

Basic military training

[Government](#), [Army](#)



Basic Military Training (BMT) is a rite of passage that every 18-year-old male Singaporean must complete. BMT is in fact an organization, within the Ministry of Defence, where young males are required to participate in rigorous exercise routines and armed combat training at Pulau Tekong, an offshore Singapore island. This compulsory training consists of basic soldiering skills, including weapon handling, individual field craft, and bayonet fighting. This military training helps to prepare these young men for battlefield survival, should the need arise.

The organization has its own rules and regulations, culture, and principles. As such, we have shared our experience at BMT, and compare some aspects of it to Henri Fayol's Classical Approach. New recruits are bombarded with information, directives, orders, and instructions from senior ranking officers. For example, we are told " Lights off at 10pm! " and " Everywhere you go, you are to get my permission. " Also, if any of us want to voice a grievance, we must approach our superiors. They are authorized to decide if anything can or should be done to resolve the matter.

These superiors are specialists (sergeants) who are directly in charge of new recruits, and the CO(Commanding officers) generally are not involved in these matters. BMT entails a wide variety of tasks and comprehensive military training, Therefore, the recruits face danger, but with every attempt to avoid life-threatening scenarios. Being in BMT is similar to being in a highly sensitive organization. Recruits are not allowed to divulge any army secrets outside the organization, and they must be wary of any statements they make in public.

All recruits must take an oath of allegiance and pledge their loyalty and honesty to Singapore. In accordance with Fayol's principle of "subordination of individual interest to general interest", there is no room for the word "I" in BMT. Accordingly, every recruit works together with the team or company that he is assigned to. If an individual recruit makes a mistake or fails to follow an order, the whole company will be punished. For example, during my second week of BMT, all recruits were to report for physical training at 6 a. m.

All reported except for one of my bunkmates, who overslept and was late. As a result, not only was he punished, but all the others from that platoon were punished as well. In BMT, recruits do not focus on their individual wants and needs, but instead they work as a team toward the betterment of their organisation. Hence, based on these illustrations, we can clearly state that communication within BMT is indeed task-oriented. In a high-security government organization like this, a formal style of communication is appropriate and required.

Ranks differentiate superiors from subordinates, and usually the higher the rank, the more respect and power you command. For instance, ranks of 'Cpt' (Captain), 'Lt' (Lieutenant), and 'Sgt' (Sergeant) tend to increase the distance between individuals and hinders familiarity with each other. A recruit who approaches anyone of higher rank will probably feel some apprehension. All new BMT recruits are required to greet not only their company IC (in-charge), but also anyone else of higher rank. Required salutes and greetings include "Good morning Sir," and all answers are to be proclaimed with "Yes Sir!

” or “ No Sir! ” The word “ Sir” conveys the respect that is required from fresh recruits toward their superiors. After two years in BMT, I came to realise that it is one’s rank, not one’s age, that determines the level and amount of respect that they receive. BMT’s formal approach becomes immediately apparent as new recruits enter the camp’s gate. Slippers, sandals, and t-shirts are forbidden, and shirts must be tucked into pants or jeans. Bermudas and shorts are banned as well. In short, all recruits are expected to wear proper attire.

Hence professionalism, respect for superiors, and self-respect are the hallmarks and defining attributes of this bureaucratic and professional organisation. Fairness is another factor that contributes to BMT’s formal culture, and it affects the style of communication. In keeping with Fayol’s “ principle of organisational reward,” all recruits, whether they be a minister’s son or a national sportsman, are awarded identical pay and receive identical treatment. The army does not discriminate against any background.

Everyone in this military organisation shares the same facilities and consumes the same food. In addition, monetary rewards are granted to recruits who have done well in their physical fitness test (IPPT Test). Therefore, these examples demonstrate “ remuneration of personnel” and “ equity” in the classical model. While completing training at BMT, officers’ and superiors’ messages and announcements are usually issued in the form of letters and memos. These letters generally begin with the recruit’s rank or with the simple salutation of “ Mr.

” and are issued to the recruit’s home address. Less formal notes or a thank you on a “ post-it” are unlikely. Friends of the same rank are virtually

helpless to aid peers during their stint at BMT. Hence, all recruits must rely on their superiors. However, this does not mean that there is no horizontal flow of communication or “gangplank” in the army. Recruits routinely turn to one another for minor favours, consolation, and motivation. Thus, BMT recruits indeed get to mingle around and talk to fellow trainees.

In addition to the usual letters, memos, and emails, face-to-face communication does exist in BMT. For instance, in the middle of my training stint at BMT, three of my platoon mates and others from various companies were selected to meet the Captain for a face-to-face chat. During that meeting with our superior, we received some feedback on how we were coping with issues and situations in the Army. In closing, the army may seem like a very authoritative organization, but there are some exceptions that exclude them from being a total role model for the Classical Approach.