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Generational Challenges in National Security Education

In recent years, increasingly far-reaching findings and researches on different generations appear, and parallel to this, the challenges related to the topic keep emerging in almost every area of life. The latter is particularly strong in the field of employment and education, the main reason for which is that the completely different attitudes of the younger generations have catalysed serious changes in both segments. In addition, in recent years, the global technological and IT development have accelerated tremendously, and the generations of the digital age are socialising in a completely different environment than their predecessors. Thus, their vision on the world, their values and their future prospects are also fundamentally different.

Keywords: national security, generational challenges, national security education

1. Brief generational characteristics

There is an extensive international and domestic literature on generational researches. Based on the findings of the researchers, the characteristics of each generation became identifiable and known. Analyses also include a number of specific aspects and approaches, such as generational characteristics related to private life, social and cultural conditions, education, consumer habits or the field of work. In this study, I do not intend to present the characteristics of each generation in detail, but I would like to give an overview of the most important criteria related to the topic.

First, it is worth reviewing the criteria by which generations can be grouped and why this is important at all. Overall, it can be stated that individuals belonging to the same generations were born in a certain time interval (approximately 15–20 years), have a similar childhood socialisation experience, and their values and habits show many similarities. At the same time, the characteristics of each generation are culture-specific in certain elements, because in addition to global trends, the regional, local, social, political, economic environment and historical background also influence them.

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The common basic generational features, habits and characteristics derive from the similar experience of the members. However, these experiences are constantly supplemented by additional ones due to the constant development that have an impact on social attitudes and thinking.²

As a result of the rapid progress that has taken place in recent decades, a number of such conditions are affecting the socialisation of generations which previously have not occurred. For example, online societies provide a different set of values, possibility of assertion, or behavioural models which inevitably influence generations' visions and attitudes toward different areas of life.

2. Generational challenges in employment and education

Changing generational characteristics are forcing new approaches in all areas of life, but perhaps the greatest challenges are being generated in the field of employment and education. In Hungary, the labour market is less segmented, which means that all civil and state actors compete for the same human resources during recruiting. Profit-oriented organisations constantly strive to monitor current trends and adjust their recruitment strategies and certain elements connected to the organisational culture and benefits, because the resulting competitive advantage can ensure their survival. Public actors are in a much more difficult position because they are also aware of changes, but the adaptation to the current situation may be much slower due to their specific operational characteristics, which are significantly reducing their competitiveness compared to other market players. Members of the Z and later the Alpha generations entering the labour market, already consider completely different aspects when choosing a job or profession. As a result, previously used recruiting and retaining strategies require strong rethinking by employers.

The challenges in the field of education are based on somewhat different considerations. In this field, finding the answers to the “what and how to teach?” questions mean the biggest challenge. Thanks to technical and IT developments, there will be professions in the future that will cease to exist or become robotic, or there are some that already do not exist. The latter poses a particular challenge because it is not possible to prepare for a non-existing profession. At the same time, thanks to the spread of the Internet and digitisation, there is an almost unlimited amount of information which is immediately accessible and searchable. Therefore, the legitimacy of traditional educational practices partly aimed at memorising numbers and facts as much as possible becomes questionable. In addition, due to the changed environment and the different socialisation circumstances, the learning and information processing skills of the younger generations have also changed significantly. Numerous studies confirm that the average concentration capacity has been radically reduced by now, even according to conservative estimates. One of the reasons for this is to be found in generational characteristics. As a native digital, Generation Z is accustomed to simultaneous multidirectional communication, a constant online presence, and being

² Krisztián Steigervald: *Generációk harca. Hogyan értsük meg egymást?* Budapest, Partvonal Kiadó, 2021. 24–35.

a part of several digital micro-communities. Therefore, their information processing method is non-linear, and their mode of expression is dominated by short, concise messages, abbreviations and visual representations. Due to the digital environment and changes in the ability to concentrate, fast information retrieval is preferred, and contents that promote practical knowledge have become a priority. It is enough to think that there is almost no topic without a practical video guide. The above-mentioned features seem to be not compatible or only to a very small extent with the previously preferred teaching methods.

3. Career characteristics of the field of national security

Before turning to the challenges of national security training, I would like to briefly introduce the career characteristics of the national security field. In recent decades, not only global development has accelerated, but political, social, economic and other changes have taken place in the world that have generated new security policy challenges. Of course, these also affected the functioning of the organisations responsible for security. The Hungarian national security services have undergone significant transformations since the change of regime, due to, among other things, technical and IT developments, the changed security policy environment and socio-cultural changes. The services, of course, strive to meet current professional and security requirements, but due to their operational characteristics and legal environment, their development is slower and more limited. National security services are highly hierarchical, traditional organisations, and their operation is regulated by law, including certain segments of human resource management. At the same time, environmental and social changes and the forthcoming expectations have had an impact on their internal development processes.

National security organisations are in a special position in the labour market, because the open sharing of information on certain jobs is limited due to its nature. Changes in the external environment, however, require opening up to society, especially in the field of recruitment. Nowadays, the national security services are increasingly using the opportunities provided by various Internet forums and social interfaces; however, they are at a disadvantage in terms of reaching, recruiting and retaining the younger generations. In order to remain competitive, they have relatively little room for changing in the present regulatory environment, especially in terms of career planning, payment and recruitment procedures. These areas are regulated by law, therefore their change does not primarily fall within the competence of the organisations. Although the fundamental interest of the services is to successfully select the most suitable candidates for the specific tasks, but the lengthy recruitment process often leads to counterproductive results. In addition, national security organisations have such specific set of requirements and expectations which further limit their possibilities for finding the appropriate candidate.

If we look at the issue in terms of generational differences, the challenges considering human resource management processes become visible. First, let us look at the expectations that the organisations have for their prospective and

existing employees. Perhaps the most important criteria are reliability and regulatory compliance, which are clearly given prominence because of the nature of national security systems. Besides loyalty, professionalism, responsibility, moral strength and impeccable lifestyle are also important. However, due to the nature of the work, a high level of stress tolerance and workload are also expected. In addition, the ideal candidate is well-suited to specific working conditions and tasks, is able to collaborate, and last but not least, is developable.

The expectations presented above did not pose a particular challenge for the Baby Boomers (1946–1964) and Generation X (1965–1979), which are more accepting of the hierarchical organisational systems, authoritarianism and regulations. In Generation Y (1980–1994), the questioning of rules and authoritarianism was more pronounced, especially for those born after 1990. However, Z (1995–2010) and presumably the following generations are already putting the frame of work on a different base, so their preferred expectations require significant changes and different approaches on the part of the organisations. For Generation Z, the organisational culture and a strong brand they can be attached to, are fundamentally important.³ In addition, a modern work environment, an innovative, digital and creative workplace, competitive payment, fast career opportunities, flexibility in the place and duration of work, training opportunities, caring leadership attitude, attention and frequent feedback are also expected.

Based on the above, there seems to be a significant discrepancy between expectations, which in any case will cause difficulties for the national security services in the long run. At the same time, some of the expectations are fully compatible with the functioning of those organisations without compromising the fundamental interest and purpose. These include the modern and innovative working environment, creativity, leadership behaviour and, last but not least, training opportunities.

3.1. The scenes of national security education

In Hungary, unlike in other professions, preparation for the national security career can only take place after being recruited, either in or outside the school system. The scene of school-based education is the University of Public Service, which was established by the government on 1 January 2012 with the integration of the Zrínyi Miklós National Defence University, the College of Police Officers and the Faculty of Public Administration of the Corvinus University of Budapest. One of the basic goals of the establishment of the University of Public Service was to strengthen the professionalism and expertise of the personnel of the civil administration, law enforcement, national defence and national security services within the civil service through coordinated and planned organisational supply training.⁴

³ Klára Kissné András: *Kettős kockázat*. s. a.

⁴ András Patyi: "E pluribus Unum" – A Nemzeti Közszolgálati Egyetem előtt álló kihívások. *Magyar Közigazgatás, Új Folyam*, 61, no. 3 (2011). 24–31.

The national security specialisation was established in 2004, and the education started in the autumn of 2005. The education at the Master's Degree in National Security (MSc) in the former ZMNE Kossuth Lajos Faculty of Military Sciences started in September 2009, thus the new system of training has become complete. The University established the national security program in 2006 based on the needs of its customers, and it received the specialisation permit in 2008. The relevant personnel of the services operating in the civil sphere were formed at other universities, and a certain proportion in the various basic courses of the former Zrínyi Miklós University of National Defence. The Institute of National Security was established in 2012 with the aim of providing an opportunity to recruit specialists from organisations authorised to use intelligence tools and to support human resource development. The two departments of the institute, the Department of National Security in Military Field and the Department of National Security in Civilian Field, carry out the teaching and research according to uniform educational principles, but taking full account of the specifics of the clients. Training is provided in the form of correspondence, depending on the needs of the services concerned, on both undergraduate (B.Sc.) and master's (M.Sc.) courses.

Considering the nature of the education, the basic conditions for admission are professional skills in active service, support from the head of the given national security organisation and a valid "C" type national security clearance, thus enrolment into this type of education is possible only after joining one of the national security services. Currently, there are three majors: specialisation on human intelligence, on technical intelligence and counterterrorism. All these majors are taught on the undergraduate and master's courses within national security in civilian field. The mission of the B.Sc. course, based on the statement of the University, is to educate national security experts for national security services and bodies authorised to collect information by covert methods. It is supposed that the graduates must have state-of-the-art knowledge in general terms, in scientific, theoretical and practical studies, and in technical, legal, criminological, psychological fields, as well as in information technology (IT), in security policy and foreign languages. The primary objective of the master's program is to train national security professionals who are suitable for managerial and expert positions in the administrative, military, law-enforcement and scientific sectors. They also must be able to assess, analyse and solve national security problems based on their professional knowledge and practical skills. They are prepared to understand the functioning of political institutions, security processes, public policies and their interrelations and interaction depending on the situation in the global security policy affairs, to support the preparation of government responses.⁵

Although there are courses at the University of Public Service which themes on national security services and their activities are part of the subject, there are no open courses with special knowledge reserved for security organisations. This is why, the national security services do not have the pre-requisite of having any special qualifications before the enrolment of their candidates. Nevertheless, there may be some exceptions in cases of positions of experts where a special degree from

⁵ See <https://felveteli.uni-nke.hu/rtk/>

beyond the national security realm may be required for the job. Due to the fact that the employees entering the national security services have different experience, qualifications and professional background, their training may be carried out through internal training systems and courses.

The system of internal trainings differs from organisation to organisation due to the different tasks, but in general, it is clear that all services have basic and special trainings and a corresponding internal educational system. Although the basic trainings vary in terms of its duration, but are similar in terms of its purpose, namely the transfer of unified approach and knowledge that contributes to the most efficient preparation for the future tasks. In addition, each service has a special, internal advanced training system, the main task of which is to prepare for a specific job or activity, and to maintain or deepen the previously acquired knowledge. The courses held within this advanced system can also vary in duration, from one- or two-days skills developing trainings up to several weeks-long special courses. Furthermore, it is common that employees enrol in various external domestic or even international courses, which are aimed to develop certain language or other targeted skills. Moreover, the services must comply with the Ministry of the Interior's unified further training system, which includes the completion of additional organisationally–institutionally accredited online and in-presence courses. Within this framework, certain amount of training scores must be obtained within a 4-year training cycle.

Examining the different training options from a methodological point of view, it seems that the services have sought to improve their tools in recent years. Accordingly, in addition to traditional forms of education, more innovative methods such as trainings through exercises, table-top exercises situation games, and online or blended learning classes are often used.

4. New generation challenges in national security education

Based on the above, it can be stated that the training systems of the national security services contain the elements which provide the opportunity to prepare the staff from the basics to the advanced levels. The teaching methodology is partly based on decades of tradition, but training systems are increasingly incorporating elements which integrate modern educational opportunities according to current organisational needs and expectations. However, due to the characteristics of the younger generations presented earlier, it will be necessary to rethink the methods used so far and to introduce forms of training that are able to meet the expectations and interests of both parties involved at the same time.

First, let us examine which forms and methods of education can produce the desired results for the Z and later the Alpha generation based on their characteristics. As I have mentioned earlier, the job expectations of younger generations are strongly tied to the digital environment and the stimuli that come with it, which they consider natural. It affects not only the teaching methodology itself and the tools used during the education, but the attitude and abilities of the instructors as well. Young people have similar expectations towards teachers as they do towards their future leaders.

In case of the younger generations, the “I do” experience has a key role to play, which means that they do not want to be passive participants in an educational process only, but they want to have an active role instead. Therefore, there is an explicit need for them to be involved in decision-making processes. Of course, this does not mean that they should be given the right to decide on the content, frequency or other characteristics of their education, but the education should provide them with decision-making opportunities that make them feel an integral part of the process. This could be, for example, the invention of group or individual projects related to the subject, which may be implemented within the framework of the certain course. It can meet several criteria at the same time, as it gives them the opportunity to make decisions, the experience of creativity and autonomy, and the sense of practical usefulness. The need for practical examples is also a defining element of the expectations, which definitely overrules the theoretical knowledge and is highly important to youngsters.

Because young people are exposed to multiple visual stimuli, a traditional lesson may be boring and untraceable for them. The latter is a consequence of the fact that their ability to concentrate has dropped sharply, so the fewer are the new stimuli, the more certain is that young people lose interest very quickly and are unwilling or unable to pay attention in the long run. Accordingly, the emergence of diversity, visuality and interactivity in education and examination is also an essential criterion. This means not only the use of various modern infocommunication tools in education, but also the introduction of creative and cooperative methods that are able to maintain activity of the students.

It can also be stated that younger generations have been active users of the vast amount of digitally available information since their childhood, but the necessary skills for the effective data selection and evaluation might be learned much later. Knowing this, the task of educators is not only to teach the lessons’ content in as a diverse form as possible, but also to raise the level of proficiency in effective information processing and the ability of recognising the differences between authentic and unreliable sources. These are even more pronounced in the case of national security training, as the services main tasks are based on the information gathering, processing and evaluation. Precisely because of the large amount of easily accessible information, it is also important for moving closer to a competency-based approach in education, which means to strengthen and develop practical skills and abilities instead of lexical knowledge.

The younger generations are accustomed to micro-communities on digital platforms, and partly because of this they may require the opportunity to work in groups and exchange views with each other. During the education, numerous topics can be processed in groups, and it is worth applying these methods more often and more consciously. With regard to expectations in the field of work, the need for frequent feedback has already been mentioned, and the same is true in the education as well. It is important for the so-called “super now” generation to have immediate or frequent feedbacks in all areas, which is also a confirmation of the quality of the given activity. It is no coincidence that the cult of “like hunting” on digital platforms has developed in young people, as there is hardly a better measure of popularity and acknowledgement.

Based on the above, it can be concluded that interactive, flexible and creative forms and methods of education are the most preferred ones by young people. The non-school-based internal national security trainings already include a number of educational methods that meet the expectations of young generations. At the same time, it is very important that development concerning education should be continuous. Due to its nature, the school-based national security education system is in a more difficult position, as it has to fulfil not only the requirements of the university but of the national security services as customers, as well. According to the previously introduced institutional strategy, national security education should be of a synthesising, integrative and complex nature. On the other hand, due to its closed nature, education contains a number of knowledge that can be closely related to the activities of the national security services. However, most of the subjects are excellent for processing and learning in an interactive way, either as situational exercises or project-type activities. In addition, there are many untapped opportunities in the field of teaching methodology which can be adapted to ensure continuous improvement.

5. Opportunities for development in the field of national security training

If we want to summarise briefly what the education system for young people should look like, three aspects are worth emphasising: digital, visual and interactive. From a methodological point of view, it can be translated as infotainment, edutainment and gamification, and all three are designed to make the learning process easier, more interesting and more efficient. The complex correlation between the upcoming different teaching methods is well illustrated in the figure below.

From the above mentioned methods, I would like to highlight gamification, because in my opinion, the application of this would provide an opportunity to improve the educational methodology of national security training. There is no uniformly accepted definition of gamification, the term itself was first used in 2002 and became public in 2010.⁶ In essence, gamification is nothing more than the application of games and game elements to non-gaming areas of life.⁷ The reason that more and more civil and professional organisations are using it, from recruitment to training, is that a properly applied gamified method is suitable for increasing intrinsic motivation and organisational commitment, enhancing creativity, and even assisting certain attitude change. It is a common biological fact that the human brain processes stories more easily than dry fact data,⁸ and that gamification can provide a story-based context. In addition, it can have a very good community development effect either at workplace or in school.

⁶ See www.growthengineering.co.uk/definition-of-gamification

⁷ See www.gamify.com/what-is-gamification

⁸ See www.quantified.ai/blog/the-science-of-stories-how-stories-impact-our-brains

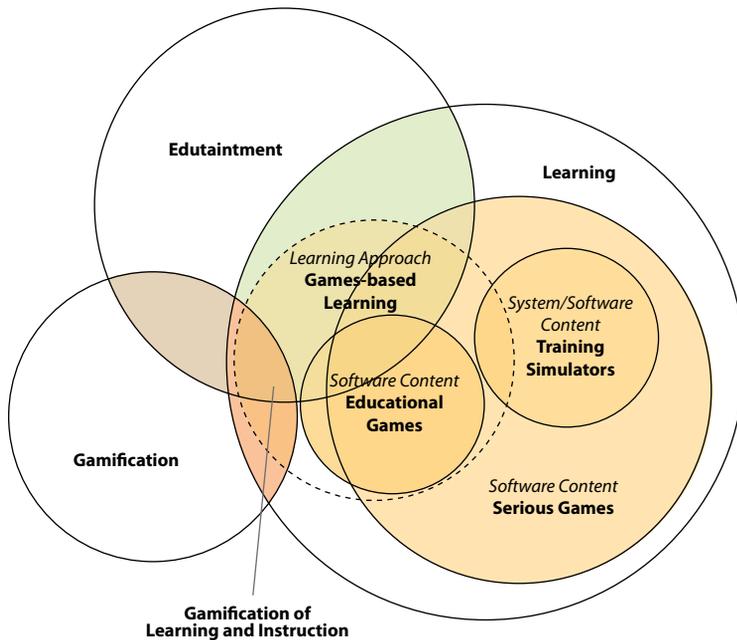


Figure 1: Relation between game-based-learning, gamification and edutainment (after Martens and Müller, 2017).

Source: Kristina M. Madsen: *The Gamified Museum: A Critical Literature Review and Discussion of Gamification in Museums*. In Thessa Jensen – Ole Ertlöv Hansen – Claus Andreas Foss Rosenstand (eds.): *Gamescope: The Potential for Gamification in Digital and Analogue Places*. Aalborg, Aalborg Universitetsforlag, 2020.

Of course, like all methods, gamification has its limitations as well, but with careful preparation, proper goal setting and professional implementation, it can greatly help achieve both organisational strategic and up-to-date development goals. The concept of gamification is basically tied to digital context, but it can take many other forms. Considering its definition, we can also consider memory games, quiz tasks, guessing games and situational, simulation tasks as gamified methods. In fact, it can be said with a little exaggeration that almost any topic or subject can be gamified, either in whole or in part, and national security education is no exception. The University of Public Service, which hosts the Institute of National Security, is also looking for the right tools for the increasingly generational challenges in education. Therefore, the Creative Learning Program was launched a few years ago, with the primary goal of introducing, testing and adapting creative teaching methods that can provide adequate solutions to the difficulties experienced in educating young people.

6. Conclusion

Overall, it can be stated that national security education has been constantly evolving in the past decade. Although many subjects are necessarily permanent in terms of content, but considering the teaching method, many innovations can be introduced in terms of methodology which will be able to meet current challenges. In the actual global security policy environment, law enforcement agencies and national security services have and will continue to have a greater role and importance than before, but they will only be able to maintain their effective functioning if they have a quality staff in the long term. Therefore, the more they know about the trends ahead, the better and more successful is their adaptation and preparation, and this is especially true to the organisational segments.

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