

The Characteristics and Practices of West Point in Real-combat Teaching

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Abstract. West Point is famous in the world not only as a military academy but also for its outstanding real-combat education. Firstly, the real-combat education system of West Point is introduced from the cultivation, the organizational structure, the teachers and the setting of curriculum system. Secondly, the basic experiences of the real-combat education of West Point are summarized. Finally, the specific practices of real-combat teaching.

West Point is the only college to recruit high school graduates for bachelor degree education, to cultivate growth officer by the U.S. army. The mission of West Point is “to educate train and inspire the Corps of Cadets so that each graduate is a commissioned leader of character to the values of ‘Duty, Honor, Country’ and prepared for a career of professional excellence and service to the Nation as an officer in the United States Army”. Cadets are required to complete a series of challenging experiences, in order to realize requirements for the development in the mode of real-combat.

1. The cultivation highlights real-combating concept

West Point attaches great importance both to the education of theories, and the basic training of military skills and calculation of the basic mental qualities.

Especially in the aspect of military, through strict military life, soldiers’ developing education and military theory education and training, West Point cultivates and improves cadets' leadership skills and abilities of adapting environment, instilling soldiers’ sense of values, duty and discipline, In this way, the cadets master the combat military knowledge and military technology which the junior officers should own.

In the aspect of sport, West Point trains cadets’ will, self-control ability, courageous and resolute temperament, cultivates their sensitive response, strong sense of competition and struggle spirit. By the way, cadets will have an iron constitution to satisfy the needs of the real-combat environment.

2. The organizational structure follows the setting of real-combat

West Point sets up a complete management, teaching and logistics system. The foundation of this agency is reasonable; meanwhile, each department has an unambiguous division of work to keep the highest spirits of all staff and keep the consistency with the U.S. army troops. This facilitates the real-combat teaching in West Point.

The principal (other institutions may call the dean) of West Point is not only the head of the West Point, but also the head of West Point’s military fortress (garrison commands).Fortress (garrison commands) commander is the primary assistant of principal in fortress and community affairs management and processing. He has responsibilities for achieving high efficiency, high quality and economize in terms of supporting various departments. The dean's office and cadet corps offer martial courses, outdoor education and training. Most of the real-combat teaching tasks are implemented by the brigade tactical department, military education department and physical education department.

Military education is led by the commander of cadet teams and the military education department shall be responsible for the implementation of courses and teaching plan in real-combat.

The military education department and cadet teams commanders at all levels are in common responsible for the combat field training. The cadet teams have 4 regiment tactical officers and each of them has respective staff officers. Each staff officer is equipped with 1 cadet cadre as assistant. These people participate in joint management under the leadership of the commander of the cadet teams. Each cadet company is equipped with one tactical officer who is a leader and manager in a company; meanwhile, he is also an adviser to the cadet cadre. These tactical officers are responsible for teaching, organizing, implementing and guiding the real-combat course and training together with military education department and physical education department.

3. Focus on teachers' real-combat experience

On the one hand, military instructors in West Point mostly are captain or major, and all of them are decorated servicemen. Before they came to West Point, they have already served in the army for 6 to 12 years, and have obtained master's degrees. They know clearly how to develop suitable combat office for the army.

On the other hand, military instructors in West Point carry out personal rotation system. Every year, about one-third of the instructors will back to the troops. As a result, every year, school has to filter teachers from officers graduated from the graduate institute, to supply the gaps. Meanwhile, in order to choose good young officers from the graduate institute for further study to ensure the number of teachers, each department has to negotiate seriously with the personnel department of all arms.

The setting of curriculum system is consistent with the real-combat target

The education plan of West Point is formulated according to its mission, principles and objectives. It fully embodies the basic ideas of modern military education: "Focus on the changing world, focus on the complex future, focus on the modernization of military technology and equipment". It reflects the differences between the military education and ordinary higher education, and shows the special requirements of real-combat talents in knowledge structure, quality and ability and so on.

West Point thinks that promising military leaders must be familiar with basic military principles, master essential military technologies, understand the role they played in the army and the using method of the army in the battle. They must keep in mind the ethics and code of conduct of professional military officers, and strive to comply with these specifications and standards strictly and exemplarily.

A. Military education plans train cadets' ability of real-combat

Under the guidance of military education program, cadets learn the course of military science and art of leadership. Through which, they will possess the basic knowledge of offensive and defensive tactics of company and platoon, and of the leadership and management. In the process of education and training, combining PE with plenty of physical exercise and match closely, makes the cadets' physical quality reached the standard of professional soldiers. So they can adapt themselves to harsh military life and environment. Summer outdoor military training makes cadets have the opportunity to apply the theoretical knowledge and tactical principle, which they have learned on the books, to practice flexibly. They promote their abilities in practice, and build up their bodies meanwhile, so that they can maintain good physical qualities all the time.

The aim of military education is, by classroom teaching and field training and developing at ordinary times, cadets can get trainings in the aspects of military theory education and military skill training to cadets. It cultivates cadets' necessary basic leadership and management skills in military career. It improves their adaptabilities to fight against the hard life of military harsh environment. When they suffer great mental and physical pressure, or be in urgent circumstances, they could be able to think and judge correctly, and make the right decisions. It is designed to follow the teaching of the "Responsibility, Honor, Country", establishing cadets the ethics and values peculiar to the soldiers, setting up the high sense of responsibility and honor and dedication to them.

Theoretical education

There are 6 military theory education courses set in West Point. At the first year, they learn 2 courses, namely *THE MILITARY PROFESSIONAL EDUCATION* and *MAP INTERPRETATION AND TEAM TACTICS*. Main contents of them are traditional behavior standard professional of soldier, offensive and defensive tactics in company or platoon and mark identification. There are 2 courses in the second year, namely *THE CONTRACT TACTICS IN COUNTER-CONTAINMENT* and *TERRAIN ANALYSIS*. Main point of which is training cadets' ability of obtaining and gather intelligence, by interpreting and deciphering satellite and aerial images from various parts of the world. In the third year, they need to study *SYSTEM MANAGEMENT IN ARMY AND PUBLIC SPEAKING*. In the fourth year it is *GUIDANCE IN THE ARMY*. Main contents are: sports coach, guide of army life and art of military leadership.

Field training

Field training is arranged in each summer, a total of 30 weeks training. The purpose is to make the future officers will not only experience the life of soldiers, but also to know and understand it from a higher perspective. Strict discipline and hard trainings helps to strengthen personal self-esteem and self-confidence and sense of responsibility. Friendship and collectivism spirit born in common life will infiltrate into all aspects of cadets' life in the future, from which they will benefit for life.

B. The sports education plans Improve cadets' quality of real-combat

The sports education plan has the equally important position with scientific culture education and military education plan in West Point. Physical curriculum is essential basic course, which is critical to cultivate cadets' abilities of real-combat.

West Point asks every cadet to become an athlete of a movement, and to take part in a school sport team, or to participate in a sport club. A third of all cadets participate in intercollegiate sports competition teams.

West Point thinks that physical exercise is not only just building our bodies, but also training soldiers' mental quality. Combat in sports field is tense and fierce, which has many similarities with battle. It needs keeping a clear mind in the case that both parties are in the extremely tight situation, and responding and judging quickly in all kinds of complicated situation. It train cadets in maximize by perseverance and self-control ability and determination, courage, the temperament of the agile thought, and competition consciousness. In addition, the collective cooperation, mutual help, after a victory to bear hardships and stand hard work, brave strong and honor the pursuit of the spirit can also gradually formed in the competition, which a qualified soldier should own. Cadets' enterprises, abilities of organization, command and coordination will be fully performed in the competition.

Theoretical education

Cadets must learn 8 courses of sports theory in the past 4 years. Contents are: the basic principle of sports, physical basic quality training, the organization and teaching of sports skills and sports and competition, etc.

Sports club

Sports club delegations are organized by cadet activity council, most of them are military class project teams. They participate in seasonal race between clubs or universities. Such as directional cross-country team, handball team and parachute team, they have won trophies in the national colleges and universities tournament for many times. Parachute teams often perform in a variety of events all over the country. Marathon athletic team composed of 25 cadets takes part in the marathon held in Boston each year.

Intramural sports

According to everyone's interests and hobbies, every afternoon from Monday to Thursday, cadets can have a variety of sports in each playground in school. The internal sports could not only exercise the leadership skills of cadets, but also can adjust their collaboration, build their bodies but also make them refreshed and full of zest, and get fun.

4. The specific practices of real-combat teaching

West Point thinks commanding officer in the future must master the basic concept and skills of

the army, and understand the function and activity of each component in army. By learning science and command of military, cadets accept detachments tactics and commands of basic knowledge education. Sports and wide range of school curriculum learning make cadets adapt to operational environment and physical demands in the army. Two to three summer trainings in the field provide cadets many opportunities to apply knowledge into practice, and at the same time maintain good physical quality to meet the demand of forces for officers. Classroom education and field practice co-cultivate cadets' basic leadership skills, which is very important for being an officer. Strong obligation and responsibility are especially important. In addition to discipline, each cadet needs to learn how think and reflect within time and have good judgment, even under the pressure of mentality and physicality.

The first academic year

The first day into the West Point, the freshmen complete the transformation from civilians to cadets. From the first challenging day, new cadets turn into the six-week courses of high strength basic training. Courses teach them how to be a warrior and cadet. They learn to answer "Sir or Madam", learn to regularize behavior according to the traditional military etiquette, learn to wear uniform, and learn to sort room and participate in the parade in accordance with the strict standards. Hours of hard physical training prepares them for marching over a long distance, abseiling without a harness, shooting with rifle and tactical maneuvering. These are parts of the field of basic skills training for them. Like all recruits, they learn to respond quickly and accurately to the commander under pressure from mentality and physicality. Another reason of this kind of training is: if new cadets experience the recruitment in troops, they will be more insight and understanding as an officer. What also important is, common experience of rigorous training makes the new cadets have firm friends and team spirit.

At the end of this phase of training, new cadets joined cadet corps officially. Each new member is assigned to 1 cadet company of 36 companies of the cadet corps. Other military training course in one grade will introduce the military knowledge to the cadets, focusing on the military discipline, officers' professional ethics and the military establishment. Meanwhile, they also train cadets how to mark identification of the team tactics. School also emphasizes physical exercise. They ask cadets keeping exercising during the period of school and also the army.

The second academic year

After the end of the holidays, the second grade cadets report their arrivals to Buckner camp of West Point, accepting a six-week outdoor military training. Training subjects main include: infantry tactics, artillery shooting, weapons operating, military aviation, military project, field communication and survival. Cadets learn to be familiar with the tanks, cavalry, mechanized infantry, field artillery, combat engineers and air defense operation within a week in Kentucky fort Knox. Main points of those courses are unit operations on the ground. Cadets can apply what they learn in classroom to the operation. Six weeks of training imitates the real battleground as much as possible, which has strict requirements on physicality and mentality. Second-year cadets experience part of the battlefield environment, learning skills and requirements which are the cornerstones of the combat brigade. The joint action of military science education of grade two students emphasizes company or group and task force of military action.

The third academic year

In the summer of third grade, cadets come to Miami's army to accept the leadership quality training. They participate in military trainings as monitor in the cadets' basic training and field training. Some cadets attend the training of cadet cadres. They participate in the training of new recruits in one of the six recruit training troops from the mainland. Some other cadets accept leadership qualities training in the army officers training class, and participate in the regular army. Some cadets become the second grade cadets' monitor in Buckner training camp. They train second grade cadets and new cadets of the basic training period. Cadets practice the knowledge and skills they have learned in each course of study. At the end of the leadership qualities training course, the cadets are chosen to participate in a variety of military training courses of rich content. Those training include: operations in Gerry, the north of Alaska; mountain operations in Jericho fort,

Vermont; airborne operation in Fort Benning, Georgia; airborne operations in West Point. Military science course for grade three introduces operations of the Mechanized division and tank division to cadets, as well as their leader role as a platoon in the future. Course emphasizes the process of using computer simulating tactical scenarios to develop military command procedures and drills and ordering the forces.

The fourth academic year

The long-awaited fourth grade accompanies the privilege of more freedom and more responsibility. In the summer before the last academic year start, half of the fourth grade cadets are in charge of the training of grade three cadets in Buckner and the basic training of new cadets. The other cadets accept the training of leadership quality of the army, and join regular troops in Germany, Panama, Alaska, Hawaii, South Korea or the United States. From the start of the academic year, some cadets of four grade are selected to be the head of the cadets from cadet corps of 4000 people to platoon of 40 people or staff officer managing various kinds of affairs of cadet corps. Opportunities for cadets participating in planning, organizing and directing emerge in endlessly.

Courses for graduates preparing for joining the regular troops include: military professional, ethical and moral, military establishment, standard operational procedures, and how to command a platoon, methods of anti terrorism and the role of sergeant. Service consulting lesson provide cadets with how to do in conditions of various departments, to help them select a department and initial inauguration of forces, and to promote their transition to the regular troops. The commencement week marks the end of a phase and the beginning of a new stage. Cadets say goodbye to the color hat, putting on the cap of the second lieutenant of the U.S. army, and became a second lieutenant.

5.Summary

As West Point had its 200th birthday in 2002, there may be certain things that will change in the academic program and physical structure of the environment. But the motto—Duty, Honor, Country—which was adopted in 1898, will never change.

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