

Who Should Teach? The Next Step to Improve Army PME

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Abstract

The Army has renewed its focus on its professional military education (PME) system to better address what the current and evolving environments demand of graduates of PME programs, and therefore what to teach. The Army has taken valuable and necessary steps to revitalize its PME system, but now it is time for the Army to turn its attention to the remaining key element: the faculty. The Army must reevaluate who is best qualified to teach its officers, especially in the early phases of their careers. It must then make the necessary changes to properly identify, select, assign, and reward the best possible instructors. This paper examines the Army's PME improvement efforts to date and offers recommendations to the senior leaders on the next steps to accomplish one of the Army's stated strategic priorities and better prepare its officers for the future they face, right from the beginning of their careers.

Who Should Teach? The Next Step to Improve Army PME

The Army expects leaders to teach and teachers to lead.

-- U.S. Army Learning Concept for Training and Education¹

As the Army works to best posture itself to operate in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous security environment and prepare for the security challenges it will face in the future, it has determined that sustained leader development, especially of the officer corps, is critical. In the last five years the Army has identified several challenges to this development and has undertaken multiple assessments, revised its strategy, and implemented changes to address those challenges. Specific to the institutional domain, the Army has renewed its focus on its professional military education (PME) system, with particular emphasis on officer education. Senior leaders have placed renewed value on education, especially life-long education, revitalizing multiple facets of the system. To address what the current and evolving environments demand of graduates of PME programs, and therefore what to teach, the Army reviewed and rewrote PME curriculum, incorporated more updated teaching and learning models, reorganized some organizational structure, and took steps to ensure the right students are attending at the right time. Now it is time for the Army to turn its attention to the remaining key element of its PME system – the faculty. The Army must reevaluate who is best qualified to teach its officers, especially in the early phases of their careers. It must then make the necessary changes to properly identify, select, assign, and reward the best possible instructors. It is critical for the Army to get this right because a strategy to improve the education experience that overlooks the very individual experts who deliver that education is incomplete and will not deliver the

effects the Army seeks. It is especially important to focus on the PME schools for captains because many of their graduates are executing operations with strategic impact immediately upon graduation. These graduates are also the officers who will develop into the strategic advisors and leaders of tomorrow.

This paper examines the Army's PME improvement efforts to date and offers recommendations on the next steps to better prepare its officers for the future they face, right from the beginning of their careers. These recommendations offer better options than the Army is currently employing, will serve as embedding mechanisms to help cement the changes, and will do so with resources already on-hand. While the proposed actions certainly involve some risk, they are nevertheless feasible, suitable, and, considering the strategic importance, should be acceptable to the Army's senior leaders.

Situation

The security environment in which the Army finds itself today presents a wide range of challenges that are increasingly dynamic, cross state and regional boundaries, exist in multiple domains, and can manifest as both conflict and competition. Actors in this environment include both states and non-state actors. Information flow and technology advancement and proliferation are increasing at exponential rates. This type of environment is blurring the lines between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels because all echelons of the Army are affected by and affecting all these factors. The Army is continually assessing this environment and itself so that informed decisions can be made as to how to best operate currently and prepare for the future.

As part of its constant assessment of and preparation for the environments of today and the future, the Army continues to identify sustained, quality leader

development as critical to maintaining relative advantage in the strategic environment. Of particular concern in the institutional domain of leader development is how the Army educates its officer corps through professional military education. In the last decade a plethora of researchers and writers, both inside and outside the Army, have produced volumes of literature focused on how to improve professional military education. Many of these writers, including some Army senior leaders, concluded the Army had developed a culture that did not value education. This problem was most recognizable by the cultural artifact that many officers were not attending school at the appropriate point in their career timelines or, in some cases, at all, choosing instead to prioritize operational, and certainly deployed, assignments.² The Army's senior leaders quickly remedied this problem by ordering commanders at all levels to move their officers on to their student assignments in a timely manner. The selection and assignment bureaucracy followed quickly behind and enforced time limits for positions and producing assignment instructions to schools based on those timings.

Many of the PME studies also identified issues with the education itself – what was being taught at each level, and how. Beginning in 2013, the Army conducted a comprehensive effort to review the entire professional military education enterprise, including assessments of objectives, reviews of strategies and programs, and debates about curriculum, learning and teaching models, and technology. In addition to the numerous articles, opinion pieces, studies, and reports produced by think tanks, civilian and military academia, and interested individuals, the Army itself produced three notable documents which assessed and then drove some necessary adjustments to its professional military education. First, the *Final Report of the Chief of Staff of the Army's*

Leader Development Task Force, published in 2013, provided an excellent summary of the challenges the Army faced. This document served as a valid assessment of the current state of professional military education and made recommendations for future study and adjustments for the Army. It was followed later that year by the new *Army Leader Development Strategy (ALDS)*, outlining the Army's strategy for dealing with those challenges. Nested under that strategy is the Army's plan for implementation, the recently updated (2017) *Army Concept for Training and Education*, produced by Training and Doctrine Command, outlines how the Army will operationalize the ALDS. Driven in part by these documents, the Army reorganized and consolidated the bulk of its training and education structure under The Army University to ensure unity of effort and command, as well as the ability to shape accreditation and perceptions of prestige.

To examine the Army's PME improvement efforts to date, Professor Kevin P. Kelley and Dr. Joan Johnson-Freese, both faculty at the Navy War College and frequent writers on issues of professional military education, provide a useful framework. They wrote that any academic institution must determine three things. It first must figure out what it wants from its graduates. From that answer, it must determine what to teach. Finally, the institution must determine who should teach.³ The Army must assess its professional military education system using the same framework.

The Army has taken several necessary and valuable steps to review and adjust the professional military education of its officer corps. However, these efforts appear to address only the first two questions raised by Kelley and Johnson-Freese: "What is expected of the graduates?" and "What should be taught?" The Army's recent publications and reorganization efforts focus almost exclusively on curriculum, the

student learning model, and broadening and accreditation in the image of civilian institutions of higher learning. As for “Who should teach?”, the ALDS and *Concept for Training and Education* talk only in generalities when addressing instructors. The ALDS states simply that the Army must “provide qualified, inspirational instructors who value giving back.”⁴ The *Concept* goes a bit further by discussing the need for “seasoned trainers, skilled teachers, experienced instructors, and adept facilitators.”⁵ However, these documents provide neither the requisite information for actually identifying these instructors nor procedures for properly assigning them to the correct positions. It is time for the Army to get beyond generalities and take the next step to truly address Professor Kelly and Dr. Johnson-Freeze’s third question, “Who should teach?” While the Army must address this question across the whole of its PME system, this paper will focus on the Captains’ Career Course for several reasons. This course is the first PME gateway into the ranks of more senior officer leadership and occurs at a critical junction in junior officer development. CCC occurs at a decisive point in an officer’s career at which the officer is making decisions regarding continued service. Of the four levels of PME it is the only course that employs officers to instruct their peers, which limits mentorship and educational opportunities for more in-depth development.

For decades, the Army has assigned captains to instruct the officer corps in the first half of its professional military education system, the Basic Officer Leaders Course, for lieutenants, and the Captains’ Career Course (CCC). After twelve months of successful company command those captains who wish may apply for instructor assignments at one of these courses. Personnel at each school review these application packets and, working with the assignment officers at Human Resources

Command, then select the captains for instructor positions.⁶ As a result of this process, most instructors at the Captains' Career Course have only one assignment more than their captain students. Based on rank and experience, instructors at CCC are essentially dealing with students who are peers. Despite the Army's recent efforts to revamp its professional military education system, its process for identifying and assigning instructors for this critical course remains unchanged.

Why It Matters

Through the efforts it has taken so far the Army clearly recognizes that it "must provide our future leaders with the best possible education in the military art, and other related fields, to make certain America retains its preeminence on tomorrow's battlefields."⁷ Not assessing and appropriately adjusting who is delivering the first half of that education, though, puts the entire endeavor at risk for several reasons. First, curriculum improvements, changes to learning models and teaching methodology, and technology exploitation, while good and needed, are not enough. Quality instructors are a critical component of the educational experience. Secondly, it is especially important to focus in this early phase of the officers' professional military education continuum, during what General (R) Gordon Sullivan, former Chief of Staff of the Army, called "this critical period when officers initially develop and come to terms with their professional identity."⁸ These students are the future of the officer corps. Finally, by failing to force an injection of proven talent into the instructor positions through deliberate changes to the selection, assignment, and promotion system the Army risks creating a "say-do" gap for the officer corps. The officers hear the Army say education is important but do not necessarily see the Army doing all the things that will make it so.

When then-Lieutenant General (now General) Robert B. Brown was the commander of the Army's Combined Arms Center he wrote, "Without an investment in faculty excellence, no amount of restructuring will produce the results we seek."⁹ What is being taught and how it is being taught cannot be divorced from those who teach it. This is recognized in civilian academia, as well. A well-known social scientist in the civilian education field, John Hattie, published a study in 2003 that measured what accounted for the variance in student performance. His study found that several variables affected student performance to varying degrees. The student's motivation and factors "related to levels of expectation and encouragement" accounted for 10% of the variance in student performance. The school itself, with factors like curriculum, organization, and procedures, accounted for another 10%. After the student himself, which accounted for 50%, teachers accounted for the remaining 30% of the variance in student performance.¹⁰ These findings indicate teachers account for over half of what can externally influence a student's performance. So, while the Army has made valuable adjustments to curriculum and organizational structure, Hattie's study suggests that such changes by themselves are not likely to have a substantial impact on student performance. The Army should now focus on making real changes in that category which accounts for the largest impact – the teachers themselves. Hattie asserts, "It is what teachers know, do, and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation."¹¹ General Martin Dempsey, at the time the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, summed it up best in 2012 when he said, "Simply put, we need the right folks teaching."¹²

However, the Army's strategy documents and surrounding literature do not address this very well. While some offer limited recommendations, most documents simply talk broadly about employing the right people. For example, the *Army Leader Development Strategy, 2013*, states the Army will "provide qualified, inspirational instructors who value giving back."¹³ A more recent Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) publication, the 2017 *Army Concept for Training and Education*, contains significant guidance for improving the curriculum development process. As for instructors, though, while the concept acknowledges that "recruiting, developing, and sustaining world class instructors is essential," it simply describes general desires of good qualifications and good facilitation skills without actually prescribing any process to assess, select and assign the best qualified instructors.¹⁴

Overall, there is a limited amount of PME-related literature that discusses instructors at all. And, the literature that does do so focuses almost exclusively on schools and programs traditionally dealing with the operational and strategic level, namely, intermediate level education (ILE), the senior service colleges (SSC), and general officer education. For the Army, that covers Command and General Staff College, the Army War College, and several courses for general officers, programs developed to educate officers in the ranks of Major and above. The early phase of PME, especially with respect to the various Captains' Career Courses, is mostly absent from the discussion because the existing literature primarily centers around preparing Army officers for actions at the traditionally defined strategic level, that is, advising civilian decision-makers, developing military strategy above the operational level, managing the enterprise, and complying with Joint requirements. However, given the enduring and

ever-increasing roles of junior officers in complex Joint and Combined operations at levels up to and including strategic, the Army cannot afford to continue to overlook this critical area of its officers' education.

While the Captains' Career Courses focus primarily at the tactical level, one should not underestimate their strategic impact. These courses must train captains for their immediate responsibilities in the tactical fight, no doubt. However, these are the officers who form the very foundation of the profession of arms, from which tomorrow's senior leaders will emerge. They are what LTG (R) Scales called "the military's officer seed corn."¹⁵ These officers will impact the Army immediately and in the long term, and their education should best prepare them for what lies ahead.

No period in the Army's history better highlights the strategic impact of thoughtful and dedicated junior officer education than the first half of the twentieth century. In the interwar period "many officers, especially midcareer officers – the future general officers of World War II – viewed the branch schools, also known as service schools, as 'the most important of all the schools in the military system of education.'"¹⁶ That line comes from Steven Thomas Barry's book, *Battalion Commanders at War*. In it he demonstrates that it was not Command and General Staff College or War College graduates commanding at the operational and strategic levels of war that carried the day in the critical Mediterranean Theater of Operations, a theater which could have stunted Allied pressure on the German war machine. Instead, it was those officers who had received quality training and education in the basic branch schools who displayed mental agility, adaptability, and leadership who forced victory in those early days of the war for the Americans: "Their battle-scarred and dirty success is a testament to the necessity of

professional armies to remain grounded in quality professional military education and rigorous training in both peacetime and war.”¹⁷ These schools are just as important today.

The Captains’ Career Courses help students, still young members of the officer corps with only one completed posting, continue becoming intimately familiar with the organizational culture. This is an important part of their educational journey, where, as Edgar Schein wrote, that culture is “...taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and react to organizational problems.”¹⁸ Today, though, those organizational problems are occurring in an environment where the lines between the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war, warfare, and the prevention of both, are not so clean. The environment in which graduates of CCC find themselves has changed exponentially since the Cold War environment on which the course designs were based:

The distributed nature of operations...has shifted responsibilities for key decisions in volatile, complex, ambiguous and uncertain environments down to new levels. As GEN George Casey stated, ‘today’s leaders are making critical decisions on the battlefield that only a decade ago were reserved for senior officers.’¹⁹

GEN Casey’s comments were specifically about warfighting, but “the new security environment has changed the relationship between the levels of war in ways that must be considered when determining an effective way to educate officers for the future.”²⁰ Today the graduates of these traditionally tactically-oriented “branch” schools are expected to operate on a daily basis in ways which have strategic implications, well before any shooting starts. In the current environment, for example, one might find a recent CCC graduate has deployed his or her company to an island in the Pacific as part of what United States (U.S.) Pacific Command calls Pacific Pathways. He or she

arrived there by ship and the mission will include partnering with host nation forces to build relationships, train their forces, and conduct combined live fire exercises. This company commander will split time between the training areas supervising training and the capital coordinating with the host nation's Ministry of Defense and the U.S. Embassy. A fellow CCC graduate may be found in the battalion tactical operations center, on another island, serving as an operations officer and working to set conditions to move the rest of the battalion to another island, perhaps another country altogether, all while testing new concepts like multi-domain battle. This scenario describes the conditions that constitute the tactical level today. This is what captains face immediately upon graduating from CCC: "Today's young officer is much more likely to be confronted by decisions that may have operational or even strategic consequences than were his Cold War predecessors. Today's missions...are more politically and culturally complex than were most Cold War missions."²¹ The Army's lead trainer, General Perkins, the Commanding General of TRADOC, clearly recognized the immediacy of addressing this level:

Instead of waiting for War College to teach strategic issues, the service needs to imbue strategic awareness from the start. 'We have this company commander from the 173rd Airborne Brigade meeting with the president of Lithuania,' Perkins told reporters at [last year's Association of the United States Army symposium]. 'He has to understand the strategic aspect...'²²

Beyond just responding to the current complex environment, the Army can shape its future through those schools that train and educate its captains. Many of the officers who graduate these schools will move on to higher levels, eventually serving as future battalion and brigade commanders. Before that they will be the "iron" captains and majors who serve as key staff officers in headquarters at every level of the Army, even

the Joint Force. As such, these officers must be armed with at least some familiarity with concepts outside of their branch-specific, tactical problem solving. This point is illustrated by a frustrated senior civilian at United States Strategic Command, who recently said, “[T]he Army has trained its officers to do things a certain way for ten years and then wants them to behave in a completely different way when they are assigned to a strategic level headquarters. It doesn’t often work well.”²³ This issue is only exacerbated by the Army’s common practice of filling staff positions with lower ranking officers than required. These points are reflected in an observation by then-Lieutenant General Brown in 2015. The former commanding general of the Combined Arms Center and Army University chancellor said, “Experience in the last decade of conflict suggests that some level of joint education may be valuable at the primary level of a commissioned officer’s education.”²⁴

Looking even longer-term, think tanks and Army analysts predict a future environment in which officers at all levels will require critical and creative thinking abilities, strategic perspective, and frames of reference beyond the Jominian tactical currently taught in the initial entry courses. For example, the *Capstone Concept for Joint Operations*, published in 2016, states that by 2030 “the Joint Force will conduct cross-domain operations at all echelons down to small-unit level.”²⁵ As the Army develops new concepts, doctrine, and equipment, graduates of CCC will be serving as strategic advisors and strategic leaders making important decisions that affect the viability of the Army and the Nation:

Thus, for all the missions our officers must perform—from warfighting to peacekeeping—waiting until the 20-year point in an officer’s career and then trying to transform officers from tacticians and operators to strategists during ten months at a senior service college may simply be too little, too

late, if we expect our officers to render the professional services that the nation now requires.²⁶

For these reasons and more, the Army must put organizational energy toward providing the best qualified instructors to educate its young officers. Otherwise, the strategy and resultant efforts to revitalize its professional military education cannot have the optimal and lasting effects the Army seeks. As its own Leader Development Task Force noted, “[I]f the Army indeed values developing others, then from an institutional perspective, the Army must do what it values and see to it that the very best officers are assigned to teaching and mentoring in professional military schools.”²⁷ To do so, however, the Army will have to embed mechanisms that change the officer corps’ perception of the value of teaching in the PME system. What the officer corps currently sees as important to career development and advancement are assignments in the inner rings and key staff positions for general officers, or serving as Task Force Senior Observer/Controllers at the Combat Training Centers. These jobs are perceived as critical for remaining competitive at central selection boards for promotion and commands. If assignments teaching at professional military education schools are not given equal footing on that career path, they will never be equally important to the officer corps.

The Way Ahead

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey clearly guided strategic leaders in his 2012 *Joint Education White Paper*. “Simply put, we need the right folks teaching.” General Dempsey continued, “...our rising generation should be shaped by the best and brightest...” He saw the problem with the culture clearly and wanted to change it, stating that “Within the military, instructor duty should be seen both

by the individuals and by the organization as an essential element of a successful career.”²⁸ Translated into executable tasks, that means assigning the best officers to be PME instructors and then rewarding them with promotion and command.

As the Army looks at its talent management practices to better serve its leader development strategy, it must shape those practices to reinvest its most talented personnel back into developing the future of the officer corps. This process should begin by identifying not just qualified potential instructors for CCC, but the *very best* qualified that the Army has to offer. While the captains who currently serve as faculty at these schools are certainly talented and capable officers, most simply do not have the broader education and experience required to deliver the education that today’s environment demands. Instead, the Army should assign much more senior officers with the requisite qualifications, gained from many more years of training, professional military education, and operational experience as instructors at each of the Army’s Captains’ Career Courses. Beyond just declaring it be done, the Army should also centralize their selection and then senior leaders should approve the list and provide guidance to future promotion and command selection boards as to the criticality of these officers having served as instructors.

This recommendation is not meant to imply that the current instructors at these schools are not doing a good job or that assignment officers, working with the schools’ chains of command, cannot select good candidates from the available pool; rather, it is about ensuring that the pool of candidates from which they are selecting is the right one – one filled with the best qualified officers the Army has to offer. This recommendation is about the Army’s senior leaders acting on what they say is important. This is about

using the Army's best available assets, into which it has invested many years of training, education, and experience, to gain a position of advantage in the evolving security environment.

Who Should Teach?

As mentioned previously, instructor billets at the Captains' Career Courses are filled by captains. These captains have between five and seven years of experience in the Army and are branch qualified, which in most branches means they have completed company command. Experiences differ, but most of these officers will have followed a very similar basic career path. The typical infantry captain, for example, will have completed the basic and career courses, completed assignments as a platoon leader and company executive officer, performed duty as a staff officer at the battalion or brigade level, and commanded a company.

Comparatively, a lieutenant colonel pins on his or her rank in their seventeenth year, "the hallmark of a successful career," according to Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-3, *Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management*.²⁹ Now two grades higher in rank, this senior officer has more than twice the amount of commissioned service as that captain instructor. In that additional time, he or she has completed multiple key and developmental jobs in the very environment for which the Army needs its CCC graduates to be prepared, to include serving as an executive officer and/or operations officer (or branch equivalent assignment) at the battalion or brigade level. He or she may have even completed one or more broadening assignments. Throughout it all these senior officers continued their practice of developing company grade officers. Significant to the argument for better qualifications

to teach at CCC, these officers graduated intermediate level education, their third level of PME.

An even more specific demographic of lieutenant colonels the Army should consider is the successful former battalion commander. These officers generally have, at a minimum, over twenty years of experience in the Army, anywhere from three to four times that of a captain instructor currently teaching CCC. These senior officers have commanded at both the direct and organizational levels. The average light infantry battalion commander, for example, has two years teaching, coaching, and mentoring – in a word, developing – company grade officers serving in the headquarters and staff, four different types of companies, and eight different types of platoons. Accounting for personnel rotation, for one former battalion commander that meant 97 separate company grade officers, spanning seven separate branches.³⁰

Within the cohort of former battalion commanders, those selected for and graduating a senior service college (SSC), they now have an additional one to two years of experience. More importantly, graduating the Army War College, or a comparable experience at one of the other SSCs or as a War College Fellow, gives these officers their fourth level of professional military education. At this level he or she studied the linkage from the operational to the strategic and policy levels, learned the key tenets of multiple military theorists and explored broadening concepts such as empathy, strategic advising, levels of analysis, and critical and creative thinking, to name just a few. These are important areas of study that help leaders navigate today's complex security environment. And, for the purposes of this study, this education,

combined with their experience, makes these officers particularly well-suited to teach at CCC.

Arguably the very best qualified to teach, however, are colonels that have not only had all the previously described education and experience, but who have also successfully completed brigade command. Former brigade commanders have anywhere from three to five years' additional experience, for a total of at least twenty-four years of commissioned service. The Army recognizes the value of its colonels, stating that the rank "is realized by a select few and truly constitutes the elite of the officer corps."³¹ Further, former brigade commanders completed a third level of organizational command, during which they were responsible for senior rating and developing company commanders in particular.

Currently, the Army assigns most lieutenant colonels and colonels to key staff billets at division and higher levels. The Army should instead reinvest some of these senior officers into faculty positions at the Captains' Career Courses for three reasons. First, these senior officers are the best military personnel available to instruct the Army's captains. They are the Army's experts, with the most up-to-date experience, reach back to the operational force, and far more training, education, and experience than the captains who currently serve as faculty. These men and women are exactly who the *Concept for Education and Training* said were needed: "Individuals who have studied their profession to a great depth...are valuable assets to retain as trainers and educators."³² Using these proven experts would also allow the institutional domain to better mirror its teacher-student relationship with the operational domain's leader development relationship. Secondly, assigning such valuable, well-developed human

capital to these positions will serve as an embedding mechanism to change the officer corps' culture to one that values its professional military education. Finally, because of the unique aspects of the career timeline beginning at lieutenant colonel, these senior officers represent a potent resource that is uniquely available. As the Army looks at the time, money, and sustainability of other avenues to develop and/or hire better instructors, the cost of using these proven instructors is simply prioritizing instructor positions over other positions. Each of these arguments will be examined further in the following sections.

The Army's Experts

By the time the average officer is promoted to lieutenant colonel, the Army has invested over seventeen years of training, education, and operational experience in that officer, more if that lieutenant colonel is a former battalion commander, and even more if he or she is an SSC graduate. A former brigade commander has at least twenty-one years of that experience. These officers are the Army's experts in tactics, operations and the development of company grade officers. With over ten years more experience than the captains currently teaching at CCC, at the very minimum, these senior officers have operated in, worked to understand, and developed others for service in today's volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environment, spanning not just the tactical and operational, but also the strategic level. They are not only subject matter experts, but also seasoned leaders who can provide the appropriate context to better facilitate the students' learning and preparation. When those students are preparing themselves to lead operations in places like Lithuania or on a distant island in the Pacific, as described earlier, a school-house training regimen based on Jominian tactical problem solving, facilitated by an instructor with relatively limited experience, will only be so

helpful. Even if their captain instructor had been deployed on a similar operation, that officer's experience is narrowly limited. On the other hand, lieutenant colonels on the various staffs and the executing battalion and brigade commanders are nested within larger brigade, division, and even echelons above corps operations, coordination, and synchronization that enabled these types of operations, are routinely exposed to strategic leadership in Joint and Combined operations, providing them much better context and understanding. More importantly, they can apply their years of training, education, and experience to complex situations at all levels, providing the students with useful insights. These experiences, at these levels, provide senior officers with exposure to dealing with complex problem sets, usually not well-defined, operating across multiple domains, often with strategic implications. That better postures them to facilitate students' preparation for the current environment, as well as dealing with future complexity. Considering the current and future environments in which CCC graduates will have to operate, senior officers who have substantial experience working in this environment are far better qualified to instruct them than less experienced captains with less professional military education.

In addition to the expertise they bring, assigning lieutenant colonels, or even colonels, to teach captains would allow leader development in the institutional domain to better mirror that of the operational domain. In the operational domain, the Army depends on these senior leaders to develop its captains. Employing former commanders at this level as CCC instructors would allow the Army to take advantage of the many years these officers spent perfecting their leader development skills on the very demographic they would teach. Former battalion and brigade commanders are at

the height of their leader development skills and will bring a relevant perspective to the education of these fledgling officers by providing cogent insight to the student on what their next rater and senior rater are expecting. Former commander or not, employing senior officers at the grade of O-5 and O-6 to teach the captains at these courses could potentially lead to a mentor-mentee relationship that would serve the officers and the Army for the remainder of their careers. Additionally, this would not be a reinvestment in just the individual students; rather, these more developed senior officers would also provide the institutions relevancy and reach back to the operational force and its senior leaders. They have been executing in the environment, nested into the operational and strategic levels, and networked with strategic decision makers. As the institutional and operational domains wrestle with incorporating new concepts, doctrines, technology, and equipment, these officers can best help facilitate.

Change the Culture

As discussed earlier, there is wide-spread recognition, both within and outside the Army, that the Army needs to change its culture toward valuing education, and in particular, its professional military education system. The Army's leadership has repeatedly stated how important PME is, made some needed changes to PME curriculum at all levels, and reorganized much of the structure of the education system, most notably reorganizing under a "university" system in Army University. However, some would classify most of those efforts as reinforcing mechanisms for change. By taking steps to assign its best qualified officers as faculty, senior leaders could seize the opportunity to use embedding mechanisms to truly put the Army on the path to real change. Centrally assigning resources as limited and valuable as lieutenant colonels and colonels as instructors, and subsequently promoting and selecting them for higher

command, would employ multiple embedding mechanisms: “In other words, if PME is important, then the Army must institute policies that underscore the importance of PME.”³³ Few things demonstrate to Army officers what is important, thereby affecting their behavior, as clearly as a centralized process that ends with the Chief of Staff of the Army approving (or disapproving) selections, by name. When the Army elevates requirements of instructor positions to include only those having proven successful throughout a career’s worth of training, education, and operational experience, centralizes the screening and selection process, and then raises the approval level to that of the Army’s senior leaders, then the officer corps will know that PME is truly important to the Army’s leadership. Then momentum will grow. Then the culture will begin to change.

Better Use of Existing Resources

Finally, the Army has an opportunity to maximize its use of on-hand human capital. Officers at the rank of lieutenant colonel and colonel represent means that are uniquely available. At the grade of lieutenant colonel, the officer career timeline becomes very regimented because it is anchored on two centralized selection boards, one for battalion command and then one for attendance of senior service college. Because the Army wants officers considered by these boards as cohort year groups, assignment types and timings at this grade are predictable and more centrally managed. Consequently, at any given time, the lieutenant colonels in each year group are generally equally available (or unavailable) for particular assignments. This provides a much wider pool of eligible officer from each year group from which to select the best to be instructors. This is in significant contrast to the current process for selecting instructors. Compounding the issue of assigning much less experienced captains as

instructors is the fact that they are at the mercy of local commands' timelines. These timelines dictate the captains' placement in staff and company command positions before they can even apply to be instructors, so there can be wider variance in timelines of individual captains among the same year group throughout the same brigade. That variance is multiplied by the number of brigades throughout the Army. Subsequently, in any given assignment cycle one of the limiting factors to selecting the best to instruct under the current system is that many of these captains are not available. By using lieutenant colonels, though, the Army can access nearly entire year groups for consideration as instructors. Right now, the Army prioritizes assignment of successful lieutenant colonels, for example, to work for senior civilian leaders or flag officers (commonly called "black book" jobs), serve as a division primary staff officer, serve in a Joint billet, or serve as an Observer/Controller at a Combat Training Center, in that order.³⁴ Any of these officers not assigned to one of those positions will move to various staff positions throughout different Army headquarters. The Army is missing an opportunity to exploit this resource. More so than at any other time in their career up to this point, lieutenant colonels present a uniform pool from which the Army could select the very best to instruct at the PME schools. If, as the former CAC commander said, "the ultimate goal is to improve the overall quality of educational outputs through better use of existing resources,"³⁵ this is a way to start.

Implementation

General Odierno, then Chief of Staff of the Army, wrote in a 2015 *Military Review* that "talent management and leader development are intrinsically linked."³⁶ In that article, like most literature on this subject, he was talking about how to better manage the students themselves to provide the best leader development possible. However,

students are only part of the PME equation. Instructors are an equally critical part, and they must also be managed with a deliberate, thoughtful approach.

Though not many, there are some ideas in the literature for getting the right instructors into the classrooms. Lieutenant General (retired) Robert Scales, former commandant of the Army War College, argues that the only way to make it happen is for Congress to legislate that no officer will be confirmed to general officer without having completed a teaching assignment.³⁷ This option would require significant input from political leadership that may be viewed as not warranting that level of involvement. While enshrining this requirement in law would certainly make it important, others argue that the Army can solve this problem internally. For example, Keith Ferguson, an educator for over 30 years and a staff and faculty instructor and developer for Army Logistics University, recommends establishing a separate military occupational specialty for PME instructors.³⁸ While this option might entice officers who really want to teach it would certainly not ensure teaching is seen as a vital gate on a career path toward higher promotion and command. More concerning, though, this option would exclude the very officers for which this paper argues: the Army's subject matter experts, fresh from the environment, with over twenty years of training, education, and operational experience.

Still others have proposed options that are less complex or disruptive. Dr. Nicholas Murray, an Associate Professor in the Department of Military History at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, suggests that instructor positions should be designated as key (commonly referred to as KD [Key & Developmental] positions), and required for career progression.³⁹ This option would achieve the effect

LTG (r) Scales was seeking, but without getting Congress involved. While there could be multiple variations and timing considerations for this option, inserting a KD requirement as senior commanders are coming out of command would be minimally disruptive to career timelines while simultaneously getting the best qualified instructors into the classroom. These same timing considerations could also be applied to another proposed approach: convening a centralized board to select instructors, recommended in the 2013 *Chief of Staff of the Army's Leader Development Task Force Report*.⁴⁰

While these last two options seem the most promising, there is an even simpler option that the Army's senior leaders should consider: The Chief of Staff of the Army could simply order Colonels Management Office (COMO) and Human Resources Command (HRC) to assign selected lieutenant colonels, and even colonels, to serve in these faculty billets. Such a directive would not be unprecedented. Mentioned earlier in this paper, the case of officers needing to attend their schools on time is an effective example. The Chief of Staff of the Army simply ordered it so and the assignment and career management bureaucracy caught up. There are several options to implement such a directive. The Army could keep the actions with the assignment officers but provide specific manning guidance prioritizing the instructor positions. Similar to the board option, but with much less rigidity, the Army could also convene a panel composed of the assignment branches at COMO and HRC, or more appropriately, by Army University, to select the best qualified officers. Regardless of the process chosen, that process must produce a slate of qualified candidates to be approved (or adjusted, as required) by the Chief of Staff of the Army, similar to battalion and brigade command selection slates.

Whatever selection process is chosen, it will only work as an embedding mechanism that truly changes the culture if the selected officers are then rewarded for successful performance in their teaching assignments. As Lieutenant General Scales said, “The truth is, PME reform is not a pedagogical problem. It’s a personnel problem that can be addressed only by changing the military’s reward system to favor those with the intellectual right stuff.”⁴¹ For that ‘reward system’ to work first means that the assignment cannot interfere with the officers’ career timelines. Using lieutenant colonels, as this paper proposes, would not. Again, because their career timeline at this grade is so regimented and uniformly managed, any new process for selection and assignment can be inserted very deliberately and thoughtfully. Second, and closely linked, the teaching assignments would have to be equated with those established top tier assignments mentioned earlier. PME faculty positions must be briefed by assignment personnel, mentored by seniors, and sought after by juniors as valued professional development opportunities. Directing them as a CSA priority would go a long way toward creating this change. Making faculty assignments the result of a competitive board would also enhance their status. But what will really drive it home is the third reward: the CSA’s guidance to the promotion and command selection boards each year emphasizing how important to the Army teaching is and that the board members should weight such service in their evaluation of officers’ files—and the results of those boards reflect accordingly.

As with all human resourcing decisions, this proposed change to the Army’s Leader Development Strategy has force management implications and some element of risk. Implementing this strategy will clearly have an effect on the Army’s manpower

resources. Assigning lieutenant colonels or colonels to PME faculty positions means they are not available for other assignments, though that is no different than any other assignment decision. Though any in-depth personnel management analysis is outside the scope of this paper, initial examination indicates feasibility. The Army's latest Personnel Management Authorization Document (PMAD), which tells the human resourcing enterprise what positions are required to be filled, shows there are less than two hundred CCC instructor positions across the eighteen branch schools.⁴² Using as a reference the FY17 Competitive Category Lieutenant Colonel Board results of 1,150 officers selected for promotion to LTC, this means that to fill every CCC instructor position each year would take approximately 17% of a year group.⁴³ But if the instructor assignments were for two years and offset by half, the requirement would only take approximately 8% of a year group. Three-year assignments, offset in thirds, would take that number down to 6%. Again, this was not in-depth manpower analysis. However, the Army's senior leaders should find an estimated 6 to 8% investment into the future of the officer corps acceptable. At the least, this argument requires additional study.

Additionally, implementing a more centralized, systematic selection and assignment process could increase the workload on the human resourcing enterprise, specifically the assignment branches at Human Resources Command and Senior Leader Division, and if a board or panel is used, the DA Secretariat. Considering the strategic importance of assigning the best officers to instruct the foundation of the officer corps, these impacts should be found acceptable.

As for suitability, this strategy seems to challenge the idea discussed in some of the literature that it takes time and resources to develop quality instructors. However, as

this paper argued, the Army spends at least sixteen years, at the minimum, preparing lieutenant colonels to train, educate, and develop junior officers. Additionally, nothing in this strategy precludes continuing to improve curriculum or experimentation with teaching methods and learning models at the school houses. The Army may even discover that assigning a proven instructor, fine-tuned for the very student he or she is teaching, may mean it can spend fewer resources on constant, centralized efforts to modernize and update curriculum and methods.

It is important to acknowledge that this strategy also has significant intrinsic risk. This risk manifests itself in two potential 'half-steps.' The first 'half-step' would occur if the Army chooses to change the position requirements on the Tables of Distribution and Allowances (TDA) for these courses to reflect a requirement for lieutenant colonels, but then not change either the manning guidance for filling nor adjust the procedures for selection and assignment. If the Army does this, not only will the strategy not work, it could make the situation worse. Having moved the requirements from the large pool of captains to the much smaller pool of lieutenant colonels and colonels without a forcing mechanism to ensure the correct officers show up to the classrooms, the best of these officers will continue to be assigned to positions in the operational force. The second 'half-step' would occur if the Army begins to select and assign the best officers, through whichever adjusted process, but then does not reward those same officers. Again, rewarding them translates to continued on-pace selection for subsequent promotions and commands. If these cohorts of officers do not see comparable promotion and command selection rates, the officer corps will take note and resist the culture change. Younger officers approaching the window of consideration will avoid the assignments,

and senior officers will mentor against those assignments. If forced to fill the positions despite lagging promotion and command trends, then these cohorts, because of their time in service, could simply retire instead.

The negative impacts of employing this strategy are minimal. Managing human resources will always require the Army to identify what is important and prioritize its human capital accordingly. This initiative would not more negatively affect human resourcing than any other. The Army can easily mitigate the risk associated with this strategy by ensuring whole-hearted implementation and not 'half-stepping.'

Conclusion

The Army has recognized the criticality of providing quality professional military education for its officer corps to best posture itself to win in a complex world. To do so, the Army has taken several actions in recent years to determine the expectations of the graduates and adjust what is taught and how it is delivered. Now the Army must take the next step and address who should deliver that education. By assigning at least lieutenant colonels as instructors at the various Captains' Career Courses, the Army can seize an opportunity to exploit its own experts, developed through an investment of many years in their training, education, and experience, to better instruct its newest officers. This change to who is instructing the officer corps will have strategic impacts immediately and for the future of the Army. By selecting, assigning, and promoting these officers the Army's senior leadership can embed the culture change they are seeking.

This change is both suitable and feasible, the impacts are within reason, and the risk is acceptable. Assigning its senior officers to instruct the Army's fledgling officers will embed a culture of valuing education and will shape the Army's leaders not only for

tomorrow, but for years in the future. According to *Strategic Studies Institute* expert Leonard Wong, “Real culture change—the type that transforms not just behavior, but also underlying beliefs and values—is transmitted via the actions of leadership.”⁴⁴ By acting now to exploit this valuable, proven, on-hand resource to shape its future leaders earlier, Army senior leaders put the officer corps, thus the Army and the nation, in a position of advantage.

The Army’s Strategic Guidance identified producing ‘adaptive Army leaders for a complex world’ as its first strategic priority. To do this the Army declared it must “develop the talent, both physically and intellectually, in the quality and quantity that will support the leader base of the future force” and educate leaders “capable of applying not only tactics, but far more importantly, the appropriate operational art, informed by strategy.”⁴⁵ Accomplishing this strategic priority is within reach. The Army’s senior leaders need only take the next step.

Endnotes

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