

Dutch dilemmas.

Officer education at the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (1828-2003)

Petra Groen & Wim Klinkert^I

Abstract

The Royal Netherlands Military Academy began its life as an institution of secondary education. In the course of its 175-year history two clear landmarks stand out: in 1890 the Academy became a military vocational school for pupils with a h.b.s.-education and in 1960 the choice for an academic education was made. The year 2003 may prove to be yet another landmark with the introduction of the Bachelor education. Should officers be educated to be generalists or specialists; how should the academic education relate to a practical military training; how should the values and norms of the officer profession be inculcated in the cadets? These are questions which formed a constant throughout the Academy's entire history. There have been marked changes in recruitment as a result of a democratization and an almost exclusive origin from protestant civil servant/military families has shifted to a much more diverse background of aspirant officers.

Introduction.

By the joining together of the northern and southern Netherlands in 1815 a new state arose in north-western Europe, the Kingdom of the Netherlands. It had been the wish of the Vienna Congress to create a strong buffer north of France in order to contain any possible future French expansion. The fledgling kingdom built a new army and an officer corps to go with it and in doing so it took a significant step forward in this field. King William I did not want the various corps to recruit and educate their own officers any longer, and he entrusted a central state institution with it, the Royal Netherlands Military Academy (KMA), situated in the Castle of Breda. It was here that the aspirant officers of all arms and services of the army went through the same education. In this manner the monarch wanted to create a homogeneous officer corps for the army of his new state. The pillars of the new institute were the transfer of knowledge and 'military education' in the values and norms of the traditional officer class and the new officer profession.

Surveying the 175 years of RNLMA history, it can be said that transfer of knowledge and military education have remained the alpha and omega throughout. But this seeming continuity conceals changes as well as recurring problems. What the content of the required knowledge and education was to be, how it should be realized and in what man-

Cadets leave the Academy in formation, November 1938.

Holding the banner is D. de Iongh, president of the Senate. The banner detail is commanded by W.H.J.E. van Daalen, on the right, armed with klewang. Both De Iongh and Van Daalen were cadets of the East Indian Army.



ner both pillars should relate to each other, changed over the years. The experiences gained at the RNLMA itself had an effect on this process of change, as well as the views and wishes of the military organizations for which the RNLMA functioned as main supplier: the Royal Netherlands Army (KL), the Royal Netherlands East-Indian Army (KNIL) from 1836 until World War II, and later the Royal Netherlands Air Force (KLu). The Dutch society, too, of which the armed forces were a part, and, still further afield, the military developments in Europe and south-east Asia had their impact on the education. An important watershed was the 1890 Act on military education, when the RNLMA became a military vocational school, building on the h.b.s.-education. Another was the choice for academic education in 1960. Possibly 2003 may prove to be yet another with the new legal tie-up with civil higher education.

The questions that have continued to be topical in spite of these watersheds, are:

- to what extent can or must the RNLMA provide academic education?
- should the RNLMA produce generalists or specialists?
- how can the military as well as the theoretical/academic education be given enough substance, in view of the limited time available?
- how should the military education of the aspirant officer be realized?

The answer to this last question does not only relate to the officer ideal envisaged by the RNLMA leadership, but also to the backgrounds of the aspirant officers, the cadets. The present contribution will therefore be concluded with a brief analysis of the changes in recruitment numbers in a geographical, religious and social respect during the past 175 years.

Academic education

A constant factor in the history of the RNLMA has been the concern for the level of the theoretical education. Initially, the RNLMA was a military secondary school, linked to a theoretical, or, according to 19th century norms, 'scientific' vocational education, that was supposed to give the officer enough intellectual substance to carry him through the rest of career with the help of a certain quantity of self-study. The Secondary Education Act of 1863, which meant the birth of the h.b.s.², led to drastic changes, for it allowed the RNLMA to specialize into a military school, building on knowledge the students had acquired at secondary school. It was hoped by the leadership of the army that the somewhat higher age of the students would have the added advantage of the sharpest edges of the hazing – a big problem for decades – being taken away. After a failed experiment between 1869-1879, it was finally realized in the Act on Military Education of 1890, the first landmark, or watershed, in this phase of the RNLMA history. From that year onwards the RNLMA was a military vocational school at a post-h.b.s. level. With regard to the entry requirements the RNLMA followed the Dutch High Schools, but it was not included in the Higher Education Acts that later laid down the scientific status of the Technical High School at Delft (1905), the High School of Commerce in Rotterdam (1913) or Wageningen Agricultural High School (1918).

Some progressive officers were of the opinion that the RNLMA should transform itself into a Military High School. Professor W. Storm van Leeuwen, a former officer, launched this idea in 1910 and the prominent liberal officer J.T.T.C. van Dam van Isselt elaborated it. Their argument was that the reputation – and therefore recruitment potential - of the officer profession would decline, if no academic status was attached to it. For h.b.s. students the RNLMA would become increasingly less appealing, with the High Schools competing for them.

This argument carried some weight with the Minister of War W. Cool. Together with the continuous criticism of the high costs of the RNLMA and the difficulty of recruiting sufficient cadets with the required level of education, this was enough reason for him to appoint a State Committee to see into the matter. In 1913, after three years, the committee gave the advice to raise the content of the study to such an academic level that civil recognition would become possible, however without affecting the military aspect of the education. The RNLMA was to retain a boarding school system and the first year should have a strong orientation towards military practice. The committee supported the argument that a higher level of education would enhance the reputation of the profession and recruitment potential. However, World War I threw a spanner in the works and the advice was not implemented.

After World War I virtually the entire educational staff of the RNLMA backed the High School idea under the influence of the developments that had manifested

themselves during the war. Apart from the earlier arguments they also pointed at the position of the professional officer who should be able to hold his own in an environment of academically educated reserve officers, emancipated conscripts and the rapidly increasing technical complexity of warfare. The lecturers, military as well as civil, joined forces in the so-called Breda Committee, in order to realize the transformation into a Military High School, this time even without the boarding school system. The endeavour failed because of the military establishment. It is true, the Commandant, the inspector of Military Education, the Indian Army commander, and the Minister of War did want education at an academic level, but only if it was not too theoretical and insofar as it was necessary for the further education of the officer. Their main objection concerned the proposed abolishment of the boarding school system, which in their view did not have a deforming influence, but a uniquely forming one. It was military spirit and not academic capacities that in the end constituted the quality of an officer. That higher education would enhance recruitment was deemed a hypothesis as yet unproven. Contrary to the situation of around 1910, when recruitment had been the main problem, it was the funding of the education that caused the most worries in the twenties. Because of this the theoretical education was even shortened for the majority of the cadets by a year in 1924, by 'contracting out' the first year to the Schools for Reserve Officers. The rear-guard action fought by Engineer Officer C.P. Brest van Kempen in 1926 was doomed to fail therefore. In his book *Onderwijs en opvoeding aan de KMA (Education and upbringing at the RNLMA)* he presented an inspired re-iteration of the arguments since Storm van Leeuwen for the scientification of the education, without the military straightjacket of the boarding school system. But the announced review of the 1890 Act did not come. The RNLMA was and remained a military vocational school, as stipulated in the Act, with a theoretical education at an academic level insofar as this was necessary for the remainder of the officer's career. Because of this, the RNLMA missed out on the rapid developments in the civil academic and higher education. A fossilization in Breda was the result. Especially in the technical subjects these arrears could never be made good anymore.

The situation did not change immediately after World War II, in spite of ambitious plans of the leadership of the armed forces, who wanted to realize a tie-up between the RNLMA and higher education, taking the newly established Nederlands Opleidingsinstituut voor het Internationale Bedrijfsleven (Netherlands International Business School) Nyenrode as an example. However, the time, financial and personnel resources were lacking to make the break with the past. Only in the late fifties was the course changed, when a choice was made for a legally established academic education of the aspirant officer, albeit within the familiar boarding school system. The arguments were also familiar: on the recruitment market the competition with the universities had

to be improved, the social status and the position of the regular officer with respect to reserve officers and his task as a leader and educator of conscripts required an academic education, and then there were the military-technological developments. That it proved possible to set out a new course in 1960 on the basis of arguments that had discredited the educational staff in 1921, had everything to do with the big recruitment problems for the RNLMA in the post-war reconstruction years, the comparatively easy financial situation of the armed forces, the absence of the practice-minded obstructionists in the Dutch East Indies, and of course the less extreme nature of the proposals of 1958-1960, which left the boarding school system intact. In essence these plans did not go beyond the proposals of the State Committee of 1913.

The academic education that began in 1960, the second landmark in this respect, also marked the beginning of a thirty-year struggle for legal recognition of the academic character of the RNLMA education. This struggle for the Academic Military Education Act (WWOK) was a very protracted one and eventually it was lost. The reasons for this primarily lie in the infighting between the RNLMA and the Royal Netherlands Naval College (KIM), their hierarchical and organizational embedding within the armed forces, and the doubts outside the military about the academic level of both institutes. Already in the early sixties RNLMA and RNLNC were hard put to present a common proposal for the WWOK, which was a clear indication of the difference of opinion on the character of the education – higher vocational or academic education. The pursuit of a separate legal regulation for the officer education met with parliamentary opposition in 1963 and 1987. An incorporation of RNLMA and RNLNC in the Higher Education Act, as Parliament suggested in 1963, was out of the question for the leadership of the armed forces, as this would jeopardize the control over ‘their’ officer education, and on



Cadet studying, 1950s.

top of that would let in the 'spectre of democratization'. Moreover, in 1963 and 1987 Parliament (preponderantly the left parties) had reservations about the academic character of the RNLMA and RNLNC, a doubt that was shared by an important governmental advisory body, the Academic Council, and incidentally also by the educational staff of the RNLMA. Another advisory body, the Educational Council, even stated in 1985 that an officer education and an academic education were in principle mutually exclusive. Given this situation, the Secretary of Defence faced a tough choice in 1990. He either would have to change the organizational structure and embedding of the officer education in such a way that the Commanders in Chief would lose some of their grip and that outsiders would assess the academic quality – at the worst possible moment -, or he would have to withdraw the Bill. He chose the latter option, also because of the pressure exerted by his social-democrat colleague on Education.

With the struggle for the WWOK lost, the aspiration for a basic education that had civil recognition of the officer corps did not wane. Considerations of recruitment and an increasing complexity of the armed forces, along with a national and international environment in which officers would have to be able to function, kept the flame going. Incidentally, in spite of the erratic academic status of the RNLMA, its recruitment potential among pre-university students did not decrease in the nineties. This may have been caused by the solution the RNLMA sought, and found, to shore up its academic ambition. Although legally an academic status had been withheld, it managed to conclude formal contracts of cooperation with institutions of higher education. This enabled the RNLMA to contract out part of its (technical) education or offer its graduate officers the prospect of an academic continuation course. This strategy may yield special rewards at a time when national higher education has been in a process of reform since 1999, leading up to the introduction of the Anglo-Saxon Bachelor-Master educational model, while in 2001 the quality of the theoretical part of the RNLMA education was assessed as academic by an unsuspected outsider, the Vereniging van Samenwerkende Nederlandse Universiteiten (Association of Cooperating Dutch Universities). If this institution gives the same predicate on its next visitation, an accreditation of the RNLMA as an academic Bachelor education becomes a real possibility. It would be the third landmark, after the fundamental change of 1960, in the pursuit of establishing the tie with civil education, and in doing so fulfil a century-old ambition.

Generalist or specialist

There was no discussion in the first decades of its existence about the theoretical part of the RNLMA education. When the Academy opened its gates in 1828 it was the express intention to offer all cadets one and the same general theoretical curriculum, with a view

Handling technology is important in
any officer training.
In the 1950s the Signal Corps was one of the
pioneers in using modern radio equipment.
Here, cadets are training in the field,
approx. 1955.



to the homogeneity of the officer corps. It was crammed with mathematics to guarantee an adequate education for the technical arms and services. Still, it became necessary to introduce an extra year for the Engineers, whereas in practice the mathematics course for Infantry and Cavalry was simplified to avoid too much drop-out.

After 1890, when the RNLMA became a military vocational school, this general theoretical education was replaced by a somewhat differentiated curriculum, geared to the different requirements of the various arms and services. Broadly speaking, there was a technical study for the Engineers – although as early as in 1910 it had been considered whether this education had not better be contracted out to the Technical University at Delft -, and a curriculum with a minimum of mathematics and science for the infantry and Cavalry, with the course for the Artillery taking up a middle position. In 1930 an administrative-economic course was added for the cadets of the military Military Administration, the first service at the RNLMA. Apart from that, in spite of opposition, the number of theoretical subjects especially intended for the East Indian professional practice grew. At the same time World War I caused the introduction of new subjects in the general theoretical part of the education during the interbellum period, such as (military) sociology, intended to prepare the future officer better for his task as leader and educator.

The same themes played an important role after World War II in the debates on the reform of the education. 'Military leadership' became the general theme of the education that started in 1960. As far as the academic education was concerned this was a departure from the arm-or service-specific theoretical curriculum. Instead, there came three disciplines: an administrative-economic, a technical, and a social-economic variant, although for the cadets destined for the technical functions the freedom of choice was very limited indeed. What was striking, too, was the absence of a discipline directed at the military core business: operations. As a result of the criticism of the too theoretical character of the education, the high costs, the striving for legal recognition of the academic part of the education and the positive experiences with the subject of management, that was also making its way into the academic world, a new academic educa-

tion was designed in 1974. 'Military management' was to be its binding factor. A multi-disciplinary basic education in military management for all cadets, and a full integration of the academic and military elements were the objectives, the 'educational model 1985', the result. The three old disciplines were replaced by three new ones: technology, operations and economics, but the old faculty departments still remained intact. In spite of all the generalist intentions, there still remained three specialist studies under the flag of military management due to obstruction by the departments and the ambition to meet the WWOK-requirements. It even proved impossible to set up a common first-year course. The integration of the military and academic elements of the study, hard enough in theory, also failed in practice.

This result after years of discussions, together with the lost struggle for the WWOK, made the Minister of Defence and the armed forces chiefs decide on a fundamental change of the education. The military management study that was introduced in 1992 formed a rigorous break with the past in many respects. The first phase of the education, KMA-I, had a much more generalist character. For almost two years the cadets followed a common education, with a strong emphasis on management. The bulk of their specialist academic education, KMA-II, the cadets would get as lieutenants, so after their first posting, and certainly with regard to the technical disciplines this would take place outside the RNLMA. For what had once been the RNLMA's pride - its own technical education - the end was really near. In order to enhance the ideal of integration, the old departments were replaced by new ones and incorporated into one faculty: the Faculty of Military Management Studies (1992).

The 1992 model was not given a long lease of life. The separation between KMA-I and KMA-II caused practical problems and the changing personnel policies made it necessary that the education also accommodate the new, short-term, officer category. Finally, the prospect of Bachelor status for the RNLMA had its impact, just as previously the struggle for the WWOK had determined the arrangement of the education. The long generalist basic education has in the meantime been reduced to a seven-month preliminary course for the long-term cadets – not jointly anymore with the short-term cadets –, followed by a specialist academic Bachelor education. There is still no certainty yet about the epithet to be given to this education. Possibly the line is followed that has become popular in the world of officer (continuation) education. If so, in the future the RNLMA will be part of a broad defence Faculty of Military Sciences, incorporating three disciplines: management and administration, technology and military science. The presence of the latter in this set-up would mean the emancipation of a discipline that could not develop itself in the peace organization between 1960 and 1990, and a loss of territory for (military) management, which flourished in a climate oriented towards internal management processes.

Military education

Another recurrent theme in the history of the RNLMA is the debate on the relation between the academic and the military education and the link with the first military function. When it was first established, the RNLMA was expressly intended as a theoretical education, albeit in support of military practice. However, the RNLMA-educated officer had no idea about practice until 1890. The summer exercises he took part in did not prevent him from starting his first function rather awkwardly, as the continuous complaint was.

In the period 1890-1918 this problem was tackled by detaching the cadets to the units, while the first year on a function was seen as a training-period. This was, however, an 'expensive' solution, and it disappeared after 1918. A cheaper solution, that was introduced in 1924, was to give the first year-students their military training at the Schools for Reserve Officers, although this did have some repercussions on the theoretical education. But these solutions were enough to silence the complaints about the education of the RNLMA officer in the Netherlands being too theoretical and not practical enough. This was different in the colonies. The detachment to the Dutch units and the Schools for Reserve Officers did not link up with military practice in the East Indies, for which almost half of the cadets were destined after 1890. The establishment of an officer education on East-Indian soil would be a solution, but it was out of the question in the Netherlands for colonial-political reasons and it was also a bridge too far for the East-Indian Army commander. The alternative was an education geared at the Indian military practice at the RNLMA, which was realized in 1939, due to the continuous pressure of the Indian lobby.

After World War II, initially, and particularly in the 1950s, the emphasis lay on the training as platoon commander. With the introduction of the academic education in

Military training of Artillery cadets at
Oldebroek, 1958.



1960 the old complaint resurfaced: the military training fell short of the mark and did not link up with the first function. The 1960 model envisaged an intermitting military training after the initial general military training of a few months in the three (or four) following years. As a result of these complaints an 'improved' model was already introduced in 1965, in which the intermitting training was replaced by a specialist function training during the last year. This, however, did not really mend the situation. The military training remained inadequate for military practice, while the lieutenant was academically too highly educated for his first function, which resulted in demotivation. Besides, study drop-out was high among cadets who were more interested in things military than academic, and who, after their basic military training had to wait until their fourth year for the follow-up of their military training. After a parade of project groups had looked into the matter, the 1985 model in essence returned to the intermitting training of the 1960 model, while on top of that the military training was to be integrated more into the academic curriculum than in 1960. The latter proved an impossible mission, with the possible exception of leadership training. The former, as in the period 1960-1965, did not take away the complaints. Once more, the 1992 model was a choice for a function-oriented training in the last year. Again, it did not link up seamlessly with the first function, and in addition there were new complaints about the character of the education being too generalist, which was certainly inadequate with respect to technical subjects and did not prepare sufficiently for the new reality of missions abroad. For the time being, however, the BaMa-model that is still being developed, provides a function-oriented training as a conclusion to the bachelor education after an initial seven-month general military training.

For the practical training a solution for the problems brought along by the 'scientification' of the education at the RNLMA in 1960 proved difficult to find. Since then, each time essentially a choice has been made for an intermitting or continuous function-oriented training after the initial basic military training. After all, the margins for solution are very narrow indeed. There is a limit to the duration and the costs of the education and therefore a choice for a substantial theoretical education will have consequences for the military training. There are other solutions, such as the German officer education, where the aspirant officer first gets his entire military training, followed by a monitored detachment, after which he starts his theoretical education. Another possibility would be to consider his first year on function as a training year, as is done in other professions with a problematical link between education and professional practice, by offering practical training periods. Such solutions, however, have a serious disadvantage: they increase the duration of the education and consequently the costs.

Character development

An essential part of the officer education is the instilling of (military) values and norms and a feeling of *esprit de corps*, essential elements in the process of professionalization. In the 19th century the emphasis lay on military values such as discipline, obedience, self-sacrifice, courage and fidelity. The civil values and norms, those of a *gentleman*, were self-evident, as the large majority of cadets came from the higher social circles of the population and, as officers, would remain there.

The 20th century, especially after World War II, would bring considerable changes. The democratization of recruitment, the socialization of all level of the military and the more civil character of the education caused the emphasis to shift away from the traditional military values and norms – they certainly did not disappear – and made it necessary to instill any values and norms the cadets may have lacked originally.

There were and are two instruments at the RNLMA for enhancing *esprit de corps*, camaraderie and cohesion as well as character development: the boarding school system and the Cadets' Corps. The former was the official tool of old and it found justification in disciplining, fostering professional norms and the development of the *esprit de corps*; the latter evolved in the course of the 20th century from a social club into an integral part of the education and character development.

The boarding school system, the initially undisputed and principal instrument for the character development of the officer, has been the butt of criticism since the end of the 19th century. Progressive officers such as Van Dam van Isselt opposed it, claiming it would foster the formation of an officer class detached from civil society. Proponents of a better study climate, such as Storm van Leeuwen and Brest van Kempen criticized it for its supposed crippling of independence and sense of responsibility. For them it was an impediment to the ambition of a truly free academic education. Theirs was a minority voice. The military establishment kept supporting the boarding school system, as it was supposed to enhance recruitment potential – it lowered the expenses and anxieties of the (East-Indian) parents – and because it saw it as the ideal environment for disciplining and developing the *esprit de corps*. The Indian lobby in particular was a strong pressure group in favour of the system.

After World War II the boarding school system returned. The fundamental change set in only after two decades. After the failure to establish a campus in 1947, the scientific drive of 1960 caused the first cracks in the traditional boarding school bulwark. For recruitment and study reasons the objective in 1960 was to give the senior students more freedom, - the fourth-year 'students in uniform' should be able to live completely on their own – and to allow them to have their own digs. It was to some extent a recognition of Storm van Leeuwen and Brest van Kempen's criticism. The original idea of a gradual increase of freedom per study year eroded in the seventies and

after. On the one hand, the Academy leadership felt a hesitation to give the cadets true freedom as this would undermine discipline and make it impossible to attain educational objectives. On the other, it became increasingly harder to maintain the more trivial regulations, especially when the spirit of the societal changes began to penetrate the Academy. Von Meijenfeldt was the first Commandant (1976-1980) who dared to make a more radical choice in favour of freedom, but it went so far that it had to be revoked. Nevertheless, the trend had been set. The use of the term 'open boarding school system' in the eighties was in fact an admission that the traditional system had outlived its purpose and that the boarding school system had in fact become a 'student barracks'. Only for the first-year students, who still lived in dormitories at the Castle, was the traditional situation maintained. Now, in 2003, accommodation in the Castle is limited to the first few months of the education only.

After 1995 it was more a matter of 'providing accommodation' than a boarding school system. The large numbers of cadets, spread out over several locations, with considerable variations in age, keen on the fulfilment of their individual needs and financially so well off that living elsewhere was a perfectly realistic option, made the boarding school system a thing of the past. This, however, does not mean that ideals such as the attainment of an esprit de corps and the instilling of norms and values disappeared in the process. They have, at least in part, become more emphatic elements of the task of the Cadets' Corps.

The Cadets' Corps began in 1879 as an association in the Grote Markt at Breda. In the 1860s a number of hazing scandals had caused some considerable embarrassment to the RNLMA and it was thought that the causes for this could be found in the strict military regime at the Castle. As a form of compensation the Academy leadership gave the cadets a certain measure of freedom and independence, which was gratefully accept-

International contacts are an important part in the lives of cadets. Meetings between military academies were actively promoted especially after World War II. Here, one of the first visits to Breda of Sandhurst cadets, approx. 1951.



ed by the cadets, who lost no time in establishing their own association and sports clubs and other societies. Besides, in the gradually emerging structure they integrated the important process of informal socialization. The hazing, that between 1836-1869 could easily have developed into a barbaric ritual, not unusual in military and other boarding schools, was thus channelled within the framework of the Cadets' Corps, with its own board in the form of a Senate, similar to that of student associations (1898). The Corps developed an identity of its own, finding expression in organizing balls, sports games and other events and the publication of a yearbook. Corps life, which filled the cadets' spare time after study hours and military training, had already contributed substantially to the fostering of the esprit de corps, group building and character development long before it became an official pillar of the education. The period after World War II was to bring major changes with regard to this aspect.

As early as the 1950s the Corps saw an educational role for itself with regard to cadets who did not come from higher social circles. That education had to be a broad one, ranging from cultural education to etiquette and the promotion of socially desirable behaviour and dress, on and off duty, which in its turn required more and more internal rules and regulations and an internal disciplinary system for maintaining them.

The introduction of new cadets into the Corps has continued to this day, but over time the pressure of social change and the concern for bad publicity has made the event physically and mentally less strenuous. This process was reflected in the name applied to it: 'ragging' or 'hazing time' were first replaced by 'coordination period', and in the nineties by 'introduction period'. This period traditionally culminated in the acceptance into the Corps, confirmed since 1952 by the Cadet's promise. That promise – a foreshadowing of the officer's oath – forms the foundation of the values that the Corps wants to represent internally as well as externally. Fidelity, honesty, and obedience are its central concepts.

Step by step, but at an ever-increasing pace since the nineties, the Corps has been made into a pillar of the education by the RNLMA leadership. Already in the sixties it was recognized that the Corps was indispensable for character development and group building, but in spite of the acceptance of cadets in various consultative bodies, and the role of staff members in the cadets' associations, the Corps was not provided with the means and authority necessary for this aspect of the education. The Corps operated independently and was not really a player in the many educational changes, especially when things came to a head, a fact which became amply evident in 1992 when the reduction of the duration of the education almost meant the demise of the Corps.

The Corps as a binding element, as a basis for the informal networks that are so important within the officer corps, and as the guardian of the norms and values of the officer, has certainly been put under pressure. There are a number of factors that

The 'Assaut' is the yearly traditional gala ball organized by the cadets themselves. It is formally opened by a dance of the chairman of the Senate with the Commandant's wife, 2003.



contribute to this. The weakening of the boarding school system, along with individualization as a social phenomenon and wider possibilities for the cadets to spend their spare time, make it more difficult for cadets to get a sense of going through the RNLMA-period together. Besides, it proved to be increasingly difficult to maintain values and norms and the traditional Corps etiquette with a growing social heterogeneity of the cadet population. Nevertheless, there were counterforces, that seemed to gather momentum as the boarding school system lost its binding potential. First of all, the RNLMA leadership integrated Corps activities into 'the duty', a process by which autonomy was traded off for more facilities and a formal big stick with respect to cadet participation. Secondly, the Corps emancipated as the leadership began to consider it more and more as an equal partner, and finally, the educational aspect seemed to benefit from the increased attention for (professional) ethics discernable within the armed forces since 1996.

Officer material

The development of an esprit de corps and ensuing values and norms of the officer is not only determined by the 'ideals' of the educator. Success in this process of socialization is also dependent on the backgrounds of the cadets, as was mentioned above. The more heterogeneous the backgrounds, especially social origin of the cadets, the more difficult it will be to forge one corps out of this amalgam.

From the very first days of the Academy, therefore, the cadets were an elite group. Selection took place at the gate in order to sift the wheat from the chaff. Neither social origin, nor religious or geographical backgrounds of the cadets were formal barriers to admission. In the nineteenth century school qualification, entry exams and the school fee served as selection instruments to recruit the flower of the nation. After 1910 the entry exam disappeared from the array of selection instruments and the low school fees

had to function as a means of recruitment. After World War II this remained so, but also a selection board made its appearance. In the fifties it explicitly took the social and political origins of the applicants into consideration. Later the board lost interest in the social backgrounds of the candidates, although a reliability check remained. Motivation became the most important criterion. At the same time, after 1989 the selection process was tied up with a new phenomenon: the departmental target figures for female and (since 1998) ethnic military personnel.

Selection was not only bound by the qualitative requirements of the Royal Netherlands Army, the Royal Netherlands East Indies Army, and the Royal Netherlands Air Force, but also by their quantitative needs. In general, the rule was (and is), the greater the supply, the stricter the selection. With the exception of the period between 1869-1877, the RNLMA could draw from an inexhaustible supply until 1890. After this year there was an almost permanent shortage of suitable applicants, a situation that only improved after 1980. Because of the meagre recruitment results the selection process kept on wavering between the needs and ambitions of the (colonial) land and air forces.

The developments to be discerned with regard to geographical, religious and social origin over the past 175 years in the 'officer material' admitted to the RNLMA, is reflected in the four tables presented below.

Table 1: Geographic origin (place of birth) cadets RNLMA 1828-2003

All figures indicate percentages

Year/ province		Northern Netherlands	Central Netherlands	Western Netherlands	Southern Netherlands	Netherlands East Indies	Netherlands West Indies /Suriname	Abroad	Belgium
1828-1830	RNLA	2	26	39	12	2	0	10	9
1836-1895	total	6	26	35	15	13	2	2	
	RNLA	8	26	42	17	4	0	3	
	RNLIA	2	27	25	11	28	4	2	
1896-1934	total	5	16	38	12	28	1	1	
	RNLA	6	19	44	17	12	0	1	
	RNLIA	3	12	29	6	45	1	2	
1935-1940	total	8	16	36	10	30	0	0	
	RNLA	12	19	46	15	8	0	0	
	RNLIA	1	12	20	9	63	0	1	
1948-1974	total	10	20	44	21	4	0	1	
	RNLA	9	20	45	20	5	0	1	
	RNLAF	14	24	37	24	0	0	0	
1975-2003	total	9	28	32	27	0	0	3	
	RNLA	8	26	35	28	0	0	4	
	RNLAF	7	36	26	28	0	0	2	

Northern Netherlands: Friesland, Groningen, Drenthe
Central Netherlands: Overijssel, Gelderland, Utrecht, Flevoland
Western Netherlands: Noord-Holland, Zuid-Holland, Zeeland
Southern Netherlands Noord-Brabant and Limburg

Table 2: Religion of RNLMA cadets 1828-2003

All figures indicate percentages

Year/religion		Protestant	Roman Catholic	Jewish	Islamic	None
1828-1830	RNLA	79	21	0	0	0
1836-1895	total	91	9	0	0	0
	RNLA	90	10	0	0	0
	RNLIA	92	7	0	0	1
1896-1934	total	64	18	1	0	17
	RNLA	64	21	1	0	14
	RNLIA	65	15	0	0	20
1935-1940	total	61	20	0	0	19
	RNLA	63	20	0	0	17
	RNLIA	57	19	0	1	23
1948-1974	total	40	43	0	0	17
	RNLA	42	41	0	0	17
	RNLAF	33	49	0	0	18
1975-2003	total	24	38	0	0	38
	RNLA	24	37	0	0	39
	RNLAF	24	41	0	0	35

Table 3: Social status fathers RNLMA cadets 18280-2003 ³

All figures indicate percentages

Year/ social layer		Layer 1	Layer 2	Layer 3	Layer 4	Layer 5	Layer 6
1828-1830	RNLA	49	41	9	1	0	0
1836-1895	total	33	50	11	4	2	0
	RNLA	38	50	8	3	1	0
	RNLIA	25	51	15	6	3	0
1896-1934	total	19	44	22	12	3	0
	RNLA	20	41	24	13	2	0
	RNLIA	19	46	19	12	4	0
1935-1940	total	9	38	28	22	3	0
	RNLA	8	33	34	21	3	1
	RNLIA	12	45	17	24	2	0
1948-1974	total	16	30	27	21	4	2
	RNLA	17	31	26	20	4	2
	RNLAF	10	31	31	22	6	0
1975-2003	total	8	32	30	24	5	1
	RNLA	8	34	30	22	5	1
	RNLAF	7	25	30	30	5	3

Table 4: social occupational background RNLMA cadets 1828-1003⁴

All figures indicate percentages

Year/occupational group	Commissioned Officers	Non-Commissioned Officers	Others (semi-) civil servants	Free Professions	Tradespeople industry	Skilled and unskilled labourers trade and industry	Others employees trade and industry
1828-1830 RNLA	35	0	41	10	14	0	1
1836-1895 total	39	1	32	11	13	2	2
KL	42	0	29	12	13	2	2
RNLIA	31	2	39	10	15	1	1
1896- total	32	6	30	5	19	3	5
1934 RNLA	33	8	22	6	25	4	2
RNLIA	30	5	36	5	13	2	9
1935-1940 total	15	5	37	5	20	2	16
RNLA	9	7	33	7	28	3	13
RNLIA	23	2	42	3	8	1	21
1948- total	15	5	34	8	15	6	17
1974 RNLA	14	5	35	8	16	6	16
RNLAF	15	8	32	8	10	6	21
1975- total	8	4	28	6	15	9	30
2003 RNLA	10	4	26	6	14	10	30
RNLAF	4	4	34	5	18	8	27

From these, and other more detailed data⁵, it can be concluded that at the time of the foundation of the RNLMA the average cadet came from the social elite. The upper middleclass and the nobility – that supplied 20% of the cadets between 1828-1830 – were keen on sending their sons to Breda, which is exactly what King William I had intended. The officer professionalization that he wanted to realize through the KMA, did by no means imply an ambition to democratize the officer corps. In spite of the choice of Breda as its location, the large majority of the cadets came from the Northern Netherlands and were protestant, as had always been the tradition in the former Army of the Dutch Republic.

After the secession of Belgium the ties between the protestant Netherlands and the RNLMA became increasingly close throughout the 19th century. It is not clear whether Dutch Catholics avoided the KMA, or whether the RNLMA tacitly fended them off. In spite of this catholic under-representation there was a considerable influx from the southern part of the Netherlands, in particular from the protestant elite from the province of Noord-Brabant⁶. The north of the country provided few cadets in relation to the density of the population. Surprisingly, the coastal provinces were not only an important recruitment area for the navy, but also for the RNLMA. Apart from that,

a considerable number of cadets came from the Dutch and Indo-European (Dutch-Indian) communities in the colonies, especially Java. The majority of these cadets returned to the colonial army on completion of their studies. In spite of the rural character of the 19th century Dutch society, 75% of the cadets from the Netherlands came from the larger Dutch cities, with The Hague, and not the capital, coming out on top, a position 'the residence' has retained to this day⁷. Moreover, they were often garrison towns, which was connected with a high degree of self-recruitment in the officer corps (39% of the cadets came from officer families). The officer profession was also very popular among civil servants, albeit the higher classes, for in the 19th century the RNLMA population still retained its socially elite character. To a somewhat lesser extent this also applied to the cadets that opted for the East Indien Army. In the Netherlands there was some reluctance towards colonial service among the better classes. Conversely, the intermediate layers (social layer 3) were more enthusiastic, due to the lower school fees necessary to fill the ranks. The colonial elite did not have this hesitation.⁸

It can be said that the 19th century cadet population was rather homogeneous with regard to its social and religious origins. The cadet often belonged to the flower of the protestant Netherlands and came from an officer or (semi-) civil servant milieu, but in any case almost exclusively from the better social circles. The geographical origin of the cadet was more heterogeneous, certainly also because of recruitment from the colonies, although many had in common that they came from garrison towns.

Throughout the 20th century the cadet retained his metropolitan or urban origin. With the disappearance of the urban garrisons after 1960 cadets coming from these towns only formed a minority. Nevertheless, even today a military presence in a town is a stimulant for application at the RNLMA.

During the first decades of the 20th century a modest democratization began to develop at the RNLMA. Improved educational opportunities, the removal of the financial barrier to the RNLMA, and the needs of the (colonial) army up to 1919, contributed to the sons of the middle class (social layer 3) – usually sons of (small) tradespeople – and to a lesser extent the lower middle class (social layer 4) making their appearance at the Academy. The emancipation of the catholic part of the population was also a factor in this. Up to World War II the number of catholic cadets doubled. Because of their social origin this had a slightly downward effect on the social composition of the RNLMA population, especially for cadets destined for the Netherlands Army. The social background of the cadets destined for the East-Indian Army also conformed to this trend, but it retained a more elite character than that of the Netherlands army, one reason being the extremely high percentage of self-recruitment in the Dutch East Indies (approx. 50%)⁹. Besides, the influx from the colonies went through a rapid growth after 1896, due to the closing down of the institutes for officer education there. Incidentally,

among the cadets born in the colonies, that made up more than 25% of the total RNLMA population, there had been handful native cadets since 1918.

So, in 1930, there were on average more cadets from the colonies, of catholic and of middle class or lower middle class stock, than in the 19th century. Nevertheless, until 1935 the RNLMA remained an education for the higher social layers, from which two-thirds of its cadets originated, and it was still, as in the 19th century, very popular among sons of officers (33%) and (semi-) civil servants (29%). It was not exceptional in this respect. The Technical University at Delft in that same period could boast an even greater popularity among the highest social circles and had fewer students from the lower middle classes than the RNLMA, as a comparative study shows.¹⁰

The period between 1935-1940, when the German and Japanese threat caused an increase in recruitment, proved to be a catalyst in the process of democratization at the RNLMA. The acute need for officers led to an increased influx of sons of office clerks and lower civil servants (so of the lower middle class (social layer 4)), whereas the *relative* share of cadets from the officer milieu fell by more than half, and with it the share of the higher social layers. Sons of labourers remained a rarity at the RNLMA, even at that time (see Table 4)¹¹. In the period between 1836-1895 their number was 2%, between 1896-1934 it was 3%, and in the years of military crisis until 1940 it was 2%. There were no simultaneous major changes in geographical or religious backgrounds of the cadets.

World War II and the decolonization war changed all this. With the loss of the Dutch East Indies as a recruitment area, an ongoing personnel requirement for the army due to NATO-obligations, and an Air Force that had to build up its place on the Dutch recruitment market, it was especially the cadets from the southernmost provinces that filled the gap. Recruitment results there showed the steepest rise. The southern influx ran almost completely parallel to the simultaneous increase in the number of catholic cadets, giving shape to the catholic emancipation at the RNLMA to such an extent that after World War II there was an over-representation of the catholic community. In general it was catholic cadets who, more so than their fellow students of other denominations, ensured that the democratization process at the RNLMA, that had gathered momentum after 1935 in spite of an increased social selection in the fifties, proved to be irreversible. Again, however, it was almost exclusively limited to the (lower) middle classes (social layer 4) and the number of sons of labourers remained 6% until 1974.¹² The tendency for democratization was strongest within the Royal Netherlands Air Force (RNLAF). Although this new Service recruited 15% of its cadets from the officer milieu in the first decades of its existence, it was especially popular among sons of intermediate and lower civil servants and intermediate skilled employees.¹³

Thus, 'the' cadet during the first few post-war decades still often came from a larger

military town, one in two still came from the higher social circles, though less from the officer milieu than in 1935, whereas the number of cadets coming from a (semi-) civil servant background still increased somewhat. The long-standing exclusive ties between the protestant community and the RNLMA of the past had been severed, which was closely related to the increased influx of catholic cadets from the southern provinces.

This influx kept on growing after 1974, resulting in more than 25% of cadets coming from the towns of Brabant and Limburg over the past few decades. This did not manifest itself in a growing number of catholic cadets, as after the sixties secularization also made its way into the catholic south. This process has also been reflected at the RNLMA during the past few decades. The southern cadets, together with the growing number from the middle of the country, had to compensate for the decreasing recruitment results, especially in the west of the country. This decline is probably related to a fall in recruitment from the officer class – by far the sharpest in the RNLAF – and (semi-) civil servant milieu, which is so abundantly represented in the west of the Netherlands. The result is that for the first time in the history of the RNLMA the military and civil servant milieu was not the dominant one anymore. This diminished self-recruitment and the greater accessibility of secondary education since the sixties are the main causes for the ongoing democratization of the recruitment at the RNLMA. Nevertheless, over the past few years still one third of the cadets have come from higher social circles, the others mainly from the (lower) middle classes (layers 3 and 4), whose numbers have gone up to more than 50%, and - although the number of children of labourers has gone up lightly to 9% - hardly any from the bottom two layers that encompass the least educated part of a shrinking labour class.¹⁴

Social and catholic emancipation has affected the RNLMA over the past 175 years. Especially in cases of extreme peril, as in the years of military crisis between 1935-1940 and the post-war construction years, new groups got and took their chance. New examples of emancipation have emerged over the years: women have had to be admitted since 1974 and departmental target numbers should determine the number of ethnic cadets since 1998. In comparison to the rest of the RNLA and RNLAF the RNLMA has relatively many females with an annual influx of 12% since 1989, although it is still way behind civil society. The integration process of the new Dutch has so far been almost exclusively limited to the rank and file. The pace at which women and ethnic cadets can make good the arrears depends on the needs of the RNLMA and armed forces in general, the enthusiasm for the RNLMA and its attraction on women and newcomers, and the social pressure - the policy of affirmative action – on the RNLMA and the entire armed forces.

Conclusion

The Dutch officer education, at least insofar it took place at the RNLMA, has always been a hybrid. It had to produce an officer who could function as a lieutenant, but who had also acquired the intellectual foundation for further study. At the same time he was expected to have built up a network and acquired the norms and values of the officer. The problem forces itself upon the reader: there are hardly any circumstances imaginable in which it is possible to optimally attain all these targets. The history of the RNLMA education can be summarized as a quest for the unreachable ideal, without daring to make a radical choice for a different system which gives clear priority to either science, or military professionalism or character building. The idea of *training on the job*, as the Israelis do, has never received any serious consideration. The British system of taking in civil university graduates is impossible in the Netherlands, as the basis for recruitment would become too small. The German system, in which a university study is provided in a civil environment and the officer school is only a short education in which military subjects are taught, has never enjoyed much popularity in our country. The reason is that the armed forces attach so much value to generating an officer corps in an institute of their own under close scrutiny of the leadership.

Nevertheless, the RNLMA seems to be shifting towards civil higher education. The Breda committee of 1921 was far ahead of its time. The educational renovation of 1960 brought the civil academic world within the walls of the Castle, but the education did not attain an academic level straight away. That still required a protracted development in which the foundation of the Faculty (1992), and the awarding of civil study credits to RNLMA graduates, that will eventually lead to a Bachelor degree recognized outside the Castle (2006/2007) as an important landmark. Simultaneous with this, the boarding school system in effect disappeared, and the character development, the instilling of professional norms and values, the esprit de corps, came under pressure. This is a development into the direction of a military high school with a campus, in which the aspirant officer receives his academic professional education. At the same time, however, the problem presents itself of how and where to realize the necessary military training and education. The Dutch dilemma of military training, academic education and transfer of values and norms, together with the instilling of an esprit de corps, has not been solved either in the 21st century. A look at the plans of almost a century ago, which in hindsight appear to have foreseen the development reasonably accurately, shows that, especially with the contracting out of parts of the education to civil universities and the large extent of freedom the cadets enjoy nowadays, the 'Military High School' has materialized. Character development and group formation, cohesion and military training pay the price for this, a development which is reinforced by the tendency to scale-up and the heterogeneous background of the cadets. As long as the organization is not prepared

to give more time, and therefore money, to its officer education, the dilemma will not be solved.

Notes

- ¹ This article is entirely based on *Studeren in uniform. 175 jaar Koninklijke Militaire Academie 1828-2003* [*Studying in uniform. 175 years Royal Netherlands Military Academy 1828-2003*] This study in Dutch was published in September 2003 and comprises contributions by drs. J. Coenen, dr. W. Bevaart, dr. J.W.M. Schulten, drs W.P.R.A. Cappers, drs. H. Roozenbeek, dr. W. Klinkert, and prof. dr. P.M.H. Groen. The latter two authors were also the editors. For the present article is primarily based on the introduction, conclusion and chapter 8 of *Studeren in uniform*.
- ² h.b.s. is the abbreviation of Hogere Burger School (Higher School for Civilians). This new secondary general school type was intended for the middle class. Pupils were taught in modern languages, economics and science and it gave access to Higher Vocational Education. Classical languages did not feature in the h.b.s.-curriculum, which is why the education did not give access to the universities.
- ³ The classification on social prestige was established on the basis of occupational categories, following the stratification model developed by K. Mandemakers for his survey of the social backgrounds of Grammar School and HBS pupils in the Netherlands and his earlier study into the origins of students of Technical University Delft. For this see: K.Mandemakers, *HBS en Gymnasium. Ontwikkeling, structuur, sociale achtergrond en schoolprestaties Nederland, circa 1800-1968*. (Amsterdam, 1996), in particular pp. 222, 223 and D. van Lente, K. Mandemakers, en R. Rottier, 'De sociale achtergronden van studenten aan de hogere technische opleidingen in Delft 1842-1940'. *Tijdschrift voor Sociale Geschiedenis*, XIX (nov 1993) 4, 432-462. See also: K. Mandemakers, *Negen classificaties voor 19^{de} en 20^{ste} eeuwse beroepstitels*. Amsterdam, 1995. This social-historical survey was directed at the Dutch situation and encompasses a longer period. Mandemakers based his classification on social prestige on the work of the Dutch sociologist J.J.M. van Tulder, *De beroepsmobiliteit in Nederland van 1919 tot 1954. Een sociaal-statistische studie*. Leiden, 1962. He arrived at a classification of six social layers on the basis of a representative sample among the Dutch population in 1953 of the social prestige attributed to 217 representative occupations, a survey which was repeated in 1983 and which generated almost the same ranking on the 'prestige ladder' (see: H. Sixma, en W. Ultee, 'Een beroepsprestigeschaal voor Nederland in de jaren tachtig', *Mens en Maatschappij*, 58-4 (1983), see: in particular pp. 370-372). Mandemakers expanded this 'occupational prestige list' to 229 professions (see:

Mandemakers, *Negen Classificaties*, pp. 9-11), making use of the comparative survey of J.D. Treiman, *Occupational prestige in comparative perspective* (New York, 1977) pp. 414-421. The original classification of van Tulder is as follows (van Tulder, *beroepsmobiliteit*, p. 22):

Layer 1	Mainly free and academic professions, executive officers of large companies, secondary school teachers, very senior civil servants
Layer 2	Mainly higher employees, executive officers of small companies, senior civil servants, large farmers and market gardeners, intermediate technicians
Layer 3	Mainly large to intermediate old and new tradespeople, intermediate civil servants, intermediate farmers and market gardeners, intermediate employees
Layer 4	Mainly small old and new tradespeople, skilled labourers, small farmers and gardeners, office clerks, lower employees, lower civil servants
Layer 5	Mainly practised labourers, lower civil servants
Layer 5	Mainly unpractised labourers

It is important to note that *skilled* labourers are classified in *social layer 4* (small tradespeople/lower middle class) in van Tulder-Treiman-Mandemakers' system.

The number of children of skilled, practised and unpractised labourers can be found in table 4, which presents a division between 'skilled and unskilled labourers' and 'other employees'. For further reference, see: *Studeren in uniform*, chapter 8.

4 For the social-occupational classification the classification developed by K. Mandemakers for his survey of HTS and HBS pupils was used, see note 3.

5 Chapter 8 of *Studeren in uniform* presents a much more detailed analysis of the available data. When necessary those results are summarized here with a reference to the relevant table.

6 See tables 10, 11, 18 and 19 *Studeren in uniform*, pp. 521-522, 531.

7 See table 6 *Studeren in uniform* p. 511.

8 See tables 10 and 11 *Studeren in uniform*, pp. 521-522.

9 See table 11 *Studeren in uniform*, p. 522. Of the cadets born in the colony in 1836-1894 64% came from an officer family; between 1895-1934 this was 46%. For cadets born in the Netherlands these percentages were 34% and 25%, respectively. Officers are classified in layers 1 and 2 of the social prestige stratification that is used here.

¹⁰ See table 15 *Studeren in uniform*, p. 527.

¹¹ As explained in note 3, skilled labourers are classified in social layer 4 in the social prestige classification presented in table 3. The category of skilled and unskilled labourers in table 4, in which the social occupational background of the fathers of cadets are presented, does not quite match the social status layers 5 and 6 in

table 3, which, incidentally, also contains the lower civil servants (see classification scheme note 3).

¹² See remark note II.

¹³ See table 9, *Studeren in uniform*, pp. 516-517.

¹⁴ See remark note II.