

History Essay

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Introduction

Since the beginning of the Army there have been Non Commissioned Officers. The professionalism of the NCO has changed drastically since World War II. In this thesis you find throughout time NCO has evolved into a more competent and small unit leader driven profession. Using baseball as a comparison, the players today have become bigger, faster, and smarter. This also holds true for the NCO Corps. The NCO has become more of a leader; through the ever changing military evaluation system, the individual NCO requirements, and civil education. Since World War II there is evidence with the addition to the military evaluation system, NCOES requirements, and civil education that there has not been an impact on the professionalism of a NCO. Some will argue nothing has changed. The professionalism has not changed; but rather the professionalism has developed into a more advanced level of the old boys system. However both in the baseball world and the overall NCO evaluation there are none without faults. This thesis will prove this is the year of the NCO and that we are the greatest NCOs of all time.

From the time period of World War II to the Korean War there was not an official Army Non Commissioned Officer Enlisted Reporting system. Only in the late sixties had this system developed. The purpose of this system was to provide a measurement of the proficiency of enlisted personnel to perform the duties of an NCO in their military occupational specialty (MOS). The evaluation score was a combination of values from written test results, enlisted efficiency reports, and performance tests when necessary. One of the key factors was to verify the NCO military job proficiency. Each NCO had to achieve a score of 70 or higher to be considered qualified in their MOS. This system was not primarily designed with the training mission in mind. The next change implemented in the required amount of military and civilian education development consisted of NCOs having quarterly counseling. This made the NCOER a more thorough evaluation of a soldier's overall performance. Presently, the Army will soon start screening senior NCOs with the intention of alleviating two philosophies. One that senior NCOs can stay in the military and not perform their duties and responsibilities as professional NCOs and stay in the military with the ideal that the military is job security. Secondly, the notion that an NCO must have an Article 15 or some other disciplinary action to prove themselves or the general consensus they were a good NCO leader.

During the time period of World War II mostly all military personnel were either volunteers, drafted, or lacking experience. Most of the time the appointed authority was poor and promotions were given based on being in the right place at the right time such as an NCO being killed in action and the next soldier in line taking the position rather than being based on standards and evaluations. Lack of personnel management and poor training took a terrible toll on the Army's NCO Corps. Many platoon and squad leaders were hesitant or unsure about the position that they obtained. Although it seemed there was not a structured appointment of

authority during World War II, afterwards LTC's or regiment commanders were given the authority to promote NCO's to E-5-E-7. Appointment authority during the Korean War was also poor. The expansion of the Army and the decision to not keep draftees and mobilized reserve components led to many NCO positions being filled by inexperienced military personnel lacking lengthy experience and training. In 1958 the Army added two grades to the NCO ranks. These pay grades, E-8 and E-9. During the Vietnam War a majority of the soldiers were drafted creating a lack of good and sound appointment authority and the "Shake 'n Bake" sergeants. Soldiers would attend an NCO course for eight weeks and then be promoted to sergeant. These sergeants lacked experience and skill but had great attitudes. The perception that E-5's and E-6's primarily were promoted by the "Shake 'n Bake" system was strongly believed. Field grade commanders could be promoted to E-5 or E-6 and Headquarters Department of the Army was authorized to promote to E-7 through E-9. Presently, appointment of authority is based on the documented approval system and levels of appointment are based on the precise number of required levels of NCOs in each particular MOS and grade. In 1986, the Army for the first time established a prerequisite for promotion with the creation of MILPO. The appointment authority is set up using the military evaluation system, military requirements and a civilian education. In this current system for the promotion to E-5 or E-6 they use the above system and a local selection board. The Department of the Army selects E-7 and higher taking the personality out of the appointment of these level NCOs.

During World War II, the major problem was the rapid expansion of the Army that led to a decrease in experienced men in the NCO ranks. Also, a concern was the practice of quickly advancing soldiers in rank who showed potential as combat losses reduced the number of experienced NCOs. There were no requirements for having a high school diploma. A new

emphasis on education began in the post-World War II era. This emphasis encouraged soldiers to become better educated in order to advance in rank.

In June 1947, the first Brigade's NCO school opened in Germany. Eight years later standards for NCO academies were established. By the end of the 1950's, there were approximately 180,000 soldiers attending some type of NCO military leadership courses in the continental United States. In the early 1950's the Army developed the Army Education Program. This provided a number of ways for the enlisted man to attain a high school or college diploma. Vietnam proved to be a junior leader's war with limited amount of control. Much of the burden of combat leadership fell on the NCOs. The Army began the Noncommissioned Officer Candidate Course. A graduate of this 12-week course became an E-5; those in the top five percent became an E-6. There was an additional 10 weeks of hands-on training that followed and the NCOs were then sent to Vietnam. Senior NCOs had mixed feelings about the program the "shake-and-bake" program.

After the Vietnam War, it was clear NCOs needed more NCO military educational training throughout their careers. The NCO education system became formalized in the 70's and 80's. Today's NCO Education System includes Warrior Leader Course (WLC), Basic Noncommissioned Officer Course (BNCOC), Advanced Noncommissioned Officer Course (ANCOC), and the US Army Sergeant Major Course (USASMC). The Sergeant Major Course first began in January 1973 as the training for the Army's most senior NCO's. In 1986 PLDC later know as WLC became a mandatory prerequisite for promotion to staff sergeant. This was the first time a course actually became mandatory for promotion. Currently, it is mandated that

all NCOs attend BNCOC prior to being promoted to sergeant first class and attend ANCOC prior to promotion to master sergeant.

Presently with the requirements of NCO level military courses those individuals requesting to get promoted to the next higher rank must participate in some higher civilian education besides the general high school diploma. Before the mass use of computers NCOs found it difficult to go to college. Those individuals that attended college were only afforded the opportunity to attend at the discretion of their commander, or if they were in a particular MOS that was more structured for a work day, or they were not in a unit that did not deploy nor had many field problems. This created the statement “If your unit is in the field and you are in college the professor is not coming out to conduct your college class.” With availability of computers and college online NCOs are afforded the opportunity to further their education beyond high school. In fact, it is not uncommon for NCOs to have a master degree.

Several changes have been made to the amount of points of the EPS system. The areas of the EPS system include the Army Physical Fitness Test, individual weapons qualification, levels of NCO leadership schooling, military education and civilian education, time in grade and time in service, and the promotion board either local or at DA. These areas remain present in the EPS system, but the amount of points allocated per area has changed. One of the most recent changes in this system is alleviating the amount of points corresponding to courses as a separate area to accumulate points. With today’s computer technology NCOs are able to add points to certain areas and validate the amount of points they have instead of previously having a one year review board.

Since World War II there have been very few NCOs with a college education. Through Vietnam attending college meant a no draft policy. Present day the opportunity for NCOs to attend college has grown immensely primarily through new enlisted soldiers with a partial or a full college education degree. With adaptation to the new computer age NCOs have been given the opportunity to attend college even in a time of conflict.

Previously correspondence courses were mailed to soldiers. This caused a delay based on the lack of effort and or response from an NCO. Today with the computer system NCOs are able to complete correspondence immediately and in a timely fashion. One down side to the use of the computer is NCOs are able to find the answers on the internet and this leads to the lack of professionalism.

As stated in the introduction with the comparison between baseball and NCO. Nothing has changed. If like the baseball problem with steroids, the professionalism of the NCO has become worse. Over the years there are numerous cases of NCOs acting unprofessional in their attempt to get promoted. The electronic passing of correspondence course in 2007 and as early as 1999. The Senior NCO using the buddy system to enhance their NCOERs to promote their protégé. Other Senior NCOs not doing the required quarterly counseling and just cut and pasting bullets commend on NCOER to insure the junior NCO receives an excellent rating. Another example is the local board unjustly awarding soldiers points based on their verbal presentation to the board members. Certain career fields are not able to attend a traditional college. Soldiers with access to computers can have an unfair advantage over other soldiers due to their ability to take online courses. On the flip side, NCOs can have a lot of college, but no real NCO leadership.

Conclusion

The NCO; the leader of the Army Transformation. The Army has become a more deployable, agile and responsive force. The NCO with his or her specialized schooling is the leader most responsible for individual and small unit training, building the foundation for the Army's objective force. New technology enables all NCOs to cover more ground and maintain better situational awareness. Individual and collective tasks are more complex, requiring small unit leaders to coordinate and develop their soldiers to a degree never before seen. This would not be possible without the change in NCO training and schooling, appointment authority, military evaluation system, NCOERS requirements, and civil education. The Army has always benefited from well trained and educated NCOs who could and do display initiative and make decisions. These qualities are more important than ever in Army Transformation. Although the Army has many technological improvements and increased situational awareness, the NCO must make decisions that utilize everything the Army has to offer.

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