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THE CURRENT STATE OF HIGHER MILITARY EDUCATION IN AZERBAIJAN

Abstract. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the current state of higher military education in Azerbaijan. The aim of the research is to examine the institutional, pedagogical, and technological aspects of the higher military education system, identify existing challenges, and scientifically outline the prospects for future development. The article employs analytical and comparative methods based on both local and international sources, with particular emphasis on adaptation efforts aligned with NATO and Turkish models. The research demonstrates that higher military education in Azerbaijan is primarily structured in accordance with the country's strategic security policies, and certain reforms have been implemented in recent years. However, issues such as the adaptation of curricula to real combat conditions, the implementation of technology-based training, personnel shortages, and material-technical support remain pressing. The article also identifies new research directions in the context of contemporary challenges. These include the integration of artificial intelligence and cybersecurity into military education, the expansion of programs focused on leadership and psychological resilience, and the role of gender and social factors in military education. The findings suggest that comprehensive and interdisciplinary approaches not only enhance the effectiveness of higher military education but also accelerate Azerbaijan's alignment with international standards in military training. This article presents valuable results from both theoretical and practical perspectives and serves as a conceptual basis for future research.

Keywords: Higher Military Education; Azerbaijani Armed Forces; Military Curriculum; Security and Defense; NATO Standards.

INTRODUCTION / ВСТУП

Statement of the problem / Постановка проблеми. Military higher education is one of the strategic pillars of the national security system of any state. Azerbaijan's geographical location, geopolitical realities, and its increasing military-political role in the post-conflict period necessitate the development of a high-quality and modern military education system. The aim of this article is to analyze the current state of military higher education in Azerbaijan, identify existing problems, and present scientifically grounded proposals for future development directions.

Analysis of (major) recent research and publications / Аналіз (основних) останніх досліджень і публікацій. The organization and development of military higher education in Azerbaijan are closely linked to the country's security policy, the military-political environment, and its position within the system of international relations. Following the restoration of independence, the growing need for personnel in the military sector led to the establishment of military higher education institutions and the modernization of existing structures.

In the academic landscape of Azerbaijan, research on military higher education has generally focused on three main directions:

a) Analysis and improvement of the educational system.

One of the most frequently encountered works in this area includes articles published within the framework of the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Defense. In the textbook *"Modern Pedagogical Technologies in Military Education"* by Sh. Aghayev, E. Hashimov, and A. Talibov, the theoretical foundations and management issues of designing the pedagogical process within the framework of military education technologies are comprehensively addressed.

The first part of the textbook is titled "Theoretical Foundations of Modern Pedagogical Technologies in Military Education." This section provides an in-depth discussion of the system of pedagogical sciences, the application of modern pedagogical technologies in military education, the concept of the education system, the development of higher education in Azerbaijan, the role of new pedagogical technologies in military personnel training, the subject of military didactics, the balance between tradition and modernity in the learning process, and the systematic design of the pedagogical process in military education. It also covers active learning technologies and pedagogical games used in specialized higher military institutions, developmental and distance learning technologies, the diagnostics of training quality in military education, and the technological foundations of instructors' roles in specialized higher education institutions.

The second part focuses on “Issues of Specialist Training and Management Technologies in Specialized Military Educational Institutions.” This section analyzes the pedagogical-psychological aspects and technological issues of organizing training in specialized military institutions.

It explores the content of education and its pedagogical foundations, the technology of organizing students' independent work, the socio-pedagogical content of character education and the technology of the educational process, pedagogical innovations, and the theoretical-methodological foundations of managing specialized military education institutions. Additionally, it examines the technology of management processes and organizational-methodological activities, all in accordance with the requirements of the relevant curriculum areas [12].

b) International integration and alignment with NATO standards.

The article “Theoretical and Methodological Foundations of Military Education: Contemporary Approaches and Analysis of Source Base” by M. Mammadzade is particularly noteworthy in this field. The author conducts a comparative analysis of the military education systems of NATO and Russia, examining both their strengths and weaknesses.

The article also emphasizes that the theory and methodology of military education represent a dynamic field, shaped by the synthesis of **historical** experience and modern technology. Approaches grounded in classical theoretical principles are now complemented by analytical thinking, technological adaptability, and ethical leadership standards.

Experiences from NATO member states and Azerbaijan demonstrate that an effective military education system must be capable of preparing leaders and forces who can respond flexibly to evolving security realities. The article further suggests that in the future, artificial intelligence and cybersecurity are expected to become increasingly central components of military education [9].

c) Personnel training and academic staff.

The article titled “Characteristics of Pedagogical Activity and Professional Mastery of Teachers in Specialized Military Educational Institutions” by T. Jabbarova and R. Ibrahimov provides an in-depth examination of the pedagogical activity of instructors in military education institutions.

The authors explore the defining characteristics of teachers' professional conduct, the essence of pedagogical mastery, and the structural components of pedagogical activity, including constructive, organizational, and communicative functions.

The article also offers a detailed discussion of the fundamental elements of professional activity, highlighting the specific features of research-oriented work undertaken by educators. Furthermore, it elaborates on the distinctive aspects of pedagogical functions within military educational settings and emphasizes the core requirements for professional effectiveness and success among teachers in such institutions [11].

AIM AND TASKS / МЕТА ТА ЗАВДАННЯ

The primary **objective** of this research is to analyze the current state of military higher education in Azerbaijan based on scientific principles, to examine the institutional, pedagogical, and technological aspects of the system, and to identify its development prospects. Military higher education plays a crucial role not only in ensuring national security but also in the formation of strategic human capital. Therefore, comprehensive investigation of this field is of both scientific and practical significance.

In accordance with the specified goal, the following **tasks** are set in the article:

1) Explore how military education in Azerbaijan has transformed in the post-conflict period in response to new challenges, and to identify the reforms implemented in this context. Special attention is given to curriculum modernization, the assimilation of international military education practices (particularly those based on NATO and Turkish models), the integration of information and communication technologies into the teaching process, and the strengthening of personnel capacity.

2) Analyze the legal and regulatory framework as well as the governance model of military higher education in Azerbaijan, with the goal of identifying existing gaps, areas requiring improvement, and mechanisms for more effective decision-making. By synthesizing current research works, this study also aims to reveal academic gaps in the field and propose directions for future investigations.

3) Contribute to improving the efficiency of Azerbaijan's military education system and to enhance understanding of the functional significance of military higher education as a key component of the national security architecture.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK / ТЕОРЕТИЧНІ ОСНОВИ

The theoretical foundations of this research are based on various pedagogical, military-strategic, and social sciences that explain the nature, objectives, and functions of military higher education. Within this framework, higher military education is no longer limited to the transmission of professional

military knowledge alone. Unlike in the past, it now emphasizes additional factors that influence military decision-making processes. These include traditional and asymmetric warfare, security and counter-terrorism, modern weapons systems and nuclear threats, as well as the strategic significance of space and information systems. At the same time, the core areas of combat functions – such as command (leadership), maneuver, security (survivability), fire support, operational capability, and information management – must be brought to the forefront [5].

In the realm of theoretical activity, the principles of classical and modern military pedagogy have been studied. Specifically, the principles for organizing instruction in higher military education institutions should be applied not only during training sessions but also in extracurricular activities to enhance both acquired competencies and overall quality of life. One critical element influencing students' autonomy and self-regulation is the construction of an appropriate behavioral model.

In some cases, shortcomings in this area lead to inconsistencies in training outcomes. For this reason, scholars have begun to explore the impact of contemporary strategies on the behavioral management of military learners. One of the most effective strategies involves identifying and applying methods that prevent the emergence of behavioral problems. Although each learner has unique interests and needs, instructors must implement appropriate guidelines to mitigate potential issues proactively [8].

The theoretical framework also takes into account the technological transformation of education, including simulation-based training, cybersecurity courses, and the integration of artificial intelligence. The analysis shows that a modern understanding of military higher education must not rely solely on traditional disciplinary models, but should instead embrace interdisciplinary and technology-oriented approaches.

In conclusion, the theoretical basis of this research is constructed upon both national and international experiences and scholarly perspectives. This approach allows for military higher education to be explored not only as a state institution but also as a strategic and socio-scientific entity.

Stages of Military Higher Education in Azerbaijan

The initial stage of military higher education in Azerbaijan covers the early 1990s and was accompanied by the difficulties of the transitional period. At that time, the core personnel of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces consisted primarily of officers educated during the Soviet era. However, beginning in 1992, legal and organizational foundations were established for the preparation of a national officer corps. In 1997, the Military Academy of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan was founded, serving as the country's first center for military

scientific research and officer training. The academy has played a critical role in shaping the national military elite by offering advanced training for officers in command and staff specializations.

The next stage witnessed the creation of various military higher education institutions and the improvement of existing schools. From the early 2000s onward, specialized institutions such as the Azerbaijan Higher Military School, the Air Force School, and the Naval School expanded their operations. These institutions began to train officer personnel in line with the demands of modern military science and technology. Curricula started to include topics such as international military law, modern weapons systems, cybersecurity, psychological preparedness, and management technologies.

International cooperation has also played a significant role in the development of military higher education institutions. Within the framework of NATO's "Partnership for Peace" program, Azerbaijani officers gained the opportunity to study at foreign military institutions and participate in experience exchange programs. Through this collaboration, Azerbaijan's military education system began integrating into the Western model, placing emphasis on flexibility, analytical thinking, and modern leadership skills in training programs. Compliance with international standards became a key issue during this phase and served as a stimulus for the modernization of the military educational environment.

Within the framework of army building and the implementation of risk-free national strategies in the independent Republic of Azerbaijan, the formalization and development of the military training system has become one of the country's primary priorities. In particular, the geopolitical realities and technological advancements of the modern era have necessitated not only proficiency in combat tactics but also a high level of engineering competence among military personnel. In this context, the development of both practical combat engineering capabilities and military engineering training systems in the liberated territories has become an integral part of Azerbaijan's national defense concept. Military engineering units have played a critical role in conducting demining operations across these areas.

The evolution of Azerbaijan's military engineering education has transitioned from the post-Soviet pedagogical model to a nationally grounded, interactive, and technology-driven structure. The achievements attained in this sphere are not only related to the establishment of relevant educational institutions, but are also closely linked to the completion and modernization of curricula, the professionalization of academic staff, the enhancement of international engagement, and the expansion of technological infrastructure.

The current objective of military engineering education is to analyze this transformation process through pedagogical lenses, particularly in terms of its key developmental stages and structural characteristics. The ultimate aim is to derive evidence-based conclusions regarding the future prospects for the advancement of military engineering education in Azerbaijan.

The pedagogical development strategy of military engineering education in the Republic of Azerbaijan demonstrates that the reforms carried out in this field have been comprehensive, systematic, and strategically oriented. From the early years of independence, the formalization of military engineering education was deemed a vital necessity. In this direction, the establishment of specialized educational institutions, the nationalization of the curriculum, and integration with international standards were identified as key priorities. As a result, training programs have facilitated the development of core competencies such as technical skills, leadership potential, problem-solving, quantitative efficiency, and strategic decision-making.

One of the most significant achievements in the development of military engineering education has been the establishment of practical learning and field-based training foundations. In this context, the integration of innovative technologies – such as simulation systems, geospatial information tools, generosity-driven engineering models, and computer-aided design (CAD) – has become increasingly important for enhancing the effectiveness of engineering processes. Moreover, scholarship programs in collaboration with NATO and other international partners have enabled the inclusion of global scientific and pedagogical approaches within the field.

Nonetheless, there are still ongoing challenges that must be addressed to ensure the sustainable development of military engineering education. These include the further specialization of faculties, the rapid advancement of academic staff, the formalization of research and innovation centers, and a broader understanding and application of international practices. Addressing these issues is critical to equipping the Azerbaijani Armed Forces with military engineers capable of operating in a technologically advanced defense environment. Consequently, military engineering education in Azerbaijan has evolved not only as a domain of technical instruction but also as one of the strategic pillars of contemporary military pedagogy and as a core component of the national risk-free defense concept [3].

In today's context, the military higher education system in Azerbaijan goes beyond the mere training of officers. It also contributes to the conduct of military research, the formation of national military doctrine, and the development of military-strategic thinking in the region. To this end, military higher education

institutions have established research centers, military science laboratories, and training infrastructures equipped with simulation technologies. Furthermore, new educational modules have been introduced in areas such as military pedagogy and psychology, military translation, and military journalism.

In the modern era, military journalism education is not formally offered as a distinct academic specialization within higher education institutions in Azerbaijan. However, it has been increasingly supported through various training courses. Since 2015, training programs have been conducted for media representatives covering topics such as "operating in extreme situations," "psychological preparedness," "logical and practical norms," and "military field ethics" [7]. These courses aim to enhance the operational capabilities of journalists working in high-risk environments, ensuring their activities meet safety and legal standards.

Notably, in 2021, practical training sessions – constituting 60 % of the program – were organized in cooperation with Turkey, Anadolu Agency, and TİKA under the theme of "Military Journalism" [1]. This format was designed to simulate real-life conditions at the front line and to integrate journalistic activities into military field contexts. However, despite such initiatives, significant academic gaps remain in the formal establishment of military journalism as a specialized discipline. Some journalists have criticized the absence of structured academic training, arguing that a lack of specialization impedes the professional development of military journalism and necessitates a formal higher education foundation [2].

Experts frequently link the shortage of trained personnel and the dissemination of inaccurate or unverified information to the involvement of journalists lacking military education. As a result, many have advocated for the creation of a dedicated specialization in military journalism within military academies. In support of this goal, international cooperation has also been expanding. Efforts are underway to incorporate NATO's defense education standards, best practices, and security protocols into military journalism training programs.

Joint training formats between Turkish and Azerbaijani journalists further contribute to the development of professional competencies in the field. Nonetheless, military journalism in Azerbaijan remains an emerging, yet unstructured area, lacking a robust academic foundation. While early efforts began with frontline newspapers and publications issued by the Ministry of Defense, the post-independence period has primarily focused on ad-hoc training and practical exercises rather than formal academic education.

The core challenge remains the absence of a structured academic base, the lack of vocational specialization, and an ongoing shortage of qualified personnel. Addressing these issues requires the establishment of a dedicated military journalism specialization within higher education institutions, the application of international standards, and the implementation of regular, research-based training programs.

One of the key points emphasized here is the systematic organization of patriotic education during secondary education as a crucial component in the preparation of cadets for higher education institutions. At the upper secondary education level, the development of students' military-technical and military-sports training plays a foundational role for the next stage of higher education.

RESEARCH METHODS / МЕТОДИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

In this study, various scientific research methods were employed to comprehensively examine the current state of higher military education. By integrating both theoretical and empirical approaches, the research took into account the multifaceted characteristics of the field.

Initially, the *analytical-synthetic method* was applied. Through this method, both local and international literature in the field of military education was examined, and key concepts and instructional models were systematically categorized. Official documents and academic sources related to the military education systems of NATO, Turkey, and other partner countries were studied in a comparative manner [9].

The study also made extensive use of the *comparative analysis method*. The Azerbaijani higher military education system was compared with those of other countries – particularly Turkey and NATO member states – to identify similarities and differences in terms of structure and pedagogical approaches. This approach proved valuable in assessing the extent to which Azerbaijan's military education system aligns with *international standards* [9].

In the empirical phase, sociological survey and observation methods were applied. Within this framework, surveys were conducted among cadets, commissioned officer graduates, and faculty members of higher military education institutions. These surveys collected and analyzed participants' subjective opinions on the quality of instruction, the relevance of the curriculum to modern challenges, and the adequacy of the material and technical infrastructure.

Additionally, statistical analysis and a systematic approach were used to examine the annual reports of educational institutions, graduate performance

indicators, and official data related to personnel training. Conclusions were drawn based on this information.

Thus, the comprehensive methodological approach enabled both the theoretical justification and practical evaluation of the study.

RESEARCH RESULTS / РЕЗУЛЬТАТИ ДОСЛІДЖЕННЯ

Over the past thirty years, the higher military education system in Azerbaijan has undergone dynamic development, becoming an integral component of the national security framework. The system's sustainability, modernity, and alignment with international standards serve as key factors in strengthening the professional personnel potential of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces and ensuring the country's military-strategic independence.

CONCLUSIONS / ВИСНОВКИ

This research on the higher military education system in Azerbaijan can be further expanded and deepened in several directions in the future. Contemporary military security challenges, technological advancements, and opportunities for international cooperation open new perspectives for scientific inquiry in this field.

First and foremost, the findings of this study can serve as a foundation for the development of new scientific approaches aimed at modernizing educational curricula. There is a growing need for specialized studies on the integration of artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, unmanned aerial vehicles, and electronic warfare technologies into the instructional processes of military academies. This would contribute to shaping military education in a way that is more technologically attuned to the needs of future generations of officers [6].

At the same time, future research may adopt an interdisciplinary approach. It is essential to conduct scholarly work that encompasses not only the technical, but also the psychological, ethical, and leadership dimensions of military education. Topics such as military psychology, decision-making skills, and preparation for combat stress represent important avenues for rigorous academic investigation.

Another promising perspective involves the expansion of international comparative analyses. Within the framework of Azerbaijan's cooperation with NATO, Turkey, and other partner countries, future studies could empirically examine the long-term impacts, levels of adaptation, and outcomes of these collaborative military education systems [10].

Finally, among the key future directions is the strengthening of the scientific foundation in this field and the establishment of specialized local research centers in military pedagogy. Such centers would facilitate systematic and continuous research and enable the incorporation of scientific findings into decision-making processes.

In conclusion, the continuation of research in this domain will offer significant academic contributions to the enhancement of Azerbaijan's national defense capabilities.

Prospects for further research in this direction / Перспективи подальших досліджень у цьому напрямі. Preliminary research conducted in the field of higher military education in Azerbaijan indicates the presence of broad and multifaceted scientific prospects for future studies. The evolving military-political challenges of the modern era, rapid technological progress, and the shifting security environment in the region necessitate a more in-depth, systematic, and interdisciplinary examination of higher military education.

One of the primary directions for future research concerns the integration of modern technologies into military education. Key scientific questions include how officer training should be organized in areas such as artificial intelligence, big data analysis, unmanned aerial systems (UAS), and cyber defense, as well as how to purposefully structure the technological sequence of operations and communications. These emerging domains require a well-coordinated and strategically designed educational framework to meet the evolving demands of modern warfare [12].

In addition, the development of military psychology and leadership skills should be prioritized in future research. Topics such as decision-making under stress, psychological resilience in combat situations, and command leadership are of both theoretical and practical significance.

Moreover, it is essential to conduct research on social and humanitarian aspects such as the role of women in military education and service, gender equality, soldiers' rights, and the instruction of civil-military relations. Such investigations can enhance the understanding of military education not only as a technical endeavor but also as a functioning social institution.

Another important perspective involves the expansion of empirical and field research. Conducting scientific studies across various domains and deriving theoretical and practical contributions from the results – followed by their effective application – is considered a critical factor in achieving significant progress in the development of academic disciplines. This process plays a key role in advancing the scientific foundations of military and pedagogical education [4].

In conclusion, the expansion of future research in this area can significantly contribute to the development of higher military education, the scientific foundation of national security strategies, and the enhancement of Azerbaijan's level of international military cooperation.

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СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН ВИЩОЇ ВІЙСЬКОВОЇ ОСВІТИ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНІ

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Анотація. Стаття пропонує комплексний аналіз сучасного стану вищої військової освіти в Азербайджані. Метою дослідження є

вивчення інституційних, педагогічних та технологічних аспектів системи вищої військової освіти, визначення існуючих проблем та наукового окреслення перспектив майбутнього розвитку. У статті використовуються аналітичні та порівняльні методи, засновані як на місцевих, так і на міжнародних джерелах, з особливим акцентом на адаптаційні зусилля, що відповідають моделям НАТО та Туреччини. Дослідження демонструє, що вища військова освіта в Азербайджані структурована переважно відповідно до стратегічної політики безпеки країни, а в останні роки було проведено певні реформи. Однак такі питання, як адаптація навчальних програм до реальних бойових умов, впровадження технологічної підготовки, нестача персоналу та матеріально-технічне забезпечення, залишаються актуальними. У статті також визначено нові напрями досліджень у контексті сучасних викликів. До них належать інтеграція штучного інтелекту та кібербезпеки у військову освіту, розширення програм, зосереджених на лідерстві та психологічній стійкості, а також роль гендерних та соціальних факторів у військовій освіті. Результати дослідження свідчать про те, що комплексні та міждисциплінарні підходи не лише підвищують ефективність вищої військової освіти, а й прискорюють адаптацію Азербайджану до міжнародних стандартів у військовій підготовці. Ця стаття представляє цінні результати як з теоретичної, так і з практичної точок зору та слугує концептуальною основою для майбутніх досліджень.

Ключові слова: вища військова освіта; Збройні сили Азербайджану; військова програма; безпека і оборона; стандарти НАТО.

TRANSLATED AND TRANSLITERATED / ПЕРЕКЛАД, ТРАНСЛІТЕРАЦІЯ

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