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**MILITARY CLASSES AS AN AREA OF INTEREST FOR
THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND.
EXPERIENCE AND PERSPECTIVES**

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Abstract:

Military classes have attracted the attention of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland due to several reasons: the curriculum that oscillates around the defense issues and the professionalization of the Polish Army in 2010, which resulted in its reduction in size to 100,000 soldiers and the limitation of the inflow of trained personnel. This study aims not only to investigate the characteristic of students studying in military classes and their goals but also to describe the curriculum in military classes. The aim of the article is to discuss the issue of military classes as an area of interest for the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The research method used in the study was diagnostic survey, the research technique was a questionnaire and document analysis. Achieving the goal requires presenting the results of own research on the teleology of the functioning of military classes, where the characteristics of the students of military classes were characterized in terms of their axiological predispositions and objectives, and the objectives of programs implemented in military classes were presented. Next, the praxeology of the functioning of military classes was presented based on the diagnosis of various curricula as part of pedagogical innovations and on the basis of the "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military education".

Key words: military classes, military education, Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, pedagogical innovation.

1. Introduction

In Poland – as part of secondary school education – there are so-called military classes. They implement a widely understood education program for security, enriched with topics related to the defense of the country, the history of the Polish army or a shell. It should be pointed out that the repertoire of their goals, programs and content is huge – from a superficial facade boasting a connection with a uniform which during the implementation of the educational program does not give much more to its pupils, to the fascination of teachers, support of educational authorities and the local community thanks to which factually and pragmatically attractive programs are built. Therefore, there are schools and military classes that associate enthusiasts, theoreticians and practitioners, teachers, pupils and their students. Through their activities, they integrate the local environment and shape patriotic, civic and pro-social attitudes of this environment. In addition, military classes enjoy considerable and growing popularity in Poland. Today, about 50,000 young people are taught there [1].

Due to the additional program content implemented in military classes, oscillating around the defense issues of the country, as well as the professionalization of the Polish Army in 2010, which caused its reduction to the dimensions of 100,000th formation and limiting the inflow of trained personnel reserves, military classes have also become the

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object of interest Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. It was considered that there is a need to rebuild personal reserves, including ensuring a significant inflow of younger soldiers of the reserve [2] so that in the next 8 years this number - including the soldiers of the Territorial Defense Forces - will exceed 200,000. This task was entrusted to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, which resulted in monitoring the military potential of the army and taking possible actions to increase the number of recruits [3]. In practice, it resulted in the interest of the Polish Armed Forces in various forms of military training, including youth education in the so-called military classes [4].

The purpose of this article is to discuss the issue of military classes, which is in the area of interest of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. It was assumed that the basis of this interest is the specificity of military-class students and programs implemented in those classes that contain military content [5]. In other words, this article answers the following research problem: what is the specificity of military-grade students and their education, causing interest of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland? The need to achieve the purpose of narrative and to answer the main research question first required introduction to the subject of military classes in Poland, which was done by presenting their genesis of this specific form of education in Poland. Next, the characteristics of the students of military classes and their education were made on the basis of the analysis of the results of own research. Subsequently, the "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military education" was presented. At the end of the article there is a summary and conclusions.

2. The genesis of functioning of military classes in Poland

The idea of creating military classes in Poland refers to the tradition of defensive education, preparing the young generation to defend their homeland, as well as strengthening the bonds of the nation with the army. Their contemporary development and character is the result of many initiatives that were born in the nineties of the last century, mainly in the school and military environment [6].

The foundation of functioning of uniformed classes after 1989 are the reforms that have been carried out since then in Poland in the field of armed forces, defense policy of the state and education. First of all, Poland's withdrawal from the Warsaw Pact and joining NATO and the associated perception of threats caused, among other things, the withdrawal from the conscript army to the professional army. Secondly, the subject of defensive adoption was withdrawn, introducing education for safety in return. Thus, the preparation of children and young people for action against possible military threats resulting from the Cold War doctrine was completed in a certain part. Thirdly, there were changes in the education system - junior high schools were introduced. These transformations occurred simultaneously, usually independently of each other, while having a significant impact on the shaping of contemporary uniformed classes [7].

Then in May 26, 1994, the Agreement on cooperation was signed between the Minister of National Defense and the Minister of National Education in the field of didactic-educational, scientific and organizational and logistic activities. The Decision No. 126/ MON of June 30, 1999 on the conduct of an experiment in the field of youth defense education became the complement of this agreement and the official beginning of the existence of military classes as the first uniformed class. This decision sets out the rules for conducting the experiment and its goal, which was to develop a new and rational system of military training for youth in secondary schools. Such activities were to be used to acquire prepared non-commissioned officers for the ranks of the Polish Armed Forces [8].

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Therefore, the beginning of the functioning of classes with a military profile in the Third Republic of Poland is assumed the creation of experimental classes with the first military class created in the 1998/1999 school year in the High School in Tuchola. These activities initiated the creation by the Ministry of National Defense and the Ministry of National Education in Poland of a common defense education system for high school youth. Military classes in this experimental formula functioned from 1998 to 2002 [9].

The experiment itself - although successful - could not be expanded and disseminated. In practice, however, this did not mean the cessation of the functioning of uniformed classes, but only the lack of funding their activities from the funds of the armed forces. Completing the experiment with profiled classes proactively, without indicating further system solutions, and at the same time growing interest of young people in education in such classes, has become an impulse for working out a new formula for the functioning of uniformed classes. An opportunity for further development of military classes was created by the Regulation of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 9 April 2002 on the conditions for conducting innovative and experimental activities by public schools and institutions [10].

Further functioning of uniformed classes was defined by the Decision of the Minister of National Defense of 9 June 2009 on the introduction of principles for the cooperation of the Ministry of National Defense with non-governmental organizations and other social partners [11]. And the Decision on 11th April 2011 [12], which changes the aforementioned decision. However, the legal basis for today's functioning of military classes is the Regulation of the Minister of National Education of August 24, 2011 amending the regulation on the conditions for conducting innovative and experimental activities by public schools and institution [13].

3. Contemporary determinants of education of military-grade students

The basics of determinants of contemporary education of military-grade students, which affect their specificity, are located in the area of pedagogical innovation principles [14]. Pursuant to the Ordinance of the Minister of National Education and Sport of 9 April 2002 on the conditions for conducting innovative and experimental activities, "innovative program, organizational or methodological solutions aimed at improving the quality of school work" are defined as innovations [15]. The implementation of the innovation program requires that a specific teacher develop pedagogical innovation and a dedicated curriculum, which is based on the minimum curriculum for schools, which was introduced by the Ministry of National Defense. "A minimum of programs implemented as part of innovative programs of defense preparation or education for safety and training programs for members of non-governmental organizations required to sign agreements with the commandant of a military school or training center".

The next step is the procedure for implementing innovation. It consists in the fact that the Pedagogical Council of a given school adopts a resolution on introducing the innovation presented by the teacher. The adopted resolution of the Pedagogical Council along with the description of the principles of innovation and the opinion of the School Council (if not appointed, the opinion of the Pedagogical Council attached) and the consent of the author (authors) the school head passes to the school superintendent and school governing body by 31 March of the year preceding the school year, where the innovation is planned. If the innovation requires additional funding for the school, a written approval of the governing body for financing the planned activities should be obtained. At the same time, it should be pointed out that the body conducting the innovative activity can finance up to three teaching hours per week.

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Pedagogical innovation enables the introduction of an object or objects with military content, but usually coherent with the specific curriculum of a given school, which results in programs with different goals, different quality and quantity of hours allocated for them. This situation causes that within the framework of pedagogical innovation of military profile, one class implements ambitious programs, they operate with the involvement of teachers, students and their parents, the local environment and in intensive cooperation of a given military unit. However, there are also military classes whose program was written by a teacher with less motivation or knowledge, and their functioning in military culture is much less active.

The formula of innovation assumes the possibility of implementing various program basics implemented by various classes covered by an innovation of the same name. On the other hand, the subject or subjects implemented during pedagogical innovation can be entered on the school certificate as an optional subject, which consequently leads to a situation in which the possible insufficient assessment of this subject does not affect the promotion of the student to the next grade.

4. Methodology of the author

Empirical studies in which military subjects are the subject of research are conducted by the author of the article from 2013 - earlier in the Department of Education for Security in the National Security Department of the National Defense Academy in Warsaw and now in the Department of Education for Security in the National Security Department of the Academy of War Art in Warsaw. The research results presented in this article come from research conducted in January and February 2017.

In pedagogical research, three categories of research goals are most often distinguished: cognitive, theoretical and practical. In the undertaken diagnostic and explanatory studies, all the mentioned categories of goals were taken into account. The cognitive goal was to describe, diagnose and explain the specifics of military-grade students and their education. The theoretical aim was to enrich the system of theoretical pedagogical knowledge related to the process of educating students of military classes. The practical goal was to formulate, on the basis of the results obtained, the conclusions for the practice of education of military-grade students. The main problem of empirical research will be contained in the question: What is the specificity of military-class students? In other words, they were looking for answers to the question of how students of military classes perceive themselves, which is the specific group of young people - because of the military content implemented during education.

The studies used a diagnostic survey method [16], the survey and analysis of documents was the research technique. The pilot nature of the research meant that they covered a small group of the studied students of military classes of high schools (200). The choice of the research sample was random, assuming that the schools were randomly selected from secondary schools, leading classes of the so-called military profile, which have signed a cooperation agreement with the Academy of War Art in Warsaw.

Based on the analysis of own research results [17] it can be pointed out that the small majority of military-grade students are men (55%).

The research also made it possible to characterize the youth of military classes in terms of military traditions in their families. The analysis of the research results proves that the military traditions were maintained in families of 62% of respondents. In the remaining 38% of cases, no one in the immediate family was a military student. Most often, the military uniform was worn by an uncle (29.0%), grandfather (28.5%), father (22.5%), and in individual cases, mother (2.0%) or members of a distant family (8.0%) .

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The specificity of students of military classes in the light of the analysis of the results of their own research

The analysis of the results of own research also allowed for a more precise characterization of young people learning in military classes [18] (Cf.: Pic. 1.). Adepts of military classes primarily achieve high results from physical education (89% in total, where I totally agree - 59%, rather I agree - 30%), show interest in the issues of defense and state security (83% in total, where I totally agree - 47%, I agree rather - 36%), attend military extra-curricular activities (76% in total, where I totally agree - 46%, rather agree - 30%) and sports (74% in total, where completely I agree - 37%, I rather agree - 37%).

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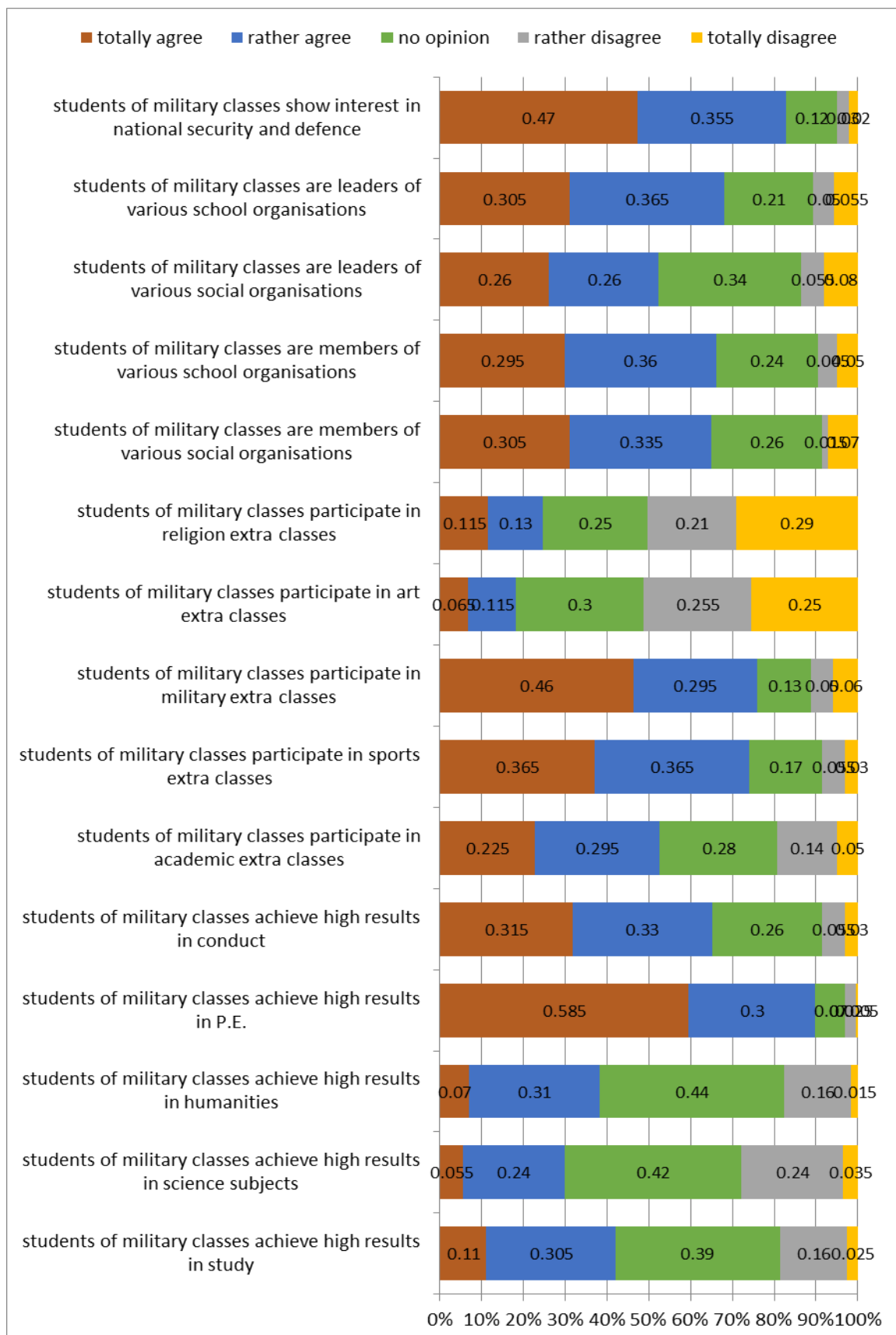


Fig.1. Characteristics of students of military classes according to the surveyed students
Source: the author's own research.

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Moreover, based on the analysis of research results, it can be indicated that for students in military classes, social activity in the school environment is characteristic: leadership (68%) and belonging (66%) to various school organizations, as well as in the local environment: leadership (52 %) and affiliation (65%) to various social organizations. Although 65% of respondents said that students of military classes receive high degrees of behavior, then 42% of respondents confirmed their academic successes, and 52% of the group indicated participation in these extra-curricular activities. In addition, according to the surveyed people, the most important to the profile of a military-grade student is not the participation in extracurricular activities of a religious and artistic nature - the answer "rather disagree" and "totally disagree" indicated respectively 50% and 51% of respondents.

The surveyed students compared the examined traits of a typical military-class student to their own person. The respondents confirmed high scores in physical education (90%) and participation in military (72%) and sports (63%) extracurricular activities. As in the general profile, and in personal evaluation, religious and artistic activities did not enjoy much interest - 20% and 23% respectively declared their participation in them. Most of the students (83%) were interested in the issues of state defense and security. They also more often indicated participation in extracurricular activities (60%) as well as achieving high levels of behavior (85%). The assessment of own scientific successes was slightly higher than for all military-grade students. Over half of the respondents confirmed their affiliation to various school (55%) and social (52%) organizations. The characteristics of one's own person as a military-grade student in the opinion of the respondents is shown in Fig. 2.

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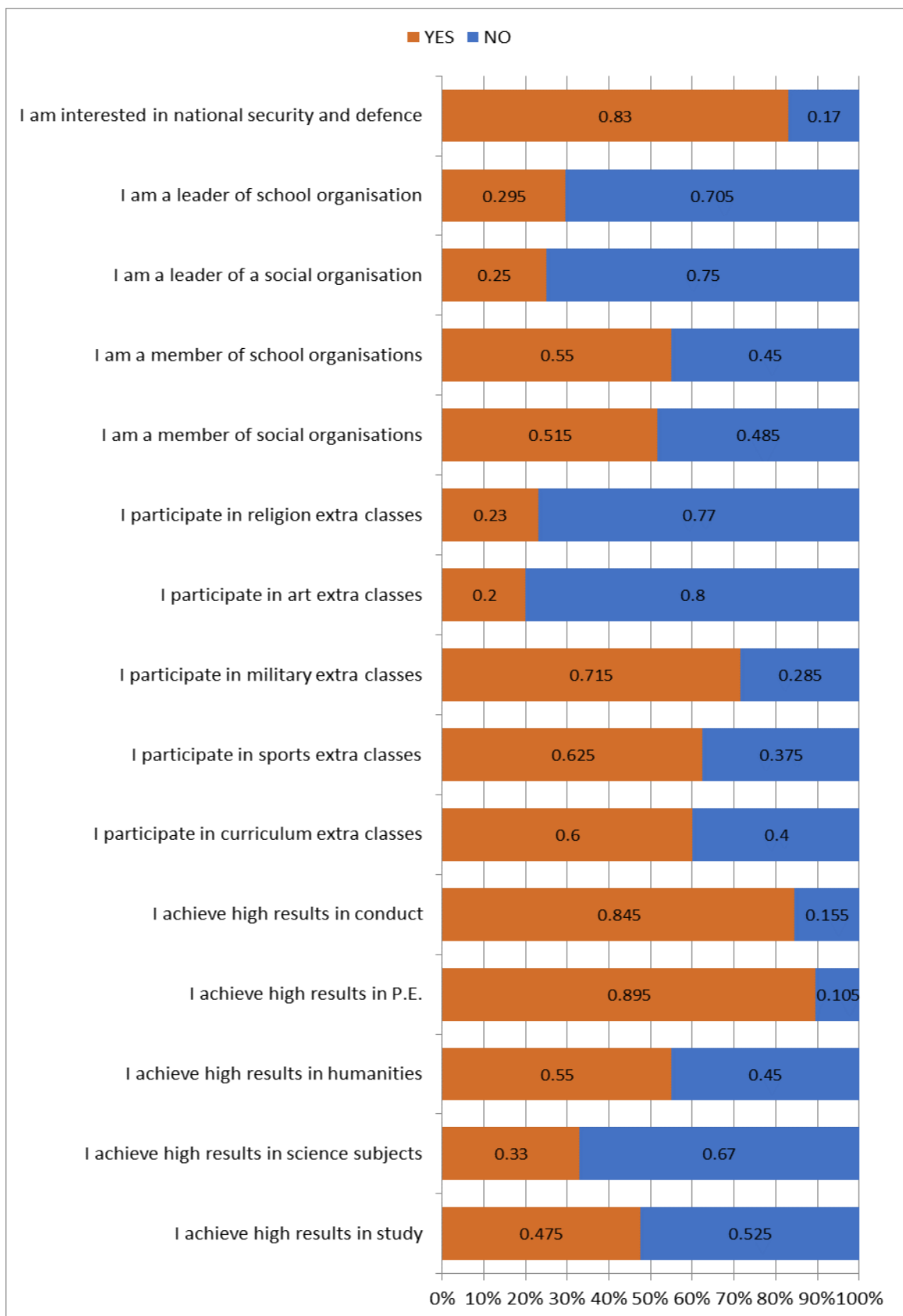


Fig.2. Personal characteristics in the opinion of the surveyed students
Source: the author's own research.

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The synthesis of the collected results allows a profile of a military class student to be created:

- achieve high results in P.E. ,
- are interested in national security and defence
- participate in military and sports extra classes
- achieve high grades in conduct
- are active in various school and social organisations.

1. Characteristics of education in military classes

According to the surveyed students of military classes, the specificity of education in these classes is primarily wearing uniforms (in the opinion of 80.5% of respondents). In addition, these students have classes: military drill (76.5% of respondents), military prevention and discipline (74.5% of respondents), learning about the service of a soldier (72.5% of respondents in the opinion). The respondents also indicated that they participate in national holidays (70%), shooting trainings (66%), go to military camps (65.5%) and to military unit (65%). For educational purposes, the respondents also qualified cognition of national and regional traditions (49.5% of indications). Curriculum differences in students' learning difficulties presents Fig.3.

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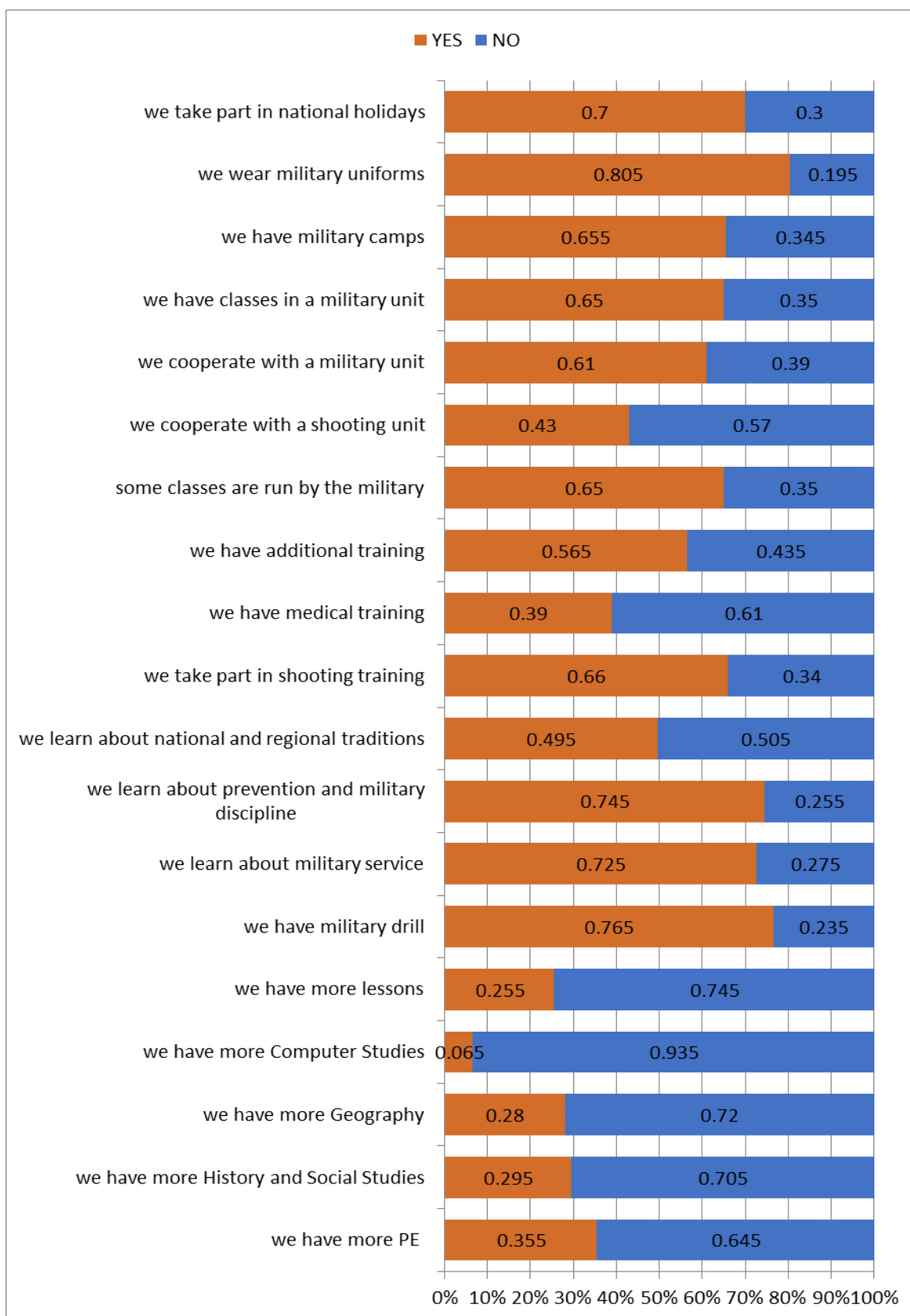


Fig.4. Curriculum differences in military classes in comparison with classes of other profiles in the opinion of the surveyed students
Source: the author's own research.

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Research shows that the goals of pedagogical innovation in military classes are realized thanks to the fact that some of the classes are conducted by military personnel (65%), and also because cooperation is established with a military unit (61%) and shooting (43%). The attribute is the fact that additional training (56.5%) as well as medical training (39%) are included in the curriculum. There are also more hours of physical education (35.5%), history and WOS (29.5%), geography (28%), computer science (6.5%). The respondents stated that they generally run more hours than students of other profiles.

The surveyed students of military classes have indicated that additional teaching hours are allocated to the implementation of curriculum content in the field of pedagogical innovation. Almost half of the respondents (46%) indicated that they have an additional 4-6 hours a week, up to 3 hours a week every third respondent (34.5%), and seven or more hours a week has one in five students of military class (19.5 %).

The analysis of the research results shows that most of the military-class students of the pedagogical innovation content are also leaving for military units (70%) and military camps: summer (50%), weekend (44%), and winter 14.5%.

The conducted research also allowed to indicate practical areas of using the skills acquired during education in military classes. Responded students of military classes believed that the acquired skills will be useful to them in further military service (in the opinion of 48% of respondents), for security and national defense (according to 17% of respondents), in the case of various types of threats (according to 15% of students), recruitment for higher education (in the opinion of 9% of respondents), when helping another person (according to 8% of respondents), while shaping their own character (opinion 8% of respondents).

Education in military classes based on the "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military education".

In August 2017, the Ministry of National Defense, in consultation with the Ministry of National Education, introduced a coherent teaching system, using the standards applied in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The MOD program [19], based on a unified program of practical and theoretical science, it was directed to selected 57 upper-secondary schools that had military classes. "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military education" is a unified program for all participating schools. It covers three semesters of school education, from 4.09.2017 to around 11/02/2019.

The MON Program implementation is carried out with the support of the nearest military unit. Training centers and Regional Military Administration Bodies (TOAW) are also helpful. Substantive supervision over the implementation of the program is exercised by the University of the Arts of Wales [20]. In turn, the teaching contents of the discussed program are modeled on the "Territorial Defense Training Program", and have also been expanded to include elements of the military preparatory service.

In connection with the above, the "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military Education" includes 185 hours of theoretical and practical lessons, including field training in the form of a training camp and 30 hours of self-study lessons. Practical training is mainly based on the base of military units and training centers in the form of military training days, i.e. longer practical classes - field exercises, classes with military and specialist equipment.

Precisely including the pilot program of the Ministry of National Defense includes the implementation of:

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- minimum 45 hours of lessons in the theory within 1.5 years of study in the second and first half of the third grade, which gives an average of one teaching hour per week;

- minimum 90 hours of practical training within 1.5 years of second class and first half year classes in the form of military training days, which gives an average of 2 hours per week, but their accumulation and implementation on one designated day of the month is preferred ;

- minimum 50 hours of practical training in the form of a 5-day military training camp in the second half of the second year or a training camp during the summer holidays - holidays after the third year. The implementation of the camp is envisaged with the support of the army, or rather by the army, on military training facilities;

- a minimum of 30 teaching hours extending the teaching content carried out as part of the monitored, directed self-directed education, i.e. using the e-learning platform and additionally supported by the Ministry of National Defense an educational program including the distribution of training aid sets to schools.

The last half-year of school education is the provision of support by the Regional Military Administration in the field of targeting willing pupils on the possible paths of military service and the military qualification of adult students - volunteers. On the other hand, summer holidays, holidays after finishing school for graduate-volunteers who will confirm in the military qualifications the ability to active military service, is a short-term military preparatory training concluded with the submission of a military oath [21].

5. Summary

Military classes, dynamically developing in Poland since the end of the nineties, enjoy the interest and acceptance of both young people, as well as teachers and local communities. The popularity of education carried out in these classes testifies to the interest of young people in the subject of security and defense, but also about the broadly understood fascination with the army, which may only be a temporary passion, but may also confirm the young man in his future plans. Thus, military classes, contents and programs implemented by them, or the students themselves, constitute an interesting subject of scientific cognition. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to discuss the issue of military classes, which is in the area of interest of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. The presented considerations lead to the following conclusions:

1. The beginning of the modern functioning of classes with a military profile is assumed the creation of experimental classes with the first military class created in the 1998/1999 school year in the High School in Tuchola. The popularity of the pedagogical experiment carried out in the years 1998-2002 contributed to the increased interest of the youth in military issues.
2. Contemporary education of students in military classes determines their functioning not based on a pedagogical experiment, but as part of the pedagogical innovation introduced in 2002 with the amendment in 2011. Such a legal solution means that various programs are currently being implemented that contain military content with a different saturation.
3. The analysis of the results of empirical research indicates that the students of military classes are in the small majority men. It is worth noting that in more than half of the families of the respondents, military traditions are maintained. Most often, the military uniform was worn by an uncle, grandfather, father, and individual cases - mother or extended family members.
4. It can also be pointed out that students of military classes primarily achieve high results from physical education, show interest in the issues of defense and security

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of the state, attend military and sports extra-curricular activities. However, religious and artistic activities are not very popular among them. The vast majority of respondents achieve high degrees of behavior. Half of them achieve high results in science, especially in humanities and less often in science subjects. Students of military classes also take part in these extracurricular activities. Social activity in the school environment is also characteristic for them: leadership and belonging to various school organizations, as well as in the local environment: leadership and belonging to various social organizations.

5. The synthesis of the collected results allows to create a profile of a military-class student characterized by: achieving high results from physical education, showing interest in defense and state security issues, attending military and sports extracurricular activities, achieving high levels of behavior, active activity in various organizations school and social.
6. Externally, a military-class student is distinguished by wearing a uniform. On the other hand, in the field of education, these students carry out classes in: military drill, military prevention and discipline, and soldier service. Students of military classes also participate in state holidays, shooting training, travel to military camps and to military unit classes. Part of the classes lead the military. Cooperation with a military and shooting unit is established. The curriculum includes additional training, including medical training, more hours of physical education, history and knowledge about society, geography and information technology. Students of military classes also go to classes to military units and to military camps: weekend, summer and winter.
7. Research has shown that curricula in military classes in the opinion of respondents contain many attributes, such as: characteristic activities based on defense and military dimension, program content containing elements of military training, classes and extracurricular (away) education for military education. Responded students of military classes thought that the acquired skills would be useful to them all in the further military service and for security and national defense.
8. It is necessary to institutionalize the educational efforts of schools in which military-class programs are implemented. The first attempt of nationwide activities in this area is the "Teaching program for upper secondary schools of the subject of Military education", which - in addition to the program content consistent with the expectations of the Polish Armed Forces - guarantees, among others, cooperation with the patron unit, substantive supervision of the Academy of War Art in Warsaw, support in the implementation of the program from the side of the Office of Defense Affairs of the Ministry of National Defense. Standardization of all programs would make it possible to use students or graduates of such classes in emergency response or in the event of war, which perfectly fits in with the assumptions of the "Strategy for the development of the national security system of the Republic of Poland 2022" [22].

The popularity of education in uniformed classes functioning in secondary schools proves the interest of young people in the subject of security and defense. It also testifies to the broadly understood fascination with the army, which can only be a temporary passion, but it can also confirm the young man in his future plans. Thus, students of uniformed classes are also excellent personnel resources for the Polish Armed Forces. Graduates of secondary schools who implemented the curriculum content of pedagogical innovation in the field of military education could - after verifying their skills and submitting their military oath - feed the corps of non-commissioned and non-commissioned officers.

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In connection with the interest of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland in military classes, further, in-depth and extended research on identifying the potential of functioning pedagogical innovations in the field of military education in terms of quantity and quality should be undertaken. Therefore, it seems justified to conduct further research, the results of which can be used to indicate the implications for the practical use of the acquired knowledge, skills and competences of students of these classes.

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[18] The content on the specifics of military-grade students and the characteristics of education in military classes refers to the article I. Urych *Student's opinion on the academic curriculum in military classes*, "Security and Defense Quarterly", 1 (18) 2018, pp. 26-44.

[19] The article uses interchangeably: Program of The Ministry of National Defense, Program MON, *Teaching Program for Post-Secondary Schools of the Subject "Military Education"*.

[20] The head of the care team of the Academy of War Art on the course of the educational process of students of selected uniformed classes of high schools leading the subject of teaching Military education is Col. dr hab. Eng. Krzysztof Krakowski, and the deputy team leader is Lt. Col. Dr. Zbigniew Leśniewski. The members of this team are: Major MSc. Paweł Rafał Ostolski, Lt. Col. Dr inż. Andrzej Soboń, dr Ilona Urych, Lt. Col. MSc. Jacek Asztemborski, major mgr Sławomir Achler, major mgr inż. Andrzej Mocarcki, ZDW, Lt. Col. Dr. Witold Słomiany, Major Dr. Piotr Maśloch, Institute of Management, Lt. Col. Dr. Eng. Krystian Frącik, major Jacek Droszcz, major dr inż. Mirosław Laskowski

[21] *Teaching Program for Post-Secondary Schools of the Subject "Military Education"*.

[22] *Strategia rozwoju systemu bezpieczeństwa narodowego Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej* 2022, Warsaw, 2013, pp. 80.