

IN QUEST OF EFFECTIVE SOLDIERS' BASIC TRAINING SYSTEM FOR BANGLADESH ARMY IN LIGHT OF FUTURE BATTLEFIELD CHALLENGES

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“I know not with what weapons World War III will be fought, but World War IV will be fought with sticks and stones”

Albert Einstein

Introduction

Soldiering is considered to be one of the oldest profession in the world. It is not merely a profession; rather it is a way of life in which each individual is bestowed with the sacred responsibility of safeguarding the sovereignty of the nation. In that perspective, training is thought to be the best welfare in army profession. The term ‘Training’ refers to the acquisition of knowledge, skills, techniques and competencies to perform the assigned tasks. A soldier, in his entire military career, undergoes different kinds of training activities to increase his professional efficiency. But among all these training activities, the soldiers’ basic training in the respective arms and services’ centers is considered to be the most crucial phase of a soldier’s professional career.

The great challenges lie in the adoption of hardy and robust Army life for the young soldiers. With the modern life style, a good number of youths find difficulties in adjusting with the hardship of military training. Therefore, transforming and making the incoming lots a more professional, loyal and dedicated future soldiers’ is a challenging task. In short, creating an adaptable and flexible training environment focusing on the future battlefield scenario may prove to be a major challenge in the coming days. Militaries of South and South-East Asia are advancing fast in this regard to cope with the future challenges and BD Army without wasting time should also move towards modernizing its training system and curricula.

In today’s world of modern science and technology, everything changes very rapidly. The soldiers of today should be adaptable to the changes of strategy, tactics and technology. Today’s war accounts for more destruction and degradation of

human property than any of the previous wars. To meet such challenges in future, Bangladesh Army has already taken up significant steps to upgrade its soldier's basic training system. Besides, ARTDOC also organizes, supervises and monitors the soldiers' training to incorporate future training needs into the overall soldiers' training curricula. However, the present soldiers' basic training still has the scope to improve upon in the fields of physical and weapon training, character building and motivation programmes, adequate training infrastructural/facilities and quantity versus quality instructors to meet the future challenges.

Soldiers' basic training in this paper would mean the recruit training conducted either in the training centers or in special cases in the formations. The word recruits and future/young soldiers may also be used interchangeably in the paper. The paper would seek to identify lacunas of the existing soldiers' basic training system and knit those gaps between the present and the future training requirements by offering necessary modifications in the syllabus.

Characteristics of the Future Battlefield

General: Future battlefields are likely to be chaotic, intense, highly destructive and they will probably extend over wider areas. The important characteristics of future battlefields (CGS 2006, P.1-5) are:

- Short and Intense.
- High Lethality.
- Movement and Manoeuvre.
- Restricted Support.
- Unconventional Warfare and Terrorism.
- Joint Operations.
- Non-Linear Operations.
- Electronic Warfare.

The Third Wave-Information Warfare¹: The futuristic American writer Alvin and Heidi Toffler in their ground breaking books 'Future Shock' and 'The Third Wave' have identified how changes in human civilization have brought changes to war (Alvin and Heidi Toffler 1980). They have classified war into three waves and future wars will be within the third wave:

1. Info W- Information warfare (IW) is a concept involving the use and management of information and communication technology in pursuit of a competitive advantage over an opponent.

- **First Wave:** Agrarian age.
- **Second Wave:** Industrial age. Toffler writes, “The Second Wave Society is industrial and based on mass production, mass distribution, mass consumption, mass education, mass media, mass recreation, mass entertainment, and weapons of mass destruction (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2016)”.
- **Third Wave:** The Third Wave is the post-industrial society. Toffler says that since the late 1950s most countries have been transitioning from a Second Wave society into a Third Wave society. He coined many words to describe it and mentions names invented by others, such as the Information Age (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia 2016)”.

Blending Conventional, Unconventional and Nuclear Warfare: From the military stand point, the most appropriate classification is given by General Vladimir Slipchenko of Russian Army. According to him, there are total six generations of warfare and we are in the sixth Generation (Jacob 2012):

- 1st Generation Warfare consists of infantry and cavalry forces fighting without fire arms.
- 2nd Generation is characterized by gun powder and smooth bore fire arms.
- 3rd Generation is characterized by rifled bored weapon, tube artillery and increased rate of fire power.
- 4th Generation is the Conventional Warfare.
- 5th Generation is the Nuclear Warfare.
- 6th Generation is the Information Warfare.

In any future conflict, a combination of 4th, 5th and 6th generations is likely to be unified together to fight a war.

Mobile and Small Group Operations: It was as if a psychological revulsion from the experiences of 1914-18 that had created an obsession that large-scale battles must in future be avoided and that well-handled light mobile forces could win wars by out-manoeuvring the big masses of the enemy- in other words, that decisions on the battlefield could be gained by manoeuvre and expertise, thus avoiding the necessity of direct confrontation with large forces (Palit 1970, p.147). It is assumed that future wars will be dominated by highly mobile small group operations.

Human Element

The basic features of war are essentially unchangeable. Even the most profound changes in technology, thought, and doctrine will not change the true nature of war. The pervasiveness of moral elements remains constant in any war and is the key to win that war. General George Patton aptly observed that wars may be fought with weapons, but they are won by men. It is the spirit of the men who follow and of the man who leads those gains to victory (Vego 2000, p.619).

Believers of Newtonian view suggest the body count and other numerical indicators as measures of effectiveness, instead of strategic reasoning. However the effectiveness of one's forces in war cannot be solely measured by the number of targets destroyed and casualties inflicted on the enemy. The outcome of a war cannot be predicted with certainty because so many intangible elements are an integral part of it. For a victory to have true meaning, the enemy must be defeated in his own mind (Riper and Scales 1997, pp.2,5).

Independent Decision Making for Junior Level Leadership: At the lowest tier in the tactical level, the JCOs and NCOs² who lead soldiers on ground should be able to handle crisis during the fog and frictions of war without the support from their superior authority. Creative and flexible thinking, collaborative behavior skills, collective intelligence, and the ability to work with Information and Communication Technologies are becoming crucial qualifications for future military leaders (Burmaoglu and Saritas, pp.16,17).

The Centrality of Influence: The conflicts in future are likely to be defined more by the centrality of influence. Adversaries will use public perceptions and will continue to develop and use increasingly sophisticated methods. This battle of narratives will take place in a decentralized, networked and free-market of ideas, opinions and even raw data, which will weaken the immediacy and influence of mainstream news providers. Breaking events will be increasingly transmitted directly to individuals at ever higher tempo (UK MOD 2015, p.12). Media will be used as a propaganda machine in favor of the adversaries.

Hybrid Threats: The greatest challenge in future will not come from a state that selects a single approach, but from states or groups that select from the whole menu of regular and unconventional tactics and technologies. Any future war in the subcontinent is likely to be hybrid of the industrial age of

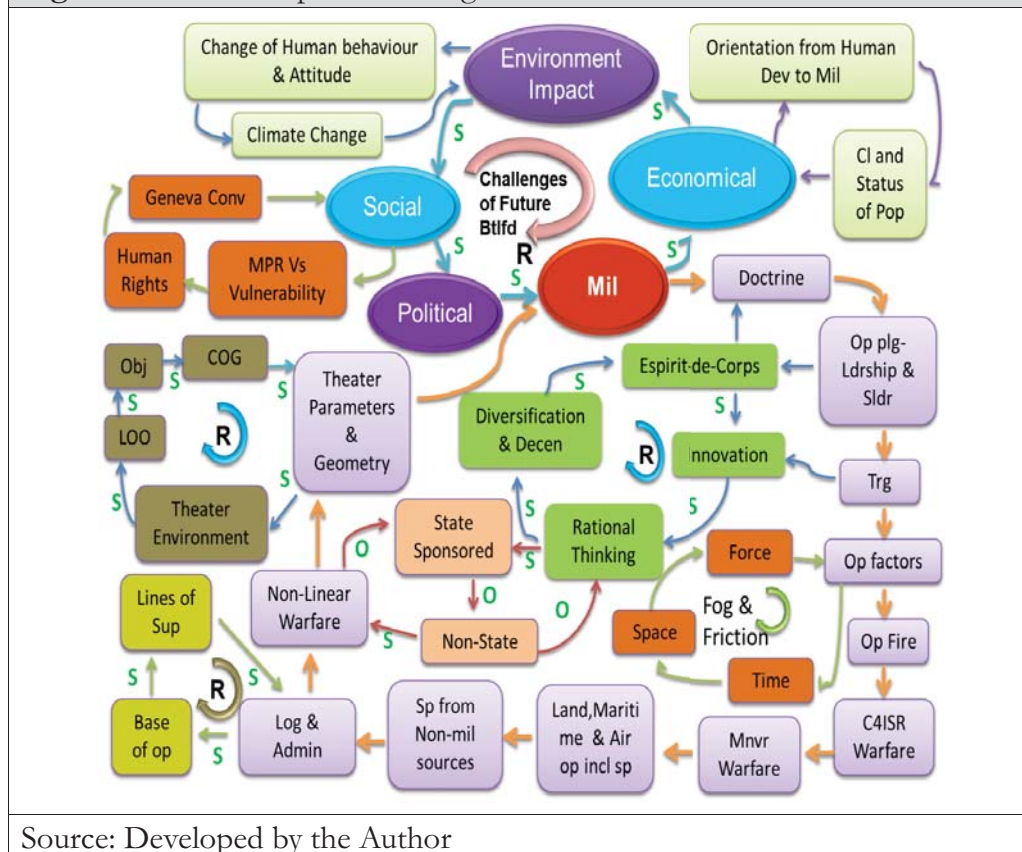
2. JCO means Junior Commissioned Officer and NCO means Non-Commissioned Officer

warfare and post-industrial age of warfare with an emphasis on RMA³ technologies and information warfare (Hossain 2012, pp.55,61).

The Future Battlefield- 'Challenge Loop'

Future battlefield challenges that our soldiers' are likely to meet from both the tradition and non-traditional security threats are described by a Causal Loop in a diagrammatic form. The primary nodes in the loop are the military, political, social, environmental and economic aspects. The secondary and tertiary nodes along with their first and second degree effects are also shown in the diagramme. Notation "S" means similar and "O" means opposite effect while "R" means the reinforced loop.

Figure 1: Causal Loop on Challenges of Future Battlefield⁴



3. RMA means Revolution in Military Affairs

4. MPR means Military Participation Ratio and other abbreviations are used as per the JSSDM

Findings for Meeting the Future Battlefield Challenges

The study finds out the following aspects:

- Rigorous physical hardship would enable soldiers to withstand fog and frictions of war with boldness and courage. Physical training should be broad based and not just jogging, roping and ditch crossing.
- Short runs, unexpected tests will grow quick reflex, reaction or response capability to any unforeseen events enabling a strong nervous system to the recruits.
- At present, there is no leadership training package in the overall recruit training curricula. It's time to start the package including case study of the Liberation War-1971 and is to be included in the syllabus.
- Lessons related to future characteristics of war and related challenges thereof may be taught during the training.
- Minor tactics should be incorporated in the training curricula for training in small group operations like patrolling, ambush, raid, infiltration and other required battle drills and battle procedures.
- Exposure to basic lessons on "Low Intensity Conflict (LICO)" i.e terrorism, guerrilla warfare may be given during the training. Guest speakers may be nominated for such classes.
- Unarmed combat for the male recruits and Taeikundo for female recruits would build self-confidence as part of the self defence training.
- As part of the joint training module; exposure to the lessons on mission, role and capability of the sister services and para-military forces may be given to recruits. Goodwill visits to the nearby sites and installations of sister services and para-military forces would generate interest among the recruits.
- To increase the reflex power, preliminary exposure to kill house training might instill the soldier's confidence in weapon handling and reduce trigger shyness.
- Trade training module within the recruit training syllabus may include training on computer and Global Positioning System (GPS). Fundamental knowledge on identification, marking of UXO, IEDs may be given to recruits during their trade training.

- As the trainees become confident in handling small arms like rifles and SMGs, they may also be trained on light weapons like pistols to enable undertaking future non-linear threats.
- Initial basic awareness training on surveillance and intelligence gathering measures may be imparted to recruits during theoretical or minor operation classes.
- In the present era of globalization, proper use and handling of media should be a must lesson for the young soldiers. A short media package may be planned and local media personnel may be invited during the package.
- To instill confidence in vocabulary; public/extempore speech, debate competitions may be arranged at regular basis during the off hours. Practice in front of a large gathering would help growing self-confidence.
- Under the MBML⁵ package, exposure to the lessons on “Laws of War” may be taught. The human aspects of war should be taught to them.
- Regular motivation classes by officers/JCOs/Religious Teachers; social gathering during important occasions, frequent interaction between trainees, staffs and instructors may help recruits to develop a charming personality.
- No common assessment criteria, so far has been formulated to evaluate recruits' character quality. Like BMA, evaluation system of individual recruit may be introduced forthwith.

Soldiers' Present Basic Training System of Bangladesh Army

In 2016, Trade-1 and Trade-2 training of six months were conducted by two of the formations besides the routine recruit training of one year in the centers. The findings are:

- Subjects of soldiers' basic training from 2014 till 2016 have not been adequately changed or modified except the training duration. With the passage of time, technological advancement and changing security situation; the syllabus of soldiers' basic training specially the general military training (GMT) syllabus should have been adjusted or rearranged accordingly.
- In 2016 training curricula; academic classes constitute 262 periods (21.8%), games and sports including inter centers' competitions take 175 periods (14.6%) cutting a total of 437 periods (36.4%) away from the allotted 1200 periods.

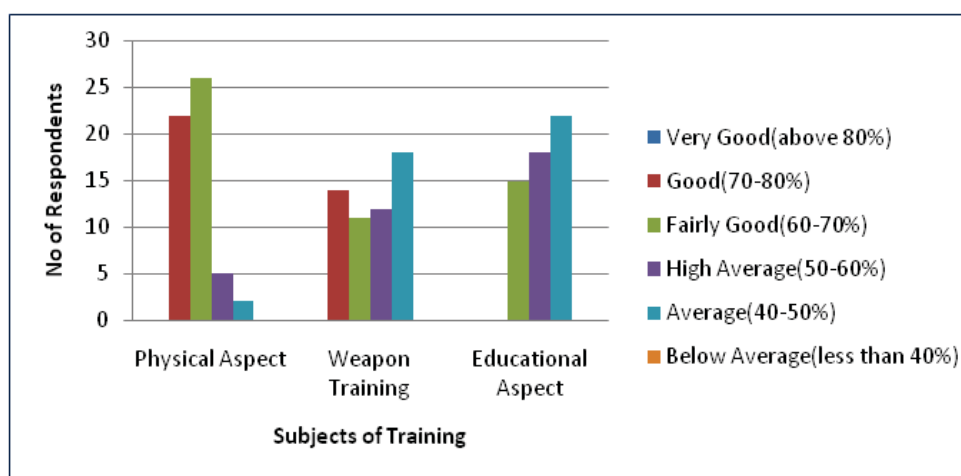
5. MBML means Manual of Bangladesh Military law

- During the soldiers' basic training either at the centers or in the formations; similar syllabus, at least for the GMT subjects may be followed. Again during the 06-months trade-1 training in the formations, trade training may also be included for individual skill development through assignments/ projects.
- 06-months Trade-2 training (Cook, E&BR, and Tailor) may continue under the formation arrangement but the trade-1 training should take place only in the centers due to the availability of adequate training facilities/resources and already existing establishments.
- Under '**Train the Trainers**' programme, the syllabus has no mention about the qualifications needed for becoming an instructor. As such, many adhoc instructors are being employed to impart training to the recruits. It is likely that the standard of military training, at some cases is being compromised.

Survey Data Received from Different Training Centers

- **On Physical, Weapon Training and Educational Aspect:** The survey question was, 'How do you rate our soldiers' in the following 03-parameters?'

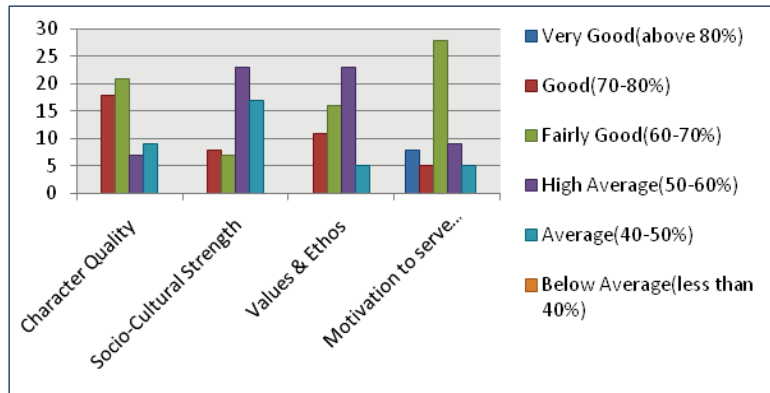
Figure 2: Graph on Physical Vs Weapon Training Vs Educational Aspect



Source: Based on Survey Data Developed by Author

- **On Character Quality, Socio-Cultural Strength, Values and Ethos and Motivation to Serve Army:** The survey question was, 'How do you rate our soldiers' in the following 04-parameters?'

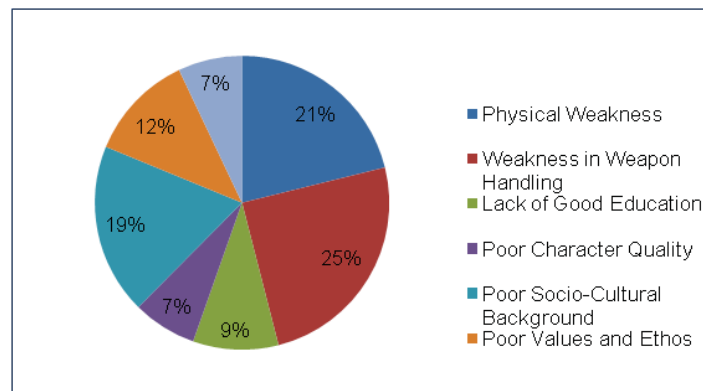
Figure 3: Graph on Character Vs Socio-Cultural Vs Values & Ethos Vs Motivation to Serve



Source: Based on Survey Data Developed by Author

- **Major Shortcomings of the Trainees:** The survey question was, ‘In your opinion, while imparting training to the trainees (recruits) - what are the weaknesses you generally observe among them?’

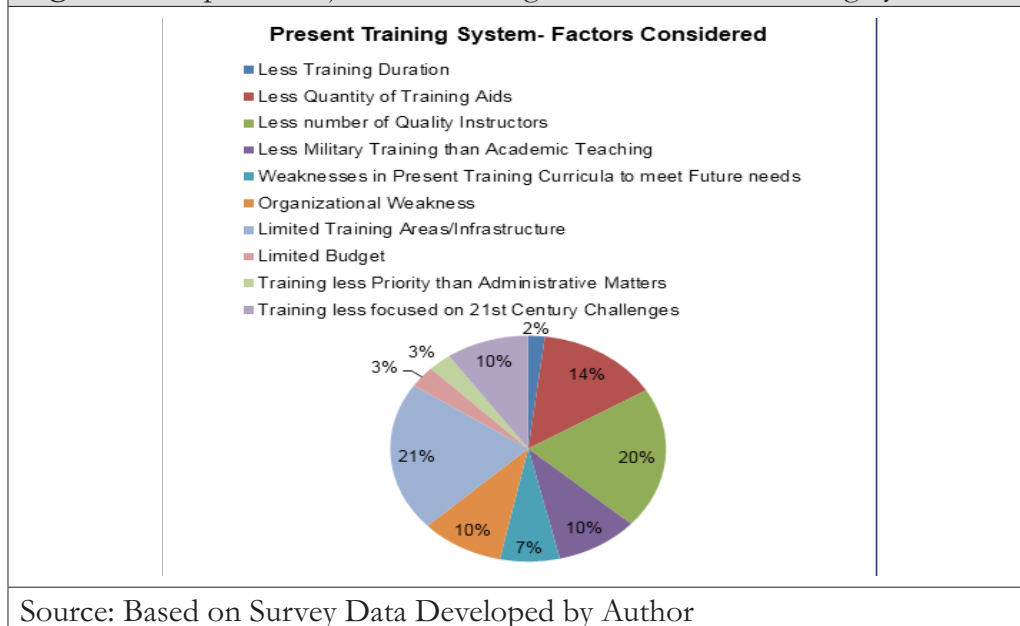
Figure 4: Graph on Major Shortcomings of the Trainees



Source: Based on Survey Data Developed by Author

- **Major Shortcomings of the Present Training System:** The survey question was, “In your opinion, what may be the shortcomings of the present training system?”

Figure 5: Graph on Major Shortcomings of the Present Training System



Findings

- The dissimilarities of training curricula/syllabus in the soldiers' basic training conducted in the centers and in the formations may further be studied and reviewed in order to bring those in under a common platform.
- From 2012 to 2016, soldiers' basic training curricula had been frequently revised causing loss of continuity and harmony within the system, trainers and trainees.
- Weaknesses among the trainees have been identified as:
 - Physical Fitness.
 - Weapon Training.
 - Educational Aspect.
 - Training and awareness to meet the future battlefield challenges.
- Shortcomings other than the trainees have been identified as:
 - Limited training areas/infrastructures.
 - Less no of quality instructors.
 - Less quantity of training aids.
 - More focus on academic related subjects.
 - Less focus on 21st century challenges while preparing the training syllabus.

- **Comments:**

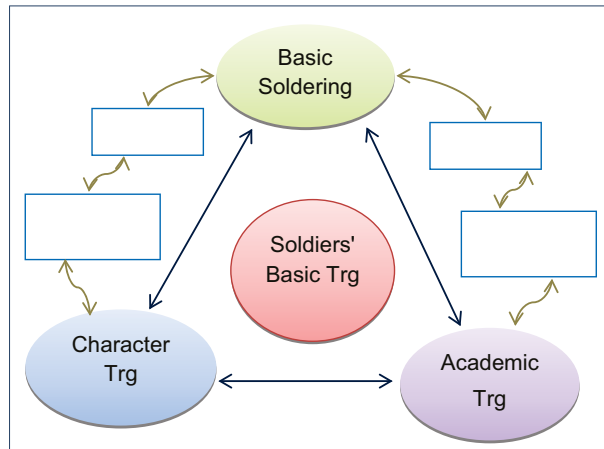
- Training should not be monotonous and be made interesting. As part of the physical training, cross country run along the village tracks or hiking, jogging, walk and run outside the cantonment may make training enjoyable while serving the purpose of fitness building as well.
- A strong character training module along with the strict evaluation system should be in place from Day-1 and this factor may be included in the overall assessment system.
- Socio-cultural events and the recruits parent's day at regular intervals may bring comfort to recruit's mind and spirit. Adequate arrangements for talking with their families should also be kept. Weekly war movie show, lessons on military history can also generate interest in the training.

Exploring Alternative Options for Soldiers' Basic Training of Bangladesh Army

Basic Theme of the Modified Training Syllabus

- The modified syllabus is to be named as 'Three Pillars Training Model' consisting of Basic Soldiering, Academic Training and Character Training. Each part will again be subdivided into Training part and Assessment part which will contain different subjects.
- The modified training syllabus would not mean that the soldiers' will master all the arts of warfare just within 01-year of basic training but surely they will possess, nearly all the basic knowledge on the present and future battlefield challenges. The syllabus should be progressive, job specific and not repetitive.
- The modified training syllabus brings conducive environment where recruits can speak out their mind freely to their concerned training officers/JCOs/NCOs and instructors. Sometimes Commanding Officer/Chief Instructor may speak to them directly listening and addressing their problems, clarifying their doubts/misunderstandings about any issue.
- The modified syllabus is likely to reduce the knowledge, attitude and working gap between officers and soldiers. The process also helps trainees to learn through inter personal communication and relationship.

Figure 6: Three Pillars Training Model



Source: Developed by Author

Three Pillars Training Model

- **Basic Soldiering:** The main subjects and assessment factors of basic soldiering are:

Serial No	Trg Part: Main Subjects	Assessment Part: Main Factors
1.	GMT	Intellectual Factor
2.	Military (Mil) Discipline	Mental uptake.
3.	Mil Organization	Inquisitiveness.
4.	Mil History	Mil Knowledge.
5.	Mil Leadership Trg	Power of Expression.
6.	Mil Communication Skill	Application of Theoretical
7.	Joint Trg	Knowledge to practical situation.
8.	Self Defence Trg	Physio-Dynamic Factor
9.	Trade Trg	Determination.
10.	Field Trg Exercise	Physical Efficiency.
11.	Trg Visits	Stamina and Endurance.
12.	Impromptu Tests	Strength
13.	Other Activities	

Source: Developed by Author

- **Academic:** The main subjects and assessment factors of academic training are:

Serial No	Trg Part: Main Subjects	Assessment Part: Main Factors
1.	H.S.C Programme	Intellectual Factor Mental uptake. Inquisitiveness. Academic Knowledge. Power of Expression.
2.	Socio-Cultural Training	
3.	Communication Skill Dev Programme	
4.	Information and Communication Technology (ICT)	
5.	Language Training	
6.	War and Politics	
7.	Media Management	
8.	Impromptu Tests	
9.	First Year Examination	
10.	Other Activities	
Source: Developed by Author		

- **Character Training:** The main subjects and assessment factors of character training are:

Serial No	Trg Part: Main Subjects	Assessment Part: Main Factors
1.	Character Building Programme	Moral Factor Honesty and Integrity. Loyalty. Unselfishness/Sacrificing Attitude. Military Discipline.
2.	Manner and Etiquettes	
3.	Religious Teachings	
4.	Motivation	
5.	Other Activities	
		Influencing Factor Sincerity. Self Confidence. Sense of honour and Dignity. Courage. Command and Control. Sense of Duty and Responsibility.
		Socio-Cultural Factor Liveliness and Sense of Humour. Cooperation. Manner and Etiquettes. Turnout-Bearing. Socio-Cultural Behaviour.
Source: Developed by Author		

Options for the Modified Soldiers' Basic Trg System Based on the Three Pillars Training Model

Option-1: Present system of 01-year Soldiers' Basic Training should continue. However minimum GPA requirement is to be 3.50 and minimum educational qualification should be S.S.C/ equivalent.

- **Merits:**

- Maximum candidates can participate due to lower grading requirements and better option for recruit selection.
- Acclimatization with the modified syllabus would be easier because of the existing set of training curricula.
- Training will be more interesting due to diversity of subjects in the modified training syllabus.

- **Demerits:**

- Due to inclusion of new subjects within the same training duration, time management for training would be a challenge for the institutions.
- Officers/JCOs/Staffs connected to the training process including the centers need to adjust first with the modified syllabus which will consume additional time and resources.

Option-2: Soldiers' Basic Training duration should be one and a half year. Minimum GPA requirement is 3.50 and minimum educational qualification is S.S.C/ equivalent. But during the recruitment process, priority should be given for the H.S.C pass candidates.

- **Merits:**

- Trainees can better focus on the suggested subjects of 'Three Pillars Training Model' which attaches importance on future battlefield challenges because of extended time duration.
- Due to higher educational qualification, the trainees are likely to have better mental uptake to perform better.
- Less number of S.S.C pass candidates will be studying H.S.C programme. So the freed money may be utilized for other training activities.
- More time would ensure more training on GMT, academic and Character Building programmes enabling the trainees to have more confidence in meeting the present and future challenges.
- Better evaluation and assessment of the recruits can be done because the instructors/staffs can see them for more time. This will build positive 'Trainers and Trainees' interpersonal relationship.

- Candidates of H.S.C programme can remain under central guidance of the respective centers for one and a half year which will allow their unbroken study and just appear final examination from the unit after their passing out.
- **Demerits:**
 - Recruiting options get narrowed down due to higher grading requirements.
 - Units will get fresh troops after 06 more months than the normal timeframe of 01-year that may create manpower problems for that duration.

Option-3: Present system of 01-year Soldiers' Basic Training should continue. However for technical arms/services, minimum GPA requirement is to be 3.75 and minimum educational qualification should be H.S.C/equivalent. For other arms/services, minimum GPA requirement is to be 3.50 and minimum educational qualification should be S.S.C/ equivalent.

- **Merits:**
 - There will not be any academic classes under 'Niche Programme' for the recruits of technical arms/services, so the freed academic periods can be utilized for military subjects or for the basic technical skill development programmes.
 - In the training centers, only one type of educational background students will be trained. So the training and admin plans can be better harmonized.
- **Demerits:**
 - Recruiting options get a bit narrowed down due to higher grading requirement of GPA 3.75.
 - Officers/JCOs/Staffs related to training including the centers need to adjust first with the modified training syllabus which will consume additional time and resources.
 - In academic training module, there will be two types of academic syllabus, HSC and SSC.

Recommended Option: Based on the subjective analysis, the recommended option as per priority is:

- Option-2.
- Option-3.
- Option-1.

Testing of the Remodeled Soldiers' Basic Training System Based on Subjective Analysis

The modified basic training syllabus for the soldiers' is expected to transform the soldiers' of BD Army in terms of physical and psychological build-ups which will make them prepare to undertake future battlefield challenges.

Figure 7: Causal Loop on the 'Remodeled Soldiers' Basic Training System'



Operational Level

- The proposed modified training syllabus may be adopted for both the Trade-1 and Trade-2 training curricula. The syllabus may further be studied by ARTDOC if necessary.
- Soldiers' Trade-1 Training may not be conducted under the formation arrangement. However, Trade-2 (cook, E&BR and tailor) training may be conducted by the formations if necessary.
- Additional training budget may be allotted for improving the standards of training aids, development of infrastructural facilities/areas, basic skill development in trade and practical training.

Functional Level

- Selection of instructors to training institutions may get the highest priority. The selection should be based on instructor's recommendation in any previous course, should have higher physical and moral ability with smart outlook and forward looking attitude.
- ARTDOC may assess the implementation of the syllabus/guidelines by the respective centers/formations quarterly.

Conclusion

Training is the mother of all achievements in a soldier's military career where the basic training plays an important role. Physical fitness, GMT coupled with good education, mental courage, sincerity and loyalty towards service, high standard of character quality, enhanced basic skill with creative mind and leadership training can make soldiers' capable of undertaking the future battlefield challenges. It is thus necessary that soldiers' should get adequate basic knowledge and training during their initial stages of military career. The proposed modified basic training syllabus for the soldiers' may further be modified, rearranged or readjusted in light of the changing time, situation and war fighting skills, ability and security environment.

The characteristics and challenges of future battlefield deals with non-linearity, fog and friction, chaos and confusion, unconventional warfare and terrorism, information and cyber warfare which are likely to dominate future battlefield. Again, the future battlefield demands faster mobility and maneuverability, self-

sufficiency in sustenance capability, sound leadership at tactical level, joint effort and good media handling sense and competency.

The analysis of survey data received from different training centers and concerned officers, instructors and staffs identifies the shortcomings in weapon handling, physical weakness and lack of motivation. Major shortcomings in regards to the present training system are identified in the areas of quantity and quality of instructors, limited training areas/infrastructure, organizational weakness, less quantity of training aids and less training activities related to future battlefield challenges.

The modified soldiers' basic training system is proposed keeping in view the training objectives, means available and requirements of both the present and future battlefield challenges. The modified training syllabus is to include academic, basic soldering and character training modules. A robust assessment system has also been incorporated in the proposed system to bring in interest in training activities. The proposed system is also likely to prepare the young soldiers' with strong mental courage and spirit making them physically fit with unquestionable loyalty and with good character quality capable of undertaking challenging jobs.

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