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ОСВІТНЬОЇ ПРОГРАМИ ВІЙСЬКОВОЇ АКАДЕМІЇ США

The aim of the article is to highlight the structural and content features of the educational program of the US Military Academy at West Point in the context of modern trends in the development of American higher education. The study exploited a complex of general scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization and systematization of scholarly sources and regulatory and educational documents, which allowed considering the educational program of the Academy at West Point as a holistic integrated system of professional training of future officers. It was established that the educational model of West Point is based on a combination of academic, military-professional, moral-ethical, physical and leadership training. It was found that the structure of the program consists of a basic general educational component and professional training. The key areas of cadet training are outlined and characterized: communication, critical thinking, ethical judgment, lifelong learning, STEM training, humanities and social sciences, as well as advanced professional training. Particular attention is paid to the integration of language and engineering education into the process of forming professional competencies of a future officer in the USA. It was found that the combination of language training, the development of intercultural communication and engineering and technological knowledge contributes to the formation of an officer capable of acting effectively in the conditions of a modern digitalized and multinational security environment. It is noted that important areas of training cadets at West Point are the development of systems thinking, the ability to intercultural interaction and activity in the conditions of digitalization of the military sphere. The educational program of the US Military Academy at West Point is a comprehensive interdisciplinary system aimed at forming a professionally competent officer-leader capable of acting effectively in the conditions of modern security challenges, technological changes and a globalized environment.

Key words: US military education, educational program, general education, professional training of future officers, STEM education, language training, interdisciplinary approach, professional competencies.

Мета статті полягає у висвітленні структурно-змістових особливостей освітньої програми Військової академії США у Вест Пойнті у контексті сучасних тенденцій розвитку американської вищої освіти. У дослідженні використано комплекс загальнонаукових методів: аналіз, синтез, узагальнення та систематизація наукових джерел і нормативно-освітніх документів, що дозволило розглянути освітню програму Академії як цілісну інтегровану систему професійної підготовки майбутніх офіцерів. Встановлено, що освітня модель Вест Пойнту ґрунтується на поєднанні академічної, військово-професійної, морально-етичної, фізичної та лідерської підготовки. З'ясовано, що структура програми складається з базового загальноосвітнього компонента та професійної підготовки. Окреслено та схарактеризовано ключові напрями підготовки курсантів: комунікація, критичне мислення, етичне судження, навчання протягом життя, STEM-підготовка, гуманітарні та соціальні науки, а також поглиблена професійна підготовка. Особливу увагу приділено інтеграції мовної та інженерної освіти у процес формування професійних компетентностей майбутнього офіцера у США. З'ясовано, що поєднання мовної підготовки, розвитку міжкультурної комунікації та інженерно-технологічних знань сприяє формуванню офіцера, здатного ефективно діяти в умовах сучасного цифровізованого та багатонаціонального безпекового середовища. Зазначено, що важливими напрямками підготовки курсантів у Вест Пойнті є розвиток системного мислення, здатності до міжкультурної взаємодії та діяльності в умовах цифровізації військової сфери. Освітня програма Військової академії США у Вест Пойнті є комплексною міждисциплінарною системою, спрямованою на формування професійно компетентного офіцера-лідера, здатного ефективно діяти в умовах сучасних безпекових викликів, технологічних змін та глобалізованого середовища.

Ключові слова: військова освіта США, освітня програма, загальна підготовка, професійна підготовка майбутніх офіцерів, STEM-освіта, мовна підготовка, міждисциплінарний підхід, професійні компетентності.

Introduction. Under the current conditions of global security instability, the intensification of hybrid threats, the rapid development of military technologies, and the transformation of the nature of armed conflicts, the requirements for the professional training of officer personnel are increasing significantly. For Ukraine, which is experiencing a full-scale war while simultaneously pursuing a strategic course toward Euro-Atlantic integration, the modernization of the military education system has become a matter of particular national importance. In this context, the study and adaptation of leading international experience in the organization of military professional training, particularly in NATO member states, acquires priority significance.

One of the world's most authoritative military educational institutions is the United States Military Academy, whose educational system has consistently demonstrated high effectiveness in training officer-leaders for the United States Armed Forces. The Academy's educational program is characterized by its comprehensiveness, integration of academic, military-professional, physical, and moral-ethical components of training, as well as its focus on developing strategic thinking, leadership competencies, and the ability to make decisions under conditions of uncertainty and high responsibility. These qualities are essential for a modern officer engaged in multidimensional warfare and the functioning of joint international security forces.

The relevance of studying the structural and content-related features of the educational program of the United States Military Academy is also обусловлена the need to reconsider traditional approaches to professional military education in Ukraine. The modern system of officer training requires not only updating the content of education, but also implementing a competency-based approach, interdisciplinary integration, innovative teaching methods, and the development of critical thinking and leadership potential among future military personnel. In this regard, the experience of American military education serves as a valuable source of organizational, methodological, and pedagogical practices that may be adapted to national conditions.

Particular attention should be given to analyzing the structural organization of the Academy's educational program, the mechanisms for combining fundamental academic training with practical military activity, as well as the system for developing officer ethics and leadership. Under modern conditions, it is precisely an officer's ability to act effectively

in non-standard situations, manage personnel, rapidly adapt to technological changes, and make well-grounded decisions that determines the overall combat capability of the armed forces.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In modern scientific discourse, the study of educational programs of military higher education institutions of the United States, in particular the United States Military Academy, is considered in the context of the transformation of American higher education under the influence of globalization processes, a competency-based approach, increased requirements for the professional training of officer personnel, and the growing importance of the quality of educational programs. The generalization of the results of modern Ukrainian and foreign research allows us to identify the leading trends in the development of the content, structure, and methodological principles of training future officers in the US military education system.

In the scientific achievements of L. Batiuk [1] it is emphasized that the American higher education system is characterized by a high level of institutional differentiation, openness, and variability of educational trajectories, which creates the prerequisites for the formation of flexible educational programs focused on the needs of specific professional sectors, including the military sphere. The author emphasizes the strengthening of trends towards selective admission and competition of educational institutions, which directly affects the quality of the contingent of education seekers and, accordingly, the effectiveness of the implementation of educational programs [1].

In the context of ensuring the quality of educational programs, the provisions of S. Kravchenko [2] are significant. She considers the American model of education quality as a multi-level system that combines institutional autonomy, independent accreditation and internal mechanisms for assessing learning outcomes [2]. This approach is especially relevant for the analysis of the West Point educational program, as it allows understanding the mechanisms for maintaining high standards of officer training through systematic control of competencies, learning outcomes and professional readiness of graduates.

The historical and evolutionary dimension of the development of American higher education, presented in the study of O. Plahotnik [3], allows tracing the formation of a specific model of university training that combines democratic principles, academic freedom and practical orientation of education. The author emphasizes that the decentralized

structure of education management in the United States promotes the autonomy of educational institutions, which is a key factor in the flexibility and innovation of educational programs, particularly in military academies [3].

Within the framework of the study of professional training of specialists, N. Paziura [4] emphasizes the practice-oriented nature of American education, in particular, the role of applied programs and institutions such as community colleges. Although these provisions relate mainly to the training of specialists with secondary qualifications, they are conceptually important for understanding the general logic of the American educational system, in which professional training is based on a combination of theoretical training, practice and close interaction with employers, which is also characteristic of the West Point educational model.

A separate conceptual dimension is the collaborative work of Ukrainian educators [5], which analyzes the humanities and entrepreneurial component of higher education in the United States. The researchers prove that the American model of training specialists is based on the idea of liberal arts education, which ensures the integration of general education, humanities and professional training [5]. In the context of the United States Military Academy, this approach is transformed into a system of forming an officer as a holistic personality capable of strategic thinking, ethical leadership, and interdisciplinary analysis of professional situations.

A significant contribution to the understanding of the liberal arts component of the American educational model was made by S. Fedorenko [6–8]. Her findings substantiate the priority of general education of undergraduate students in the US higher education institutions [6], which in the military context acquires special importance as the basis for the moral and ethical education of future officers. S. Fedorenko emphasizes that general education performs the function of forming value orientations, leadership qualities, and social responsibility [7]. These provisions directly correlate with the logic of constructing the West Point educational program, where humanitarian disciplines are integrated into the system of military professional training. The Ukrainian researcher also analyzes the principles of constructing curricula for general education in the US higher education institutions, among which she highlights interdisciplinarity, flexibility, and competency-based orientation [8].

An important contribution to the analysis of higher education curricula is the recent “Course-Skill Atlas” study conducted by A. Javadian Sabet

and co-authors [9]. Using large-scale empirical data, the study systematically maps the skills embedded in university curricula and examines their distribution across higher education institutions in the United States. The scholars prove that modern educational programs are increasingly oriented towards a skills-based approach, which assumes a clear correspondence between the content of training and professional competencies [9]. In the context of military education, this means increased attention to the formation of leadership, analytical, communicative and digital skills necessary to perform officer functions in modern conditions [10].

Therefore, modern research provides grounds to assert that the United States Military Academy educational program is formed within the framework of the all-American model of higher education, which is characterized by competency orientation, integration of general and professional education, high quality standards, autonomy of educational institutions, and a clear focus on the formation of practical and leadership competencies of a future officer.

Highlighting previously unresolved parts of the overall problem. Despite the significant number of studies devoted to the American system of higher education, the analysis of academic sources indicates the presence of a number of unresolved problems in the professional training of officer personnel in the USA. First of all, the holistic structure of the West Point educational program as an integrated system has not been studied in a comprehensive manner. Most scholarly works highlight individual aspects of American military education, but there is no systematic analysis of the relationship between the components of the educational program and the mechanisms of their integration in the process of forming a new generation of officers. The structural and content features of the West Point curriculum remain insufficiently disclosed, in particular the ratio of the humanitarian, natural science, technical and military-professional components of training.

The issue of implementing the general education component in the United States Military Academy educational program also remains insufficiently researched. Although modern works emphasize the importance of liberal arts education in the USA, specific mechanisms for integrating humanities disciplines into the system of military-professional training, as well as their influence on the formation of value orientations, moral responsibility, and professional culture of an officer, need to be clarified.

Thus, the relevance of the study is due to the need for a comprehensive analysis of the structural and

content features of the United States Military Academy at West Point educational program, the identification of its conceptual foundations, and the mechanisms for the formation of professional competencies of future officers in the USA.

The aim of the article. The article aims to highlight the structural and content features of the United States Military Academy at West Point educational program in the context of modern trends in the development of American military education.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks are envisaged: 1) to characterize the structure of the United States Military Academy at West Point educational program and determine its main components; 2) to clarify the features of the content of the academic, military-professional, physical and leadership training of cadets.

Research Methods. The study exploited a complex of general scientific methods: analysis, synthesis, generalization and systematization of scholarly sources and regulatory and educational documents, which allowed considering the educational program of the Academy at West Point as a holistic integrated system of professional training of future officers.

Results & Discussion. The United States Military Academy (USMA (<https://www.westpoint.edu/>)), better known as West Point, is located in West Point, New York. It is one of the most prestigious and prestigious military institutions of higher education in the world, traditionally considered the key institutional center for training the officer corps of the United States Army. Founded in 1802, the academy has since played a leading role in the formation of the American military elite, combining educational, educational, and professional functions within a single system [10]. Unlike most civilian institutions of higher education in the United States, West Point has a clearly defined professional orientation, where the main goal is the training of regular army officers. This defines the specifics of the educational model, which combines academic training with intensive military, physical, and moral and ethical training [10; 11].

The mission of the academy is to educate, train, and educate a corps of cadets with the aim of forming leaders of character, committed to the principle of “Duty, Honor, Country” and ready for professional military service. West Point graduates must deeply understand the essence of the military profession, the meaning of the US Constitution, the principles of professional military ethics, and also demonstrate readiness for military service, the ability to think critically, make decisions under stress, and

effectively manage subordinates [10; 11]. In general, the center of the educational model is the idea of the comprehensive development of the future officer, who must be not only a competent military specialist, but also an intellectually developed, morally stable, and physically hardy person.

Seven key goals form the conceptual basis of the United States Military Academy educational program. Each of them is specified through a system of supporting tasks, presented in the form of statements “What Graduates Can Do”, which reflect the set of competencies necessary for a graduate to effectively perform the professional duties of an officer [12]. These competencies are structured according to seven interrelated areas of cadet development [12; 13].

The first area is communication, which involves the formation of a high level of academic and professional communicative competence. In the West Point training system, oral and written communication skills are considered an integral part of the professional activity of an officer who is able to clearly formulate orders, analytical conclusions, official documents and present his own position in a reasoned manner [12]. An important role in this process is played by the academic discipline English Composition (EN101), aimed at developing the skills of academic writing, critical text analysis and argumentation. In case of failure to achieve the established level of results after the completion of the first semester, the cadet is obliged to re-take the appropriate course of study, which indicates the principled position of the academy regarding the need to ensure a high level of language training for each future officer, regardless of his specialization. At the same time, the Department of English provides a system of individual academic consulting, within which cadets can receive additional support in the preparation of written works in other academic disciplines. Such consultations include analysis of the structure of the text, logic of presentation, argumentation, stylistic accuracy and adherence to the principles of academic integrity, which gives language support an interdisciplinary character and contributes to improving the overall academic success of cadets [13].

The second area – Critical Thinking and Creativity – is focused on developing the ability of cadets to analyze complex situations, identify their essential characteristics, formulate relevant questions and integrate knowledge from different fields. Particular attention is paid to the development of decision-making skills in conditions of uncertainty, readiness for justified risk, an innovative approach to solving

problems and the ability to carry out a reflective analysis of the results of their own activities [13].

The third area is Ethical Reasoning, which involves preparing cadets to recognize ethical dilemmas, analyze moral principles and apply them in the decision-making process. Within this direction, cadets study various ethical concepts, assess their relevance in specific professional situations and form the ability to act responsibly in conditions of moral uncertainty [13].

The area of Lifelong Learning is aimed at forming internal motivation for continuous professional and personal development. The Academy focuses on the ability of cadets to independently acquire new knowledge, adapt to changes and take responsibility for their own improvement. This direction is especially relevant in the conditions of rapid technological development and transformation of the modern combat environment [13].

An important place in the structure of training is occupied by Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics area (STEM-education), which involves the formation of scientific, mathematical and digital literacy of cadets. Future officers must be able to assess the opportunities and risks associated with the development of modern technologies, as well as apply a systems engineering approach when developing effective solutions taking into account technological, social, political and ethical factors. Training within this direction includes the ability to apply mathematical, natural and computer knowledge to model systems and processes, use the scientific method in research and practical activities, collect and analyze data to support the decision-making process, and use the concepts and practices of information technologies in cyberspace [13].

The sixth area is Humanities and Social Sciences domain, which provides the formation of the ability to analyze human behavior, social processes and intercultural interaction. The educational training of cadets is aimed at developing the ability to effectively interact with people in different social and professional environments, analyze complex social phenomena and take into account cultural characteristics in the decision-making process. Within the framework of this direction, cadets acquire the ability to analyze and predict human behavior, research historical, cultural and social characteristics of different societies, assess the impact of political, legal, military and economic factors on social systems, carry out intercultural interaction and integrate the methodology of the humanities and social sciences into professional activities [13].

The final area is in-depth professional training (Disciplinary Depth), which complements the basic academic program through in-depth study of the chosen field of knowledge in accordance with the professional interests and educational needs of the cadet. This approach promotes intellectual diversity, interdisciplinary thinking, and the ability to function effectively in multidisciplinary teams. Training within this area involves developing the ability to apply methods, tools, and theoretical approaches of the relevant field of knowledge, identify and analyze key problems of specialization, understand the boundaries of a particular discipline and its role in solving complex problems, and integrate knowledge from different fields in the process of interdisciplinary interaction [13].

Given the aforementioned, we can conclude that the educational concept of West Point is focused on the formation of a holistic system of professional and personal development of a future officer, capable of acting effectively in conditions of uncertainty, rapid technological change and a complex socio-political environment.

Structurally, the educational program of the United States Military Academy is built as an integrated system consisting of two interconnected components: the basic curriculum (Core Curriculum) – general education, designed for the first two years of study, and specialization (Academic Major) – professional education. The basic component provides fundamental general education, while specialization is focused on individualizing the professional development trajectory of each cadet [12].

Core Curriculum of the United States Military Academy provides the formation of a single foundation for the academic, professional and leadership training of future officers. It consists of 24 compulsory academic disciplines, as well as three Core Engineering Sequences (CES) for cadets who are not studying in engineering specialties. For most cadets, the first year of study is in the nature of a common academic experience, within which they master mostly the same set of basic disciplines. This approach ensures the formation of a single educational space and a common system of professional values and competencies [12; 13].

The Core Curriculum of general education is structured around several key areas: Mathematics, Science, and Engineering (MSE), Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS), Information Technology/Cyber, Foreign Language, and Core Engineering Sequences (CES). At the end of the second semester, cadets choose a major, after which they begin

in-depth study of the disciplines of the corresponding professional field in the fall semester of the second year of study. Taken together, this structure of the curriculum ensures the systematic integration of academic, professional, and general cultural training, forming a holistic model for the development of a future officer as a specialist with a high level of intellectual, analytical, and social competence. A special place in this system is occupied by language training, which at West Point is considered not as a secondary component of general education, but as an important element of an officer's professional training for activities in a global security environment.

The Academy supplies the study of such foreign languages as: Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Persian (Farsi), Portuguese and Spanish. The choice of languages has a clear strategic justification and is directly related to the foreign policy and security priorities of the United States. In particular, Chinese and Persian are focused on preparing officers for activities in conditions of geopolitical rivalry and allow for a deeper understanding of the political, cultural and military context of the relevant regions. Arabic is of great importance for activities in regions of increased security instability, including anti-terrorist, peacekeeping and stabilization operations. French and German facilitate effective interaction with allies within NATO and the transatlantic partnership, while Spanish and Portuguese ensure communication in Latin American countries, where the United States traditionally has a significant political, economic, and military presence.

Language training is the responsibility of the Department of English and World Languages (DEWL), which focuses on developing communicative, cultural and analytical competencies through the study of literature, linguistics, cultural studies, civilization studies, media studies and military studies. The department offers three main areas of specialization: English, World Languages and Foreign Area Studies, as well as an additional specialization (minor) in regional studies. At the same time, each cadet studies four basic language and communicative educational components, such as: academic writing, literature and foreign language I and foreign language II. This model of foreign language learning, integrated into the structure of the core curriculum, ensures the formation of a single foundation for the professional communicative culture of the future officer, contributes to the development of skills in working with information, interpreting texts of various types and building argumentative communication. At the same time, language training is

integrated with the development of critical thinking, analytical skills, and intercultural sensitivity, which are necessary conditions for effective leadership in a multinational military environment. In general, this approach reflects the awareness that a modern officer must be able to act not only in the military, but also in the diplomatic, informational, and intercultural dimensions [12]. Thus, language education at West Point is based on a combination of military-professional expediency, diplomatic needs, regional expertise, and global communication. It is seen as an important tool for the formation of an officer-leader who is able to effectively interact with international partners, work with the civilian population, negotiate, and function in a multilingual and multicultural environment.

An important component of the educational model of the military academy is engineering training, which is implemented through an integrated system of military science and engineering education (Military Science and Engineering – MSE thread). It covers the following areas: Civil Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Environmental Engineering, Nuclear Engineering, Cyber Engineering and Systems Engineering. This structure reflects the academy's desire to provide training for an officer who is able to operate effectively in a technologically complex and multidimensional combat environment [12; 14]. Obviously, conceptually, engineering training at West Point goes beyond traditional technical training and is seen as a tool for developing systems thinking, analytical skills and the ability to solve complex problems. The Academy's educational approach is based on the understanding that a modern officer must be able not only to apply military-professional knowledge, but also to analyze the functioning of complex technical systems, assess technological risks, and integrate technical solutions into the sphere of operational and strategic management. In view of this, engineering training is built on interdisciplinary principles and covers mathematical, natural science, information, and military-applied components.

It should be stressed that Cyber Engineering and Systems Engineering are of particular relevance in modern conditions, ensuring the adaptation of the educational system to the processes of digitalization of the military sphere and the transformation of the nature of armed struggle. As for the first of the two indicated directions, the growth of the role of cyberspace as a separate operational domain necessitates the training of officers capable of operating in conditions of information confrontation, cyber threats,

and a high level of digital integration of military systems. In this regard, Cyber Engineering is focused on developing competencies in cybersecurity, network technologies, information systems protection, cyber threat analysis, and cyber operations management. At the same time, training in this area combines technical knowledge with an understanding of the strategic, legal, and ethical aspects of the use of digital technologies in military activities [14].

No less important is the direction of Systems Engineering, which is considered as a methodological basis for the integration of complex military-technical systems. Its importance is due to the need to manage multi-level processes that include the interaction of the human factor, information systems, technical platforms and organizational structures. Within this direction, cadets master the principles of systems analysis, modeling, risk management, process optimization and decision-making under uncertainty. Systems engineering forms the ability to consider combat and management processes as complex adaptive systems, the effectiveness of which depends on the coherence of the functioning of various components.

An essential feature of engineering education at West Point is its practice-oriented nature. The educational process combines classroom training with laboratory research, project activities, modeling of professional situations and solving applied engineering

problems [15]. Considerable attention is given to the development of teamwork skills, since modern military activity involves functioning in interdisciplinary teams, where an officer must effectively interact with both military specialists and representatives of the civilian technological sector. At the same time, engineering training is integrated with the general concept of leadership development.

Conclusions & Research Prospects. To conclude, we note that the West Point educational model demonstrates the formation of a comprehensive training system, within which academic, leadership, psychological, language and engineering-technological components are integrated into a single concept of the officer's professional development. This approach ensures the training of military specialists capable of acting effectively in conditions of hybrid threats, digitalization of the combat environment, information confrontation and rapid transformation of modern military technologies. So, in general, the West Point educational program is built on a comprehensive interdisciplinary approach aimed at training officers capable of integrating knowledge and skills from various fields to effectively respond to the challenges of the modern globalized world.

The scope for further research lies in the study of organizational and pedagogical conditions for the development of moral competence of cadets of the US Military Academy.

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