

*Professional Military Education in the Turkish War of Independence **

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ABSTRACT

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The Ottoman Empire built, trained, organized, led, and sustained her army over a period of more than 600 years, during which had a significant effect on the history of the modern world. It underwent several

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transformations. In this context, the Mekteb-i Fünûn-ı Harbiyye-i Şâhâne (Turkish Military Academy) was established in 1834 in İstanbul to provide officers for the army, where cadets were given professional military education and training. Unfortunately, the Military Academy was closed in 1914 following the start of World War I. There was an urgent need to train and educate cadets to provide necessary junior officers to the units for the Turkish War of Independence. Therefore, to satisfy this need, the first officer educating and training facility in Ankara was opened in Abidinpaşa Mansion (Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı) on 1 July 1920, i.e. the Military Academy was moved to Ankara, like most of the Ottoman institutions during Turkish War of Independence. The system is very similar to the German reserve officer system. The education was based upon on-the-job training and application of the technical and tactical staff, so the officer candidates tried to learn how to use infantry rifles and individual soldiers equipment, and later on, they practiced how to command squads, and then platoons. This study aims to put forward and reveal very unknown historical facts about this temporary military facility, and its benefits during times of poverty and lack of resources. Hence, it proves the motto “desperate times call for desperate measures”.

Keywords: Military education, Professional military education, Turkish War of Independence, Intensive & fast track learning, Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı

ÖZ

MERT, İbrahim Sani; ŞEN, Cem, **Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda Profesyonel Askerî Eğitim**, CTAD, Yıl 17, Sayı 33 (Bahar 2021), s. 441-465.

Osmanlı İmparatorluğu 600 yıldan uzun bir süre boyunca modern dünya tarihi üzerinde önemli bir etkisi olan ordusunu inşa edip eğitmiş, sürekliliğini sağlayarak organize edip yönetmiştir. Bu süre zarfında birkaç önemli dönüşüm de geçirmiştir. Bu bağlamda, ordusuna subay yetiştirmek üzere öğrencilerine profesyonel askeri eğitim ve öğretim veren Mekteb-i Fünûn-ı Harbiyye-i Şâhâne (Kara Harp Okulu) 1834 yılında İstanbul'da kurulmuştur. Ancak, ne yazık ki Harp Okulu I. Dünya Savaşı'nın başlaması üzerine 1914'te kapatılmıştır. Bu arada Kurtuluş Savaşı birliklerine gerekli küçük rütbeli subayları temin etmek için askeri öğrencilere eğitim ve öğretim verilmesi acil bir ihtiyaç olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu nedenle bu ihtiyacı karşılamak için 1 Temmuz 1920'de Ankara'daki ilk subay eğitim ve öğretim tesisi Abidinpaşa Konağı'nda (Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı) açılmış, bir başka ifadeyle Harp Okulu Kurtuluş Savaşı döneminde Osmanlı'nın diğer birçok devlet kurumu gibi Ankara'ya

taşınmıştır. Geçici kurulan bu okuldaki sistem, Alman yedek subay sistemine çok benziyordu. Eğitim, teknik ve taktik personel gözetiminde görev başı eğitimi ve uygulamasına dayanıyordu. Bu kapsamda askeri öğrencilere öncelikle piyade tüfeği ve bireysel askeri teçhizatın nasıl kullanılacağı öğretilmiş, manga ve müteakiben takımlara nasıl emir komuta edileceği uygulamalı öğretilmiştir. Bu çalışma ile, geçici olarak hizmet veren Abidinpaşa Konağı hakkındaki tarihsel gerçekleri ortaya koymak, söz konusu yokluk ve yoksulluk döneminde sağladığı faydaları gün yüzüne çıkarmak amaçlanmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, bir anlamda “umutsuz zamanlar radikal önlemler gerektirir” özdeyişi kanıtlanmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Askerî Eğitim, Profesyonel Askerî Eğitim, Türk Kurtuluş Savaşı, Yoğun & Hızlı Eğitim, Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı.

“The central task of education is to implant a will and facility for learning; it should produce not learned but learning people.”

Eric Hoffer

Introduction

Learning should be a contingent and continuous struggle; it demands a permissive institutional structure and environment, and it depends on individual disposition and desire, and most importantly it should be a life-long activity. Learning is a synergy of both training and education which is necessary for the complete and long-lasting development of an officer. Its ultimate goal should be teaching what, why, and how to think.

There are two theories worth mentioning when considering the life-long activity of learning, which are cognitivism and constructivism. Cognitivism states that learning is making sense of the relationship between what is old and what is new (the role of practice with corrective feedback), i.e. the emphasis is on promoting mental processing.¹ Constructivism is not a totally new approach to learning. Like most other learning theories, the constructivist theory states that knowledge is not passively received from the world but constructed by individuals or groups making sense of their experiential worlds.²

¹ Peggy A. Ertmer - Timothy J. Newby, “Behaviorism, Cognitivism, Constructivism: Comparing Critical Features from an Instructional Design Perspective”, *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, vol. 6, No. 4, 1993, p. 51.

² Anne K. Bednar - Donald Cunningham et. al., *Theory Into Practice: How Do We Link?* Ed. G.J. Anglin, Instructional Technology: Past, Present, and Future, Co: Libraries Unlimited, Englewood, 1991, p. 90-92.

As to our case here, professional military education and training (PMET) need to be designed to prepare professional militaries to deal with the ever-increasing ambiguities and multi-layered contemporary security environment and battlespace. Training is mostly routine in nature and focuses on “what to think”, whereas education is about developing intellectual curiosity and analytical thinking and focuses on “why and how to think.” In addition to education and training, one more thing is necessary for the complete development of an officer, which is experience. The military needs fully trained and educated personnel to defend its nation and the homeland, and to provide and maintain peace and security abroad. To be successful at these tasks, military personnel need to be intellectually trained and educated. By completing the PMET each graduating cadet is expected to demonstrate an understanding of tactics, military training, operations, and planning relevant to military operations, and has physical and mental toughness, officer identity, and military values.

Before discussing the PMET during the Turkish War of Independence, it is important and wise to provide some information about the formal Ottoman professional military education system and how it evolved throughout history. The Ottoman Empire built, trained, organized, led, and sustained their army over a period of more than 600 years, during which it had a significant effect on the history of the modern world and particularly on that of the Middle East and Europe.³ In addition to that, it underwent several transformations that modernized and enabled it to compete with the best armies of the era. The augmented role of the military, both in politics and as a catalyst for reform, has deep historical roots.⁴ The most important modernization efforts and military reforms started during the period of Selim III. His counselors stated that to have a strong army there was no alternative other than establishing at least one academic military institution for the training of officers, and further directors, teachers, and other specialists had to be imported from Europe. The main idea was to establish a modern European-style infantry corps and later use this corps as a core around which a totally modern military could be created.⁵ To place this era of attempted reforms into its proper perspective, it is of vital importance to consider the army and its lack of professionalism. The essence of this educational reform was to create a concept for an officer, who was both

³ Mesut Uyar - Edward J. Erickson, *A Military History of the Ottomans: From Osman to Atatürk*, Santa Barbara, ABC-CLIO, LLC. CA, 2009, ix.

⁴ David Capezza, “Turkey’s Military is a Catalyst for Reform The Military in Politics”, *Middle East Quarterly*, Summer Issue, 2009, p. 15.

⁵ Stanford J. Shaw, “The Nizam-i Cedid Army under Sultan Selim III 1789-1807”, *Oriens*, 18, 1965, p. 169.

educated in the art of war and at the same time was given a broader education which was designed to provide a better understanding of the world and its problems.⁶ The movement for military reforms began slowly. The most prominent reform and a real breakthrough of this period is the establishment of the first modern military school of the empire for all military branches with the help of foreign experts, which was opened in 1795, with the name of *Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümayun*- the Imperial Military Engineering School.⁷ Mühendishâne was not only the first modern military school but also the first modern school but also the first modern high school of the empire (See, Photograph 1).

Sultan Mahmud II had to deal with the Russo-Turkish War of 1806-1812 and 1828-1829 that continued amidst the rebellions within the country. With the end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815, all the monarchies and empires of Europe found themselves confronting the emergence of nationalism and the forces of the Industrial Revolution added new stresses on monarchies struggling to retain their grip on subject peoples.⁸ The Ottoman Empire was one of the states who experienced these negative impacts with a well-known difficulty of geographically extended multinational and multiethnic populations. The Greek rebels, in 1826, achieved their aim of independence only after the active military and political intervention of Britain, France, and Russia. In the history of the Ottoman Army, military reforms usually follow wars or catastrophes. All these developments triggered Mahmud II to destroy the last hopes of conservative reformers, who were still adamant about the possibility of a reorganization of the military, and hence, he understood that there was an urgent need for modernization and westernization. He clearly understood that the distinct lack of professionalism was still prevalent among the Janissaries (*Yeniçeri*), and officially disbanded the Janissary Corps (*Vaka-i Hayriyye*- the auspicious event) in 1826,⁹ where he eventually removed the last serious barrier to modernization. Then, he built up a new European-style army, the *Asakir-i*

⁶ Samuel J. Newland, *Victories are not Enough: Limitations of the German Way of War*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College, Carlisle, Pennsylvania, 2005, p. 54.

⁷ Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Taribinde Mühendishane*, Mühendishane Matbaası ve Kütüphanesi (1776-1826), Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1995, p. 36-44.

⁸ Uyar - Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 129.

⁹ Christopher Tuck, "All Innovation Leads to Hellfire: Military Reform and the Ottoman Empire in the Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 31, No. 3, 2018, p. 467 - 502; Lord Kinross, *The Ottoman Centuries: The Rise and Fall of the Turkish Empire*, Morrow Quill, New York, 1977.

Mansure-i Muhammediye¹⁰ (Victorious Troops of Muhammad), and disbanded provincial armies, making the new army the only and central military organization in the empire.¹¹ He also decided to send bright youngsters to Europe to set up a firm base of trained officers to launch further reforms.¹²

It was the establishment of a new military educational institution namely the Mekteb-i Fünûn-ı Harbiyye-i Şâhâne (Turkish Military Academy) in 1834 that turned out to be the zenith of Mahmud's military reforms and one of the most important turning points in the history of the Ottoman modernization.¹³ (See, Photograph 2). Up until that time, except for a few engineers and artillery officers, none of the Ottoman officers were academically trained, and most of the generals, who were promoted mainly by politics, had no military background and experience.¹⁴ Unlike previous schools, the new Military Academy was completely differing from traditional paternalist and ineffective methods. The main idea behind its foundation was to train and educate as many students as possible in the European style. From the perspective of reformers, it was a great way of overcoming the deficiencies of the Ottoman military system, and at the same time understanding European ideas in every respect would help to continue the reforms, not only in the military but in other institutions of the Empire as well.¹⁵ For this reason, the reformers preferred to follow the French military educational system instead of a short-term officer corps training system like the ones established by some other successful states. The Military Academy was under the direct control of the Sultan himself.¹⁶ Since the elite and even the middle class preferred not to enroll their sons in this new school, the administration had few alternatives other than to enroll forcefully young soldiers and to collect orphans or the sons of the poor.¹⁷ The main courses were military engineering, military ballistics, strategy, and operational art.

¹⁰ Virginia H. Aksan, "Breaking the Spell of the Baron De Tott: Reframing the Question of Military Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1760-1830", *The International History Review*, vol. 24, No. 2, 2002, p. 258.

¹¹ Şükrü Hanioglu, *A Brief History of the Late Ottoman Empire*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 2010, pp. 55-71.

¹² Uyar - Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 147.

¹⁴ Avigdor Levy, *The Military Policy of Sultan Mahmud II, 1808-1839*, Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, Cambridge, 1968, pp. 382-384.

¹⁵ Uyar - Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 148.

¹⁶ Ahmet Lütüfî, *Vakanüvis Ahmed Lütüfî Efendi Tarihi*, Vol. 4-5, Yapı Kredi Bankası Yayınları, İstanbul, 1999, p. 826.

¹⁷ İlber Ortaylı, *İmparatorluğun En Uzun Yüzyılı*, İletişim Yayınları, İstanbul, 2005, p. 46.

Over time, Military Academy graduates not only changed the Ottoman military system but also the civilian governmental system and society; and influence all aspects of Ottoman life. Many graduates were assigned to different civilian posts and many of them served as teachers in schools, mainly as teachers of basic sciences and linguistics, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry, and French. Many famous writers and poets of the era were also graduates of the Military Academy.¹⁸ After twenty years of its establishment, the Military Academy became an attractive opportunity for a young man who wanted to obtain a modern education at a prestigious school, whereas the lower classes remained the main source of cadets even after the rapid increase of the prestige of the academy-trained officer corps.¹⁹ Since there was no racial discrimination, it was not uncommon to see black Africans wearing officer uniforms as well.²⁰

The reforms continued with the Tanzimat imperial edict (rescript) of 1839 (known as *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif*), and the new military regulations put into effect and improved the conditions of the rank and file, remedying some of the widespread abuses and restructuring the Ottoman military.²¹ The Ottomans did not have an officer corps trained in Western-style warfare until the Tanzimat reforms.²² Kuleli Military High School was founded on September 21, 1845, by Ottoman Sultan Abdülmecid I to provide cadets for the Military Academy. By the new Imperial Reform Edict of 1856 (known as *Islahat Fermanı*), the reforms continued.²³ Authorities sought, from the 1840s onward, to gradually establish universal conscription for all Ottoman subjects as the basis for a modern military that could withstand not only European but also regional challenges.²⁴ All citizens had the right and obligation to serve in the military²⁵ but, in reality, neither did the administration force the issue nor did the non-Muslims ask for it.²⁶

¹⁸ İlhan Çiloğlu, *Asker Yazarlar ve Şairler*, Elif Kitabevi, İstanbul, 2002, p. 1-2.

¹⁹ Uyar - Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 152.

²⁰ Charles Macfarlane, *Kismet; or the Doom of Turkey*, Thomas Bosworth, London, 1853, pp. 18-19.

²¹ Virginia H. Aksan, *Ottoman Wars 1700-1870: An Empire Besieged*, 2nd Ed. Routledge, New York, 2013, p. 402.

²² Gábor Ágoston, "Military Transformation in the Ottoman Empire and Russia, 1500-1800", *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 2011, 12(2), p. 315.

²³ Roderic H. Davison, *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-1876*, Princeton, New Jersey, 1963, pp. 54-55.

²⁴ Amit Bein, "Politics, Military Conscription, and Religious Education in the Late Ottoman Empire", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 38, No. 2, 2006, p. 285.

²⁵ Aksan, *op. cit.*, p. 276.

²⁶ Uyar & Erickson, *op. cit.*, p.180.

After the Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-1878 and the problems in Balkans, the result seemed to be a complete disaster in which both fronts collapsed. However, in relative terms, the defeated Ottoman army proved to be more capable than the previous wars, clearly demonstrating that the military reforms were on the right track and, more importantly, the officers who were the Academy graduates made their presence felt for the first time.²⁷ The German military or more correctly Prussian model was chosen for upcoming reforms. German advisors changed the education and training system, and also the overall status of the general staff officer corps within the army. According to his new evaluation system, only the best twenty to thirty out of thousand cadets were selected for the General Staff College, which was three years long and academically very demanding. During this period contemporary German military manuals and other military literature replaced French and British versions. The German armaments industry also established a monopoly on nearly every weapon system and all equipment acquired by the empire. In addition to that, hundreds of officers and other military specialists were sent to Germany for training where they not only learned military subjects, but also German culture, lifestyles, and political system.²⁸ The influence of the Germans on the military system continued until the end of World War I in 1918.

During the reform period, the education and training of the officers were very closely related to the modernization, which means the officers were seen and accepted as an agent of modernization. But by the start of World War I in 1914, the predominant objective and effort were transferred from modernization to being able to win the war. By doing so, the main purpose was to educate and train cadets with basic tactical and technical capacity and send them to the frontline fighting units as soon as possible. Particularly, it is essential to realize at this point that World War I was a kind of industrial war. Because of the high casualties, there was a great need to provide lots of officers in a short time. Eventually, there was a trade-off that ends up giving up the original goals set at the beginning of the foundation mentality of the Military Academy in the Ottoman Empire.

Ottoman units went to the First World War with only 55% of the officer positions were manned.²⁹ There were only two officers per regular infantry company at the beginning of the war, and by the time it was worsened. This was a huge problem for the Ottoman Army, because it was essentially an officers' army in which officers performed almost all of the key tasks. The

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 201-202.

²⁸ Aksan, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

²⁹ Uyar & Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 234.

dimensions of the problem became clearer as the war progressed. During this period, some methods were used by the Ottoman Army to man the empty officer posts and replace casualties, such as immediately assigning Military Academy cadets to units as brevet lieutenants (*Zabit Vekili*), and introducing senior cadets of the military secondary schools and civilian high school graduates into the military as officer candidates (*Zabit Namzeti*) after brief combat training.³⁰ Another method was opening several officer training courses (*Zabit Talimğâhları*) to provide a continuous supply of junior officers to the units of the army where students took basic officer training for six to eight months. At the units, it was decided by the commanders to commission them as officers or not upon evaluation after six months. In this way, the officer candidates with the rank of noncommissioned officers (NCOs) fulfilled a very important duty for the army.³¹ Thus, the brevet officers filled a very important gap in the army's junior leadership, and the methods used were proved to be quite satisfactory. But, it was obviously seen that in order to continue these efforts successfully, there was a great need for a centralized high caliber of planning and execution. As we are going to discuss in the following sections, these officer training courses of the First World War were taken as an example during the Turkish War of Independence, and similar practices were implemented.

Great Britain had a similar experience where they formed the officer training corps of the Kitchener's armies in late 1914.³² Kitchener units did not draw their officers from pre-war officer training corps products and relied on men with very limited or no previous military experience. Adaptation, commitment, and survival were watchwords for the officer training corps during the First World War, and they all had to adapt in one way or another to the loss of support from a War Office that was preoccupied with other matters, and they endured under the shadow of unprecedented war and kept producing as many partially trained cadets as they could manage.³³ Another example can be given from the German Army during World War I. Heavy casualties and rapid expansion forced the German Army reserves to commission approximately 220.000 officers during the First World War. German fast track training courses emphasized that new officers should be inculcated with

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

³¹ İhsan Ali Alpar, "Kahraman Türk Silahlı Kuvvetlerimizde 55 yıl 11 ay", Nilüfer Matbaası, İstanbul, 1976, 21-35.

³² Timothy Bowman, "Officering Kitchener's Armies: A Case Study of the 36th (Ulster) Division", *War in History*, vol.16, No.2, 2009, p. 189.

³³ Edward M. Spiers *University Officers' Training Corps and the First World War*. Council of Military Education Committees (COMEC) Occasional Paper. 2014, 4, p. 22.

feelings of duty, honour, paternalism (an officer must care for his men), and tact, and should be taught to take pride in their responsibility.³⁴

Ottoman Army suffered a catastrophic defeat in Syria and the Anatolian heartland was open to British incursion. In order to protect the Turkish speaking parts of the Empire from being invaded, there was no alternative other than signing an armistice. Then, the Armistice of Mudros was signed on 30 October 1918, with which the Ottoman Empire virtually ceased to exist. Right after that, unlike the expectations of the people, the country was occupied by the British, French, and Italian also Greek soldiers in a piecemeal fashion. The capital city, İstanbul, was also under de facto allied occupation and a separate allied occupational administration was established. The victorious Allied Powers sought the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire through the Treaty of Sevres (10 August 1920) where the political existence of the Turkish nation was to be completely eliminated.³⁵ Nationalist Turkish sentiment rose in the Anatolian peninsula, engendering the establishment of the Turkish national movement. Even though the armistice obligated the Ottoman military to demobilize its combat units as soon as possible, the actual demobilization proceeded slowly and came to a full stop with the start of the Turkish War of Independence in 1919, but unfortunately, the Military Academy in İstanbul was closed. Most of the surviving Ottoman officers, as well as the conscripts, were drawn to the nationalist cause to join the forces of liberation. Once again the Ottoman military transformed itself from the Sultan's army to the new Turkish Nationalist Army well before the successful end of the Independence War.³⁶ The official timeframe for the War of Independence is accepted as the dates between 19 May 1919, and 11 October 1922 (the signing of the Armistice of Mudanya).

The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi-TBMM), founded in Ankara on 23 April 1920 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his colleagues and other nationalist officials, led and managed the War of Independence. Since the Military Academy in İstanbul was still closed, there was an urgent need to train and educate cadets, in other words, to provide necessary junior officers to the units for the War of Independence. The newly founded Ankara Government decided to use the similar some methods practiced by the Ottoman Army during the First World War, to man the empty officer posts and replace casualties. Therefore, the first officer education and

³⁴ Alexander Watson, "Junior Officership in the German Army during the Great War, 1914-1918", *War in History*, vol.14, No.4, 2007, p. 437.

³⁵ David Fromkin, *A Peace to End All Peace: The Fall of the Ottoman Empire and the Creation of the Modern Middle East*, Henry Holt and Company, LLC, New York, 2001, pp. 427-434.

³⁶ Uyar - Erickson, *op. cit.*, p. 283.

training facility in Ankara was opened in Abidinpaşa Mansion (Abidinpaşa Mansion; henceforth: Talimğâh) (Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı) on 1 July 1920 (See, Photographs 3 and 4).³⁷ It was a continuation of the Military Academy founded in 1834 in İstanbul. But, due to poverty and lack of resources, the cadets were educated on the ground of the old barracks. There was not even a desk in the classrooms.

The Chief of General Staff was very interested in the training which undertook an important mission for the future of the armed forces. Inspecting the school on 28th of December 1920, the Chief of General Staff Fevzi Pasha saw some important shortcomings of the facility, which were given below:³⁸

- The cadets were not given any uniforms, therefore uniforms should be given to the cadets immediately,
- The coat should be tailored and adapted to their bodies, to do that a sewing machine and two tailors should be allocated to the school,
- The beds were also in a miserable condition, they should be renovated,
- Missing roof tiles of the barracks and dormitories should be fixed,
- One maneuvering strap, a portable pickaxe, and a shovel should be given to each cadet.

Despite all the poverty and shortcomings in the country, the problems were tried to be solved. Immediately after the opening of *the Talimğâh* (Abidinpaşa Officer Training Course) a bill was passed by the Grand National Assembly for the subsistence, salary, and per diems of the cadets.³⁹

Most of the students of this school were coming from the Military Academy and Kuleli High School. They were actually secretly infiltrated out of İstanbul and sent to Ankara in small groups. Cadets going to Anatolia, under the supervision of their commanders who moved with them, first went to the weapon depots in the eastern part of İstanbul and captured some rifles, bayonets, swords, and bullets.⁴⁰ These weapons were used in training as well as in the War of Independence.

In addition to the students coming from the Military Academy and Kuleli High School, the TBMM also recruited civilian high school graduates or high

³⁷ Suat Akgül, “Ankara Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı Mezunu Şehitler”, *19 Mayıs’ın 100. Yıldönümünde Atatürk ve Türk İstiklâli Uluslararası Sempozyumu Bildiriler Kitabı (Proceedings)*, 15-18 Mayıs 2019, Ankara, Hacettepe University, 2019, pp. 691-692.

³⁸ Ali Güler, “Millî Mücadele’de Kara Harp Okulu: Fotoğraflarla Ankara Abidinpaşa Köşkü Sınıf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimğâhı”, *Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi*, No. 53, 2002, pp. 431-432.

³⁹ Akgül, op. cit., p. 694.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 691.

school students to the officer training course. There were speculations and suggestions to admit the sons of local leaders to be officers as well. But, unlike the Ottoman Empire traditions, the Ankara Government's Ministry of War declined the suggestions and always required merit and education as the main criteria for becoming an officer. The school was formed over three groups; the first group was the students who came from the Military Academy, the second group was coming from the Military High School, and the third was civilian high schools. In the early days, *the Talimgâh* only trained infantry and cavalry officer candidates. Those who were assigned to the artillery class were sent to the Artillery Officer Candidates Training Course, which was opened in Konya in October 1921. Later, the gunners were also placed in the training course in *the Talimgâh*.⁴¹ The lessons taught at school were as follows: ⁴²

- 1st Group: Infantry field manual, weapon firing techniques, military law, criminal law, mobilization, topography, health protection measures, military correspondence, Persian, exercise/ drill.
- 2nd Group: Infantry field manual, weapon firing techniques, criminal law, topography, Persian, engineering, health protection measures, exercise/drill.
- 3rd Group: Infantry machine weapon field manual, entrenchment, mobilization, topography, weapon firing techniques, engineering, military correspondence, exercise/drill, mobilization, and topography exercises.
- Besides, 7-8 hours of training, evening, and night classes were held on Saturday, Sunday, Monday, and Tuesday. While exercises were carried out all day long on Wednesday, general cleaning and inspection were taken place on Thursday.

The system is very similar to the one used during World War I by the Ottoman Empire and German system, actually the German reserve officer system. The only difference was, all the officer candidates were coming from the Military Academy of Military High School, and they were already motivated to be professional officer candidates and had at least the military notion (See, Photographs 5-11). The officer candidates were given 6 to 8 months of training and education. The education and training system was designed for various specialized branches (infantry, cavalry, artillery, etc.) of the armed forces. The most intriguing in this curriculum is the apparent focus of tactical studies. At the end of the program, the ones who succeed were sent to the units as officer candidates as carrying the rank of corporal. According to the system, after

⁴¹ Güler, op. cit., p. 430.

⁴² Ibid., p. 431.

spending 6 months with their units, the unit commander should write a report on their performances, and depending upon this report they would be either promoted to the officers rank as a third lieutenant or continued as a sergeant (NCO) in their units. This is just like the system of officer training courses established during World War I by the Ottoman Empire to provide a continuous supply of junior officers to the units of the army.

The Talimğâh gave its first 102 graduates on November 1, 1920, after four months of training.⁴³ In addition to Atatürk, the Chief of General Staff Fevzi Pasha, senior commanders, members of the Grand National Assembly, and Azerbaijani, Ukrainian and Russian ambassadors also attended this graduation ceremony. The ones who took their diplomas from Atatürk's hand went directly to the frontlines⁴⁴ (See, Photograph 12). Speaking on behalf of the first graduates of *the Talimğâh*, the top graduate of the class Enver Aka (retired lieutenant general) said that “*Today, with great happiness and honor, we have attained our first deed for the salvation of our country. There is a Turkish youth who is crying out for independence. Our motto is ‘either independence or death’ as Atatürk pointed out.*”⁴⁵ Atatürk visited this education and training facility several times and delivered a speech at the first graduation ceremony. He also signed the school's honor book. According to Atatürk, the quality of the officer candidates who graduated from this facility was of great importance. Once he said, “*The value of an army is measured by the value of the officer and the command group.*”⁴⁶

The education was based upon on-the-job training and application of the technical and tactical staff, so the officer candidates tried to learn how to use infantry rifles and individual soldiers equipment, and later on, they practiced how to command squads, and then platoons. As a result, the cadets learned all the basics about becoming junior officers by participating in field exercises, mostly live exercises. And they were sent to the units where they were supposed to spend 6 months to be evaluated to get officer rank. But sometimes, the situation in the units was so dramatic, and the lack of officers was so severe that, they could immediately find themselves as platoon commanders and in some rare cases as company commanders.

As for the quality of the education, we don't have much information, but it looks like the Ankara Government was quite satisfied with the education and training were given at *the Talimğâh*. Because, after the War of Independence,

⁴³ *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye*, 7 Teşrîn-i sâni 1336 (7 November 1920).

⁴⁴ Suat Akgül, “Ankara Zabıt Namzetleri Talimğâhının İlk Mezuniyet Töreni ve ATATÜRK'ün Konuşması”, *Atatürk Haftası Armağanı*, Gnkur., Ankara, 2011, pp.1-8.

⁴⁵ Akgül, op. cit., p. 7.

⁴⁶ Speech delivered at Kütahya High School (24 March 1923), *Hâkimiyet-i Millîye*, 15 Nisan 1339 (2 April 1923).

instead of opening up the Military Academy according to the old (previous) system, which was three years of academic education, the Ankara Government decided to go on with two years of academic education.

But unfortunately, we couldn't manage to find out the exact number of cadets who graduated from *the Talimgâh*. According to Akgül⁴⁷ a total of 1.449 officers (in various ranks and classes), 144 accountants, and 8 craftsmen were graduated from *the Talimgâh* between November 1, 1920, and September 17, 1923. The officers who graduated from this facility showed great benefits on the front lines of the War of Independence, particularly in defeating the enemy in Sakarya and the Great Offensive. Many were injured, martyred, and veterans or retired.

After the War of Independence had been successfully completed, new regulations regarding the Military Academy were made. Despite the limited resources, *the Talimgâh* was transformed into a Military Academy on 1 April 1923. Ministers, members of the Grand National Assembly, flag officers, commanders, and officers and invited for its inauguration. Minister of Foreign Affairs İsmet Pasha and the National Defence Minister Kâzım (Özalp) Pasha were in the guest list who attended the opening ceremony. Course schedules were organized for two years. Each class was considered as a company, and the school was considered as a battalion. Group supervisors were formed for the existing branches in the school (infantry, cavalry, artillery, medical, engineering, and signal). The school was reorganized from battalion level to regiment level in 1931.

After the Great Offensive, the foreign flag was lowered from the historical Military Academy building in Pangaltı, İstanbul. The Military Academy in Abidinpaşa was moved to İstanbul on 17 September 1923 (See, Photograph 13). After the completion of its new buildings, the Military Academy was transferred back to Ankara on 25 September 1936 and started its education (See, Photographs 14-16). The two-year education period was arranged for three years in 1948, reverted back to two years in 1963, once again reverted back to three years in 1971, and eventually established as four years in 1974. Today, the Military Academy offers cadets an excellent four-year education in a wide range of undergraduate degrees including computer engineering, electronics and communications engineering, industrial engineering, systems engineering, mechanical engineering, civil engineering, defense management, business and public administration, international relations, and sociology. The Academy proudly carries the honor of having Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (Class of

⁴⁷ Akgül, op. cit., p. 7.

1901), an unprecedented soldier and the founding father of the modern Turkish Republic, as its graduate.

Conclusion

In summary, the Military Academy, which was first established in the Ottoman Empire to provide a good level of three-year education with an idealist and perfectionist approach, was quite insufficient in terms of meeting the officer needs of a modern army. In both the First World War and the War of Independence, *the Talimğâh* (Officer Training Course) was used to meet the young commanding officers, which was especially needed at the war front.

We have been very satisfied with the implementation and results achieved by *the Talimğâh* during the War of Independence. Therefore, it was decided to transform the Military Academy into a military school like *the Talimğâh's* structure, and education system. So, it has been transformed from a training system in which comprehensive academic courses are given for three years to a two-year Officer Training Course similar to *the Talimğâh*.

As can be seen, Professional Military Education is an issue that requires careful consideration and research. First of all, Professional Military Education must be able to meet the needs of an army. However, care should be taken in making the practical applications implemented to respond to the urgent needs arising in some crisis and war situations permanently in the Professional Military Education system. In particular, it should be taken into account that the reasoning ability to be acquired in officer training requires comprehensive academic knowledge. As a matter of fact, the quality of the role the soldier plays in society is related to the education s/he receives, and this role manifests itself not only in the war front but also in the army-society relationship.

As the Turkish Army emerged from its Ottoman experience and began its experiment with *the Talimğâh*, the Army had to contend with significant developments in the fate of the nation. As we discussed above, first the Ottoman Army has changed, but not as much as needed, then the Turkish Army has changed, with the needs of the times, yet even now after hundred years have passed, the spirit of Atatürk and his colleagues live. As a concluding remark about the professional military education in the War of Turkish Independence, it can be stated that "*desperate times call for desperate measures.*"

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Appendices



Photo 1. The Imperial Military Engineering School (Mühendishâne-i Berrî-i Hümâyun), İstanbul. (Kemal Beydilli, *Türk Bilim ve Matbaacılık Tarihinde Muühendishane, Muühendishane Matbaası ve Kütüphanesi (1776-1826)*, Eren Yayıncılık, İstanbul, 1995, p. 37.)



Photo 2. Turkish Military Academy (Mekteb-i Ulum-u Harbiye), Pangaltı, İstanbul.

(Turkish Military Academy Collection)



Photo 3. The Talimgâh (Sunûf-ı Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimgâhı), Ankara (1920-1923).

(Abdülkerim Erdoğan, Mamak Tarih ve Kültür Atlası, Cilt 2, Mamak Belediyesi Yayınları, Ankara, 2015, p. 90.)



Photo 4. The Talimgâh - Inauguration Ceremony (Ali Güler, “Millî Mücadele’de Kara Harp Okulu: Fotoğraflarla Ankara Abidinpaşa Köşkü Sınıf-I Muhtelif Zabit Namzetleri Talimgâhı”, Atatürk Araştırma Merkezi Dergisi, 53, 2002, p. 435.)



Photo 5. The Talimghâh - Administrators, Instructors, and Cadets.
(Erdođan, *loc.cit.*)



Photo 6. The Talimghâh - Instructors, and Cadets. (Güler, *loc.cit.*)



Photo 7. The Talimgâh - Cadets. (Erdoğan, *loc.cit.*)



Photo 8. The Talimgâh – Cadets. (Erdoğan, *ibid.*)



Photo 9. The Talimgâh - Cadets Digging Trenches. (Mesut Uyar Collection)



Photo 10. The Talimgâh - Field Training. (Erdoğan, *loc.cit.*)



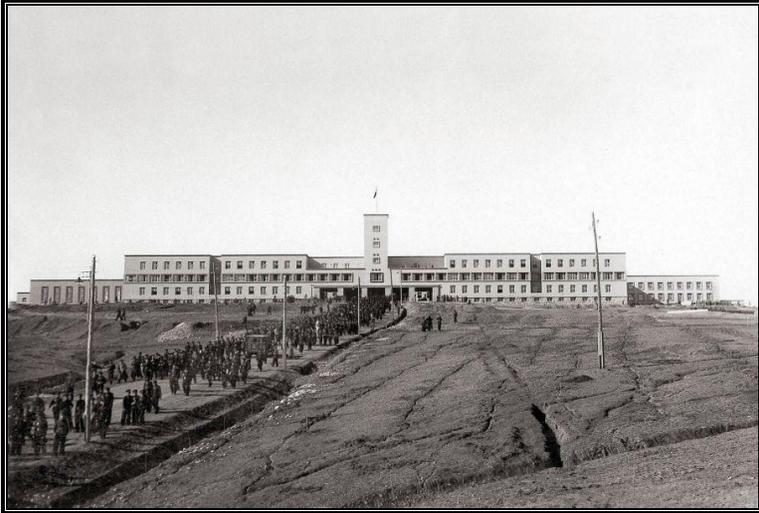
Photo 11. The *Talimgâh* - Field Training. (Güler, *loc.cit.*)



Photo 12. The Graduation Ceremony with Atatürk's Attendance at the *Talimgâh* (42 graduates on 1 November 1920). (Mesut Uyar Collection)



**Photo 13. Turkish Military Academy (Kara Harp Okulu), İstanbul.
(Turkish Military Academy Collection)**



**Photo 14. Turkish Military Academy (Kara Harp Okulu), Ankara (1936).
(Turkish Military Academy Collection)**



**Photo 15. Turkish Military Academy (Kara Harp Okulu), Ankara (2016).
(Turkish Military Academy Collection)**



**Photo 16: Turkish Military Academy (Kara Harp Okulu), Ankara (2016).
(Turkish Military Academy Collection)**