

On the Issue of Military Education Transformation in the Context of Military Specialists Training with Higher Education at the Tactical Level

Щодо питання трансформації військової освіти в контексті підготовки військових фахівців з вищою освітою на тактичному рівні

Anatolii Loishyn

Doctor of Philosophy, e-mail: aloishyn@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-2769-9336

Анатолій Лойшин

Доктор філософії, e-mail: aloishyn@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0003-2769-9336

Military Institute of National Taras Shevchenko University of Kyiv, Kyiv, Ukraine

Військовий інститут Київського національного університету імені Тараса Шевченка, м. Київ, Україна

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Purpose: is to identify key problematic issues that negatively impact: the development of professional military education, the implementation of education quality management, the motivation of applicants for higher education to learn, and the active engagement of educational process participants in activities within international programs and academic mobility.

Method: analysis and synthesis, decomposition approach.

Findings: The study identifies key issues and proposes specific solutions in the field of military education in Ukraine under the legal framework of martial law.

Theoretical implications: This research has an applied character and will be useful for scholars and administrators involved in military education in Ukraine, particularly its transformation and reform. The study emphasizes specific challenges and potential ways to address them.

Originality of the research: The research is based on original sources, including conceptual and strategic documents that define the development vectors of military education in both the short-term and long-term perspectives.

Research limitations: The study is limited to the use of publicly available information.

Paper type: Conceptual research.

Мета: виявлення ключових проблемних питань, які негативно впливають на розвиток професійної військової освіти, реалізацію управління якістю освіти, мотивацію здобувачів вищої освіти до навчання, а також активну участь учасників освітнього процесу в міжнародних програмах і заходах академічної мобільності.

Метод дослідження: аналіз і синтез, підхід декомпозиції.

Результати дослідження: У дослідженні визначено ключові проблеми та запропоновано конкретні шляхи їх вирішення у сфері військової освіти України в умовах правового режиму воєнного стану.

Теоретична цінність дослідження: Дослідження має прикладний характер і буде корисним для науковців та управлінців, які займаються військовою освітою в Україні, зокрема її трансформацією та реформуванням. У роботі акцентовано увагу на конкретних викликах і можливих шляхах їх подолання.

Оригінальність дослідження: Робота базується на оригінальних джерелах, включаючи концептуальні та стратегічні документи, які визначають вектори розвитку військової освіти як у коротко-, так і в довгостроковій перспективі.

Обмеження дослідження: Дослідження обмежене використанням загальнодоступної інформації.

Тип статті: Концептуальне дослідження.

Key words: professional military education, education quality management, foreign language learning, academic mobility.

Ключові слова: професійна військова освіта, управління якістю освіти, вивчення іноземної мови, академічна мобільність.

Introduction

As of today, Ukraine is in its fourth year of resisting the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. The Defense Forces continue to mount a resolute defense against an adversary that significantly surpasses Ukraine in terms of manpower and military-economic potential. In pursuit of victory, not only has the entire Ukrainian nation united, but partner countries have also provided invaluable material and technical assistance.

At the same time, the success of repelling armed aggression depends not only on the availability of modern weapons and military equipment, as well as a sufficient supply of missiles and ammunition, but also on the presence of well-trained and highly motivated personnel capable of carrying out complex missions in combat conditions.

Given this, we have analyzed certain priority aspects of military education in Ukraine and identified specific problematic issues that negatively impact the training of military specialists within the Defense Forces of Ukraine.

Theoretical background

The theoretical foundations of this study are based on monitoring educational process measures for the training of military specialists with higher education for the Defense Forces of Ukraine. The analysis covered specific regulatory and conceptual documents related to the reform and development of military education. In particular, the following were examined:

The military security strategy of Ukraine [1], which outlines the development of the military education system and the training of personnel for the Defense Forces of Ukraine. It also emphasizes the introduction of educational programs for officers, sergeants, and senior enlisted personnel based on combat experience, training methodologies, and NATO principles and standards.

The strategic defense bulletin of Ukraine [2], which defines the mission and vision of the Defense Forces by 2030. According to this document, the Defense Forces will be unified under a single command and consist of well-trained and motivated personnel supported by effective and transparent systems of personnel management, military education and science, healthcare, and social protection.

The higher education development strategy [3], which states that the internationalization of higher education in Ukraine is one of the country's strategic goals. It also calls for the transformation of education in the security and defense sector in line with NATO doctrinal approaches and principles.

The policy on human capital recruitment, development, and retention in the defense forces [4], which includes provisions for continuous professional development of personnel throughout their military careers. It introduces a multi-level system of professional military education aligned with NATO approaches and the best domestic and international practices. The policy also aims to establish a military education quality assurance system, improve foreign language training for Defense Forces personnel in accordance with STANAG 6001 standards, enhance professional development programs for academic and teaching staff, including through the NATO "Defense Education Enhancement Program" (DEEP), and refine the organizational and staffing structure of military educational institutions.

The concept for transforming the military education system [5], which highlights shortcomings in the organizational and staffing structures of military educational institutions and training centers, as well as their misalignment with the evolving needs of the Armed Forces and other Defense Forces components. It also notes deficiencies in the foreign language training system for military personnel, which fails to ensure sufficient language proficiency for effective participation in international activities. Alongside identifying these challenges, the concept prioritizes the development of professional military education and education quality management.

The strategy for military education system management [6], which outlines several key measures, including the establishment of structural units for education quality control within military command bodies and educational institutions. It also proposes the creation of a quality assurance system for higher and specialized pre-higher education based on national quality standards and professional military education requirements in line with NATO Standard Bi-SCD 075-007 "Education and Individual Training" [7].

Problem Statement

The analysis of the aforementioned conceptual and strategic documents, along with the practical training of military specialists, has revealed both existing problems and promising pathways for

addressing them in the further transformation (improvement) of Ukraine's military education system.

At the same time, the study takes into account the practical implementation experience of specific areas, including:

- the development of professional military education;
- the acquisition of language competencies by higher education students and personnel of the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of Ukraine;
- the enhancement of pedagogical skills and professional competencies of academic staff, including their participation in international programs;
- the implementation of education quality management in the learning process based on best practices from partner countries;
- ensuring sufficient motivation for higher education students to pursue their studies during the period of martial law in Ukraine.

For each of these elements (areas), key problematic issues have been identified that hinder the effective and efficient achievement of defined objectives.

Methodology

To achieve the study's objective, a decomposition approach was applied, with a focus on analyzing the core issues related to:

- 1) The development and functioning of professional military education;
- 2) The management of higher education quality;
- 3) The academic performance of higher education students in military higher education institutions (hereinafter – MHEIs) and military educational units of higher education institutions (hereinafter – MTU HEIs);
- 4) The acquisition of language competencies by personnel, as well as the involvement of academic staff and higher education students in international programs and academic mobility initiatives.

The purpose of the study is to identify the key problematic issues that negatively impact: the development of professional military education, the implementation of education quality management the maintenance of a sufficient level of motivation among higher education students, the active participation of educational process participants in activities within international programs and academic mobility.

Results

1. At present, the reform of military education is being carried out in accordance with the requirements of several conceptual and strategic documents, including the Concept for the Transformation of Military Education, the Military Security Strategy of Ukraine, the Strategic Defense Bulletin, and other regulatory documents.

The key elements of the development of the subject area, as well as potential ways to improve the educational process, have been examined in the theoretical foundations of this study.

However, practical experience in implementing professional military education courses in MHEIs and MTU HEIs has revealed critical issues that need to be addressed as a priority.

Given the three main areas of military education implementation (academic (higher) education, professional military education (hereinafter – PME), advanced training), PME currently remains organizationally unstructured within military educational institutions.

The primary issue is the absence of a centralized competence center responsible for the organization and administration of PME courses.

For example, based on the experience of conducting the PME L1a+L1b course, three key organizational tasks have been identified as requiring urgent resolution:

- 1) overall management and daily operations of trainees (including coordination of arrivals, accommodation, and support throughout the training process);
- 2) implementation of the basic PME tactical-level course (hereinafter – L1a);
- 3) implementation of the specialized PME tactical-level course (hereinafter – L1b).

In practice, this necessitates the formal appointment of a course administration team from the personnel of MHEIs, MTU HEIs, and other structural units; personnel responsible for conducting general military and specialized training.

Considering that both basic (general military) and specialized training are conducted by the respective instructor and teaching staff of designated departments, with an assigned teaching workload, overall administration (management) is entrusted to non-staff personnel who must combine the performance of their official duties with tasks related to the PME course.

In this regard, it is worth presenting a successful example of addressing this issue based on the experience of the National Defense University of Ukraine.

Thus, the Professional Military Education Institute “Leadership School” operates within the structure of the National Defense University of Ukraine. The mission of this Institute is defined as: “preparing leaders at the strategic and operational levels based on national combat experience and best practices of NATO member states...” [8].

It should be noted that the organization of the educational process has been developed in accordance with the core requirements of the Joint Directive “Education and Individual Training” (075-007).

At the same time, the organizational and staffing structure of the Institute has been designed with consideration of best PME practices, ensuring the structured implementation of the «Joint staff officers course» (L-3), «Senior leadership course at the strategic level» (L-4), and «Strategic management and state policy course» (L-5) through the establishment of course director and mentor positions.

According to the information provided on the official website of the National Defense University, the main tasks of course mentors include developing a new style of military leadership among students, participating in all training sessions with students, and more.

At the same time, the Chief Mentor of the Institute coordinates the activities of the mentors.

One of the key advantages of implementing the mentor system is the necessity to combine theory and practice. This is justified by the fact that scientific and pedagogical staff (hereinafter – SPS), due to the nature of their daily activities, often lose connection with the practical component of the subject they teach.

Meanwhile, individual deployments of SPS from among military personnel, assigned by senior leadership, are often too short and sporadic to provide a full understanding of the actual situation.

Furthermore, SPS from among civilian personnel are entirely deprived of the opportunity to study the practical component of their activities, particularly in specialties related to combat command, logistics, and support.

It is also important to note certain peculiarities in the mechanisms for filling teaching positions, such as the position of professor, which requires prior research dissertation defense, teaching experience, etc.

The requirement to have teaching experience and achievements specifically in the field of teaching activity automatically excludes the possibility of appointing an officer with practical combat experience to such a position.

Therefore, practically combining theory and practice by involving both an instructor with a high level of theoretical expertise and a mentor – an officer with extensive practical experience enables the effective conduct of all types of training sessions.

Currently, PME courses are conducted not only at the National Defense University of Ukraine.

Thus, PME courses at the operational and strategic levels are organized and conducted at the aforementioned university, while PME courses at the tactical level are conducted at MHEIs and MTU HEIs.

At the same time, as of today, PME courses can be conducted both separately and as part of the educational and professional programs of bachelor's degree (L1a and L1b courses) and master's degree (L1c course).

For example, at the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, PME courses – Basic tactical-level PME course (L1a), Specialized PME course (L1b), and Command PME course (L1c) – have been fully integrated into all educational and professional training programs for bachelor's and master's degree specializations.

However, it should be added that PME courses are primarily conducted to attain the appropriate level of military education (tactical, operational, strategic). This means that course participants develop the ability to solve service-related tasks at the corresponding level of military command, rather than acquiring specialized competencies in specific fields (with the exception of the specialized PME course (L1b)).

Currently, there are different perspectives within Ukraine's military education system regarding the content and structure of PME courses, particularly concerning the tactical-level command and staff course (L2) (hereinafter – L2 course). The core focus of this course is the study of the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP) [9], and there are ongoing discussions about whether it should be conducted separately for each specialization or for groups of specializations.

This debate is primarily driven by the requirement for officers to obtain the necessary level of military education for career advancement and promotion to higher military ranks.

For combat command specialties, the gradual completion of PME tactical-level courses follows a structured and systematic approach. An officer progresses through service, gains experience and gradually advances in rank and responsibility. For example:

platoon commander (after completing training at an MHEI, during which the service member completed the L1a course, acquiring the necessary military-professional competencies required for all platoon commanders in personnel management; and the L1b course, during which military-specialized competencies specific to the future commander's specialization (artillery, tank, reconnaissance units, etc.) are acquired; rank: "senior lieutenant").

company commander (after completing the L1c command course; rank: "captain").

battalion staff chief (after completing the L2 course; rank: "major").

At the same time, officers specializing in non-combat command fields, such as military translation, face specific challenges.

The core issue lies in the fact that, upon graduation, an officer in this specialization may immediately be assigned to positions in linguistic or international relations roles within strategic-level military command structures, often with an initial rank and position level higher ("captain", "major") than the baseline category of a platoon commander – "senior lieutenant".

At the same time, the key issue is that specialists in this field, under the existing personnel management approach, may go through their entire career without serving at the tactical unit level.

However, when becoming eligible for promotion to the next military rank, personnel departments will require the prospective "major" to present a certificate of successful completion of the L2 course.

The resolution of this issue leads to debates regarding the organization of a separate command and staff course for a specific category of specialties, which contradicts the fundamental purpose of PME courses.

However, returning to the content of tactical-level PME courses integrated into the educational and professional programs of bachelor's degree students, it is important to emphasize that the typical educational program of the L1a course [10] and the competency requirements that must be developed upon its completion are the same for all specialties (specializations).

For example, one of the military-professional competencies acquired during the course is: *“the ability to prepare the unit's standard weapons for combat use; effectively utilize the combat and technical capabilities of weapons during combat operations and training sessions with subordinate personnel; personally master techniques and methods of accurate fire with standard weapons against emerging and moving targets, both during the day and at night; manage the fire of subordinate units (fire support assets) during combat missions”*.

At the same time, the learning outcomes associated with this competency include: *“applying knowledge of the material structure of small arms, rules of shooting, operation, and maintenance of small arms; methods for organizing and conducting training for unit personnel; preparing weapons for use in both peacetime and combat conditions; and applying knowledge and skills in managing unit fire in combat”*.

This raises a critical issue regarding not only the availability of qualified instructor and teaching staff capable of implementing this training but also the presence of the necessary material and technical resources, including weapons and military equipment.

If for the Hetman Petro Sahaidachnyi National Army Academy and the Military Academy (Odesa) such training is standard, then for MTU HEIs such as the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, this activity differs from the profile of military specialist training.

In our opinion, the mentioned program requires revision in terms of clarifying its content in the context of the dynamic development of military affairs, as well as the need to consider the feasibility of separately developing the basic L1a course for combat command specialties and the basic L1a course for specialties not related to combat command.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of PME courses, it is necessary to first consider the following issues:

- 1) organizational structuring of PME courses within the current (prospective) structures of MHEIs and MTU HEIs;
- 2) analysis and revision of existing competencies acquired during the L1a course;
- 3) establishing a clear hierarchy of officer positions across all military occupational specialties at all levels of military command, defining the requirements for filling these positions considering the specific activities of military specialists, and justifying the necessity of completing specific PME courses.

2. The Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” [11] states: *“the quality of higher education is the compliance of the conditions for educational activities and learning outcomes with the requirements of legislation and higher education standards, professional and/or international standards (if available), as well as the needs of stakeholders and society, ensured through internal and external quality assurance procedures”*.

Additionally, according to the Recommendations of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance regarding the implementation of an internal quality assurance system: *“the internal (intra-university) quality assurance system aims to establish a framework for continuous institutional attention to education quality, including the review and improvement of courses and educational programs”* [12].

The implementation of quality assurance in higher education has also extended to military education in Ukraine. According to the provisions of the Concept for the transformation of military education, MHEIs and MTU HEIs are tasked with ensuring the quality of military education, implementing stakeholder responsibility for educational activities, enforcing legally established

requirements for quality assurance and guarantees in education, and introducing institutional audits of professional military education.

In accordance with the above, the quality management of military education is being actively implemented based on the approaches of NATO member states, particularly the Joint Directive “Education and Individual Training” (075-007). The Joint Directive provides for the establishment of a five-element (tiered) system: quality management, quality assurance, quality control, and inspection. These elements are classified as either proactive or reactive in nature.

According to the Joint Directive, the quality management system is understood as a comprehensive framework of quality standards, methodologies, and authorities—elements that enable a holistic approach to the educational process at all stages, from planning to reporting on completed training activities. The analysis of quality management measures in education has shown that it can be associated with an audit system in military education. Audits are conducted to provide recommendations to educational process participants regarding existing issues, identifying their causes, and suggesting paths for improvement.

At the same time, the primary beneficiary of quality management is the head of the MHEI (MTU HEI), who, based on the provided recommendations, makes the necessary management decisions to improve the educational process.

Additionally, one of the key participants in the quality management process is the learner. Maintaining constant communication with students allows for the identification of organizational challenges in the educational process.

Overall, this approach is not new but is widely known in the business sector as the *PDCA* (*Plan/Do/Check/Act*) cycle, also referred to as the Shewhart-Deming Cycle [13] – a four-step model used for continuous improvement. This approach is a fundamental part of Lean Management [14], a strategy aimed at efficient business management. The strategy was successfully applied by Toyota during the post-war recovery of Japan’s automotive industry. The PDCA approach focuses on business process improvement through planning and implementing solutions, testing them, and analyzing the results.

Taking this into account, as well as the provisions of the Joint Directive, one of the key principles of modern educational quality management is the Continuous Improvement Process (CIP), which involves a set of measures such as reporting, self-assessment, implementation, and review.

To initiate this process, specialized units (departments, offices) for quality assurance in educational activities and higher education have been established (or are being established) within MHEIs and MTU HEIs.

The practical establishment of quality assurance departments (units) has shown that the personnel of these departments, which are essentially expert bodies, should primarily consist of individuals with relevant experience in organizing and conducting the educational process. However, in practice, these units are staffed with personnel who lack sufficient experience and professional achievements in educational work.

This issue arises primarily due to the current approach to staffing policies and the classification of personnel categories and requirements for these units.

At present, even a senior lecturer of a department (assigned the 43rd tariff grade) does not receive a promotion in position or salary when serving in quality assurance units.

As a result, the requirements for personnel conducting expert evaluations, monitoring the educational process, and providing recommendations to the institution’s leadership are lower than those for departmental teaching staff, who directly implement educational activities.

Given the above, it is essential for staff quality management units with personnel who have relevant backgrounds in educational activities. To ensure high motivation for serving in such units, their personnel should have higher staffing categories and salaries compared to those directly involved in conducting educational processes.

However, if it is not possible to staff these units with military personnel who are experts in education, an alternative solution could be recruiting civilian employees of the Armed Forces of Ukraine from among experienced academic staff while ensuring appropriate salary levels.

For the effective functioning of this unit and to maintain high motivation among its personnel, the transition from implementing educational activities to expert evaluation work should be considered a promotion.

At the same time, to enable experts in education to effectively fulfill their duties and produce impartial and objective assessments, a priority task for the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine is to ensure competitive salaries for these professionals within the labor market.

Summarizing the above, it can be stated that the introduction of a quality management system in MHEIs and MTU HEIs will undoubtedly contribute to improving the educational process by providing objective and impartial proposals (recommendations) aimed at its enhancement.

3. Next, it is proposed to examine specific problematic issues in the training of military specialists at the bachelor's degree level.

Currently, a pressing issue is the development of necessary physical fitness among cadets of MHEIs and MTU HEIs, as well as the assessment of their physical preparedness.

The full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation and the resulting armed resistance have necessitated the justified dispersal of personnel, including training units. Security measures in response to constant enemy air threats do not allow for full-scale outdoor training.

At the same time, it can be stated that the physical education system in Ukraine does not fully ensure the development of youth's physical abilities during their schooling, nor does it provide a gradual increase in their physical capabilities.

In an ideal physical education system, a student would progressively develop physical abilities, ensuring that by the time they take entrance exams for military educational institutions, they are physically prepared to complete the required physical training program.

Additionally, restrictive measures introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic, which lasted for several years, have significantly impacted the overall physical health of young people.

As a result, today's reality is that many prospective applicants who wish to pursue a military career are not always physically prepared to pass the entrance fitness tests required for admission to MHEIs and MTU HEIs.

Given the shortage of trained officer personnel in the Defense Forces, there is a need for a systematic approach to the initial physical development of prospective applicants.

A possible solution to this issue could be the implementation of a state reform (government initiative) in the field of school education. This reform could include a set of measures aimed at sufficient physical development throughout schooling.

Additionally, it is necessary to introduce a specialized program integrated into the curricula of graduating classes for students planning to apply to military educational institutions.

The existing physical fitness standards, if developed gradually and systematically throughout secondary education, are achievable for the vast majority of students.

Analyzing the issue of students mastering the prescribed training programs, it is necessary to focus on the lack of motivation among cadets of MHEIs and MTU HEIs for successful learning.

As of today, since the introduction of martial law in Ukraine, a problematic issue has been identified in the training of military specialists with higher education.

Specifically, there is no legal mechanism for dismissing cadets due to academic failure or violations of contract terms, particularly regarding termination of education contracts during martial law. This is due to the absence of such a provision in Ukrainian legislation as a legal basis for contract termination.

According to Clause 36 of the Presidential Decree of Ukraine No. 1153/2008 "On the Regulations for Military Service of Citizens of Ukraine in the Armed Forces of Ukraine", and Clause

3, Part Five, Article 26 of the Law of Ukraine “On Military Duty and Military Service”, a training contract is terminated, and a cadet is dismissed during martial law only in the following cases:

“For health reasons – based on a conclusion (resolution) of the Military Medical Commission regarding unfitness for military service, with removal from military records; In connection with the entry into force of a court conviction imposing imprisonment, restriction of liberty, or deprivation of military rank” [15].

Thus, cadets of MHEIs and MTU HEIs lack motivation for successful learning due to the absence of grounds for dismissal in cases of academic failure.

This leads to disregard for recommendations and instructions from the academic staff of educational institutions regarding increased efforts in studying.

Moreover, the lack of legal regulation in this area results in the graduation of officers who, during their studies, failed to acquire the necessary competencies in their specialties. This leads to low professional qualifications when performing duties in the military.

As a consequence, poor decision-making by an unqualified officer may result in unjustified losses of personnel and state resources due to ineffective command and management decisions.

4. Alongside the development of physical fitness and the lack of motivation among cadets of MHEIs and MTU HEIs, another pressing issue is the insufficient acquisition of language competencies among both military education students and personnel within the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine.

According to the Roadmap for Enhancing Language Training in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (2021–2025) [16], the strategic goal is to ensure a rapid increase in the number of personnel with foreign language proficiency, achieving a minimum proficiency level of SLP 2 “Functional” under NATO STANAG 6001 for officers, sergeants, and civilian employees of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. This is necessary for Ukraine’s Membership Action Plan with NATO, the implementation of NATO policies and standards at all levels of military command, service in international organizations, participation in multinational military exercises, international cooperation activities, peacekeeping and security operations, and education abroad.

The document outlines a set of measures aimed at developing language competencies among Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces personnel, recognizing language proficiency as a key requirement for Ukraine’s Euro-Atlantic integration in the defense sector, including military education.

The implementation of these measures was planned across different levels of military education: tactical, operational, and strategic.

At the tactical level, the goal was to gradually build capabilities to ensure that graduates of MHEIs and MTU HEIs attain a minimum proficiency level of SLP 2 by 2025, with at least 20% of final-year courses taught in a foreign language.

It is important to note that the provisions of the roadmap were developed before the full-scale invasion of the Russian Federation in 2024. The onset of full-scale aggression has negatively impacted the organization of the educational process, including foreign language learning.

The conditions of constant air threats, personnel dispersal, and the priority of acquiring military-professional and military-specialized competencies in direct fields of expertise have objectively limited the ability to prioritize foreign language education.

In addition to the above, the development of language competencies among all personnel within the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of Ukraine must be comprehensive, forming a system that covers the entire spectrum of issues related to the development and continuous improvement of subject-specific competencies.

The main issue in this area is the lack of a centralized competence hub (coordination center) for language competency development within the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

Such a center could be established as a Language Agency of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, with the following key tasks:

1) *initiating and participating in the development of policies* (in collaboration with relevant structural units within the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine), identifying priority tasks in foreign language training and ensuring their primary implementation;

2) *coordinating and monitoring* personnel training in foreign language acquisition.

The improvement of this process would involve a comprehensive set of measures, including the development of regulatory frameworks, personnel management, and institutional capacity-building in MHEIs and MTU HEIs engaged in conducting language courses, including enhancing instructor and teaching staff, reviewing and updating curricula, and developing online courses.

It is important to note that, when analyzing ways to enhance the language competencies of personnel and students, and considering the current number of personnel and the actual capabilities of MHEIs and MTU HEIs, it is advisable to explore not only the possibility of sending personnel to partner countries for language training but also applying the outsourcing principle. This would involve engaging external (civilian) commercial organizations that are certified and specialize in foreign language training courses.

At the same time, the process of improving language competencies among personnel must be strictly managed at all stages of implementation: from the selection of candidates for foreign language training based on specific priorities to their continued support throughout their military careers.

At the conclusion of this analysis, it is worth mentioning a government initiative introduced by the Government of Ukraine to encourage English language learning and proficiency at the national level.

According to Clause 6, Article 4 of the Law of Ukraine «On the Use of the English Language in Ukraine» [17]: «individuals holding positions specified in Parts One and Two of Article 3 of this Law shall receive a 10% salary bonus for English language proficiency at a level not lower than B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), as determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine».

Thus, given the current government initiatives and financial incentives for English language proficiency, this measure will undoubtedly motivate Ukrainian citizens to learn the language.

Furthermore, the mandatory requirement for English proficiency when filling specific positions in the state and military administration sectors will become a key motivational factor for language acquisition.

Additionally, when analyzing motivation for education and foreign language learning, an issue has been identified: the lack of motivation among students and academic staff to actively participate in international programs, including the Development Enhancing Education Program (DEEP).

At present, SPS and cadets are actively engaged in various international programs for personal and institutional development.

However, participation in relevant online (offline) courses (events) is practically not encouraged by leadership. For example, if an academic staff member applies for a course in a partner country under the DEEP program to acquire relevant language or professional competencies, successfully completes the training, and implements the acquired skills and competencies in the educational process, this does not directly influence career advancement.

It is also necessary to emphasize the practical implementation of the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” particularly regarding the right to academic mobility for higher education students, including cadets (trainees) of MHEIs and MTU HEIs of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.

According to the law, academic mobility is defined as: “the ability of participants in the educational process to study, teach, intern, or conduct scientific activities at another higher education institution (scientific institution) within Ukraine or abroad”.

Academic mobility is an essential component for the successful implementation of the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS) and for shaping an individual educational trajectory for higher education students.

At the same time, Article 62 of the law states that higher education students have the right to academic mobility, including international mobility.

However, the Regulations on the Implementation of the Right to Academic Mobility [18] specify that these provisions do not apply to students (doctoral candidates) of military institutions of professional pre-higher and higher education (institutions of professional pre-higher and higher education with specific learning conditions), as well as to employees of such institutions.

Thus, the existing restrictions on academic mobility for cadets (trainees) of MHEIs and MTU HEIs do not facilitate the promotion of international programs, particularly Erasmus+ (the European Union's international cooperation program in education, youth, and sports) [19].

Discussion

The scientific novelty of the research results and their practical significance were confirmed during discussions with the personnel of the Training Department and the Quality Assurance Department of the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv.

Conclusion

The objective of this study has been successfully achieved. Key problematic issues have been identified that adversely affect the development of PME, the implementation of education quality management mechanisms, the motivation of higher education applicants to engage in learning, and the active involvement of educational process participants in international programs and academic mobility initiatives.

Based on the analysis of the issues outlined, the following conclusions are drawn:

1. **The absence of a centralized competence center (or “hub”) for PME within the organizational structures of military higher education institutions (MHEIs) and military training units of higher education institutions (MTU HEIs)** negatively impacts the quality, consistency, and efficiency of PME course implementation. The institutional structuring and resourcing of PME programs should be prioritized in each MHEI and MTU HEI. The National Defense University of Ukraine exemplifies best practices in this area, offering structured courses such as the *Joint Staff Officers Course (L-3)*, *Senior Leadership Course at the Strategic Level (L-4)*, and *Strategic Management and State Policy Course (L-5)*. The incorporation of mentoring practices within these programs ensures the effective integration of theoretical and practical components. For officers whose specializations lie outside operational command, logistics, or force support, participation in the *L-2 Command and Staff PME Course* remains a challenge. Addressing this issue necessitates the development of a coherent and vertically integrated PME framework across all military occupational specialties and command echelons.
2. **The current system of education quality management within the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine** requires a comprehensive reassessment of staffing policies and the qualification requirements for personnel responsible for quality assurance. The effective institutionalization of this function depends on the establishment of a qualified and competent workforce.
3. **The existing model of physical education in general secondary schools** does not adequately prepare prospective applicants for the physical demands associated with entry into MHEIs and MTU HEIs. To bridge this gap, it is imperative to develop and implement a national-level program for the progressive enhancement of youth physical fitness, beginning at the pre-university level.

4. **The absence of a dedicated competence center within the Ministry of Defense for language training and language skills development** impedes the systemic advancement of foreign language proficiency among military personnel. To overcome this structural deficiency, it is proposed to establish a *Language Training Agency* under the Ministry of Defense to coordinate institutional development and standardize foreign language instruction.
5. **Amendments to Presidential Decree No. 1153/2008 “On the Regulations for Military Service of Citizens of Ukraine in the Armed Forces of Ukraine”** are required to introduce a legal basis for contract termination due to academic underperformance. This measure would serve as a regulatory tool for upholding academic standards in military education.
6. **The existing regulations governing academic mobility for higher education students enrolled in MHEIs and MTU HEIs** require revision. A more flexible and inclusive legal framework is needed to ensure that military students have equitable access to international academic opportunities, consistent with broader national policies on higher education mobility.

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Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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