



Teaching Ethics and Discipline: A Military College Model

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Abstract

This paper proposes a comprehensive model for integrating ethics and discipline education within military colleges, drawing on contemporary practices in military ethics training as documented in international literature. The model emphasizes early, continuous, and scenario-based ethical instruction to cultivate morally sound decision-making at all levels of military service. Using the Select–Train–Educate–Promote (STEP) framework, we outline a structured approach to ethics education that begins at entry-level training and continues throughout a soldier's career. The paper argues that such a model not only enhances operational effectiveness but also strengthens civil-military relations and mitigates misconduct. Recommendations are offered for implementation within Nigerian and similar military educational contexts.

Keywords: military ethics, discipline, ethics education, military training, leadership, Nigerian Army, STEP model

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I. Introduction

Military organizations worldwide are increasingly recognizing the importance of ethics education in fostering disciplined, morally aware, and effective service members (Emonet, 2018). The changing nature of modern warfare, coupled with the strategic impact of individual actions—as seen in cases such as the Abu Ghraib scandal—underscores the need for robust ethical training from the earliest stages of military socialization (Belanger & Lagagce-Roy, 2016). This paper presents a Military College Model for teaching ethics and discipline, designed to be integrated into military academies and training institutions. The model is grounded in evidence-based practices and aligns with global trends in military professionalization. Military ethics education is not merely about rule compliance; it is about developing the cognitive and moral capacities to navigate complex, ambiguous situations (Baker, 2015). The model draws from the strategic private concept, which holds that even junior personnel can significantly impact mission success and public perception through their ethical conduct (Emonet, 2018). Additionally, the Geneva Conventions and principles of international humanitarian law provide a normative foundation for ethical behavior in conflict zones (ICRC, 2010).

II. The Military College Model: A STEP-Based Framework

The proposed model is structured around four sequential phases: Selection, Training, Education, and Promotion (STEP). Each phase incorporates ethics and discipline as core components.

1. Selection

Ethical screening should begin at recruitment. Candidates must be assessed not only for physical and cognitive aptitude but also for moral reasoning and value orientation. Unethical tendencies observed early often predict future misconduct (Mooney, n.d.). Structured interviews, situational judgment tests, and peer evaluations can help identify candidates with high ethical potential.

II. Training

Basic training must include mandatory ethics modules grounded in case-based learning (Micewski, 2016). Scenarios should reflect real-world dilemmas—such as rules of engagement, treatment of non-combatants, and reporting misconduct. The U.S. Army's Not in My Squad (NIMS) and SHARP programs offer examples of integrating ethical prevention into unit culture (CAPE, 2017; U.S. Army, n.d.). Training should also simulate multinational operations to foster cultural and ethical interoperability.

III. Education

Formal education in ethics should be embedded in military college curricula. Courses might include:

- Foundations of Military Ethics
- Leadership and Moral Decision-Making
- International Humanitarian Law
- Psychology of Ethical Behavior

These courses should employ active learning strategies, such as role-playing, debates, and reflective writing, to deepen critical thinking (Robinson et al., 2008).

IV. Promotion

Ethical competency should be a criterion for advancement. Leaders must model ethical behavior and mentor subordinates. After-action reviews and ethical debriefings should become routine. Promotion boards should consider a soldier's ethical judgment as demonstrated in training evaluations and real-world performance.

III. Implementation in the Nigerian Context

The Nigerian Army School of Education can serve as a pilot institution for this model. Key steps include:

- Developing a standardized ethics curriculum aligned with **Nigerian Army Core Values**.
- Training instructors in facilitative and scenario-based teaching methods.
- Establishing partnerships with international military academies for curriculum exchange.
- Integrating digital tools (e.g., simulation software) for ethics training.

Table 1: Sample Ethics Curriculum Structure

Level	Course Title	Key Topics	Instructional Method
Year 1	Introduction to Military Ethics	Values, integrity, chain of command	Case studies, lectures
Year 2	Ethics in Operations	ROE, civilian protection, reporting	Simulations, guest speakers
Year 3	Leadership & Ethics	Ethical leadership, mentoring, accountability	Role-play, group projects
Year 4	Advanced Ethical Decision-Making	Multinational ops, crisis ethics, moral injury	Capstone projects, debates

IV. Discussion

Ethics education is a force multiplier. It enhances unit cohesion, mission legitimacy, and public trust (Wallace, 2008). In multicultural and joint force environments—common in peacekeeping operations—shared ethical frameworks facilitate cooperation and reduce friction (Emonet, 2018). The proposed model also addresses **civil-military relations** by promoting soldiers as ethical ambassadors of the state, which is critical in democratic societies.

V. Conclusion

The Military College Model presented here provides a structured, phased approach to instilling ethics and discipline in military personnel. By adopting the STEP framework, military academies can produce leaders who are not only tactically proficient but also morally grounded. Future research should evaluate the model's impact on misconduct rates, decision-making in the field, and long-term career outcomes.

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