

Codes of Ethics and their Place in the New Security Environment as an Important Part of Human Resource Management

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Abstract

The research problem was determined whether the new socio-economic and security environment needs a code of ethics. The values of the code of ethics of a military professional were analyzed by students of the University of Defence of the Czech Republic and military professionals from practice in the Czech Republic, Poland and Germany. The research included quantitative and qualitative research. The results show that the existence of a code of ethics is becoming unprecedentedly important in the new security environment and furthermore that it should be specified according to the specific focus of the workplace, type of forces. The hypothesis confirmed that the importance of moral values is increasing in the military education system.

KEY WORDS: *code of ethics; military professional; human resource management.*

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1. Introduction

Ethics is an important part of human resource management for any employer organisation that wants to succeed in the 21st century labour market [1]. Ethics in an employer reveals two levels. Firstly, it is the attitude and behaviour towards people according to the norms of labour law but also decency and responsibility. Larger and multinational employers are aware of this fact and they seek to include in their policies the realization that: the strategic goals of the organization should include the rights and needs of employees, employees have the right to be treated as human beings, employees will be preserved their natural rights and will be treated fairly, honestly and respectfully [2]. Secondly, it is an approach more related to the profession the employee is in. In this second approach, it also takes into account the competencies of the profession especially the soft ones.

By claiming to be a profession, the military claims a special moral justification to carry out acts of extreme violence and destruction. Unlike most professionals, military personnel are allowed to kill, destroy the infrastructure of enemy states, and endanger the lives of military personnel under their command. If this is a profession, then the military deserves greater moral scrutiny through a code of ethics, and military personnel can be expected to meet high moral standards. The status of professional brings with it special moral authority, but it also imposes moral constraints: professionals must guide their actions by the regulatory ideal of their profession and must respect important broad-based moral norms. Professionals' special moral authority to violate ordinary moral norms or to weigh moral values differently within the profession is justified only if the profession genuinely serves an important human need, and only if such special authority is necessary to satisfy that need. Given that the military claims special moral authority of a very serious nature, we certainly want it to be a profession that is governed by high professional standards and professional responsibility. Without such a status, a code of ethics, the Army would be no better than a mercenary army.

2. Current status of the issue under study

Ethics is the basis of original law, but law contains a minimum of ethics. Ethics should be able to answer whether what we do as an individual or a company is good or bad. The answer is ambiguous due to individual and ethnic differences.

Ethics is a normative science and defines the scope of ethical laws, which are called codes of ethics. Codes of ethics are only a morally binding standard, but they should not conflict with existing legislation. Ethics, according to Sokol [3], can be described as follows: “The science of morality is part of practical philosophy; it asks what is right and wrong and what should and should not be”. Ethics, according to Nytro [4], can be defined as what we can and cannot do, but it helps us to seek and expand at all times what is moral, what is immoral, and that we can act rightly or wrongly. Ethics is closely related to value theory. Since the “good” is considered ethically the highest human value, ethics teaches us to recognize what is good and what is not good. “A person acts morally if he acts consciously and voluntarily in accordance with his duties, otherwise we can speak of immoral conduct [5].” Morality determines socially desirable and undesirable actions and thus directs human behaviour in society. We assume here that humans are rational subjects and that free and rational choice is a necessary condition for moral responsibility. Ethics should be concerned with what is right and wrong, good and bad; it should examine the moral choices people make and the ways in which they seek to justify them. To the pair of morality and morality we add the concept of morality. As with morality, morality concerns conscience. Morality, first of all, depicts the moral sentiment where an individual can take upon himself the general concern in his conscience and translate it into his own convictions. In morality, the difference between actions is only in the dimension of what is morally good (in accordance with the conscience of a particular person) and what is morally bad (against the conscience of that person). Through morality, an opinion or statement related to morality should be communicated and also aims to instruct us [6,7].

Codes of ethics define norms of behavior in the workplace; their existence is evident in larger and multinational companies. Currently, companies are developing core ethical values and will be a key management and motivational tool [8]. Currently, the code of ethics can be one of the essential tools for the implementation of ethical principles into the conditions of the Army of the Czech Republic. The Code of Conduct should set certain desirable boundaries of behaviour. A code of ethics serves to define principles and rules of conduct and is usually based on a defined goal and values in a particular company. The situation arises for the military to determine its own code of ethics, how it will communicate and whether it will review the code periodically, and to what extent it will be binding on military professionals and whether violations will be addressed. Many professional fields have developed codes of ethics that are more or less binding on competent personnel. In some fields, e.g. advocacy, medicine, forensic science, there are codes of ethics with significant legal validity. Some authors place more emphasis on the value dimension than on ethical responsibility. Talking about ethics is not the same as doing ethics. Reaching consensus is not practicing ethics. An ethical solution does not necessarily satisfy the interests of all involved. Any decision a military professional makes related to what he or she does as a leader will have an ethical component because leadership involves the interaction of personalities – the basis and emergence of ethical concern. Many of the decisions to be made will involve a set of common ethical issues, although they will be set in a wide range of professional circumstances. The world's current social and economic development is going through a difficult period. A new quality of interrelationships between countries is taking shape, and value systems are changing in the context of fundamental changes in their social composition and domestic and international orientation. New values are finding their way into life with problems, as their implementation is accompanied by difficulties of both objective and subjective nature. Currently, the process of searching for and at the same time consolidating the values of the code of ethics of the military professional is underway.

The codes of ethics serve as a formalized basis for easier and more verifiable assessment of sudden action also in combat conditions and under conditions of maximum psychological stress. Codes of ethics have an unmistakable, moral educational and preventive significance. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization has developed a code of ethics that includes promoting the highest levels of trust in our integrity and impartiality, loyalty, accountability and professionalism. Therefore, these five basic principles exemplify them and form the basis of this Code, which guides the conduct of all NATO members, whether civilian or military personnel, in all areas of NATO activities and NATO organs [9].

Most countries have developed codes of ethics for military professionals. At present, the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic has an officially established code of ethics for the employees of the Ministry of Defence in RMO 6/2013 [10], which follows the Act No. 221/1999 Coll., on professional soldiers [11], Act No. 262/2006 Coll., Labour Code [12] and the Organisational Code of the Ministry of Defence [13]. The values of a military professional are displayed on the platform of the Virtual Recruitment Centre “doarmady.cz”. Those interested in a military profession or Active Reserve become familiar with the Military Ethics, the Military Oath and the Soldier's Code of Ethics, which summarises topics such as responsibility and sense of duty, dedication, courage, loyalty and honour [14, 15]. Therefore, the question arises whether the military profession needs its own code of ethics in the new security environment and also to manage human resources in the organisation. People with high emotional intelligence are able to feel many things, and thanks to this ability they can make the right decisions and take the right actions. They would not need a code of ethics. Other people do not have this talent and such a code could help them. Problem solving in the Army of the Czech Republic through emotional intelligence is limited by centralized command and control.

There are several basic steps or phases that a military professional in the new security environment should go through when making decisions of a moral nature:

- Identify the ethical issues associated with the situation and the decision to be made.
 - Consider a range of possible alternatives.
 - Consider the possible consequences for military professionals.
 - Determine the potential social, material, and combat damage under each alternative.
 - Loss of life:
- Avoidable damage/unavoidable damage.
- Residual damage/unavoidable damage.

- Determine the benefits to be gained from each alternative.

In many ways, however, the military profession differs from activities in other professions. In this context, we distinguish between the choice of a permanent profession and the temporary exercise of a profession [16]. Logically, we assume a higher value consciousness and a higher level of professional morality in military professionals [17]. The latter have voluntarily chosen to pursue a military profession on the basis of their awareness of their moral obligations. The current code of ethics of a military professional of the Army of the Czech Republic includes:

- Responsibility and sense of duty “be aware of your duties, show initiative and creative approach to service”.
- Sacrifice: “give everything, give more than you get, realize that the success of the whole is worth more than the success of the individual”.
- Courage: “do not be afraid to make decisions and take on new challenges, have the strength to overcome difficult, dangerous and risky situations”.
- Loyalty: “be loyal to your country and its army and loyal to your superiors, respect your co-workers”.
- Honour: “be direct and principled, always act in accordance with your conscience, your mission binds you”.

3. Data and Methods

The analysis was based on questionnaires. A written questionnaire was sent to 100 respondents of the military studies of the University of Defence, in each 1st to 5th year, that was 20 respondents. From the year group, the questionnaire was sent to every fifth military professional. The typical survey participant was an officer-in-waiting, a student between the ages of 20 and 25. In this paper, we are concerned with defining the code of ethics of the military professional and finding differences between beginning students and students in their final year of study in assessing the values of the military professional. The questionnaire contained closed-ended questions. The return rate of the questionnaire was 100%. In addition, the opinion of military professionals from practice in selected NATO countries on the place of the code of ethics in the activities of the armed forces was surveyed. The return rate of the questionnaires was 100%.

The main research question 1: Is it appropriate to examine the code of ethics of a military professional in the Czech Republic in relation to the new security environment?

The main research question 2: Is the current code of ethics for military professionals in the Czech Republic sufficient?

Hypothesis 1: In the military education system, the importance of moral values tends to increase.

4. Results and Discussion

The result of the research shows that the respondents' evaluation of the moral values of a military professional by the students of the University of Defence from the 1st to the 5th year has an increasing tendency. The same conclusions were reached by Krivanek in 2007 when examining moral values [17]. Up to 86 out of 100 respondents desire their own code of ethics. The results of the survey showed that 65 respondents believe that the Code meets their objective. Only 8 respondents do not reflect it. A positive finding is that military professionals recommend not to adopt only a branch, related ready-made code of ethics, but the Army of the Czech Republic should try to take into account the specifics and specific types of troops. When asked whether a code of ethics is “mandatory” for you, 64 respondents answered “yes”, 9 respondents answered “no”. Respondents were dissatisfied that the values of the Code of Ethics do not reflect military specialization. Up to 86 respondents called for legitimizing the code of ethics. On the other hand, only 8 respondents expressed negative views. The result gives us an answer to the question of whether there is any benefit to legitimizing the code of ethics. The majority of military professionals consider legalization necessary. Respondents state that if a code of ethics is adopted, it is more appropriate in judging the actions of military professionals and themselves in security and military situations, in fact, as some respondents state, it is an anchor of behavior. A code would eliminate the manifestation of excesses in combat situations and remove responsibility for the actions of the individual. Up to 75 respondents said that a code of ethics would lead to greater loyalty in the performance of duties and measurable behaviour. Only 10 responses stated that a code of ethics is only advisory and yet should be respected. The results show that respondents view a code of ethics as something that largely promotes the quality of military professionals, brings units together, and helps fulfill subordination. In only 13 cases did respondents indicate that a possible adopted code of ethics would have shortcomings. These deficiencies can be summarized as follows: the code of ethics does not represent and respect military specialization, does not fully address the relationship to commanders, peers, or the public.

Respondents' attitudes towards codes of ethics are very interesting. Up to 82 respondents were closest to saying that they considered codes of ethics very important. Although a significant number of respondents appreciate that they exist, they do not concern themselves with them as much; 23 respondents indicated this possibility. Respondents who are not very interested in codes of ethics were 8 and 7 respondents also indicated that they are unnecessary. The results show that codes of ethics do have their place, as two thirds of the respondents said that codes have some influence on them. The social responsibility of the military professional is closely related to ethics, even if ethical responsibility is not enacted. However, ethical conduct and trust suffer to a large extent in the current environment because of vested interests.

How does the relationship between competence and ethics manifest itself? When selecting military professionals, competence should be a primary consideration. Competence is defined as the ability of a military professional at any level to behave appropriately to the requirements of the military profession and thus contribute to the desired outcomes of the Army. Professional ethics plays an important role in the competence of a worker but does not make professionals more ethical, yet it

develops sensitivity to value and moral issues and promotes clearer thinking that, based on general ethical principles, helps to understand the role and importance of professional positions in contemporary society.

The military profession is understood as a specific concept and appears in connection with a certain group of professions based on long-term theoretical training. Military competences are considered as the ability to successfully perform a military profession. Thus, they form the basic prerequisite for the performance not only of this but also of other military jobs. Competencies are skills that are widely applicable. Military competence constitutes the basic prerequisite for the performance of a military professional. It expresses the knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes military professionals should attain. Fig. 1 shows the perceived ethical values of the University of Defence military students towards the military profession. From Fig. 1, it can be seen that 5th year students perceive more ethical values to the military profession than 1st year students.

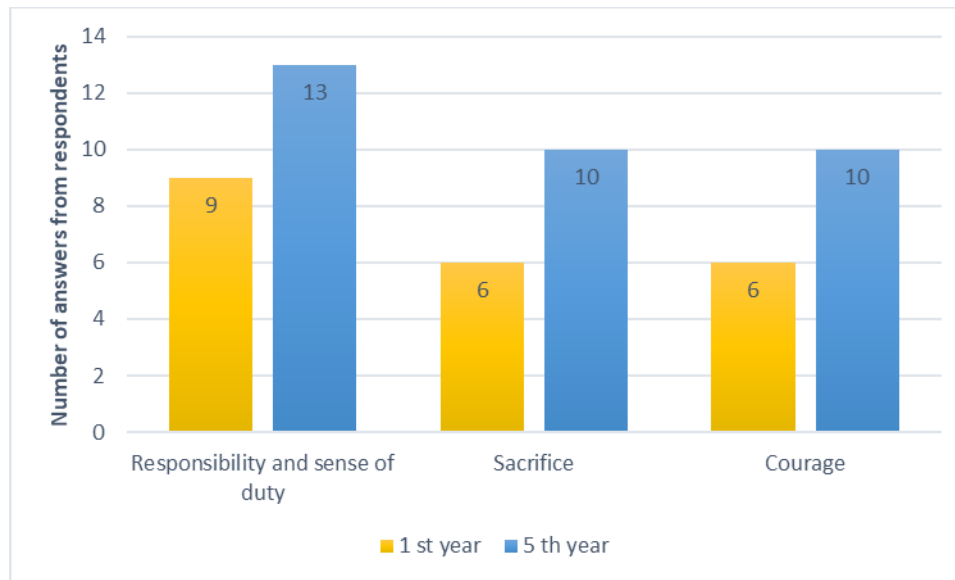


Fig. 1. Perceived ethical values of military students of the University of Defence towards the military profession.

The perception of ethical values of military professionals towards the military profession was also investigated among professionals in practice in the Czech Republic and in selected NATO member countries - see Table 1 [18, 19].

Table 1.
Perceived ethical values of military professionals towards the military profession

Military professionals	Perceived ethical values
Czech Republic (Army of the Czech Republic)	Honor, loyalty, responsibility, courage, sacrifice.
Republic of Poland (Polish Army)	Loyalty, courage, sacrifice, pride, integrity, duty, bravery, valor.
Federal Republic of Germany (Bundeswehr)	Honor, loyalty, courage, sacrifice, tenacity, fortitude, diligence, bravery, sincerity.

It is evident from the table and graph that military professionals in practice and students of the University of Defence perceive duty, sacrifice and courage in the same way. Similarly, it can be stated that military professionals of the selected countries perceive courage and sacrifice equally.

5. Conclusions

Answer to main research question 1. Is it appropriate to examine the code of ethics of a military professional in the Czech Republic in relation to the new security environment?

Yes, it can be stated that the existence of a code of ethics is of unprecedented importance in the new security environment. A code of ethics is lacking for military professionals who have to make decisions independently without interaction with the commander and the parent unit.

Answer to main research question 2. Is the current code of ethics for military professionals in the Czech Republic sufficient?

Partially sufficient, codes of ethics should be part of the internal directive or organisational regulations of the Army of the Czech Republic. As many as 86 respondents confirmed that the current code of ethics does not respect the differences and specifics of military specialties. The Code of Ethics should be specified according to the specific specialisation. The influence of the military environment, the system of military education is manifested in the fact that the importance of moral values for a military professional has an increasing tendency.

The behaviour of military professionals is governed by certain rules. Some assignments or guidelines may take the form of recommendations that are traditionally followed. Some need to be signed and affirmed. However, the legitimisation of a code of ethics does not enhance quality. On the contrary, the creation of a code of ethics specific to the troop types would influence the behaviour of military professionals. This fact was also observed in this research. It seems appropriate to maintain the basic points of the code of ethics, which should be fulfilled according to the specification, professional focus and other aspects of the specific type of troops. The importance of moral values is increasing in the military education system. The stated hypothesis H1 was confirmed by the questionnaire investigation. The values listed in the Code of Ethics of the Professional of the Army of the Czech Republic have the highest rating among students of the last year of study. This confirms the importance of military education in the preparation of a military professional. Similarly, military professionals in the practice of the selected NATO countries perceive the same ethical values as courage and sacrifice.

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