

Cultural Life of Cadets in Military Academies and the Formation of Young Officers' Personality

Le Van Nam, M.A.¹, Nguyen Duc Loc, M.A.², Nguyen Tat Hong, M.A.³

¹ Military Technical Academy, Vietnam

² Military Technical Academy, Vietnam

³ Engineer Officer Academy, Vietnam

Corresponding Author:

Le Van Nam, Department of Party and Political Affairs, Military Technical Academy, Vietnam.

Abstract: Cultural life plays a pivotal role in shaping the political consciousness, ideological orientation, moral character, lifestyle, discipline, professional conduct, and behavioral culture of cadets in military academies, thereby contributing decisively to the formation of the personality of future young officers. This article examines the relationship between the cultural life of cadets in military academies and the development of young officers' personality, focusing on how cultural life influences the formation of values, norms, behavioral styles, and resilience throughout the processes of education and training. Drawing on cultural studies and social theories—particularly structural-functionalism, social action theory, and interpretive cultural theory—the article elucidates the role of cultural life as a foundational and integrative factor in shaping the comprehensive personality of young officers. On this basis, the study proposes a set of measures aimed at enhancing the role of cultural life in orienting values, consolidating norms, and creating a favorable environment in which cadets can practice values, develop competencies, and form a well-rounded personality that meets the requirements of building the contingent of young officers in the current context of the Vietnam People's Army.

Keywords: Cultural life; Military academies; Personality formation; Young officers; Cultural values and norms.

I. Introduction

Cadets in military academies constitute a distinctive group within the overall population of learners and students in Vietnam. They are selected through rigorous criteria encompassing political awareness, ideological orientation, moral qualities, lifestyle, and professional aptitude, and are educated and trained within a highly regulated, disciplined, and collective environment under the Vietnam People's Army. This group represents a pioneering force in learning, training, scientific research, and the mastery of modern science and technology, making significant contributions to the process of military modernization. Simultaneously, cadets form a core contingent for fulfilling the mission of national defense and contributing to socio-economic development.

Within military educational institutions, cadets differ in age, social background, educational level, military rank, and professional orientation. They are recruited from diverse sources, including officers, professional soldiers, non-commissioned officers, enlisted soldiers, pupils, and students from various regions and social strata. However, the largest proportion consists of undergraduate cadets undergoing platoon-level officer training, generally between 18 and 23 years of age. Carefully selected through competitive entrance examinations and nomination-based admission processes, these cadets possess sound political and moral qualities and are trained to become future officers—both the successor cadre force and the strategic reserve of the Vietnam People's Army.

In military academies, cadets receive comprehensive education in political theory, military science, culture, science and technology, and professional skills. Through strict adherence to military regulations and statutes, they cultivate discipline, organizational awareness, and standardized military demeanor. At the same time, this age group is undergoing profound physical and psychological development and is in a critical phase of worldview formation. Cadets tend to be inquisitive, eager to explore new experiences, motivated to assert their abilities, and willing to confront challenges. However, they may also exhibit immaturity and a lack of prudence when facing difficulties or unfamiliar ideas. In this context, cultural life plays a crucial role in fostering resilience and shaping political qualities, moral character, lifestyle orientation, discipline, professional conduct, and behavioral culture, thereby contributing to the formation of the personality of future young officers.

Young officers constitute a significant proportion of the officer corps of the Vietnam People's Army. Typically under 35 years of age and holding ranks from second lieutenant to major, they form the principal force responsible for organizing training, educating and managing troops, and building comprehensively strong units. They also represent the successor generation for campaign- and strategic-level leadership. The personality of young officers manifests across all domains of military activity, including cognition, ideology, political commitment, morality, lifestyle, command, management, and professional performance. A well-formed personality is therefore a decisive factor enabling young officers to successfully fulfill their duties and contribute to the construction of a revolutionary, regular, elite, and modern army.

II. Conceptualizing the Cultural Life of Cadets in Military Academies

Cultural life is a broad and comprehensive category reflecting the processes through which individuals and communities create, maintain, and practice cultural values, norms, institutions, behaviors, and activities within specific social environments. According to Nguyen Huu Thuc, “cultural life is the vivid reality of human activities in their living environment aimed at maintaining and reproducing material and spiritual cultural products in accordance with social values and norms, thereby continuously influencing and transforming nature and society while meeting the demands for innovation and improving the quality of human life”¹. Within military academies, the cultural life of cadets can be understood as the totality of values, norms, institutions, and cultural practices embedded in a military pedagogical environment that contributes to the formation of personality, political resilience, and cultural competence of future officers. Its core components include: (1) a system of values such as patriotism, discipline, collectivism, fighting spirit, and social responsibility; (2) behavioral norms governing lifestyle and conduct, including military regulations and codes of discipline; (3) cultural institutions such as libraries, cultural centers, clubs, artistic troupes, and mass organizations; and (4) cultural practices manifested in learning, training, recreation, communication, artistic and sports activities, and military rituals.

The cultural life of cadets in military academies does not exist in isolation but is shaped by the interaction of two fundamental factors: the specific characteristics of the military environment and the distinctive features of the educational environment. The military environment, with its high degree of politicization, discipline, and collectivism, imparts a distinctive character to cadets' cultural life; meanwhile, the educational environment,

¹ Dinh, T. V. C. (2015). *Theoretical and practical issues of cultural life and the cultural environment*. Ethnic Culture Publishing House, Hanoi, p. 57.

oriented toward the goal of comprehensive human development, emphasizes the guiding, educational, and organizational dimensions of cultural activities.

Based on these approaches, the cultural life of cadets in military academies can be conceptualized as follows: the cultural life of cadets in military academies constitutes an integrated whole of material and spiritual cultural expressions that are formed and developed through cadets' interactions with the military pedagogical cultural environment. It encompasses a system of values, norms, institutions, and cultural practices that contribute to shaping personality and cultivating political qualities, ideological orientation, and cultural resilience of future military officers.

The cultural life of cadets in military academies embodies both the general characteristics of social cultural life and the distinctive features of military cultural life, reflecting the specific organizational, functional, and task-related requirements of the armed forces. It is formed through the interweaving of national cultural traditions, military culture, and individual characteristics within a specialized educational and training environment. Closely linked to cadets' daily life, study, training, and professional activities, cadets are simultaneously recipients and creators of culture, as well as a core force in inheriting, preserving, and promoting the military cultural values of the nation, the armed forces, and military educational institutions. Cultural life thus contributes to nurturing shared cultural values within the military collective and creates favorable conditions for the formation and development of each cadet's personality. The cultural life of cadets in military academies exhibits several key characteristics, including political and ideological orientation; regularity and discipline; distinctive symbolism and ritualization; strong community cohesion and solidarity; and diversity within unity.

Regarding the structure of the cultural life of cadets in military academies, from a structuralist perspective in cultural studies, cultural life does not exist as a homogeneous entity but is composed of multiple layers and functional subsystems that together shape the overall operation of an institution or community. As a distinct socio-military environment, military academies exert a strong influence on the structure of cadets' cultural life through principles of strict discipline, high levels of collectivism and community orientation, and clearly defined goals of political and ideological education. Accordingly, the structure of cadets' cultural life can be analyzed across three principal layers: (1) the system of cultural values and norms; (2) the system of cultural institutions; and (3) cultural practices. These three structural layers do not exist independently but are interwoven, mutually reinforcing, and interact dynamically with one another. Values and norms constitute the foundational layer; institutions provide the organizational and behavioral framework; and cultural practices represent the arena in which the degree of internalization, transformation, and creative agency of the subject is manifested. Particularly within the military environment, the operation of this cultural life structure is organized according to principles of collectivism, discipline, and a high degree of politicization, with a clear normative orientation that helps maintain cultural stability and consolidate the identity of the revolutionary soldier.

III. The Role of Cadets' Cultural Life in Shaping the Personality of Young Officers

Studies in cultural studies and military education emphasize that cultural values, norms, and practices constitute the foundation upon which cadets form their understanding of loyalty, discipline, integrity, responsibility, and *esprit de corps*. When these values are internalized through practical experience, cadets not only comply with regulations but also proactively regulate their behavior, foster creativity, and develop leadership capacities. The military cultural environment provides opportunities for cadets to cultivate communication skills, critical thinking, emotional regulation, and the ability to adapt to pressure, thereby shaping a solid personal and social personality. According to Clifford Geertz's interpretive cultural theory, experiential activities, rituals, and cultural interactions enable cadets to "decode" the meanings of values, transforming them into lived experience and behavioral norms, thus directly contributing to the process of personality formation.

From the perspective of Max Weber's social action theory, cadets' behavior within cultural life is influenced by both individual rationality and social value-normative systems, forming a synthesis of personal motives and

collective motivations in the shaping of personality. This process is proactive and systematic, enabling cadets to become aware of and self-regulate their behavior in accordance with military cultural norms, thereby fostering core qualities such as loyalty, discipline, integrity, and a strong sense of responsibility.

One of the most significant roles of cultural life lies in shaping the system of values and norms for officer cadets. In military academies, military values and norms are continuously transmitted through political education, collective activities, military rituals, cultural and artistic programs, and youth and mass organization activities. Each of these activities carries symbolic and educational significance, enabling cadets not only to cognitively grasp but also to experience and internalize these values. According to Talcott Parsons' structural-functional theory, cultural life functions as a mechanism for maintaining and reproducing the system of values and norms that ensure the stable operation of the military organization, while simultaneously fostering coherence between attitudes, cognition, and behavior among individual cadets. Through the reception and practice of these values, cadets not only cultivate professional ethics but also build a stable personality foundation, serving as a prerequisite for the development of higher-level qualities such as resilience, creative thinking, and leadership capacity.

In addition, cultural life provides a critical environment for cultivating military behavior and habits among cadets. Professional habits and behaviors are formed through daily activities, ranging from adherence to discipline and the cultivation of proper conduct in collective life to the performance of military rituals. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of habitus, these cultural experiences gradually become stable behavioral patterns that are internalized and integrated into the personality structure. Through this cultural environment, cadets learn normative conduct, develop professional demeanor, and strengthen self-discipline, perseverance, and the capacity for coordination within a collective. The formation of military cultural habitus not only shapes individual behavior but also enhances adaptability and the ability to cope with complex situations, thereby contributing to the construction of a well-rounded personality among young officers.

Cultural life also plays a vital role in fostering resilience and the cultural identity of military personnel within military academies. Values, norms, symbols, rituals, traditions, and cultural, artistic, and sports activities not only help cadets recognize their role and value within the collective but also enhance professional pride and a sense of responsibility toward the Fatherland. Through experiential activities, cadets develop self-control, strategic thinking, and firm political resilience. Clifford Geertz's interpretive cultural theory underscores the importance of symbols and meaning in social life; when applied to the military context, symbols, rituals, and traditions enable cadets to interpret cultural values and transform them into practical resilience and action. This forms the basis of military cultural identity, enabling young officers to remain steadfast in the execution of missions and to uphold moral qualities and professional conduct under all circumstances.

Furthermore, cultural life contributes to the development of self-directed learning, critical thinking, and leadership capacity among cadets. Training and educational activities, along with cultural, artistic, and sports clubs and movements promoting self-study and self-improvement, create an environment in which cadets can practice and refine problem-solving skills, communication abilities, and collective leadership. Cadets are encouraged to take initiative in learning, engage in critical and creative thinking, and develop strategic approaches in collective activities. Cultural life thus plays an essential role in strengthening the capacity to organize and conduct practical activities, preparing cadets for management, command, and leadership roles in a modern military environment. A distinctive feature of cadets' cultural life in military academies is its integrative and interactive nature. Cultural values, institutions, practices, and feedback do not exist in isolation but interact dynamically, forming a continuous process of education and personality formation. Values are transmitted through institutions, reinforced and practiced on a daily basis, and receive feedback from officers, instructors, peers, mass organizations, and soldiers' councils. This process ensures the coherence of personality while allowing cadets to adjust and develop individual qualities, integrating revolutionary ideals with practical competence and military style.

In sum, cultural life is not merely an environment in which cadets in military academies receive and preserve traditional values or achieve comprehensive development in morality, intellect, physical fitness, and

aesthetics; it is also a decisive factor in shaping the personality of young officers. The cultural life of cadets in military academies constitutes the cradle and foundational platform for the development and perfection of the personality of future young officers.

IV. Building Cadets' Cultural Life to Shape the Personality of Young Officers

First, continuously educating and orienting cultural values and norms for cadets

This is the foremost and most significant measure in building the cultural life of cadets in military academies with the aim of shaping the personality of young officers. As a distinctive cultural institution, the military academy is not merely a site for the transmission of culture, but also an environment for the reproduction of culture and for transforming individuals into cultural subjects bearing the identity of military officers.

From a cultural studies perspective, value education and orientation should not be understood as a process of transmitting or imposing norms, but rather as a process of *cultural empowerment*, enabling cadets to establish their own cultural frame of reference and to consciously select and practice values appropriate to the specific nature of the military profession. Orienting cultural values and norms must aim at shaping the deeper layers of personality, rather than remaining at the level of observable behavior. This implies a transformation of values from “passive cognition” into “value-based belief,” and of behavior from “rule compliance” into “consciously chosen action.” When cadets correctly understand, deeply internalize, and genuinely believe in military cultural values and norms—particularly the honor of the military profession, military discipline, integrity, humanistic qualities, and social responsibility—they do not merely act correctly, but act proactively, responsibly, with self-respect and a strong sense of honor. These are vivid manifestations of the personality of the revolutionary soldier.

Given the specific characteristics of the military environment, the orientation of cultural values and norms should be implemented through a model of “multi-layered cultural internalization”: (i) the cognitive layer, through political, ideological, moral, and lifestyle education and through the curricula of military social sciences and humanities; (ii) the experiential layer, through collective activities, military rituals, and simulations of professional situations; (iii) the practical layer, through daily interactions, behavioral norms, disciplinary training, and the building of military regularity; and (iv) the exemplary layer, through the positive influence of instructors, commanders, and unit collectives. The meaningful repetition of these cultural experiences leads to a process of *cultural accumulation* among cadets, gradually forming stable behavioral habits and a distinct cultural style characteristic of young officers.

In the context of contemporary social transformations—especially under the multidimensional influence of external value systems such as digital culture and consumer culture—the orientation of cultural values and norms for cadets must be conducted with depth and through dialogue and interpretation. Rather than requiring cadets to comply with values and norms in a rigid or imposed manner, military academies must emphasize education that helps cadets understand *why* such values and norms should be upheld, recognize their legitimacy, and appreciate their necessity in shaping the cultural and spiritual integrity of the revolutionary soldier. Only when cadets genuinely live within a value-oriented cultural environment—where values are present in daily life, embedded in each lesson, embodied in rituals, diffused through patterns of conduct, symbolized by military traditions, and validated by the exemplary behavior of instructors and commanders—can the cultural personality of cadets, as future officers, be sustainably and firmly shaped.

Second, prioritizing investment in the construction and development of cultural institutions in military academies

Investing in the construction and development of cultural institutions in military academies constitutes a comprehensive measure that integrates physical and technical infrastructure with cultural, artistic, and sports

activities, as well as clubs and collective organizations, in order to create a favorable environment for the holistic development of cadets. Cultural institutions are not merely places where cadets receive knowledge, values, and norms, but also spaces for experience, practice, and internalization of military cultural values, thereby directly contributing to the shaping of a well-rounded personality among young officers of the Vietnam People's Army.

Cultural institutions in military academies include physical infrastructure (such as tradition halls, cultural centers, libraries, lecture halls, Ho Chi Minh rooms within departments and battalions, cultural and sports clubs, and collective living spaces), as well as organizational and managerial structures, command systems, mass organizations, and systems of regulations, rules, programs, and procedures governing cultural activities. Investment in these institutions should not be understood merely as the construction of technical facilities, but rather as the establishment of a cultural "social network" capable of transmitting, practicing, and consolidating military professional values and norms among cadets. Accordingly, the development of cultural institutions in military academies should be implemented synchronously along three main axes: (1) physical and technical infrastructure, through the arrangement of multifunctional spaces that facilitate access and experiential learning; (2) human resources and organizational capacity, through professional training for cultural officers, capacity-building in organizational skills for staff—especially Youth Union cadres and teaching personnel—and encouragement of cadet-led clubs to promote initiative and active participation; and (3) content and programming, through the design of regular cultural activities (commemorative programs, youth forums, cultural creativity contests, grassroots artistic activities, and collective sports), closely aligned with the objectives of personality education and the normative standards of future officers.

In investing in and developing cultural institutions in military academies, sustainable governance mechanisms are essential, including diversified funding sources (state budget allocations, unit funds, and lawful sponsorship), a clear legal framework for cultural activities, and systems for evaluating effectiveness (participation indices, attitudinal changes, and qualitative feedback from instructors and cadets themselves). In terms of implementation methods, military academies should conduct assessments of cadets' cultural needs in order to prioritize investments based on their level of impact (for example, digital libraries for academic research, cultural centers for collective activities, or simulation rooms for training purposes); pilot initiatives in selected units prior to broader application; and integrate cultural behavior research to adjust content in accordance with military characteristics such as discipline, collectivism, training demands, and combat readiness. Importantly, cultural institutions should be closely linked with formal curricula and supplementary extracurricular training and education programs aimed at shaping cadets' personalities. Cultural activities should not be viewed merely as recreational outlets, but as essential means for practicing values such as respect, responsibility, service orientation, self-regulation, and leadership capacity. To ensure sustainability and adaptability, military academies should adopt policies that encourage innovation within cultural institutions—such as supporting cadet-led cultural innovation projects and connecting military cultural heritage with broader social communities—while simultaneously establishing continuous feedback mechanisms to enable cultural institutions to evolve in alignment with social trends and the professional requirements of young officers. Strategic investment in cultural institutions thus not only enriches the spiritual life of cadets but also transforms cultural values into concrete professional behaviors, making a lasting contribution to the process of shaping and consolidating the personality of young officers.

Third, Integrating Cultural Practices into Daily Life to Foster Cadets' Character and Professional Qualities

This measure is of critical importance in transforming military cultural values and norms from theoretical constructs into concrete behavioral practices. Cultural practice not only enables cadets to internalize moral values, military style, and professional demeanor, but also strengthens discipline, cultivates habits of self-regulation, and contributes to the formation of resilience and situational competence within the military environment. According to Max Weber's theory of social action, human behavior is shaped by both social norms and individual consciousness; therefore, integrating cultural practice into daily routines allows cadets to enact normative values

voluntarily and sustainably, thereby contributing to the formation of a comprehensive and well-rounded personality.

First and foremost, the integration of cultural practice into everyday life serves as a foundational mechanism through which military values are continuously enacted. Military academies should organize activities that closely link management, disciplinary training, ceremonial conduct, professional demeanor, and codes of behavior with collective activities, ensuring that cadets can experience and practice cultural values in all routine contexts. Training sessions, academic learning, collective living hours, and ceremonial practices are not merely opportunities for cadets to develop knowledge, skills, and military discipline; they also enable them to perceive and internalize the values of loyalty, integrity, responsibility, and comradeship. The repeated enactment of normative behaviors in daily life gradually forms military cultural habits in the sense articulated by Pierre Bourdieu, allowing such behaviors to become naturalized dispositions closely embedded in cadets' cognition and personality.

In addition, organizing experiential activities constitutes an essential measure for developing the competencies and professional fortitude of future officers. Beyond formal training and education, experiential activities such as visits to historical and cultural sites, extracurricular military training, and participation in mass mobilization or volunteer programs not only deepen cadets' understanding of traditional values but also cultivate organizational skills, leadership capacity, critical thinking, and collective coordination. These experiences create practical contexts in which cadets can apply theoretical knowledge, challenge themselves, and develop situational problem-solving abilities, thereby enhancing self-confidence, adaptability, and a distinctive military professional style. From the perspective of Clifford Geertz's interpretive theory of culture, experiential activities enable cadets to "decode" cultural values and transform them into lived personal experiences, directly contributing to the process of character formation.

Military academies should also establish clear feedback mechanisms that provide systematic evaluations of cadets' behavior, demeanor, and habits, helping them identify strengths and areas for improvement in their character development. Such mechanisms may combine assessments from commanders, instructors, peers, and cadets' self-evaluations, creating a continuous process of self-awareness that enhances self-regulation and personal development. Periodic evaluations further enable academies to identify limitations within the cultural environment and adjust institutional arrangements and activities to improve the effectiveness of character education.

Fourth, Strengthening the Leadership and Direction of Party Committees and Authorities in Building Cadets' Cultural Life

The leadership and direction of Party committees, authorities, and commanding officers at all levels within military academies constitute a decisive factor in determining the quality and effectiveness of building cadets' cultural life, ensuring coherence between value education, skills training, and the formation of behavioral norms. Strengthening leadership and guidance in this domain is not merely an administrative or organizational requirement but a strategic imperative for cultivating military culture and shaping individuals within the military environment.

From a structural-functional theoretical perspective, cultural life in military academies constitutes a system composed of interrelated elements—values, norms, institutions, and cultural practices—within which the leadership role of Party committees and authorities functions as a determining factor that provides orientation, regulation, and stability for the system's harmonious operation and development. Party committees and authorities at all levels must fundamentally renew their awareness and strategic thinking, developing a deeper and clearer understanding of the position and significance of cultural life in shaping cadets' value systems, character, political fortitude, and military cultural competence as future officers.

In leadership practice, it is essential to concretize the Party's guidelines and viewpoints on cultural and human development through mechanisms and policies tailored to the specific conditions of each academy, linking the construction of cultural life with the establishment of a clean, healthy, disciplined, and norm-governed cultural environment. Leadership methods should be innovated in flexible, creative, interactive, and dialogical ways that encourage motivation, participation, and co-creation among leaders, organizational forces, and cadets. Resources should be effectively organized and coordinated to ensure the efficient operation of cultural institutions, with synchronized investment in cultural spaces—particularly digital cultural spaces—while encouraging cadets to actively participate in the creation, preservation, and dissemination of institutional cultural values.

Moreover, it is necessary to develop a system of indicators for evaluating cultural life based on both quantitative criteria, such as the frequency of activities and levels of infrastructural investment, and qualitative or "soft" indicators, including cadets' voluntary participation, the quality of cultural interactions, and the diffusion of cultural norms, attitudes, and behaviors within the military academic environment. Strengthening inspection and supervision in the construction of cadets' cultural life contributes to the creation of a military cultural environment rich in educational value, capable of nurturing, orienting, and promoting positive cultural values, thereby enabling cadets to develop comprehensively in terms of intellect, character, political resilience, social competence, and professional military culture.

V. Conclusion

In sum, the cultural life of cadets in military academies is not merely a component of the social environment but a distinctive cultural-educational ecosystem in which values, norms, habits, and cultural behaviors are formed, disseminated, and transformed into the personal qualities of cadets as future officers. This role can only be fully realized when military academies harmoniously integrate value-oriented education, the development of cultural institutions, the organization of daily cultural practices, and the unified leadership and direction of Party committees and authorities at all levels. These are not simply managerial solutions but constitute a systematic, in-depth, and sustainable process of constructing a military academic cultural environment.

When implemented in a coordinated manner, cultural life becomes a crucial endogenous resource that contributes to the formation of professional competence, political resilience, ethical standards, lifestyle orientation, and military demeanor among cadets. These qualities represent the core attributes of young officers, meeting the requirements for building the Vietnam People's Army that is revolutionary, regular, elite, and modern in the new era.

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