

Development of Sport and Physical Education in the Armed Forces

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INTRODUCTION

The nature of the demands made on most emerging armed forces today is very different from the past, with specific reference to the Cold War era. In operational terms, the most demanding scenario for which most armed forces need now to plan is no longer full-scale war, but a major regional crises involving national interests.

The military capabilities required to conduct future operations will require well-designed, well-equipped and well-supported armed forces, manned with highly motivated, skilled and combat-ready members to conduct joint or multi-national operations such as peace mission operations.

Such a future scenario will make great physical and psychological demands on the soldier. Armed forces will be forced to devise improved methods and means to meet these future demands. One of the success factors will be not only to optimize the physical and psychological resilience of soldiers, but to also utilize sport and recreation as a valuable educational and communication mechanism for adding value to society.

AIM

The aim of this paper is to provide a perspective on the future development of sport and physical education in the armed forces.

SCOPE

The following aspects will be discussed in this paper:

- a. Definitions and terms
- b. Future scenario
- c. Future tasks and demands
- d. An integrated approach to physical education, sport and recreation.
- e. Conclusion

DEFINITIONS AND TERMS

In this paper, the concepts of physical education, sport and recreation (PTSR) will be discussed. For clarity, the following will serve as a common point of reference:

- a. Physical Education. The term "physical education" refers to training people physically and, equally important, educating them on their body and its needs.
- b. Physical Training. "Physical training" refers to a form of physical activity that is usually performed repeatedly over an extended period of time with a specific external objective, such as improving fitness, physical performance or health.

- c. Sport. "Sport" can be defined as, ..."competition according to fixed rules between individuals or teams, which requires certain physical and psychological skills".
- d. Recreation. Recreation is often defined as, "diversion from work" or, "a positive and socially accepted leisure activity". Recreation is viewed as a leisure experience in which the choices and expected outcomes of participation are left to the individual. In recreational programming, the aim is to provide everyone with an opportunity to select from a variety of activities and to assist participants in gaining a positive experience as the outcome, which will contribute to the enhancement of a military culture and to the physical and psychological preparedness of a soldier. Recreation may include physical (sport), intellectual, (reading, writing, etc), cultural (ethnic dancing, singing, etc), social (group activities, etc), educational (visiting musea, etc), and religious (choir singing, etc) activities.

THE FUTURE SCENARIO

As history approaches a new millennium, it is evident that attitudes, values and norms are changing. These changes are referred to as the *new world order*. In the past, the world was structured through the control of manipulating superpowers. Development in areas of communication, data availability and mobility are establishing a *global village* with new attitudes, values and norms.

In this *global village*, people are re-evaluating the importance and value of societies. There is a burning desire for societal equilibrium. In this state of equilibrium, realistic needs and accessible resources must be balanced. In this global development, the need for **security** is one of the cornerstones. To establish security, societies use different institutes, *inter alia*, the police, the military and para-military forces. However, the role of these forces are changing drastically. For the purpose of this paper, the military forces constitute the focal point.

In the past, the military was defined as an aggressive institution, projecting power and deterrence. However, it is evident that such an institution absorbed tremendous amounts of money and other resources to sustain. Investing such resources in military forces, threatens the balance between realistic needs and the resources required by the people. We are thus obliged to restrict the flow of resources to the military in order to focus the role of the military more on contributing to the achievement of societal a state of equilibrium, and to assist other societies in achieving equilibrium. Once this equilibrium has been achieved, it must be maintained.

The changing role of the military thus requires a re-definition of the term "military". The definition must describe a military that is still capable of deterring with aggressive offensive action, but even more importantly, that is also has the ability to conduct peace operations in its various forms, viz peace-keeping, peace enforcement and providing humanitarian aid or relief.

The abovementioned scenario will alter the profile of the successful soldier in the 21st century. These new strategic demands will also demand new skills and capabilities. This future environment also makes it absolutely necessary to re-evaluate and re-position *physical education, sport and recreation (PESR)*. If this is not done, the "new look" forces will be supported with outdated approaches to physical education, sport and recreation.

In order to analyse the skills required by soldiers in the 21st century, it is important to evaluate those issues that could threaten the equilibrium of a society. Some of the most important strategic issues are the following:

- a. The increasing danger of proliferating nuclear, biological and chemical technologies.
- b. Drugs and organised crime are new risks that threaten our security by undermining our way of life. They are powerful enough to threaten the entire fabric of some societies today.
- c. New and horrifying forms of terrorism and serious environmental degradation which could cause not only immediate suffering, but also dangerous instabilities.
- d. The benefits of the information technology revolution that have swept the world are accompanied by potential, new vulnerabilities.
- e. The challenge of moving from *stability* based on fear, to stability based on the active management of these risks, seeking to prevent conflict rather than to suppress it.
- f. Social and technological transformation has also been rapid, and we can expect this to continue, while affecting both our daily lives and the role of our armed forces over the next twenty years.

These issues may cause an imbalance in different ways, depending on the circumstances. The soldier may consequently be exposed to three broad categories of situations viz, peace-keeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian activities (also referred to reconstruction and development). The three categories will now be analysed in order to determine the competencies of the soldier in the next century.

TASKS AND DEMANDS

Peace-keeping. Peace-keeping involves military or para-military operations undertaken with the consent of the disputants. Activities include observing, monitoring and supervising of the provisions of peace agreements. These typically relate to cease-fires, arms control, the withdrawal and demobilisation of combatants, the denial of the freedom of movement and elections. *Peace-keeping* does not come easily to most soldiers. In a sense, they experience it as a contradiction in terms. This is the reason the role as *peace-keeper* is such a critical area of development for armed forces. Peace-keeping forces require soldiers who are *patient* and who are *approachable* to friend and foe. Such a soldier must have the *inter-personal skills* to project stability and neutrality. Peace-keeping requires soldiers of *stature*, who project an *image* of *charisma*, so that people can look up to and respect them. Such soldiers need a strong self-esteem and, in their dealings with people, they must have sound *judgement* and must always be *fair*. They must therefore not only *communicate* in a *trustworthy* and *credible* manner, but must also be able to *resolve conflict* positively and constructively.

Peace Enforcement. Peace enforcement refers to the application or threat of military force, pursuant to authorisation by the UN Security Council, to compel compliance with Security Council resolutions. The aims are to maintain or restore peace and to support diplomatic efforts to reach long-term settlements. Unlike other peace support operations, peace enforcement may include **combat action**. To be successful in the enforcement of peace, armed forces require soldiers who are able to perform a task or mission with *controlled*

aggression. They must have *tenacity* and *perseverance* under difficult circumstances. Soldiers who are *resilient* and who have high *pain thresholds* are needed. They must be capable of *absorbing battle stress* and to channel it through healthy means. Thus the future battlefield needs *cognitively sharp soldiers* with a keen ability for *creative problem solving*.

Humanitarian Activities (Restriction and Development). Humanitarian activities may constitute discreet operations or may form part of the operations described above. Such activities, in which military support may be required, include providing humanitarian aid, disaster relief, health care, assistance to refugees, restoring infra-structures and services, as well as dealing with displaced persons. The soldier of the 21st century must be able to play an active role in the reconstruction and development of modern societies. *Reconstruction and development per se*, contribute to the societal equilibrium. It is a normal military activity to contribute towards the reconstruction of infra-structures, for example: restoring general services, roads, airfields, buildings, etc. Activities also include the restructuring of services viz medical infra-structure and capabilities. The military also have a significant contribution to make towards training and education. This involves the concept of *collateral utility*.

Integration

- a. The qualities expressed under peace-keeping, peace enforcement and humanitarian activities, can be integrated in the work that was done on *transformational leadership* by BASS (1994). This work underscores the necessity for the soldier to *stimulate individuals intellectually*. People are stimulated to confront their problems and to facilitate problem solving. They study their environment, analyse it and to find those solutions that are best for them. In the new millennium, soldiers must show *individual consideration*. Individual consideration emphasises the treatment of friend and foe as unique individuals and not as mere interchangeable entities. This is of paramount importance especially during peace operations.
- b. According to BASS's work, the 21st century soldier must have the ability to inspire and motivate people around him or her, to strive towards excellence and to improve themselves. During restructuring and development exercises this helps people to regain their self-confidence and self-control. The last competency is an ability to project *charisma* through the *image* and *stature* of the soldier.

The abovementioned reasoning begs the following questions: Firstly, what is the link between the demands expected from the soldier in the 21st century and *physical education, sport and recreation (PTSR)* and secondly, how can *PTSR* contribute to the education, training and development of the soldier in the 21st century?

AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PHYSICAL TRAINING, SPORT AND RECREATION

Illustration. See Appendix A for an illustration of the future approach to PTSR.

Relation between Demands and PTSR

- a. It has thus far been indicated that the soldier of the 21st century will need a specific personnel profile. It was also indicated that different entities will play

a dynamic role in the desired profile namely: intellect, social skills, cultural awareness, spiritual soundness, emotional stability, physical ability and psychological preparedness. These personnel competencies serve as the framework within which PTSR are utilized as educational, training and developmental (ETD) vehicles.

- b. Even in current times, people interpret PTSR as three separate mechanisms. To utilize the full capacity of these three mechanisms, it is necessary to identify and accommodate the areas where they overlap, viz PTSR optimized its full potential. Apart from their inherent value-adding abilities, these overlapping areas provide added value, which is not always recognised. It is therefore necessary that such added values be utilised optimally when preparing soldiers for the 21st century.

Relationship Between Enabling Mechanisms. The overlapping areas add the following value:

- a. Competency Profiles (Area 1). In area 1, the profile requirements of the future combat-ready soldier are defined. The requirements are stated in terms of combat fitness and psychological resilience through PTSR. These enabling mechanisms contribute uniquely to the holistic norms and standards as described by the **desired output**.
- b. Physical Training and Sport (Area 2). The future approach to combat fitness and psychological resilience, is to utilize sport to enhance the **general fitness** of soldiers. This general fitness must serve as the starting point of a continuum, which progressively develops to a **specific fitness** required for specific jobs/tasks through specific physical training. This approach could contribute not only to minimising injuries, but could also prevent overtraining. In the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) sports, such as those disciplines practised during military pentathlon, naval pentathlon and during orientation, form part of the basic training curricula for riflemen and seaman. These sports are further utilized as recreational and competitive sports.
- c. Physical Training (PT) and Recreation (Area 3). Soldier deployed in peace operations, need to add value to their participation in PT. Relaxation and enjoyment must be the value that is added. Relaxation and enjoyment can be provided by integrating recreational activities into the PT programme. By utilizing **passive** and **active** recreation, soldiers will not only maintain their physical condition, but also their psychological and emotional state and their social inter-action will be enhanced. A good example is the participation in informal activities, such as volleyball, to allow soldiers to relax. Playing sport socially/informally, will not only condition soldiers physically, but diverts their attention from day-to-day stress and work demands. Combining PT and recreation, helps soldiers to retain a **healthy equilibrium between body and mind**.
- d. Sport and Recreation (Area 4). Much is said about the creation of a **participating** culture. The ideal way to lay a proper foundation, is to systematically facilitate individuals to participate in competitive sport through recreation. The importance of facilitating future soldiers to participate in sport, is to **simulate conflict**. In such a simulated environment, soldiers are trained and developed to deal with conflict and to express controlled aggression.

Human Dynamics

- a. Thus far the approach to developing the future soldier, has implied a **dynamic process**. This process will begin at a specific point and develop progressively on a continuum. As soldiers are exposed to the developmental influences of PTSR, they will develop intellectually, socially, culturally, spiritually, emotionally, physically and psychologically. This continuum moves through specific phases, which offer individual soldiers the opportunity to satisfy their own PTSR requirements. Therefore, each soldier must define the phases according to his or her own skills and abilities, as coupled to the set of combat-readiness **criteria**. It must always be borne in mind that this dynamic process will be coupled to aspects, such as age, sex and ability.
- b. This approach recognises the individual as part of the group as well as the responsibility of individuals to adhere to standards and expectations. These expectations may relate to an ability to function within a group.

CONCLUSION

In future, the development of physical education (PE) and sport will be drastically different. The reasons for the difference lies in the **different demands** and roles that soldiers will have to play during peace missions. To meet these demands, physical educators will have to devise a new approach to PTSR. PTSR must be able to add additional value by using a **holistic** approach. The approach focuses on ETD, which is achieved through PTSR.

Soldiers are intellectually **stimulated** to solve problems in a competitive environment (simulation of conflict through sport). They are forced to think independently and to act on their own decisions. At the social level, they are given the opportunity to **assert** themselves to learn acceptable and unacceptable social behaviour. PTSR educates soldiers culturally, exposing different cultural groups to one another and teaching cultural tolerance. At the spiritual level, sport and recreation can create a dependence on **powers** greater than themselves. PTSR develops emotional reactions and outlet for emotions, such as joy, jubilation and heartache.

Psychological development takes place in those areas of alertness and self knowledge and in promoting self-confidence and trust. The educational value of PTSR as regards physical fitness and physiological knowledge is self-explanatory.

- * This particular perspective enables PTSR to meet the demands of the **future combat-ready soldier**: "a soldier for peace". The strength of a balanced, well-equipped soldier is of paramount importance in order to stabilize societies struggling with **imbalances** and **conflict**.

"Over there I became convinced that the men who had taken part in organized sports, made the best soldiers. They were the most dependable, hardy, courageous officers I had. Men who had contended against other human beings under rules of a game where the readiest to accept and enforce discipline"

General Dauglas Mac Arthur
U.S. Army 1919

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INTEGRATED APPROACH TO PHYSICAL TRAINING, SPORT AND RECREATION (PTSR)

