Investing in Soldier professional development enriches skill sets, builds lethality, and ultimately contributes to LSCO success. The Army can uphold a global competitive advantage and strengthen Soldiers' lifelong learning by supporting their PME. (U.S. Army photo by NCOLCoE Interactive Multimedia Instruction)

Revolutionizing Soldier Professional Development

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Investing in Soldiers' professional development enriches skill sets, builds lethality, and ultimately contributes to large-scale combat operations (LSCO) success. The Army can strengthen Soldiers' lifelong learning by supporting their professional military education (PME), upholding a global competitive advantage.

According to the Department of the Army (DA, 2024), the Army 2030-2040 learning concept argues that winning in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) against peer and near-peer adversaries in a highly contested Operational Environment (OE) "requires an Army learning ecosystem that can innovate and adapt even faster than the last decade" (p. 11).

Such efforts are the driving force behind the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Leadership Center of Excellence (NCOLCoE), Division of Curriculum Development (DCD) mission: "To provide high quality, professional curriculum that is rigorous, current, relevant, sequential, and progressive which helps educate and develop Soldiers and noncommissioned officers in support of lifelong learning" (NCOLCoE, DCD, 2024).

DCD serves as the nucleus of Soldier curriculum development. It also orchestrates a sophisticated learning infrastructure predicated on innovation to deliver heightened educational outcomes.

For Soldiers, such efforts offer a segue to strengthen and accommodate their knowledge, skills, behaviors, and

preferences (KSB-Ps) to fulfill the Army's demand and accelerate their performance throughout the operational environment. These efforts reveal a focus on today's curriculum to accomplish tomorrow's demands.

Investing in Soldier professional development is essential to strengthening the Army profession and building lethality to win wars.

The People Strategy: 2023-2025

As the global environment evolves and our adversaries seek to disrupt harmony, our curriculum must empower Soldiers to exploit opportunities and weaknesses to win decisively against adversary aggression.

According to the DA (2022), the Army must "modernize how it develops its primary weapons—Soldiers and leaders" (p. 62). It outlined a line of effort to develop talent through six strategic outcomes.

1. Implementing enduring and evolving career-long assessments
2. Instilling the Army Profession by improving PME
3. Modernizing and instilling career-long leader development
4. Continuously incorporating emerging technologies into training and education
5. Maximizing Soldier credentialing opportunities
6. Modernizing doctrine to support requirements in Multi-Domain environments

Establishing a framework systematically to strengthen leader skill sets and professional knowledge provides a lifelong learning approach for Soldiers.

To further promote the strategy, DCD redesigned lessons in its learning infrastructure to strengthen Soldier professional development and achieve the Army's objective.

Investing in Soldier professional development through advanced training and education is crucial for building a more effective and adaptable force. This continuous learning approach prepares Soldiers to excel in future large-scale combat operations. (U.S. Army photo by NCOLCoE Interactive Multimedia Instruction)

Master Leader Course

The Master Leader Course (MLC) is a learner-centered and facilitator-guided leadership course designed to introduce senior NCOs to stress-related problems while learning.

The primary goal is to heighten their critical thinking skills while incorporating quantifiable data and emotional intelligence to solve problems effectively.

The course introduces cross-cultural competence through two specific lenses: unit culture and cultural awareness.

Cultural awareness provides required "culture-general" knowledge, skills, and attributes, enabling leaders and Soldiers to adapt and influence effectively in any cross-cultural environment.

Additionally, MLC examines the power of leading unit culture by applying methods of sustaining and instigating change in enduring unit values, beliefs, and norms. Examples include diversity, equity, and inclusion or efforts to incorporate data literacy.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

The diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) addition to MLC helps leaders understand the importance of fostering a climate of dignity and respect through trust. This deliberate effort fights harmful behaviors and builds combat readiness.

By promoting DE&I, leaders can harness the power of diverse perspectives, fostering innovation and problem-solving. Moreover, it cultivates an environment where every member feels valued and heard, enhancing team cohesion and morale, which are crucial for effective combat operations.

Data Literacy

The MLC team analyzes how best to incorporate data literacy, introducing leaders to the fundamentals of reading, working, analyzing, and communicating with data. Furthermore, exploring the Army's four levels of data analytics (Descriptive, Diagnostic, Predictive, and Prescriptive) equips leaders with a comprehensive understanding of data analysis, enabling them to extract meaningful information for rapid decision-making.

Mastering data analytics levels allows leaders to transform raw data into actionable insights, enhancing their strategy and operations effectiveness. This data-driven approach cultivates a culture of transparency and accountability, fostering evidence-based decision-making and continuous improvement.

Senior Leader Course & Advanced Leader Course NCO C3

The integrated Senior Leader Course (SLC) and Advanced Leader Course (ALC) incorporate NCO Common Core Competencies (C3), which

Professional military education focuses on developing leaders through advanced training and a rigorous curriculum. It prepares leaders to guide Soldiers and effectively adapt to complex operational environments. (U.S. Army photo by NCOLCoE Interactive Multimedia Instruction)

include readiness, leadership, operations, training management, communications, and program management. These competencies are integrated into all NCO Professional Military Education (NCOPME), regardless of Military Occupational Specialty (MOS), rank, or position.

The SLC/ALC NCO C3 is a robust platform designed to enhance Soldier skills, knowledge, and abilities, enabling them to operate effectively as professional members of a lethal force.

Furthermore, it bolsters tactical proficiency and fosters a profound understanding of the strategic aspects of military operations. This holistic approach equips Soldiers with the tools they need to navigate complex challenges in varied operational environments, fortifying the force's overall combat readiness.

Career-Long Assessments

Career-long assessments are the Army's premier effort to provide leaders with feedback about their skills, capabilities, and tendencies. Within the ALC NCO C3, the Athena Leader Self-Development Tool establishes a framework to increase Soldiers' self-awareness of leadership capabilities and behaviors.

It uses the following assessments to update or create Soldiers' individual development plan (IDP) (Center for Army Leadership [CAL], n.d.):

- Leader180 (LDR180) – Ability to receive/ provide leader feedback
- Individual Adaptability (I-ADAPT) – Assesses leaders' ability to adapt

Soldiers can implement the tool in the SLC NCO C3 through the following assessments:

- Leader360 (LDR360) Feedback Report – Ability to receive/provide leader feedback
- Army Critical Thinking Test (ACTT) – Measures critical thinking and metacognition
- Sensemaking Assessment – Measures decision-making in complex situations

The Harding Project

The Army introduced the Harding Project into the SLC/ALC NCO C3 as an initiative to "organize those interested in renewing professional publications, inform that community, and solicit their ideas" (Griffiths and Lipsky, 2023). It provides leaders an instrumental opportunity to enhance

Army professional writing and publicly convey their thoughts to the force.

Articles on conventional nuclear integration would be an example. These texts could provide leaders with a comprehensive understanding of how nuclear weapons affect operations at the platoon level (including nuclear-armed adversaries, hazards of a nuclear weapon detonation, and mitigating risk presented by nuclear weapons throughout the OE).

Basic Leader Course

The Basic Leader Course (BLC) establishes a foundation for learning fundamental skills to operate and lead small teams. It also allows young leaders to acquire leadership skills, knowledge, and experience to function as NCOs.

The course reinstituted land navigation to afford Soldiers essential skills and knowledge to maneuver through unfamiliar terrain as the Army shifts to LSCO.

Such efforts include a map reading refresher and leadership assessments on land navigation events (day and night).

Furthermore, BLC incorporated leader stakes, which consist of stations where Soldiers demonstrate their leadership ability by performing assorted skill level 20 tasks to increase their lethality and warfighting capability.

The Transformation

Ultimately, investing in Soldier professional development is imperative as transformation is predicated on lifelong learning in support of PME. This deliberate approach is invaluable as Soldiers, who are critical thinkers and problem-solvers, become tremendous assets able to strengthen organizations' combat readiness, build lethality, and win decisively in an ever-changing, complex global environment.

Through the curriculum's evolution, these efforts are pivotal to orchestrating an invaluable platform focused on accomplishing future demands. ∎

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