

## Chapter 6

# The Modern American Military Education Model: A New Approach for a New Century

**Kelly Jordan**

*American Military University of American Public University System, USA*

### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes an approach to formation at military schools for the 21st century that is both explicit and intentional, posing it for consideration as the Modern American Military Education Model (MAMEM). This chapter does not spell out the implementation of the proposed MAMEM specifically; rather, it is meant to inform the reader about the philosophy and components of the proposed MAMEM, the process of formation associated with it, and to provide examples of ways that schools associated with the Association of Military Colleges and Schools in the United States (AMCSUS) have implemented a version of it to support their varied missions and achieve their disparate educational objectives. In aggregate, the intention is to show how the proposed MAMEM provides a coherent philosophy of education by intention, atmosphere, and implication that forms, informs, and transforms cadets effectively, satisfying Chesterton's demanding criteria for qualification as an excellent form of education.*

### INTRODUCTION

According to English author G. K. Chesterton,

*Every education teaches a philosophy of life, if not explicitly, then by suggestion, by implication, by atmosphere. If the different parts of that education do not cohere or connect with each other; if the educational process as a whole does not combine to convey a coherent view of life; if, in the end, it does not empower and transform, then, it is not education at all. (Chesterton 1950, 161).*

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-7998-6636-7.ch006

## ***The Modern American Military Education Model***

An effective education, then, is one in which the student is formed by a coherent and connected approach that engages in discerning one's purpose to empower and transform the student into an agent of change who knows how best to place his or her gifts in service to others and to the greater good.

In our contemporary time, education is a critical stage in the development of emerging adults when they move toward new forms of identity and more sophisticated ways of knowing, choosing, and living authentically, leaving behind their old ways of understanding, believing, and relating to the people around them.<sup>1</sup> The ideal mechanism for helping them achieve this transformation is a holistic education in which the mind, body, and spirit are engaged to help the student form a new and improved identity, conscience, and character with which they may engage the world and begin making substantive contributions to the society in which they exist. However, many American schools have moved away from helping students address the full scope of these challenges, choosing instead to focus primarily on their intellectual development. The result is a one-dimensional concentration that fails to connect the classroom and the other parts of students' lives during this challenging and confusing period, and thus failing to help them achieve what developmental psychologist James Marcia termed the *identity achievement* necessary to function effectively as adults.

This article describes an approach to formation at military schools for the 21<sup>st</sup> century that is both explicit and intentional, posing it for consideration as the Modern American Military Education Model (MAMEM). This article does not spell out the implementation of the proposed MAMEM specifically; rather, it is meant to inform the reader about the philosophy and components of the proposed MAMEM, the process of formation associated with it, and to provide examples of ways that schools associated with the Association of Military Colleges and Schools in the United States (AMCSUS) have implemented a version of it to support their varied missions and achieve their disparate educational objectives. In aggregate, the intention is to show how the proposed MAMEM provides a coherent philosophy of education by intention, atmosphere, and implication that forms, informs, and transforms cadets effectively, satisfying Chesterton's demanding criteria for qualification as an excellent form of education.

## **A Brief History of the Traditional American Military Education Model**

Military schools have existed in America since almost its founding, reflecting the country's belief in the power of education to better one's self by deliberate efforts to form the intellect and develop the character in disciplined and academically rigorous environments. Rather than increasing one's social status (as was the case in Europe), the goal of an American military education has always been and remains to produce informed individuals capable of being transformed into effective citizens of a democratic republic.

Military schools began appearing in America after the Revolutionary War, initially to help produce "proper military officers" of honor, ability, and intellect for the nation. Since 1802, with the founding of the United States Military Academy at West Point, almost 850 different military schools have operated in the United States, far more than anywhere else in the world and making them a uniquely American institution (Coulter 2017, xiii).

## **The Thayer Method – The Foundation of the Traditional Military Education Model**

West Point sought to discover the optimal balance of providing a comprehensive and sound technical education, along with relevant military training and effective character development as the foundation

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