

Increased Education and Training Opportunities

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MEMORANDUM FOR Faculty Advisor, SGM Estrada, Group Room L06, Fort Bliss,
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SUBJECT: Increasing Education in the Military

1. Thesis Statement: The foundation of the noncommissioned officers corps is able to remain effective through increased education and training opportunities provided by institutional training, self development, and operational assignments.

2. Discussion. The Noncommissioned Officer's Corp is a vital asset of the Army. It is the backbone that keeps the Corps united as one. This is made possible because of the critical institutional training, self development, and operational assignments that the NCOs have endured over their career. This leader development structure has prepared NCOs for increased positions of responsibility throughout the Army.

3. Counterstatement. NCOs are failing to capitalize on the institutional training, self development and operational assignments afforded to them in the military. Without these educational tools, NCOs will fail to develop their leadership competencies thus, compromising the future of the NCO Corps.

4. Conclusion. The need to teach our NCOs how to think rather than what to think has never been clearer. To defeat adaptive enemies, we must out think them in order to out-fight them.

5. Haines Award. We do not request that the Haines Award Selection Board consider this paper for the General Haines Award for Excellence in Research. Writing Research Papers Tenth Edition by James D. Lester is the guide used in the preparation of this research paper.



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Outline

Thesis: The foundation of the noncommissioned officers corps is able to remain effective through increased education and training opportunities provided by institutional training, self development, and operational assignments.

I. Institutional training prepares NCOs to become competent leaders before assuming leadership positions.

- A. The Army provides NCOs the education necessary to perform their assigned duties effectively, and understand the significance of those duties.
- B. NCOs will only be able to educate and train their soldiers on the degree of knowledge that has been imparted to them.
- C. The Army noncommissioned officers education system (NCOES) provides formal education and training to NCOs.
- D. The Army is preparing to launch major changes in the NCO Education system.

II. NCOs will be required to maintain technical proficiency through self-development.

- A. The new Montgomery GI Bill has evolved to meet the needs of a more versatile and educated force.
- B. Tuition Assistance has become a great asset working in unison with the Montgomery GI Bill.
- C. The expansion of the Service Member's Opportunity Colleges Army Degree (SOCAD) program has been helpful for NCOs seeking degrees.
- D. eARMYU and other distance learning programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of a high OPTEMPO force, and provide NCOs the opportunity to complete their degree anywhere in the world.
- E. The Army is using Computer Based Training (CBTs) to replace correspondence courses, shorten institutional training courses, and provide training opportunities when equipment is unavailable.

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III. Operational assignments provide NCOs the opportunity to broaden their knowledge and refine their skills by using what they have learned through on the job training (OJT), lessons learned, and previous experiences.

A. Learning by Doing (OJT)

B. Lessons Learned

C. Educating through Experience

IV. The Army is not providing the proper resources and directions to properly educate, train, and develop our NCOs for future assignments.

A. The NCOES system does not provide the NCOs with the proper resources and training doctrine needed to become effective leaders in today's operational environment.

B. A large majority of NCOs aren't taking advantage of obtaining a college degree due to the current promotion rate of those who doesn't possess a college degree.

C. Colleges are offering numerous extended studies program which make its easy for soldiers who are deployed or away from home stations to start or complete their college requirements.

D. The Army level Project Warrior Training Program is a useless tool.

E. Lessons learned from combat operations should be implemented within the NCO Academies common core phase and 10 level instructions such as squad drill and platoon drill should be deleted immediately.

V. The need to teach our NCOs how to think rather than what to think has never been clearer. To defeat adaptive enemies, we must out think them in order to out-fight them.

The noncommissioned officers role is constantly changing, and the success of the noncommissioned officers corps will only sustain itself through increased education and training opportunities. In today's troubled world, raising the educational level of the military is not a matter of choice. An educated Army is a sign of the nation's strength, and educating The Army can be as challenging and rewarding as it has been for the past 229 years. It is critical that noncommissioned officers skills and knowledge remain current in order to have a competent Army. Noncommissioned officers are responsible for the individual training of soldiers. This responsibility becomes inevitable for NCOs to receive excellent training in military skills and professional leadership. NCOs will only be able to educate and train their soldiers on the degree of knowledge that has been imparted to them. There are three avenues available for NCOs to acquire the skills necessary to gain this level of competence. These three avenues are institutional training, self development, and operational assignments.

Institutional training is provided through the Noncommissioned officers education system (NCOES). There are currently four levels of NCOES that are used to educate the NCO corps. They are as follow: Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC), Basic Noncommissioned Officers Course (BNCOC), Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC), and the Sergeants Major Course (SMC). These courses provide NCOs with progressive and sequential leader training relevant to the duties, responsibilities and missions they will need to become effective leaders.

The objectives for the NCOES education program is setup to provide the education for NCOs to perform his assigned duties effectively, and to enable him to understand the significance of those duties in relation to the function of his unit and the overall mission

of the Army. It also enables each NCO to meet the educational requirements for promotion and provide them continuing education opportunities.

However, The Army has launched major changes to the NCO Education System that took place during the fall of 2004 and is scheduled to continue with changes during the early part of 2005. These new changes will revolutionize the way soldiers are trained, educated and promoted. The final design of the NCOES revamp will abandon policies that restrict school attendance to soldiers selected for promotion. While officials have yet to determine what the future NCOES will look like, it's clear soldiers will receive training and education that will be conducive to the foundation of the NCO corps.

Senior CSMs had the opportunity to provide input on the issue at their annual Nominative Command Sergeant Major conference held at Fort Bliss, Texas, January 2004. The CSMs that attended the conference determined that to best sustain the NCO corps, education and training should be delivered to soldiers before they are considered for promotion. Their decision was supported by personnel and training officials. Therefore, the sequence "educate, train, select, then promote" will likely be the central theme of the new NCOES. If this strategy is adopted, long-term changes will take two to three years to completely implement.

Under the new format, NCOES courses, particularly those centering on leadership will have a strong warrior focus and will include lessons learned from recent operations. In order to adjust to the Army's new modular force. TRADOC has implemented some excellent training tools for teaching NCOs to become effective leaders in combat. Project Warrior (PW) is one such program. It's a TRADOC program consisting of a permanent change of station (PCS) for two years at a CTC (Phase I) followed by a two year

assignment to a TRADOC school in a designated Project Warrior position. The objective of PW is to utilize the expertise developed by observer controllers at the Combat Training Centers and NCOs returning from recent deployments in Operation Enduring Freedom and Operation Iraqi Freedom and inject this expertise into the rest of the Army. PW also increases the relevancy of doctrine and training development products and improves the quality of instruction as the Army continues to transform and support the Global war on Terrorism. The goal of the project warrior program is to have qualified instructors and SGLs at the Engineer School and, or, alternate branch service schools. This program is already in effect throughout the Army. It is another way to expedite lessons learned from recent conflicts and train NCOs to become more warrior focused.

Throughout history there have never been two wars alike. The lessons learned from past wars are excellent starting points but they are out dated. Lessons learned should be captured as soon as possible and sent back out into the field. TRADOC is in the process of adding lessons learned to the NCOES curriculum. Lessons-learned have heavily influenced training changes. These lessons have been captured by numerous NCOs on the battlefield and returned to The Center for Army lessons learned (CALL) in order to assist NCOs how to remain effective leaders during combat.

With a goal of reorganizing and refocusing NCOES for an Army at war, officials at the Pentagon still are uneasy about changing a system that has been a strong foundation for the NCO corps and is regarded as the model of soldier professional development.

For over forty years, the Army has rested its strength on a solid NCO corps. In order to remain a strong corps, the Army has provided NCOs with the opportunity to educate themselves through higher education. Education has become so accessible that ones

mission or geographic location is no longer a barrier to meeting educational goals.

Technology, improved programs, and a genuine effort by The Army to increase educational opportunities for enlisted Soldiers are really paying off. It is important that all Noncommissioned Officers understand how The Army education system has evolved, the educational programs and opportunities that are available, and the means to fund self development.

Noncommissioned Officers (NCOs) have made great strides since the Viet Nam War in the area of civilian and military education. Gone are the days when NCOs are looked at by officers as incompetent and lacking intelligence. In fact, in many cases NCOs have Masters Degrees, and are actually more educated than the officers they work for. One of the main reasons for the education boom for NCOs is the systematic effort to improve the image of the NCO Corps from the Viet Nam era. After the war the Army began to transition to an all volunteer force. Many of the NCOs that remained in the Army were drafted just after High School, and many more had failed to achieve a High School Diploma. In the 1980's The Army raised the bar and made a High School diploma a requirement for service, and began implementing programs to increase both military and civilian education opportunities for its enlisted force.

The new Montgomery GI Bill was introduced in 1984 and replaced the Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP). At the time, tuition costs in most universities were on the rise, and the military was pressed to come up with a program that met these costs. The program called for soldiers to contribute 1,200 dollars over the first 12 months of their enlistment. The government would then match the contribution at a rate of nine to one which provided a 10,800 dollar benefit over a four year enlistment. Combined with

The Army College Fund, the Montgomery GI Bill proved to be very successful. The Army saw a dramatic increase in their recruiting. The program was very attractive to those recruits who could not afford to finance their own education. Initially, the premise for participation in the program was that soldiers would complete their enlistment and then attend college after their term of service had ended.

The Army soon learned that while this benefit did boost recruiting, it had an adverse impact on retention. Soldiers that enrolled in the Montgomery GI Bill were leaving The Army in large numbers to take advantage of the benefit. A major problem with the GI Bill was that it was nearly impossible to use the benefit while on active duty. The Army's Tuition Assistance program was antiquated, and could not be used in conjunction with the Montgomery GI Bill. The GI Bill was handled by the Veterans Administration, and for the most part, could only be used when a soldier left active duty. Another problem with the GI Bill is that it isolated those that participated in the VEAP because those personnel were denied enrollment. The Army, working in conjunction with the other services, took drastic steps to fix this anomaly. The Montgomery GI Bill expanded in the 90's and allowed those personnel enrolled in VEAP to enroll in the GI Bill. The Army successfully turned what was once an enlistment incentive into a program that increased retention. The GI Bill has continued to evolve into a more flexible program. Today, participants can use their GI Bill benefits while on active duty for a variety of educational programs, and civilian certifications.

The Army has implemented major changes to its Tuition Assistance program so that it can work in unison with the GI Bill to finance a variety of educational programs. To fully understand the value of this benefit one must understand how it evolved into the program

you see today. Originally, the Tuition Assistance program would pay up to 75% of the cost of tuition. This program was beneficial in many respects, but did not provide the availability and accessibility for all Soldiers to take advantage of. Soldiers with demanding missions and without the means to pay the remaining 25% of the tuition cost and books were unable to participate. The funds for the program were disbursed at the installation level and commanders had the latitude to divert these funds to other programs deemed more important. This meant that some installations didn't offer the benefit, and many other installations ran out of money in the middle of the year. Further, Tuition Assistance could not be used in conjunction with the GI Bill.

The Tuition Assistance Program the Army has today has the flexibility required to meet the increased educational demands. The program is fully funded, and offers each NCO access to 4,500.00 per Fiscal Year. In many cases this is enough money to fully cover tuition costs for a variety of degree programs. These funds can also be used for qualified civilian certification courses as well. There are instances where tuition costs exceed 4,500.00 in a given year, but through a program called Top Up, NCOs can access their GI Bill to cover the remaining costs.

The expansion of the Service Member's Opportunity Colleges Army Degree (SOCAD) program has been helpful for NCOs seeking degrees. SOCAD is a system of colleges working together to make it possible for Soldiers to begin a degree program with one university or college and complete the degree with courses taken at other schools as they relocate during their Army careers. Enrolling in a SOCAD college is extremely beneficial and provides a number of benefits. Enrollees have a "home college" that evaluates their prior learning experiences (including Army schools, MOSs, and national

tests). The home college establishes a clear degree plan with requirements that will not change. Soldiers are guaranteed transfer of courses as they move among SOCAD colleges during the course of their Army career. Soldiers do not have to start over with a different college, evaluation, and set of degree requirements every time they relocate. All of the credit is transferred back to the home college which grants their degree when they finish their degree plan. Since its inception, SOCAD has seen a dramatic increase in the number of colleges and universities in the program. This provides a great deal of flexibility.

The initiation of the Electronic Army University (eARMYU), and other distance learning programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of a high OPTEMPO force, and provide NCOs the opportunity to complete their degree anywhere in the world. eARMYU started out as a retention tool where soldiers were given a free laptop computer and printer in conjunction with enrollment in the fully funded degree program. eARMYU has expanded to allow enrollment of all interested Soldiers, but only those who choose eARMYU as a reenlistment option will receive the free laptop computer and printer. What is significant about eARMYU is that it is fully funded to include the cost of books. eARMYU offers a variety of degree programs, and meets the demands of soldiers. Many other universities have jumped on the distance learning band wagon, and are offering degree programs that also meet the demands of Soldiers. One should ensure, that what ever university they choose, that they are a member of SOCAD, and that they are accredited.

The Army is using Computer Based Training (CBTs) to replace correspondence courses, to shorten institutional training courses, and provide training opportunities when

equipment is unavailable. Taking advantage of available technology has become the most important part of self development. The Army has demonstrated that technology reduces costs, saves time, and provides the needed flexibility to a highly mobile force.

The Army Correspondence Course program is rapidly becoming computer based. It wasn't that long ago that a Soldier was required to fill out paperwork requesting a course. The request was sent out by mail, and then depending on the availability of books, the material was mailed to the soldier. If the books were not available the soldier would have to wait. There was also a rule that a Soldier could only be enrolled in one course at any given time. This meant that if the books weren't available, or got lost in the mail the Soldier would have to sit in limbo until the situation was resolved. When Soldiers deployed or were reassigned the problems were magnified. Simply put, the process took a long time. This program has been completely replaced with a computer based system that is faster, and directly linked to your records.

Smart Force is another computer based form of correspondence courses that are available to every NCO. Smart Force is completely computer based and upon completion of a course Soldiers can print their completion certificate to be used for promotion points. Smart Force is available now, but will soon migrate to a program called Skill Port which will provide even more improvements. Skill Port will continue to expand over the coming months and years.

The Army is also using technology to shorten some of its institutional training courses. This started with the Battle Staff Course in the late 90's. NCOs enrolled in the course were sent CDs through the mail and were required to complete the training prior to course attendance. Upon completion of the training NCOs are required to log on to the

USASMA web site and take a test. This eliminated two weeks of the course, and over time saved The Army money. The success of this program resulted in its expansion to the First Sergeant course which was cut in half. There are plans to eliminate the common corps of the rest of the NCOES courses with CBTs.

One of the most dynamic ways to use CBTs comes in the area of simulation. Through the AKO portal NCOs have at their disposal a multitude of CBTs that offer hands-on training on equipment that may not be readily available at the installation they are assigned to. This is without question the best way to remain technically proficient in your MOS. This is especially true for those that are pulled away from their MOS to perform Drill Sergeant, Recruiter, and other special duties. With the click of a mouse NCO's can actually see what the equipment looks like, perform power-up procedures, and even do maintenance on the equipment. This system was widely tested during the fielding of the SBCTs. NCOs assigned to future SBCTs can simply go on-line and start training on and learning about the new equipment before they arrive at the installation.

The Army has provided a continually improving environment for self development. It would be difficult for anyone to argue that their duties prevent them from participating in some of these programs. Certainly, the Global War on Terror has temporarily suspended the ability for some NCOs to participate in these programs. The good news is that the Army has put flexible programs in place so that when NCOs return from deployment they can pick up where they left off. In some instances, facilities are available so that NCOs can continue to participate while on deployment. Self development has become part of the foundation of the NCO Corps, and those that choose not to take advantage of the educational opportunities will be left behind.

Those who chose to take advantage of institutional training and self development will sustain and become effective NCOs. They will be able to combine institutional training and the education they received and use it during their operational assignments. Education empowers NCOs with the ability to teach and train Soldiers when functional courses isn't available and Soldiers are forced to learn through on the job training.

On-the-job training (OJT) can be one of the best training methods because it is planned, organized, and conducted at the Soldiers home station or as needed in a theater of operation. As the war in Iraq continues, deploying units are discovering that they need Soldiers trained on a wider range of combat skills. OJT is programmed when formal courses are not available to fulfill training needs or when time does not permit. A sound OJT program can also enhance unit morale and productivity. OJT is generally the most common method used to broaden Soldiers skills and increase their knowledge. It is particularly appropriate for developing proficiency skills unique to a units mission especially jobs that are relatively easy to learn and require locally-owned equipment and facilities.

Transfer of training is probably the single most touted advantage of OJT. The sooner people are able to use the skills you teach them, the more likely they will be able to incorporate them permanently into both their brains and their performance. With on the job training, the line from learning to doing covers the shortest possible distance. But in order to take advantage of this benefit, OJT should be designed and managed more like formal training that takes place in a classroom or like a well designed training programs in any format.

When OJT has been carefully planned, organizations can effectively shorten break in periods for new Soldiers and relieve Soldier anxiety. OJT can identify Soldiers who might have learning problems. This can help leaders find a better ways to tailor their training to each individual. A well planned OJT program is one of the most cost effective tools for making an organization more effective and productive. Self-development ties together NCOs training and experience to make them a better leader, which ultimately benefits their units' combat readiness.

OJT can never be replaced by institutional training. The foundation of the NCOs corps is training Soldiers for combat. NCOs will always be responsible for the hands on training of their Soldiers. As the Army upgrades and modernizes its equipment, units must maintain a sound and well planned OJT program.

Experience plays a key role in maintaining a solid NCO corps. NCOs are sometime task with making difficult decisions. These decisions can sometime be the difference between life and death. But as NCOs we are taught to think quickly and make rational decisions. This is why the Army has reposed special trust and confidence in the fidelity and abilities of its NCOs. This is why soldiers of lesser rank are required to obey NCOs lawful orders. As noncommissioned officers and the backbone of the NCO corps, experience has led NCOs to be responsible for their actions.

At training bases across the USA, the Army has empowered NCOs to educate new troops the types of skills they might have gotten in the past only from combat or advanced training courses. The Army has transformed Fort Polk, La., into a simulation of Iraq, converting 18 training sites into replicas of Middle Eastern towns and villages. It has contracted hundreds of Iraqi-Americans to portray insurgents, police and religious

leaders in combat exercises. They also offer detailed instructions on how to recognize and remotely detonate improvised explosive devices (IEDs). They are trained in the use of electronic jammers to block insurgents' ability to explode bombs with cell phones or garage-door openers. All this critical training is made possible from feedback shared from experiences that our NCOs have encountered down range. Once again the NCO corps is proving to be solid foundation by being able to think and articulate its ideas through training and education.

To say that the non-commissioned officer education system (NCOES) is providing NCOs with progressive and sequential leaders training relevant to the duties, responsibilities and mission that they will need to become effective leaders is far from being true.

The current NCOES is great and it does provide some institutional training that will prepare future NCOs for challenges assignments and positions. However, the significantly problem with the current system is that the training takes place just a tap too late in the soldier or NCO career. For example, let's take a look at the Primary Leadership Development Course (PLDC) that is designed to teach basic leadership and soldering skills to promotable E-4s. Many of these soldiers have already developed these skills from their units. Therefore, having E-4s to attend PLDC is a bad choice for our new transforming Army. We need to capitalize on these skills earlier into the soldier career so that future NCOs will have the skills needed for the challenging assignments. Skills taught in PLDC are some of same skills that young PFCs are displaying on a daily basis in Iraq and Afghanistan. So, if the Army is going to prepare soldiers for their challenging duties, and responsibilities then it needs to reevaluate its current system and

allow soldiers to attend PLDC much earlier. This type of early institutional training would better prepare our future NCOs for challenging assignments that benefits the soldier, the unit and the Army.

Just recently the Army re-evaluated the common core classes taught in Basic Noncommissioned officer course (BNCOC) by instituting lesson learned from combat and deleting procedures of instructions (POI) like drill and ceremonies (BNCOC-SACC-POI, 2004). This is a very productive move on the Army in teaching NCOs the current operational environment. However, we're faced with the enormous problem in the way the Human Resource Command (HRC) selects these Sergeants to attend BNCOC. Under the current system Sergeants are selected for school once they're put on the promotion standing list and most have already served in their next level of responsibility. This is too late if we going to use institutional training to effective prepare NCOs well in advance for these challenging assignments. We need to place newly promoted Sergeants on the standing list to attend BNCOC ASAP so they can be trained earlier in their careers and the Army can get the best qualified Sergeant that can adapt to the Army's changing environment. Let's look at another opposing argument at a much greater scale. Even though the First Sergeant Course is not a NCOES course I would to make an argument that the NCOES isn't providing NCOs with progressive and sequential leader training. For example in comparing the First Sergeant Course POI (521-SQIM, 2002) with the Sergeant Major Course it was concluded that the same classes are taught. So, why do we have students who have graduated from the Sergeants Major Course have to go and attend the First Sergeant Course in order to receive their Mike identifier? Therefore, the

Sergeant Major Course which is a NCOES course isn't providing that sequential leaders' training that's being addressed.

The education level of NCOs has made great strides since the Vietnam War is true. However, the facts saying that NCOs are more educated than officers are not true. The latest Dantes statistics shows that there are 12, 278 total enlisted soldiers with a BA/BS degree while there are 38, 669 Officers with a BA/BS degree. Even with the entire enlisted force, we can conclude that a larger NCO Corp is far less educated than our officer counterparts. Some other statistics acquired from the Human Resource Command Senior NCOs Promotion Boards during the previous Sergeant First Class Board, Master Sergeants Board and the Command Sergeant Major/Sergeants Major Board will show that there has been much success but a great deal is still warranted if we're going to be an educated and professional NCO Corps.

The December 2004 results for the Sergeant First Class board showed that there were 33,359 Staff Sergeants that were eligible for promotion; out of that number only 927 possess a BA/BS degree. The November 2004 results for the Master Sergeants' Board showed that there were 21,957 Sergeant First Classes that were eligible for promotion; out of that number only 1,073 possess a BA/BS degree. The December 2004 results for the Sergeant Majors' Board showed that there were 3,665 Master Sergeants that were eligible for promotion; out of that number only 645 possess a BA/BS degree.

In 2002 the Army implemented changes to its Tuition Assistance (TA) program allowing unison with the GI Bill, Master Degree acceptance into the program and raising the tuition cap from 75% to 100%. This was very beneficial for soldiers; however, there were still some shortcomings with this program. The opposing argument with this

program is that it places a Fiscal Year TA cap of \$4,500.00 so those soldiers who attended course that were 6 months or longer or those seeking a Master Degree and taking two courses a semester found themselves running out of TA funds. Another problem was that the program was managed at the installation commander's discretion, which he had means to divert funds to other programs that he felt that was more important. The Army 100% tuition is a great incentive tool but it still falls short compared to others like the Virginia State Department Agencies for an example which provide full tuition assistance without a yearly cap to assist their employees with their educational needs. Civilian organizations like these are hurting the recruitment of the Army because many are seeing that the Army isn't the only organization that offers great benefits packages. (Ralph Debar, 2003).

The Montgomery GI Bill argument is that this program was designed to boost recruitment. Soldiers who contributed to the fund were matched by the Army. Many soldiers never used their Montgomery GI Bill because they never reach their educational opportunities while on active duty. However, those who were pursuing a Master Degree or those who ran out of tuition assistance funds were allowed to use their GI Bill to pay for their tuition cost. So, to say the soldiers never had the opportunity to use their GI Bill while on active duty is false. Those personnel who was in the VEAP education program were allowed the opportunity to enrolled into the Montgomery GI Bill however, they had to have the needed the lump sum \$2,500 to switch over into the program. Many soldiers that had stop and withdrew their VEAP contributions found themselves in this situation. Another thing was that soldiers who enlisted into Army are given only 3 working days to accept or decline this program, which explanation on the different rules and procedures

aren't clear and thoroughly understood by new recruits. The Montgomery GI Bill which evolves into more flexible programs was deemed as being unfair to some. It allowed the different services to offer extra money for those enlisting in critical jobs, which is controlled by each service. This could be seen as being unfair since every soldier is contributing the same amount of money each month for 12 months. However, those who enlisted into critical jobs and who qualified for the Army College Fund or "Kicker" could lose out on this program if it wasn't included in their enlistment agreement. So, many soldiers later on in their Army career found that they were uninformed about this program at no fault of there's.

The Electronic Army University (eArmyU) has assisted many soldiers in reaching their educational opportunities when stationed abroad. The initial problem with this program was that it wasn't offered at every military education. Many soldiers who were enrolled with this program at one installation experience problems trying to continue along their path. Not until 01 October 2004 that this program was offered at every military installation that has an Army Education Center. This program also place enrollment criteria's that prevent every soldier from participating. Soldiers who didn't have a minimum of 3 years left on their enlistment contract weren't allowed into the program. This is seemed as been unfair for those soldiers who are preparing to leave the Army and on extended missions around the world who are trying to reach their education goals using eArmyU. The Army shouldn't establish these types of guidelines because every soldier should be granted the same benefits that any other soldier receives. Along with these guidelines established in 2004, the Army changed its technology packed procedures and only offered it to soldiers who would volunteer to reenlist for duty in

combat operations. Soldiers enrolled into the eArmyU program must select a college from the 29 accredited colleges or universities that is a member of the Service member Opportunity Colleges Army Degrees (SOCAD); no exceptions.

The On the job program is a good program in training soldiers on their skills and the job they performed in combat situations. However, this program is not geared the same for every MOS. In the Combat Arms specialties it's a great tool to broaden soldier's skills and increase the unit's morale because it focuses on the same skills used during peacetime as in wartime. This would be a little different for soldiers in the Combat Service Support (CSS), who perform their job in peace time just a little bit different and under different circumstances than they do in war time, plus the additional basic combat tactics skills that are needed. An opposing point is this, taking an Infantry Private and placing him into an OJT program that continues to enhance his Infantry combat tactics skills which in turn will make him better qualified to perform his combat mission. For one, this is true because these are the skills that he performs on a daily basis, in peacetime and war time. On the other hand, if you take a CSS you would have to develop an OJT program that focuses on his new job skills and the basics combat skills needed in combat. So, the OJT program is a great ideal for combat arms but it would be a challenge for units with soldiers in the CSS arena. Another problem is that many soldiers will learn new skills but make not learn them too standard. On many cases another soldier will teach another soldier the way they learn the job and sometimes this might now be in the best interest of the units and can jeopardize the mission if not corrected in a timely manner. Another point is when that soldier leaves his current unit trained one way and reports to another unit which that same job is done totally different. Sometimes this can cause a

soldier to be looked upon as been incompetent. Another way they too much of it is haphazard and unplanned. Some of the questions would be who needs to be trained and how will they be identified, how will the units track the OJT program all together, and who will instruct the program and what will be the paper trail to ensure soldiers stay proficient in their new skills.

The U.S. Army has long set the standard across the world in its commitment to NCO development. We are one of the few Armies that entrust our NCOs with major responsibilities. This strong legacy is what the NCO corps is built on. We empower our NCOs to train soldiers for certainty while educating them for uncertainty.

The certainty confronting today's NCOs is probable combat. NCOs must be ready to train and lead soldiers in one or both of the present conflicts we are faced with in today's Army.

Just as training must reflect the hard certainties of the conflict before us, NCO education must address its uncertainties. George C. Marshall once said that an Army at peace must go to school. Our challenge is to go to school while at war. The need to teach our NCOs how to think rather than what to think has never been clearer. To defeat adaptive enemies, we must out think them in order to out-fight them.

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