THE MILITARY ACADEMY OF MALAYSIA COMPARED WITH WEST POINT:

LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS AND NEW TECHNOLOGY

JOWATI BINTI JUHARY

BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (TESL)
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA BANGI, 1998

MASTER OF ARTS (APPLIED LINGUISTICS)
UNIVERSITI KEBANGSAAN MALAYSIA BANGI, 2000

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Monash Asia Institute, Faculty of Arts
Monash University Australia

18 November 2007

ABSTRACT

This dissertation compares the learning environment of elite military academies in the U.S. and Malaysia, namely the United States Military Academy, New York (West Point) and the Military Academy of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur (MAM). The dissertation began as an investigation of the place of e-learning and simulation technologies in educating future military officers. It was assumed that as modern technologies for war and defence have changed, so too must the military academies accommodate to that – especially in producing the right kind of officers who will lead the defence of the nation. Research in West Point and the MAM, however, revealed much more significant and deeper differences between the two learning environments. These are also analysed in this dissertation on the basis of in-depth interviews with staff at both academies and responses to some 241 questionnaires returned by the cadets.

One of the most important findings in this study is that the learning environment at West Point is informed by the Thayer System which, in turn, is based on principles strongly reminiscent of the constructivist school of pedagogical inquiry. The impact of the Thayer System on the learning environment is analysed, as are the essential features of constructivism. In Malaysia, by contrast, the learning environment in the academy is driven by teacher-oriented practices that are not sensitive to the needs of students. Moreover, the broader authoritarian tendencies in Malaysia, have encouraged the entrenchment of didactic modes of teacher-student exchanges in the classroom. These were found not to be conducive to creative, student-centred learning processes capable of producing the kind of officers who can lead the Malaysian military at a time of growing regional insecurity in the Asia Pacific.

CANDIDATE'S DECLARATION

The work contained in this dissertation has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other tertiary education. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by any other persons except where the due reference is made.

……

Jowati binti Juhary

Date: 18 November 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First, to Allah S.W.T. for the continuous strength and perseverance bestowed, I am most thankful and humbled by this experience.

This dissertation owes much to many people. To my main supervisor, Professor Marika Vicziany, who is the voice of reason and the pillar of commitment, thank you so much for making this journey possible. Without your critiques and encouragement, I would not be writing this page. To Professor Yoni Ryan, my co-supervisor, your insightful comments have illuminated my way out of darkness.

At West Point where a major part of the research was conducted, I drew heavily on the hospitality of Colonel Curtis Carver (currently the Vice Dean for Resources). I am also grateful to Lieutenant Colonel William Suchan for his personal assistance and to the librarians at West Point for their cooperation.

I am deeply indebted to the MAM for the space given when I conducted my research in Kuala Lumpur. To the academy's Commandant (currently the Vice Chancellor of the new defence university), I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the assistance rendered. It will be a pleasure to return home and serve the academy under its new status, the National Defence University Malaysia (NDUM).

I also wish to thank all my interviewees who so kindly took time from their busy schedules to meet me and answer my numerous questions, test my propositions and offer their valuable comments. To preserve the confidentiality of my discussions with them I have chosen not to name my interview sources from West Point, the MAM, Ministry of Defence, Malaysia (MINDEF) and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). Not to be forgotten are the cadets at West Point and the P KDT at the MAM who participated in the surveys. Thank you so much for participating.

The friends and family at the Monash Asia Institute have been crucial in my PhD journey. To Kak Marlia, Kak Geetha, Kak Azie, Damien, David Triesman, Kak Kamisah,

Juliet, Tony and Emma, you are the sources of inspiration and laughter. Thank you for the great gift of friendships. To Professor Vin D'Cruz, your spirit and confidence will forever follow me. With you I find my potential. Thank you so much! To Doctor Tikky Wattanapenpaiboon, your assistance and understanding have helped me along this difficult and lonely journey. Thank you! To Doctor Ian Mitchell, I am indeed very grateful for your insightful comments on my conceptual framework; many thanks! Also to Sean, Diana and Debbie, thank you for reading!

To the Public Service Department, Malaysia, Ministry of Higher Education, Malaysia and UTM, thank you so much for sponsoring my studies and the belief in my abilities. Without the financial assistance, I would not have gained so much experience and found my true strength in the Monash Asia Institute, Monash University, Melbourne.

Above all, I am indebted to my husband Izam Nur Shukri bin Mahmood. He gave me the inspiration to pursue the importance, the courage to ignore the trivial and the enlightenment to discern the difference. I would not have come here without your personal sacrifices. Most importantly, you give me your love and support along the way. Thank you for just being here.

Finally, I wish to express my thanks and deep gratitude to my late parents, Juhary bin Sidek and Che Wah bte Zakaria. Even though both of them have now passed away, their presence is still soothing and comforting. To my sisters, Jowana and Jowani, I wish to thank you for your sustained moral support and forbearance. I dedicate this dissertation to my parents and family.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract ii

Candidate's Declaration iii

Acknowledgements iv

Table of Contents vi

List of Tables x

List of Figures/Diagrams/Photos xii

List of Abbreviations xiv

CHAPTER 1

MILITARY EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONS 1

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DISSERTATION 1

WHY THE U.S. MILITARY? 2

THE HYPOTHESIS AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS 6

1.2 MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE STRATEGY AND FOREIGN POLICY 7

THE MAM 12

JUSTIFYING A COMPARISON BETWEEN THE MAM AND WEST POINT 14

1.3 OVERVIEW 15

CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND DEFINITIONS 17

E-LEARNING AND SIMULATIONS 17

U.S. MILITARY EXPECTATIONS AND EXPENDITURE FOR E-LEARNING AND SIMULATIONS 19

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ICT REVOLUTION IN THE U.S. MILITARY 22

THE THAYER SYSTEM 23

CONSTRUCTIVISM 28

BENEFITS AND LIMITATIONS OF E-LEARNING AND SIMULATIONS 33

THE MALAYSIAN LEARNING ENVIRONMENT 36

CONCLUSION 41

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY 42

RESEARCH METHOD AND DESIGN 42

DATA COLLECTION 44

DATA ANALYSIS 49

LIMITATIONS 49

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 50

CONCLUSION 51

CHAPTER 4

WEST POINT: PROFESSIONALISM AND LEARNING CULTURE 52

4.1 INTRODUCTION 52

4.2 MILITARY PROFESSIONALISM 54

4.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING AT WEST POINT 62

THE DEMANDS OF A NEW LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT 62

THE ACADEMIC PROGRAMME 64

THE DEBATE ON LEARNING THEORIES AT WEST POINT 71

4.4 E-LEARNING 73

TECHNOLOGY AND CADETS' DAILY TIMETABLE 76

THE FUNCTIONS OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AT WEST POINT 77

4.5 CONCLUSION 79

CHAPTER 5

WEST POINT: THE CADETS' PERCEPTIONS 81

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE WEST POINT CADETS 81

CADETS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT 83

CONCLUSION 101

CHAPTER 6

THE MAM AND MILITARY MODERNISATION 103

6.1 INTRODUCTION 103

6.2 MILITARY MODERNISATION 105

6.3 LEARNING AND TEACHING AT THE MAM 109

THE EXPECTATIONS OF THE MAF 111

THE MAM'S MINORITY ISSUES 113

THE QUALITY OF THE MAM'S STUDENTS 116

THE MAM'S ACADEMIC PROGRAMME AND MANPOWER NEEDS 117

THE STRUCTURE OF THE MAM'S ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES 119

THE LEARNING AND TEACHING ENVIRONMENT AT THE MAM 123

THE NEED FOR E-LEARNING AND SIMULATION TECHNOLOGIES 128

6.4 CONCLUSION 135

CHAPTER 7

THE MAM: P KDT PERCEPTIONS 137

LEARNING AND TEACHING AT THE MAM 138

NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN THE NAUTICAL SCIENCE PROGRAMME 150

CONCLUSION 154

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION: BENCHMARKING THE MILITARY ACADEMY OF MALAYSIA AGAINST THE EXPERIENCES OF WEST POINT 156

THE KEY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN WEST POINT AND THE MAM 157

AS ASSESSMENT OF THE HYPOTHESIS 164

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A NEW MODEL FOR LEARNING AND TEACHING 167

BEYOND THE PRESENT DISSERTATION 168

APPENDICES 169

BIBLIOGRAPHY 195

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1.1	World Military Expenditure in 2007	3
Table 1.2	A Comparison between the U.S. and Malaysia's Total World R&D Expenditures 2002	4
Table 1.3	A Comparison between West Point and the MAM	16
Table 2.1	Timelines Showing the Evolution of Learning Principles	24
Table 3.1	The Number of Respondents to the Survey and Semi-structured Interviews	49
Table 3.2	Steps Taken to Ensure Confidentiality and Privacy of Respondents	51
Table 4.1	The Class Profiles of West Point Cadets Classes of 2008, 2009 and 2010	55
Table 4.2	Student Profiles at West Point, Princeton and Harvard	57
Table 4.3	The Use of Technology at West Point	77
Table 5.1	The Learning Materials Used at West Point	85
Table 5.2	The Preferred Mode of Delivery at West Point	87
Table 5.3	The Percentages of Variables for Courses in Electronic Forms	92
Table 5.4	Cadets' Views about e-Learning and Simulation Issues	94
Table 5.5	Cadets' Opinions about West Point Management for e-Learning and Simulations	96
Table 5.6	Cadets' Opinions about West Point Technical Facilities	97
Table 6.1	The Number and Percentages of P KDT, the MAM by Ethnic Groups – Original Enrolment	113
Table 6.2	The Distribution of the MAM's Graduates and Degree Classes	116
Table 6.3	The Number of Graduates based on Departments, the MAM (1999-2006)	118

Table 6.4	The Daily Timetable of P KDT at the MAM	126
Table 7.1	The Preferred Mode for Learning at the MAM	140
Table 7.2	P KDT Views about e-Learning and Simulation Issues	143
Table 7.3	P KDT Opinions about the MAM Management for e-Learning and Simulations	145
Table 7.4	P KDT Opinions about the MAM Technical Facilities	146
Table 7.5	The Learning Materials in the Nautical Science Programme	151
Table 7.6	The Variables for Courses Electronically Delivered	152

LIST OF FIGURES/DIAGRAMS/PHOTOS

Figure 1.1	A Comparison between the U.S. and Malaysian's GDP and Military Expenditure 2005	4
Figure 1.2	The Stages of U.S. Military Officers' Career Development	6
Figure 2.1	The Relationship between e-Learning and Simulation Technologies	19
Diagram 4.1	The Role of West Point (or the USMA) in the New Military Learning Environment	63
Diagram 4.2	The Core Curriculum Structure of West Point	66
Photos 4.1	The Classrooms at West Point	70
Photos 4.2	New Technologies at West Point	75
Diagram 5.1	The Survey of Cadets' Uses of Technology at West Point	90
Diagram 5.2	Indicators for Active Learning at West Point	98
Diagram 5.3	The Development of Critical Thinking at West Point	100
Figure 6.1	The Number and Percentages of Graduates based on Three Military Services – the Army, RMN and RMAF (1999-2006)	119
Diagram 6.1	The Curriculum Structure of the MAM Showing the Number of Courses and Estimated Hours of Study	122
Photos 6.1	Typical Classes at the MAM – Tutorial Rooms and Lecture Halls	130
Photos 6.2	Three Types of Laboratories for the Nautical Science Programme at the MAM	133
Diagram 7.1a	The Access to and Ownership of Personal Computers at the MAM	139
Diagram 7.1b	The Usage of Computers at the MAM	139

Diagram 7.2	The Survey of P KDT Uses of Technology at the MAM	142
Diagram 7.3	Indicators for Being Active Participants at the MAM	147
Diagram 7.4	The Development of Critical Thinking at the MAM	150
Figure 8.1	The Proposed Learning and Teaching Model for the MAM	167

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADFA	Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra
ADL	Advanced Distributed Learning
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	Asean Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association for Southeast Asian Nation
ASEM	Asia-Europe Meeting
CAI	Computer Assisted Instruction
CBT	Cadet Basic Training (West Point)
CBT	Computer-based Training (the MAM)
DELDMC	Delivery and Management Capability, Ministry of Defence, the United Kingdom
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNI	Gross National Income
ICT	Information Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
M&S	Modelling and Simulation
MAF	Malaysian Armed Forces
MAM	Military Academy of Malaysia
MINDEF	Ministry of Defence Malaysia
MOHE	Ministry of Higher Education Malaysia
NAM	Non-Aligned Movement
NDUM	National Defence University Malaysia
NEP	National Economic Policy
OIC	Organisation of the Islamic Conference

P KDT	Undergraduate Cadet Officers
R&D	Research and Development
R-Day	Reception Day (West Point)
RMAF	Royal Malaysian Air Force
RMN	Royal Malaysian Navy
RMR	Royal Malay Regiment
SAT	Standard Achievement Test
STCW 95	Standard of Training and Watch Keeping Certification 1995
TRADOC	Training and Doctrine Command (for the U.S. Army)
UN	United Nations
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
West Point	United States Military Academy New York
WMEAT	World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers
WWI	World War I
WWII	World War II

CHAPTER 1

MILITARY EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONS

This dissertation analyses the characteristics of learning environments in two very different military academies, the United States Military Academy, New York (West Point) and the Military Academy of Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur (MAM). The question addressed in this study is how cadets can be provided with a more effective learning environment in an era of modern telecommunications. Implementing new technologies in the working and learning environment could prepare future generations for the new global economy. This is as relevant to military academies as to other tertiary institutions. In this dissertation, the MAM is an example of a tertiary military academy in a developing country. Yet, the use of new technologies, without due attention to pedagogical approaches, is insufficient to ensure appropriate learning, as this dissertation will demonstrate. The key question is what can the MAM learn from the world's leading military academy, West Point?

1.1 SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS DISSERTATION

Since the time of Plato, military personnel have often been called the 'guardians'[1] (of the people) and the public have respected them as such (Ambrose, 1999, p.1; Lord, 1989, p.320; Stiehm, 2002, p.1). Given their special role and prestige, most governments need to ensure that their military institutions are ready to defend the country and such readiness depends critically on learning programmes that can prepare the guardians

[1] Guardians are mentioned throughout Plato's *Republic* (translated by Waterfield, 1998) especially in the chapters titled "Primary Education for The Guardians" and "The Guardians' Life and Duties".

accordingly. Continuously improving these learning programmes for the military has, therefore, become one of the most important aims of governments. Depending on the national defence strategies and foreign policies of a country, its needs and aspirations will be reflected directly and indirectly in the learning programmes of its military institutions.

The purposes of this study are threefold:

a) to investigate the functions of and the need for e-learning and simulation technologies at military academies

b) to identify and analyse the learning and teaching challenges at the MAM

c) to analyse e-learning and simulation strategies at West Point in order to see how these differ from those at the MAM and whether the MAM has anything to learn from the U.S. example.

Why the U.S. Military?

There are three reasons for using the U.S. as a benchmark against which the current practices and the future needs of the MAM can be compared. First, the U.S. is a global superpower and to a considerable degree this position depends on the power of the U.S. military.[2] As Table 1.1, Table 1.2 and Figure 1.1 show, U.S. military expenditure in 2007 vastly outstripped the top ten military powers in the world, using expenditure as a rough measure of military power.

Malaysia has been added to Table 1.1 to show how it differs from the U.S. in terms of scale of expenditure. Malaysia was ranked the 41st largest military spender in 2007. U.S. military spending keeps growing each year. According to one source,[3] the U.S.

[2] It is noted that the superiority of the U.S. military originates from the technology, scientific ability, research and development or R&D investment and generous funding (Deitchman, 2000, p.133; Emmert, 2002, p.1; Huisken, 2002, p.25; The Status and Significance of the Superpower Strategic Balance: Differing U.S. Views, 1978, p.64).

[3] 28th Edition of World Military Expenditures and Arms Transfers (WMEAT), 6th February 2003.

accounted for 33 percent of world military expenditure in 1999.[4] By 2002, the percentage had increased to 40 percent (Huisken, 2002, p.21) and in the fiscal year 2007-08, U.S. military spending[5] was 47 percent of the world's total military expenses. Figure 1.1 and Table 1.2 compare the Malaysian and U.S. economies using three indicators: Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Military Expenditure and Total World R&D Expenditure. These indicators are normally used to assess the relative weight a country has in terms of world power (Davis & Shapiro, 2003, pp.8-9). This evidence confirms that Malaysia, relative to the U.S., is a small military player.

Table 1.1
World Military Expenditure in 2007 (Top Ten Ranking and Malaysia)

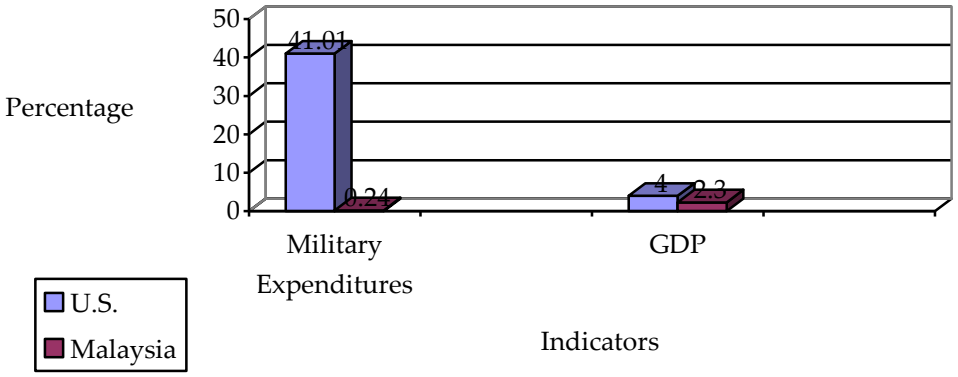
World Ranking	Countries	USD Billion (2005)	Percentage of GDP (2005)	USD Per Capita 2005	2004
1	**United States**	**495,300**	**4.0**	**1,675**	**1,556**
2	China	103,956	1.3	23	20
3	France	53,128	2.5	876	883
4	United Kingdom	51,696	2.3	855	832
5	Japan	43,910	1.0	345	355
6	Germany	38,044	1.4	462	464
7	Italy	31,384	1.8	540	592
8	Saudi Arabia	25,372	8.2	960	811
9	India	21,726	2.7	20	19
10	South Korea	20,313	2.6	418	342
41	**Malaysia**	**2,930**	**2.3**	**122**	**117**

Source: *The Military Balance 2007* (2007, pp.406-412)

[4] This is the latest WMEAT report published on 6th February 2003.

[5] U.S. Military Spending versus the World, *Centre for Arms Control and Non-Proliferation*, 5th February 2007.

Figure 1.1
A Comparison between the U.S. and Malaysian's GDP and Military Expenditures 2005 (in percentages)



Source: *The Military Balance 2007* (2007, pp.406-412)

Table 1.2
A Comparison between the U.S. and Malaysia's Total World R&D Expenditures 2002 (USD Billion)

Rank	Economy	1996	2002
	World	575.6	676.5
1	**United States**	**197.3**	**276.2**
2	Japan	138.6	133.0
3	Germany	52.3	50.2
4	France	35.3	32.5
5	United Kingdom	22.4	29.3
6	China	4.9	15.6
7	South Korea	13.5	13.8
8	Canada	10.1	13.8
9	Italy	12.6	13.7
10	Sweden	8.8[a]	9.4[b]
	Total	495.8	587.6
	Share in World (percent)	86.1	86.9
	***Malaysia**[6]	**0.03**[c]	**0.23**[d]

[a] 1995
[b] 2001
[c] 2003
[d] 2006

Sources: **2006 Budget Speech Malaysia* (2005, p.14) and *2003 Budget Speech Malaysia* (2002, p.61); *World Investment Report 2005* (2005, p.105)

[6] In 1998, Malaysia's R&D expenditure (as a percentage of Gross National Income – GNI) was 0.42 percent (*The Project on Human Development website*, 2007).

The second reason for benchmarking the MAM against West Point is that the U.S. military has been the biggest spender on e-learning and simulation programmes. In fact the U.S. military has been the most active developer and user of e-learning and simulation technologies (Aldrich, 2005, p.195). It was reported that the U.S. military through its Department of Defence spent about USD$2.2 billion for the development of its education technology programme in the 2003-04 fiscal year (Wilson, 2004, p.1). On a per employee basis, U.S. military expenditure outstripped the expenditure of corporate America. This conclusion is based on the most recent survey of the American Society for Training and Development (Analytics: Understanding the Economics of Learning, 2003, p.2). The study of more than 367 major companies in 2002 led to the conclusion that U.S. organisations dedicated about two percent of their annual budgets to learning expenses that are related to e-learning and simulation technologies. On a per employee basis, this meant a spending of more than USD$700 annually. In the same year, the U.S. military spent about USD$7.5 billion on the use of modern electronic technology to support training for military personnel (*Operation and Maintenance Overview*, 2002, pp.177-178). The total number of active military and reserve personnel was 1,414,000 and 1,259,300 respectively (*The Military Balance 2002*, 2002, p.16). This meant that the U.S. military spent about four times more than the investment of the leading U.S. corporations – about USD$2,800 per employee.[7] These expenditure patterns cannot be automatically 'connected' to West Point, but as it is one of the premier defence academies, one could expect that West Point incorporates the most advanced e-learning and simulation methods into its training programme.

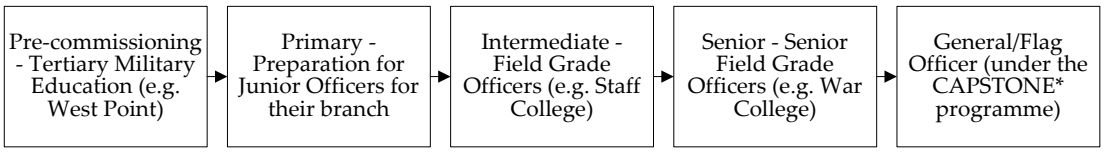
Third, the education of U.S. military officers is a specific and systematic process as indicated in Figure 1.2. The officers receive extensive training as part of an ongoing learning process that does not have a definite end point. Figure 1.2 shows the stages of a U.S. military officer's career development[8] from day one of enlistment until retirement. Phase One starts at the age of 18 to 19 years and officers in the last phase can be between

[7] See Chapter 2 for more details on e-learning and simulations expenditures of the U.S. military.

[8] The stages are a universally accepted standard around the world, albeit with some variations.

50 and 55 years old. Throughout this long career path, e-learning and stimulation technologies play a role of growing importance to the professional competency of U.S. officers (Macedonia, 2002, p.159). However, this is not the only factor that accounts for the successes of West Point (see Chapter 4).

Figure 1.2
The Stages of U.S. Military Officers' Career Development



Sources: Keaney (2002, p.151); Maxwell[9] (2005)
** CAPSTONE is a six-week programme for general/flag officers conducted by the National Defence University (NDU) Washington. This programme is a statutory requirement of the Department of Defence Reorganisation Act of 1986 (The NDU Washington website, 2007)*

The Hypothesis and Research Questions

Preliminary analysis of the secondary literature (see Chapter 2) and discussions with military personnel at various institutions in Australia, Canada, Malaysia and the U.S. have led to the formulation of the following hypothesis and four key research questions. The hypothesis is that:

> **The introduction of e-learning and simulation technologies could provide appropriate learning strategies for students at the MAM. These strategies are crucial for the development of the knowledge and skills required in a 21st century military force.**

This hypothesis will be accepted, rejected or modified depending on the results of the research findings.

[9] Based on personal communication with Lieutenant Colonel (R) Russell Maxwell, Deputy Commandant, Australian Defence College, Weston Creek, Canberra, Australia, 23rd March 2005. However, his analysis starts with a stage (not in Figure 1.2) from high school military education and stops at the fourth stage, that is, the Senior Stage, perhaps reflecting the career development of Australian Defence Force officers.

Behind this hypothesis stand the following four research questions:

a) What are the main constraints on the development of high quality graduates at the MAM? Are technological constraints more important than other factors?

b) What has been the role of new technologies in the teaching and learning strategies of military students at West Point and the MAM?

c) What stage has been reached by the MAM in adopting e-learning and simulations as learning tools? Should the MAM move further in the direction of the U.S. model?

d) What has been the main pedagogical approach at West Point? Could the MAM learn something from the learning environment at West Point?

In seeking answers to these questions, the West Point model will be used as a benchmark for assessing the experiences of the MAM. However, in order to do that, it is first necessary to explain not only what the MAM seeks to do but also its place within the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF). The next section contextualises the MAM within the security policies of Malaysia.

1.2 MALAYSIA'S DEFENCE STRATEGY AND FOREIGN POLICY

Graduates of the MAM will serve in the MAF. To comprehend the aspirations and needs of these services, the national defence strategy and foreign policy are analysed first. This is followed by a discussion about the key characteristics of the MAM, which is Malaysia's leading military training academy.

Malaysia's current approach to defence takes a comprehensive 'multi-dimensional, multi-layered and multi-focal' perspective, aiming to meet both military and non-military threats. Emphasis is given to develop capacities to counter a whole spectrum of possible threats from low to high intensity conflicts (McNally & Morrison, 2002, p.109). Malaysia's national defence strategy today identifies three key areas of interest. Firstly, there are national strategic interests that involve the immediate territory surrounding Malaysia, the region and the international arena. Secondly, the policy speaks of

Malaysia's defence principles which include deterrence, forward defence and total defence (Mohd Najib Abdul Razak, 2006, pp.161-163). While deterrence means that Malaysia has the capability to attack and hopefully prevail when provoked, forward defence suggests that Malaysia will avoid conflicts taking place on its own territory. Total defence relates to a total and integrated effort by the government, non-governmental agencies, the public sector and citizens to defend the country. Lastly, the strategy revolves around three main principles that are defined as: (a) self-reliance, (b) regional cooperation, and (c) foreign assistance. The principle of self-reliance is further supported by two elements, namely having the capacity to act alone without any outside assistance in: (a) all matters pertaining to internal security, and (b) defending Malaysia's sovereignty and security interests within its immediate neighbourhood from low and medium level external threats (*National Defence Strategy*, 2003, p.1). In short, these defence strategies emphasise the strength of the armed forces and their potential offensive and defensive capability (Jeshurun, 1980, p.133).

Malaysia's foreign policy is designed to support the defence strategies through diplomatic, trade and 'soft power' approaches. No foreign policy can be formulated in a vacuum – it must relate to a dynamic environment. Malaysia's foreign policy is no exception. Both it and the conduct of the country's international relations are shaped by various factors, including geography, history, social and political determinants. Further, the external environment or what may be termed as the *systemic determinant* becomes increasingly important with the advent of globalisation and in an epoch of information communication technology (ICT) (*National Foreign Policy*, 2004, p.4). Nevertheless the fundamental objective remains the same – that is, the pursuit of Malaysia's national interest at the international level.

Malaysia's clear foreign policy goals in respect to defence and security, development and trade, international cooperation and diplomacy determine the pattern of relations that the country establishes with its neighbours. The policy relates to frameworks established by the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Asean Regional Forum (ARF), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), the South-South Cooperation, the Organisation of the Islamic

Conference (OIC), the Commonwealth, the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), the United Nations (UN) and other regional and international organisations. Beyond these multilateral arrangements, developing close bilateral relations with its neighbours remains a high priority for Malaysia (*National Foreign Policy*, 2004, pp.1-4). A consultative approach is taken to resolve outstanding problems including those related to overlapping claims and the determination of land and maritime boundaries. Every diplomatic effort is made to ensure that bilateral relations do not become adversely affected on account of such problems. In disputes about overlapping territorial claims, for instance over Sipadan Island with the Philippines and Batu Putih Island with Singapore, Malaysia agreed to refer the problems to the International Court of Justice.[10]

Further, the establishment of separate joint commissions between Malaysia and Brunei, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos and Vietnam has also provided a useful framework to develop wide-ranging bilateral cooperation in fields of mutual interest. These agreements and approaches provide the scaffolding for Malaysia's defence policies and should determine the nature of curriculum provided by the country's military academy and colleges. Even if Malaysia has ambitions to become a major economic leader, there is no evidence to show it plans to assert any political power over its neighbours or within the region. At the same time, the changing security scenarios in the Asia Pacific region continue to compel Malaysia to adapt its defence and foreign policies to the shifting priorities of other national governments in the region. The next part explores some of these historical details.

Over the years, Malaysia's defence strategy and foreign policy have undergone tremendous changes. This historical evolution provides the key to understanding current policy positions. After gaining independence in 1957, Malaya, the old name before Malaysia was established, developed relations with its neighbouring countries. In the early 1960s, the Prime Minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, suggested the

[10] See the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Malaysia website (2007).

establishment of Malaysia.[11] However, this proposal was vehemently opposed by Indonesia and led to the confrontation between Malaya and Indonesia in 1963. The collapse of Saigon in Vietnam and the withdrawal of British and U.S. troops from the region between 1960s and the mid-1970s brought further changes to the national defence strategy and foreign policy as new fears emerged. Earlier, by 1965, Singapore withdrew from Malaysia and emerged as an independent nation. That began a considerable economic rivalry that persists today.

After Prime Minister Mahathir Mohammad took over the political stewardship in 1981, economic development increased. Due to the political and social stability built by previous Malaysian Prime Ministers, Mahathir Mohammad was able to take a different approach to Malaysia's development. During his period in office, the military was given the task of ensuring and maintaining internal stability (Nesadurai, 2004, p.8). Improvements to military education[12] were a critical part of this programme and had widespread support in the Malaysian parliament. Abdullah Ahmad[13] (1990, p.117) explains,

> Malaysia should tighten its economy, strengthen its defence capabilities, improve and consolidate the national solidarity for there is nothing the enemies would respect more than the nation's strength.

Malaysia's current defence strategies stem from a document published in 1997 and republished on-line in 2003.[14] Similarly, Malaysia's most recent foreign policy statement was published on the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004. Together these documents provide classical statements about the manner in which a rising middle

[11] The proposal involved the establishment of Malaysia incorporating Peninsular Malaya, Sabah, Sarawak, Singapore and Brunei into one country.

[12] *The Fourth Malaysia Plan 1980-1985* (1985) allocated half of its defence budget for the improvement of military education.

[13] The Honourable Datuk Abdullah Ahmad was a member of parliament Kok Lanas, Kelantan 1986-1990.

[14] The 2003 national defence strategy was a revised version of 1997 documents and had been used to formulate the national military strategy (*Ministry of Defence Malaysia's Annual Report*, 2005, p.113).