Military Education Reconsidered: A Postmodern Update

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It is commonly accepted that the nature of military operations is one of such character that no matter how well you prepare there will still be an expectation of having to deal with the unknown and unforeseen. Accordingly, there seem to be reasons for arguing that preparations for the unpredictable should play a critical role in military education. Yet, military education as we know it seems to be characterized by a rather classic modernist view on education, which promotes an environment of learning that embraces uniformity and enhances scenario based pre-planned drills as ways of conducting military operations.

*In this paper I will argue an alternative perspective, one that embraces difference rather than uniformity as a means of developing military units and their soldiers. In doing so I will ground my argument in the academic discourse on postmodern education. It is my understanding that educational practices prone to postmodern thinking are embedded in narratives sensitive to **constructivism, complexity** and **contextualism**, and thus use **emancipation, deconstruction, vocabulary, dialogue, diversity** and **aesthetics** as pedagogical strategies in their creation of 'new' meaning. A discussion of these strategies in relation to the topic of 'the unpredictable' constitutes the main body of this paper.*

INTRODUCTION

There is a broad consensus among both military leaders and scholars that the nature of military operations is one of such character that no matter how well you prepare there will still be an expectation of having to deal with that which is considered to be both unknown and unforeseen (Clausewitz *et al.*, 1984). Thus, there seems to be good reason for arguing that preparation for the unpredictable should play a pivotal role in military education.

Military education as we *traditionally* know it from our military academies and boot-camps seems, however, to be characterised by a rather classic modernist view on education rooted in **universalism**, **structure** and **objectivity** (BUF, 2012; Emilyo.eu, 2014a, 2014b), and it aims at

fostering a sense of shared identity (Chenoweth and Nihart, 2005; Edström *et al.*, 2010; Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College, 2007; Paile, 2010). The educational impact is that of promoting an environment of learning that embraces uniformity and enhances scenario-based pre-planned drills as ways of conducting military operations (Eriksen, 2011; Higate, 2003; Rones, 2015; Schaub Jr. *et al.*, 2013). This is not to say that all military education is alike and that there are no traces of alternatives, of which I am sure there are. Rather my perception is that these alternatives are mainly seen as being interpreted within the same modernist framework of education, thus there is little, if any, theorisation on how educational alternatives can be seen as a shift towards a different educational paradigm altogether.

Consequently, it seems plausible, even appropriate, to question the conventional educational paradigm in military education, and to argue an alternative perspective; one that embraces *difference* rather than *uniformity* as a means of preparing military units and their soldiers for the unknown and unforeseeable. In doing so I will ground my argument in the academic discourse on postmodern education (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991; Løvlie *et al.*, 2003; Parker, 1997; Pritscher, 2010; Usher and Edwards, 1994). It is my understanding that educational practices prone to postmodern thinking are embedded in narratives sensitive to **constructivism, complexity** and **contextualism**, and thus use **emancipation, deconstruction, vocabulary, dialogue, diversity** and **aesthetics** as kinds of pedagogical 'strategies' in their creation of 'new' meaning.[1] Discussion of these strategies as a pedagogical grip in military education to prepare soldiers and their units for tackling 'the unpredictable' is the subject of this article. Thus, to be clear, what I argue is not a change in military education as such, but rather to theorise a turn from modern towards postmodern (military) education—a turn which I believe there to already be traces of in military education.

SIX POSTMODERN PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

Before I take on what I have labeled as being *postmodern pedagogical strategies*, let us briefly look at the use of both 'postmodern' and 'strategy' in this context. To clarify the term postmodern is a challenging and almost contradictory task, for as Usher and Edwards explain:

> '. . . the term "postmodernism" notwithstanding, is not really a "system" of ideas and concepts in any conventional sense. Rather it is complex and multiform and resists reductive and simplistic explanation and explication' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 1).

This withstanding, the term postmodern is used in this article as an expression of an alternative understanding/mindset/practice to that which we understand as representing the traditional. In this respect I follow Løvlie who argues for the use of 'postmodernism' as an index term for 'a different position which in fact makes difference itself its point of view' (Løvlie, 1992, p. 120). Or as Usher and Edwards, inspired by Couzens Hoy (Hoy, 1988), describe it: 'In postmodernity, it is complexity, a myriad of meanings,

rather than profundity, the one deep meaning, which is the norm' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 10).

As such, the postmodern describes a world in continuous change where existing knowledge is under constant pressure and meaning 'floats'.

Postmodernity, then describes a world where people have to make their way without fixed referents and traditional anchoring points. It is a world of rapid change, of bewildering instability, where knowledge is constantly changing and meaning 'floats' without its traditional teleological fixing in foundational knowledge and the belief in inevitable human progress (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 10).

Accordingly, to establish a postmodern perspective as an educational framework for preparing and enabling individuals and groups to deal with the unpredictable seems to be both relevant and potentially fruitful.

Likewise, the term 'strategies' is chosen to communicate my intention of addressing something of a more comprehensive and profound order than pedagogy and education being simply the instrumental means and act of acquiring a skill or competence. For as stated in the Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine of 2007:

> 'Today's complex operations can never be fully covered by manuals and rules of engagement. Our ability to fulfill our tasks depends rather on individuals whose judgment is well developed and mature' (Norwegian Defence Command and Staff College, 2007, para. 0614).

This suggests that the role of military education in developing future soldiers is one of cultivating judgement: with the aim of fostering the ability to deconstruct and recreate meaning, where it is needed, with the means that are available, with the purpose of solving the tasks and challenges they are faced with at any time—predictable or not.

Hence, my intention is to address military education as the *cultivation of judgement* rather than as a sort of mechanical habituation of 'skills and drills', thus, conveying to the Aristotelian tradition of philosophy of education (Macallister, 2015; MacIntyre and Dunne, 2002). In this way, the term 'strategy' indicates a pedagogical approach that is more of cultivation than planning. Thus, the use of 'strategy' is an effort to convey the Greek meaning of *stratēgia* as 'generalship' or the 'Art of the General', as in 'the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfill the ends of policy' (Liddell Hart, 1991, p. 321), rather than operational or tactical ends. Consequently, the use of the term 'strategy' in relation to pedagogy should be read as the labeling of a process of (military) maturation that (hopefully) nurtures sound and qualitative judgement, which ultimately enables soldiers and officers to fulfill the ends of policy put on them.

More so, the plural form 'strategies' is meant to acknowledge and communicate that there is more than one way of cultivating one's judgement, though as a set of different pathways which seen/put together are related and in essence make up a kind of pedagogical philosophy for the cultivation of a kind of individual judgement prone to dealing with the unpredictable.

In essence, the term 'strategy' is used in this paper to convey the process of applying the deeper pedagogical understanding as a means needed to challenge knowledge, skills and competence on the level of mindset to develop individuals whose judgement is well developed and mature. This contrasts with a more modernist confined understanding of pedagogy as dealing with the theory of best practice teaching (which I would label the strategy of didactics).

In the following sections of this article I will use the aforementioned postmodern pedagogical strategies (emancipation, deconstruction, vocabulary, dialogue, diversity and aesthetics) to demonstrate how a postmodern view can influence education (as we traditionally know it), thereby paving the way to prepare military units and their soldiers to deal with the unpredictable. My purpose is not so much to give an exhaustive discussion of the account of these strategies, as it is to open up the way to a postmodern re-conceptualisation of military education by showing the different ways this might take place.

EMANCIPATION—LIBERATION FROM THAT WHICH IS TAKEN FOR GRANTED

The first postmodern pedagogical strategy I would like to put forward is *emancipation*. Emancipation is referred to here as the process of freeing oneself from previous mindsets, habits, tradition and such. Conrad P. Pritscher, in his book *Einstein & Zen—Learning to Learn* argues that a main part of Einstein's genius was his ability to meet confusion by freeing himself through curiosity and open inquiry.

His confusion led to his wonder, which in turn led to his curiosity, which again led to his open inquiry, and on to discoveries that were previously unimagined (Pritscher, 2010, p. 33).

Thus, to emancipate oneself means, in the context of this paper, to free oneself from previous understandings by the cultivation of judgement, to meet the unpredictable and unforeseen with openness and curiosity.

That said, emancipation as a pedagogical grip in military education does not come without a challenge. As mentioned in the introduction, military education is prone to fostering a sense of shared identity, and its organisational bureaucratic structure is essentially developed and well-preserved in order to keep every part of the organisation in line and on course.

Nevertheless, emancipation as a postmodern pedagogical strategy represents a possibility to liberate oneself from those opinions, choices of action, procedures, routines etc. that we are accustomed to, often as a result of previous training and experience. The postmodern as a revolt with the modern is thus an expression of emancipation from that which we see as modernity's commonly accepted 'truths'. Accordingly, it is the 'grand narrative' of modernity, like universal truth based on technical rationalism (and hence a form of unity thinking), from which one seeks liberation. A relevant example from the educational domain is the notion of the 'factory-school' built on the characteristic structures of modernity; namely, hierarchical bureaucracies, standardisation, economic efficiency and the mass market,

with the assembly line as a particularly relevant metaphor of an educational delivery system, where teachers become operators in educational factories (Carr and Kemmis, 1986, p. 16). As Stuart Parker puts it: 'Knowledge—of whatever kind—is seen as a commodity to be packaged, and transmitted or sold to others' (Parker, 1997, p. 15). Viewing the concept of education through the assembly line metaphor leads to an understanding of knowledge as something to be passed on in ('factories') schools—split up into studies, modules, subjects, lessons, facts and formulas, and consequently taught in a systematic step-by-step manner. In other words, good 'products' of the 'factory-school' are students filled with the 'correct' knowledge, which indicates the ability to assimilate the teachers' systematic step-by-step delivery of cumulative 'facts'.

According to Parker, this underpins the vision of teaching as being 'simply the technical mastery of a set of discrete procedures, achievement of which is readily manifested as a corresponding set of discrete behaviours' (Parker, 1997, p. 15), and 'that the techniques by which the problems of teaching are to be solved are universally applicable to any teaching and learning context: to any child, by any teacher, in any school whatsoever' (Parker, 1997, p. 15).

So, from a postmodern view of education, emancipation as a pedagogical strategy argues the need to break away from the narratives and arguments within the modern paradigm of what we perceive as being (a) good education. Likewise, applying a postmodern military educational perspective implies that military educations need to be liberated from those belief systems that have traditionally governed their educational programmes—bearing in mind that the 'old' educational programs were designed to develop soldiers for the past future. The postmodern deals with that of the present and future; the unknown and unpredictable resides in that of the future.

Foundational for military education is the task of developing competent soldiers in order to form military units that are relevant and capable of carrying out a state or nation's political intent by utility of violence (Weber, 1965). Thus, emancipation as a pedagogical strategy in military education is all about freeing the military student/learner from traditional views on the use of military force. Applied to a class on defence and security issues, it is about freeing learners from traditional notions of what constitutes a real threat to society. For instance, to be able to meet the kind of terrorism witnessed over the last decade or so, one needed to liberate oneself from a Cold War understanding/mindset where societal security was intrinsically linked to a possible invasion from a foreign sovereign state.

Thus, for the military, emancipation from what is taken for granted is about the ability to liberate its operational concepts from traditional thinking and by doing so open up for new operational paradigms. An apt example of this is the military transformation of Western democracies in the late 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium, when we saw a shift from large static conscripted invasion defence forces toward much smaller flexible professional expeditionary forces with the ability 'to deliver operational capability where and when the need arises, with capacities best suited to the current situation' (Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 2004, p. 12) (Moskos

et al., 2000; Shields, 2011; Sookermany, 2011a). More so, on a practical level, emancipation as a pedagogical strategy is about cultivating soldiers' judgement to enable them to free themselves and their units from predetermined mindsets and habits, in such a way that they can adapt their means and actions to the situational challenges they face. A relevant example is the 22 July Commission's[2] basic criticism of the police efforts in connection with the terrorist attacks against the Norwegian Government Complex and Utøya Island on 22 July 2011. Several times in their report the Commission highlights that the challenge of preventing similar attacks in the future has more to do with attitudes, culture and leadership than resources and plans; although both are important (NOU, 2012, pp.14, 15, 451, 456).

> 'Still, the Commission's view is that the structural organisational challenges are less important than the challenges associated with attitudes, culture and leadership. We have seen few examples of formal organisation being a limiting factor. We have seen many examples where management has not utilised the potential of their own organisation' (NOU, 2012, pp. 14, 456, author's translation).

Attitudes, culture and leadership are closely related to mindset, habit and tradition. To be able to change in this domain implies the cultivation of judgement, as opposed to obediently following the guidance of manuals and rules, to free oneself from previous understandings. Thus, for military education to be a driver in developing soldiers who possess the kind of maturity that enables them to deal with the unpredictable we need educators who are willing to use emancipation as a pedagogical strategy.

DECONSTRUCTION—THE ART OF DEVELOPING REFLECTIVE SOLDIERS

The second postmodern pedagogical strategy is *deconstruction*. From a postmodern perspective, deconstruction is about how we humans challenge the understanding of a concept through textual breakdown/decomposition of its content of meaning (Derrida, 1997; Pritscher, 2010; Silverman, 1989). The purpose of (postmodern) deconstruction is to show that what we believe to be the centre of the concept is, in reality, a constructed centre that we accept to be 'true'. Words, concepts, ideas and such are all full of meaning and understanding, intended and un-intended. The postmodern insight is that there is 'no limit to ways in which texts can be read and therefore no 'end' to the meanings of a text' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 127). Hence, there will exist other 'centres of truth' (epistemological foundations) that are equally or even more suited for our praxis—we just don't see them because of our lack of critical approach to their horizon of understanding.

From such a postmodern perspective, Usher and Edwards argue that education has to hold both critical scepticism and a suitable degree of uncertainty, while at the same time uphold an attentiveness towards a careful deconstruction of theorisations and discourses within which educational practice is situated (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 31). For, as they say: 'To be located in the postmodern is precisely to question all-encompassing

perspectives' (p. 28). As such, the postmodern pedagogical project aims to deconstruct modernity's 'grand narrative' and to develop human beings capable of doing just that. Accordingly, the ambition of postmodern education is to educate what Parker calls: 'a cultivated, literate, and ironic human being; a citizen of postmodernity' (Parker, 1997, p. 152).

Cultivating such an individual is by no means an easy task within any culture that takes pride in its uniform approach to problem-solving, as the military mainly do. Still, applied to military education and the wish to prepare soldiers for the unpredictable we can deduce from postmodern thinking that the purpose of military education should be to cultivate soldiers with the reflective ability to be critical of whatever is presented in any given situation.

Thus, we can assert that military education should be built on epistemologies that cultivate critical and reflective thinking in the soldier; because soldiers need to learn to question the world and reality as it is presented, especially that which is taken for granted (Paparone and Reed, 2008, p. 70). John Boyd, the originator of the OODA-loop (observe-orient-decide-act), put emphasis on mental patterns or concepts of meaning to be able to cope with our environment (Boyd, 1976). In an article entitled 'Destruction and Creation', Boyd argues that in the face of uncertainty one has to continuously be able to take apart the mental concepts we build our understanding on just to look for new ways of putting the pieces back into new concepts better suited for solving the challenge at hand (Boyd, 1976). In fact, this Boydian way of dealing with uncertainty is pretty much in tune with the way in which Parker portrays how we should grasp postmodern education:

> 'Out of deconstruction comes the fashioning of style; from textual incisions and dismemberment comes the building of communal identity. The process from destruction to creation is the education of postmodernity' (Parker, 1997, p. 159).

So, in relation to military education there are at least two foundational aspects in need of questioning, or more precisely deconstructing, in order to make, or should I say create, education as a process that prepares soldiers for the unpredictable. Firstly, it is not only important, but also required to educate military students in the art of questioning the meaning, knowledge, facts and narratives etc. that portray or even define the *principles of war*—as in the utility of military force. For as John I. Alger describes it, the formulation of 'the principles of war' covers the most foundational precondition of what it is that influences military conduct and the outcome of war (Alger, 1982). But more interestingly, he describes these principles as a set of intuitively accepted assumptions that are rarely questioned.

> 'Where did the principles come from? Whose principles are they? What, if any, is their value? Such questions have been rarely asked, and when they have been asked, the conclusions have been shallow, misleading, and in many cases incorrect. Perhaps the principles have been so convincingly presented in the primers of the military profession that they become intuitively accepted by all who deal with military theory' (Alger, 1982, p. xix).

Table 1. A schematic presentation of military education seen from a modernist perspective

	Education	Training	Conduct
Context	School	Garrison	Operational theatre
Epistemology/ View of Knowledge	Knowing that and why Context-free theory	Technical know-how Context-free practice	Knowing how and who Contextual conduct
Learning Perspective	Learning about doing	Learning by doing	Learning in doing

Secondly, there is a need to challenge the traditional perception of the concept of *military education* in itself. Hence, deconstructing the very essence of the educational principles guiding (military) education. Historically, military education as we know it has obviously been influenced by the principles of war, which have guided the development of modern military institutions. The clear conceptual division of *education*, *training* and *conduct* is a relevant and illuminating example in this respect. As shown in Table 1, the three domains (education, training and conduct) all hold their own concept of meaning in connection to a defined context with related epistemology and perspective of learning. In reality, the separation has not been absolute, but conceptually it is the way it has been portrayed, and largely how it has been used and seen pedagogically.

It is my belief that by applying a postmodern view to education this will change dramatically. Because learning in the postmodern implies a continuous change of behaviour of adaptive character (Sookermany, 2012). In this way, military learning seen from a postmodern viewpoint takes place as a continuous adaptation to the environment's inference towards one's own existence in the same environment, with the consequence that military learning (the adaptation of what, why, who and how (Lundvall, 1996)) is something that cannot be separated from other parts of life: it happens all the time, in all and any contexts (e.g. school, garrison, operational theatre). Thus, there are no clear-cut separations of doing, learning or knowledge; rather they are different entities of any human conduct/behaviour. All conduct is doing—of something. Thus, knowledge (what, why, who or how) is always situated, liquid and integrated. More so, learning cannot be reduced to something one-dimensional, it is by nature plural, it addresses all our senses, thus, learning is always about, by and in doing, in whatever context we are situated in. There are just different occasions/contexts that provide different stimuli for learning. Accordingly, military education should be seen more as a part of the total learning that takes place as a consequence of participation in a diverse set of (military) situations, rather than as a résumé of which military schools and courses have been undertaken. An interesting case, in this respect, is how the Norwegian Police University College gives full academic credits at bachelor level for one year of (supervised) service in the field (Politihøgskolen, 2015).

Accordingly, from a postmodern view one will understand military conduct, its principles of war, context, view of knowledge and different perspectives of learning as different layers of the same phenomenon (see Figure 1).
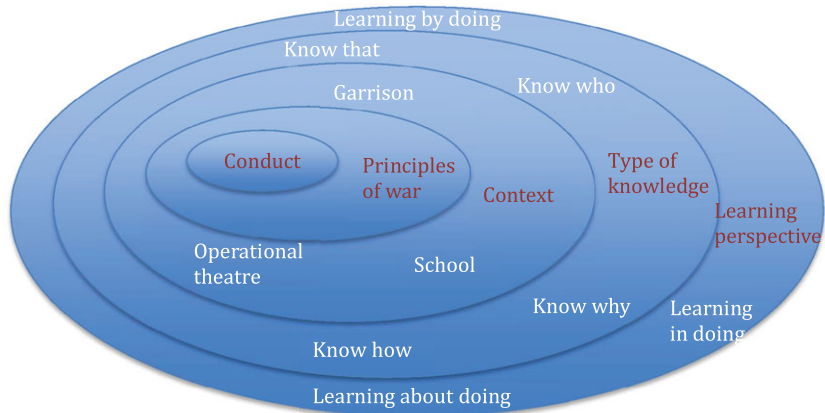
Figure 1: A metaphorical overview of the understanding of military education presented in a postmodern perspective.

Summarised one could say that the role of deconstruction is to make visible the nuances and differences of military paradigms and practice so as to facilitate the development and maturation of reflective soldiers. However, to be able to deconstruct meaning one needs to have a vocabulary and a language that is able to communicate a different and nuanced meaning of the phenomenon in question.

VOCABULARY AND LANGUAGE—TOOLS FOR DECONSTRUCTING MEANING

This brings me to the third postmodern pedagogical strategy: *vocabulary and language*. Within the postmodern perspective there is a strong belief that the way we think and speak is a major influence on the way we do or act, and vice versa. As Aronowitz and Giroux argue: 'theory in some instances directly informs practice, while in others practice restructures theory as a primary force for change' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 92). Likewise, Parker points out that language and dialogue have a narrative affiliation to a given context (Parker, 1997, p. 155). This notion also finds resonance within military discourse, as Johann Sommerville asserts:

> '[H]ow war is fought depends, at least in part, on the concepts of war held by those who participate in it: "the idea of war itself is a major factor in the way in which it is waged"' (Sommerville, 1988, p. 21).

The meaningfulness of this as a pedagogical strategy is that 'vocabulary and language' are the tools for deconstructing meaning. Thus, language within postmodern learning is seen as both a resource and a barrier for developing new knowledge and skills. As a tool, language holds the opportunity to deconstruct and reconstruct/create new and different narratives or meaning. Or as Parker explains:

> 'In contrast to traditionally passive, discovery/acquisition models of learning, in which the learner comes to know the text, postmodern learning involves coming to control the text, to be able to dismantle its rhetorical structure and refashion its themes to a new, preferred purpose' (Parker, 1997, p. 148).

Consequently, a military education grounded in a postmodern view will seek to refine its language so as to discover and exploit new meaning in developing soldiers and units that are able to deal with the dynamic challenges they face in the operational theatres around the globe.

Høiback touches upon this matter in his PhD. thesis *On the Justification of Military Doctrine: Past, Present and Future*, when debating the role of culture as practice and discourses (Høiback, 2010, pp. 150–156). He argues for a 'reciprocity between the scholars' discourse and the discourse in the field'. More specifically he advocates that: 'Words and concepts used by doctrine writers ought to develop words and concepts used by the practitioners in the field, and vice versa' (Høiback, 2010, p. 152). An apt example of how this can go wrong is provided by Thomas E. Ricks in his analysis of the first three years of the American invasion and occupation of Iraq:

> '[T]he cause of the turmoil among the troops [in Iraq] wasn't the quality of the commanders, but rather the disconnect between what the Army was designed to do and what it actually found itself doing. "I would say that the U.S. Army, ninety percent, was not structured for success", he [Lt. Col. Christopher Holschek] said later. "We've got a military designed to fight big wars, and it's constantly fighting small wars"' (Ricks, 2006, p. 310).

'Big Wars' and 'Small Wars' are both labels that communicate certain dimensions of how to apply military skills in an operational theatre. To some extent they are intuitively meaningful for anyone. The labels obviously convey something to do with the conduct of wars, yet they differ in that the first deals with wars of some magnitude whilst the latter is responsive to wars that are in some sense constrained. As such, they possess conceptual meaning. But even so, a meaningful and nuanced use of the terminology is still far from self-evident because they say nothing about their origin or which paradigm they belong to: how do they relate to other concepts, perspectives and dichotomies, such as attrition vs. maneuver warfare (Luttwak, 1980), peace enforcement vs. counter-insurgency operations (Mockaitis, 1999), old wars vs. new wars (Kaldor, 2006), symmetric vs. asymmetric wars (Caforio, 2009), invasion defences vs. expeditionary forces (Sookermany, 2013), or modern vs. postmodern armed forces (Moskos *et al.*, 2000; Sookermany, 2015)?

A military education grounded in a postmodern view would aggressively attack (with words) and deconstruct these types of labels (texts) with the intent of reaching a greater understanding of, for instance, the mechanisms of military force. Therefore, vocabulary and language become relevant both as way of communicating meaning and as a tool for deconstructing meaning. Using vocabulary and language as a pedagogical strategy will

give the military students/learners the possibility and, hopefully, the ability to view and communicate a situation from different angles/perspectives; and in this way, help develop and mature soldiers' judgement in a way that should make them and their units better equipped to conceptually tackle the unpredictable and unforeseen.

DIALOGUE, NARRATIVES AND METAPHORS—GRINDING STONES FOR ONE'S OWN JUDGEMENT

The fourth postmodern pedagogical strategy is *dialogue, narratives and metaphors*. To be able to grasp the known and unknown in everyday life we use a variety of communicative tools that have in common being bearers of meaning. Parker argues that the only guide to where we go right or wrong is through conversation with fellow human beings, thus we should honour the setting of our conversation (Parker, 1997, p. 155). More so, taking part in a conversation – to dig deeper and wider in a search for more adequate description, understanding or explanation – consequently means that we look for something that can unlock hidden knowledge. In doing so, we usually lack the precise language, so we use the words we do have in a narrative fashion to describe the phenomenon as best as we can. In this way, we provide meaning by contrasting, resembling, differencing, interpreting, illustrating and so on. Paraphrasing Lakoff, Pritscher explains that: 'meaning is found within frames, narratives, and metaphors', and that: '[d]ifferent frames give different meaning to narratives and metaphors' (Pritscher, 2010, p. 18).

From a military point of view Høiback hits the mark when he argues that: 'perhaps the best doctrines are those that are presented within a greater story. "Thick" stories that give necessary details for casuistry' (Høiback, 2010, p. 166). His argument is that: '[i]nstead of providing rules, principles, and imperatives, a doctrine can present particular cases that the military decision makers can use as a grinding stone or a springboard for their own judgment' (p. 164). And he adds that: '[i]n fact, with a closer look, many of the most distinguished generals of our own time turn out, in fact, to be great storytellers' (p. 166).

An apt and influential example of this in modern military discourse, which is highly relevant to dealing with the unpredictable, is US Marine Corps General Charles C. Krulak and his narrative and phrasing of the 'Strategic Corporal' metaphor (Krulak, 1999). Krulak's fictitious narrative, written as an operational report published in the *Marine Corps Gazette*, displays how corporals, like generals, need to be prepared (matured) to be able to assess and make decisions with the potential of having strategic impact. Likewise, though in a real-life setting, US Army General David H. Petraeus, when serving as 'Multi-National Force-Iraq Commander', fielded a counter-insurgency guidance consisting of 25 bullet points (Petraeus, 2008). Interestingly the guidance is free from objective, instrumental and technical step-by-step *jargon*. Rather it is written in the narrative, in a personal and contextual manner, recognising the complexity of the task and calling for the individual soldiers' emotional involvement in the mission. It

states the vision/mission, but leaves the responsibility and specifics of the task solving to those who are to do the work. In fact, the 22nd bullet point 'Exercise Initiative' underscores this notion and can serve as an example of the matter:

> 'In the absence of guidance or orders, determine what they should be and execute aggressively. Higher level leaders will provide a broad vision and paint "white lines on the road", but it will be up to those at tactical levels to turn "big ideas" into specific actions' (Petraeus, 2008, p. 4).

More so, in the discussion part of his paper Krulak in essence highlights the maturation of individual judgement as one of three major steps towards the development of the Strategic Corporal:

> 'The common thread uniting all training activities is an emphasis on the growth of integrity, courage, initiative, decisiveness, mental agility, and personal accountability. These qualities and attributes are fundamental and must be aggressively cultivated within all Marines from the first day of their enlistment to the last' (Krulak, 1999).

This is echoed in the 2006 Joint Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual that was catalyzed by Petraeus and Marine Corps General James F. Amos (Petraeus and Amos, 2006). In their foreword the two generals conclude that '[c]onducting a successful counterinsurgency campaign requires a flexible, adaptive force led by agile, well-informed, culturally astute leaders' (Petraeus and Amos, 2006).

Within such a framework we can assert that the role of military education (in preparing for the unpredictable) is to create opportunities of self-creation for military students and learners, by providing an arena for dialogue, narratives and metaphors, to (aggressively) cultivate individuals whose judgement is developed and matured in a way that makes them agile, well-informed and culturally astute. It is important to emphasise here that self-creation is not to be seen as an individual endeavour detached from the military context; quite the contrary. As Usher and Edwards state:

> 'In the postmodern, the claim is not that there are no norms but that they are not to be found in foundations. They have to be struggled over, and in this struggle, everyone must assume a personal responsibility' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 27).

Involved participation within a community of practice based on dialogue, sharing of narratives and looking for relevant metaphors is the personal struggle that will develop and mature one's (military) professional judgement, and, in a military context, engage soldiers to meet the unpredictable with openness and inquiry rather than rules and regulation. Therefore, in educational settings the educator plays a pivotal role. It is s/he who sets the frame by which the narratives and metaphors are aligned. A relevant example here is the pedagogue's (educator/instructor) relationship to a curriculum. A scheduled curriculum that only makes room for mainstream

knowledge could, in this context, be seen as an expression of that which Aronowitz and Giroux (1991, p. 52) call 'textual authority from the pedagogue'. The pedagogue attempts to define the 'truth' by setting up a course/syllabus in a way that is not substantially open to dialogue, narratives and metaphors that would constitute a necessary critique of the 'truth'—from either the educator or students. In consequence, students and learners are stripped of the opportunity to take personal responsibility for challenging that which is taken for granted. Rather, the pedagogue should use these and alternative ideas as grinding stones for students to offer their own interpretations of what is not only taken for granted, but also seen as mainstream.

Consequently, military education, schools and students should no longer be evaluated solely on their ability to meet predefined standards of how well they achieve correct judgement. Rather, being well-developed and mature, in relation to judgement, points to the ability to identify and understand the consequences of *difference* in a situation, and accept that they lead to different actions or conduct. Hence, being able to tackle the unpredictable means one needs to be sensitive to the unknown. The unknown is not to be found in rules and regulations, thus, it calls for a judgement that is open to its possibilities. Within postmodern education, difference and plurality are not only goals but should also be seen as a pedagogical strategy in themselves.

DIVERSITY—EDUCATING DIFFERENCE AND PLURALITY

The fifth postmodern pedagogical strategy is *diversity,* which is understood here as the open play of difference and plurality. As a pedagogical strategy it is closely connected with the struggle for theoretical difference and plurality over uniformity and sameness and, therefore, in educational practice with the willingness to look for other understandings, perspectives and ways of doing. Or as Uljens argues: 'Accepting theoretical pluralism changes the nature of the dialogue: it requires from the participants even greater sensitivity to alternative views' (Uljens, 2003, p. 43). In the face of the unpredictable there is both a substantial lack of sameness and a striking sense of difference.

Still, in modern society difference is not necessarily seen as something good. In many ways it is connected to structures of power, like hierarchy and bureaucracy. Meaning that there is a notion of something being of higher value and, likewise, something of lesser value. As such, what is of higher value becomes hegemonically more valuable, and as we strive for the higher value we shy away from the lesser value. This results in an institutionalisation of striving for that which is of higher value. Hence, in modernity the higher value is connected to striving for progress by rationalisation. Ritzer, for one, argues that this is gained through efficiency of optimisation where calculability (more is better) equals quality, and establishing predictability through standardisation elevates sameness as the standard, which in turn is manufactured, managed and manifested by systems of control to eliminate uncertainty (Ritzer, 2015). So, willingly or unwillingly, we strive and struggle for the same, and hence, become more

alike (Kovitz, 2003). However, in the process, we intentionally and unintentionally degrade the value of difference and plurality. This process could be seen as a process of mainstreaming.

On the other hand, diversity as a pedagogical strategy challenges this chain of rationalisation or mainstreaming by questioning its value. For, as Aronowitz and Giroux state:

> '...pedagogy needs to address the important question of how representations and practices that name, marginalise, and define difference as the devalued Other are actively learned, interiorised, challenged, or transformed' (Aronowitz and Giroux, 1991, p. 128).

Difference and plurality are perhaps one of the biggest challenges for educational practice in our time, and probably even more so for uniformed cultures like the military. If we look at the national educational systems within Western developed countries we will find a clearly standardised organisational structure that is internationally comparable. This is a classic story of modern mainstreaming, which today is manifested through international agreements like the Bologna Declaration (Bologna Process, 2014), the European Qualification Framework for Lifelong Learning (European Commission, 2015) and evaluations such as the PISA (OECD, 2014) and TIMSS & PIRLS (TIMSS & PIRLS International Study Center, 2014). As such, it is grounded in the foundation of modernity (universalism, structure and objectivity) rather than based on a postmodern view (contextualism, complexity and constructivism).

A postmodern education recognises that there are a multitude of tasks and abilities that are to be applied in an indefinite number of situations, and that the acquisition of (contextual) skills needs to be followed by a multitude of different ways of learning and teaching. Thus, Parker argues: '[a]lternative interpretations of the practices and dialogues of education will exist side by side without institutional or meta-theoretical pressure to become commensurate' (Parker, 1997, p. 150).

Consequently, plurality means that there should be a vast range of diverse sets of educational practices, in and out of school or praxis, experience based or not, formal or informal, general and specialised etc. In the words of Usher and Edwards: 'there is no uniform, unified postmodern discourse of education' (Usher and Edwards, 1994, p. 25). For as Zygmunt Bauman conveys: 'Difference is the seed corn of creativity, homogeneity is the recipe of stagnation' (Åmås, 2011, pp. 12–13, *author's translation)*. Thus Parker seems to be spot on when stating that:

> 'What is reproduced in postmodernity is dynamism rather than stasis; a future intended to be different from the present rather than identical with it; a progressive rather than a conservative reproduction; one for which sameness would be failure' (Parker, 1997, p. 151).

This of course is no easy challenge for an organisation that institutionally is totally embedded in modernity—as the military are. Empirical traces of an organisational environment that values uniformity and sameness over

difference and plurality are found in a wide range of academic literature over the last decade or so dealing with the military in the post-Cold war era (e.g. Ender, 2009; Hajjar and Ender, 2005; Rones, 2015; Wong, 2002).

However, the political and operational demands and experience from the last decade or so still work in its favour (Haaland, 2008; Norwegian Ministry of Defence, 1999, 2013; Petraeus, 2008; Petraeus and Amos, 2006; Ricks, 2009). As described earlier, the new narratives from the new (postmodern) leaders or leading figures within the armed forces community show a much more diverse and plural play of styles than the formal education should predict. Herein lies the seed for a truly postmodern educational culture within the military. Or as Parker argues:

> 'A significant indicator of a postmodern educational culture will be its eagerness to institutionalise the open play of styles, the trace of *différance* which would inhabit its key dialogues' (Parker, 1997, p. 150).

Consequently, developing a postmodern military educational culture means not only to give way to these different styles, but to actively accept and organise learning and education so that different styles emerge and pave the way for critical debates which have the potential of maturation. To be fruitful the different styles/schools need, as Høiback points out, to 'be detailed enough to offer sufficient similarities and dissimilarities' (Høiback, 2010, p. 165), or as Biesta argues: '[t]he crucial point, in other words, is to *show* that things can be different' (Biesta, 2003, p. 73).

As stated in the introduction to this paper, I have argued that military education is oriented toward developing a shared or common identity, which in the military world is interlocked with the concept of uniformity and, therefore, elevates sameness over difference as a value of higher order. In this way, it is built on a classic and traditional view of identity meaning identical or becoming the same.

> 'The root of the word 'identity' is the Latin *idem* (same) from which we also get 'identical'. One important meaning of the term, then, rests on the idea that not only are we identical with ourselves (that is, the same being from birth to death) but we are identical with others' (Lawler, 2008, p. 2).

But, there is a different way of understanding identity, one that not only values *sameness*, but also puts emphasis on that which is *different* from others. As Woodward argues:

> '[I]dentity gives us an idea of who we are and of how we relate to others and to the world in which we live. Identity marks the ways in which we are the *same* as others who share that position, and the ways in which we are *different* from those who do not' (Woodward, 1997, pp. 1–2).

In the postmodern, education is *to become* by inquiry and identification with someone and/or something (a cause, ideology, religion, community etc.). In this personal struggle one becomes both uniformed and different at

the same time. The key to this process, seen from a pedagogical viewpoint, is therefore to facilitate an open and personal inquiry that challenges the borders of tradition and sameness by actively playing with difference and plurality. It is this playful struggle that is the basis of the postmodern cultivation of judgement, which in turn will provide soldiers with alternative frames for dealing with the unpredictable.

AESTHETICS—AN EXPRESSION OF THE COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE'S STYLE

The sixth (and in this paper the last) postmodern pedagogical strategy is *Aesthetics*—or style. Let me commence with a quote from Parker:

> 'Postmodern education nurtures communities who will create their own style, decide what they want to learn, what practices will characterise their schools, how their teachers will be educated, what standards their children will be judged by, what their literary setting will be' (Parker, 1997, p. 159).

Within this perspective the Military (with a capital M) can be understood as a *Community of Practice* (CoP), which means that it fosters a common or certain way of thinking, training and doing (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Sookermany, 2011b; Wenger, 1998). In relation to the military transformation it is precisely this overall (taken for granted) *commonality/certainty* that is under pressure for reconstruction (Fürst and Kümmel, 2011). During the invasion-defence era, focus was on the masses—every soldier (and unit) moulded to the same form, given the same preferences, implanted with the same values in order to solve assignments that were, presumably, alike within the same cultivated frame or mindset. An apt example is the self-definition of the US Marine Corps as 'One Big Regiment'.

> 'A Marine does not recruit into a particular regiment, is not trained by a particular regiment, and does not tend to stay in a particular regiment. Instead, he goes to a recruit depot, a 'boot camp', either at San Diego, California, or at Parris Island, South Carolina. There, under the stern discipline and guidance of highly skilled drill instructors, he or she is moulded into a Marine during a 12-week period. As well as more warlike skills, Marine recruits learn the history and traditions of the entire Marine Corps, not just of a single regiment' (Chenoweth and Nihart, 2005, p. 26).

The point here is that if you 'engage' a Marine, you know what you get. They have a way or style of doing things that trademarks their conduct. They are developed with and carry the same ethos. Their skill is being a Marine, not an infantryman, pilot or engineer. Their identity is embodied into what it is to be a Marine. As Marines they are alike, yet compared with others they are distinctively different. As such, the Marine Corps is one community of practice.

> 'It goes from bottom to top and top to bottom of the entire organisation; everyone wearing the Marine uniform possesses it. No

matter what the rank, no matter what the job, the same spirit prevails throughout—and for most it lasts a lifetime, remaining with as much vigor after service and into retirement as on active duty. "Once a Marine, always a Marine" is not an empty claim' (Chenoweth and Nihart, 2005, p. 16).

However, as stated on the NATO webpage in relation to the Committee on Gender Perspectives: 'Military operations in today's world require a diversity of qualifications and resources to ensure that peace and security are achieved and maintained' (NATO, 2010). More so, there is need for a diversity of specialised military sub-professions (CoPs). They, in turn, will consist of a variety of professional traditions and qualities fostered through specialised trade, education and contextual practice. Moreover, within a sub-profession the different players will in some way be marked by their specific educational path. Meaning that the same profession can have more than one educational system or style of performance/conduct depending on the players. As Parker explains:

'Each school, each classroom, is seen as unique by dint of its qualities, meanings and challenges. Consequently reflective teachers develop their practice through their own *action*-research performed in the actual context in which their teaching takes place, upon and with the specific population which it concerns' (Parker, 1997, p. 31).

In the postmodern, developing human beings and Communities of Practice is about allowing for exploration of the boundaries of what goes. Postmodernists do not constrain themselves by accepting the given as being true. Instead they look for new ways of understanding, new ways of manufacture, new ways for creating meaning, and in the process they create new standards.

Thus if you want to develop a soldier with the ability to take the initiative and act flexibly on an independent level, you will have to accept the growth of military Communities of Practice that are recognised by just those attributes: they become known for who they are, what they do and how they do it. Douglas A. Macgregor provides us with an apt example from the military transformation:

'It is unrealistic to expect that military leaders will demonstrate the requisite physical energy, mental agility, and moral courage in war to inspire subordinates to exercise initiative, to innovate, and to take risks if they have been discouraged from doing so throughout their military careers' (Macgregor, 2003, p. 208).

Consequently, to prepare students and learners for the unpredictable, the relevance of dealing with the unknown and unforeseen should be fostered as an integrated part of the military educational programme. More so, as a pedagogical strategy, aesthetics facilitates an arena for students/learners to critically investigate the boundaries of stylistics gesture. In the process they will gain awareness not only of who they are, what they do and how they do it, but more intriguingly why they do what they do in the way they

do it. Thus, in relation to the unpredictable, the understanding of aesthetics could provide students/learners with a deeper knowledge of what we see as cultural differences, such as the relation between style, mindset and conduct.

CONCLUSION

My intention with this article has been to offer a contribution to the discourse on military education: one that provides a philosophical background for an alternative pedagogical approach more suited to the educational challenges of preparing soldiers for the unpredictable.

In doing so I have utilised a postmodern outlook that embraces difference rather than sameness and is, therefore, sensitive to constructivism, complexity and contextualism, rather than universalism, structure and objectivity as a kind of epistemological 'foundation' for military cultivation.

Thus, to be clear, the contribution of this paper is not in suggesting a change in military education, which is already there, but rather to theorise this as a turn from a modern towards a postmodern (military) education.

Essentially, I have identified and elaborated on what I have termed six postmodern pedagogical 'strategies': emancipation, deconstruction, vocabulary, dialogue, diversity and aesthetics. The strategies are then used to facilitate a debate on how a postmodern view can influence the pedagogical framework for military education so as to develop and mature the cultivation of professional judgement, thereby paving the way to prepare military units and their soldiers to deal with the unpredictable.

That said, what could be held against this article is its breadth in scope. That an attempt to follow-up on six pedagogical 'strategies' is, in fact, five too many, with the consequence being that the paper lacks a more in-depth philosophical analysis of the 'strategies', including a more comprehensive critique of them. In its defence, I will argue that the article as it stands should provide enough details for casuistry so as to be used as a grinding stone for further debate. Thus, perhaps its true importance lies in its purpose of being a springboard for *further* development and/or theorisation of military education. As such, I believe a relevant and valuable step forward would be to utilise the framework put forward in this paper as a narrative background for a more narrowed focus to look into each of the different 'strategies' and enable a deeper and more careful argument.

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NOTES

1. The six 'pedagogical strategies' are also used in an article on gamechangers and the meaningfulness of difference in the sporting world. Here the 'strategies' make up a framework for debating six 'postmodern characteristics' of gamechangers (Sookermany, 2016).
2. The 22 July Commission was appointed by the Government in consultation with the Norwegian parliament (Storting) in the wake of the terrorist attacks against the Government Complex and Utøya

Island on 22 July 2011. The mandate of the commission has been to review and learn from the attacks (NOU, 2012, p. 14; 2012, p. 38).

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