

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

Self-Development: An Important Aspect of Leader Development

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ABSTRACT

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The Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study identified the importance of self-development for lifelong professional learning, going so far as to conclude the Army does not adequately address self-development in training and leadership doctrine, Army leaders do not emphasize its value, and the Army provides neither the tools nor the support to enable its leaders to make self-development an effective component of lifelong learning. This SRP examines the concept and process of self-development, assesses the adequacy of self-development and examines ATLDP findings on the concept. It further analyzes the relevance for the Army of self-directed learning described in adult education theory and employed by civilian industry. It concludes with recommendations to enhance the role self-development in the Army leader development process. At the very least, this SRP should increase awareness of a neglected concept and generate dialogue on self-development.

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PREFACE

Thanks to the men and women I have been privileged to serve with over the last twenty years. They have influenced me in so many ways that it would be impossible to thank each of them individually.

I would like to thank my classmate Catherine McNerney, Professor Jim Hanlon, and my father Frank Snow, for reading drafts of my SRP and providing valuable feedback. I must also thank my advisor, Dr. Craig Bullis, for taking me under his wing for this project and treating me like a fellow professional throughout the entire process.

Lastly, I would like to thank my family - Lisa, Lauren, Kelly, and Maggie - for the support they have provided; they never complained about the time I spent conducting research in the library or the long hours I spent writing. They realize that writing has never come easy for me.

It is my hope that this SRP will cause leaders to recognize the importance of self-development as a viable component of leader development.

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SELF-DEVELOPMENT: AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF LEADER DEVELOPMENT

One thing is clear -- competent and confident leaders will be the key to winning our Nation's wars. Leadership in the next century will be even more challenging than it is now. Army leaders will have to be continuous learners to an unprecedented degree, with emotional maturity and flexibility to adapt and lead in a rapidly changing and lethal environment

—LTG Thomas N. Burnette¹

This epigraph appeared in the 1998 Army Green book in an article entitled "Building Better Leaders." In light of what has occurred since then, to include the Army's response to terrorist acts on September 11th, 2001, operations in support of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan, and our ongoing war with Iraq, I do not think anyone would disagree with LTG Burnette, who served then as the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (DCSOPS).

BACKGROUND

One of the most significant Army responsibilities is to develop leaders to serve the country's needs.² Fortunately, our Army has invested, and continues to invest, a significant amount of time, effort, and resources into determining how to best meet this requirement. Certainly no one can question the Army's dedication to leader development. As LTG Ulmer, former III Corps Commander and CEO of the Center for Creative Leadership, observed, "no corporation in the world equals the Army's commitment to continuing formal education."³ Since 1998, the Chief of Staff, Army (CSA) has chartered a series of panels to look specifically at training and leader development for officers, warrant officers, noncommissioned officers, and civilians to determine their applicability and suitability for the Interim Force.⁴ These panels identified many shortcomings within our leader development doctrine and practices and offered recommendations to overcome these shortcomings. The Army's leadership has considered many of these shortcomings and undertaken a number of initiatives to address many of them. However, most of these initiatives have been directed towards Institutional Training and Education.

One finding of the Army Training and Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study provided the genesis for this paper. The study stressed the importance of self-development through lifelong learning; it concluded that the Army does not adequately address self-development in training and leadership doctrine: Army leaders do not emphasize its value, and the Army provides insufficient tools and the support to enable its leaders to make self-development an effective component of lifelong learning.⁵ This finding struck a chord because it

confirms my experiences while serving almost twenty years in the Army. One of the of the requirements during the first course at the Army War College is to develop an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). In this plan, students are required to outline their personal and professional objectives for the year, identify the resources required to address those objectives, decide when they expect to accomplish them, and specify what would constitute success. This was an interesting exercise - well worth the effort. Unfortunately, it was the first time in my Army career that I had been required to do this. I queried many of my peers. Not surprisingly, I was not alone. In this SRP, the terms individual learning plan (ILP) and developmental action plan (the term used in FM 22-100) are used interchangeably.

PURPOSE

This SRP examines the self-development concept and process in Army doctrine for adequacy; it assesses the ATLDP findings on self-development, identifying shortcomings. It will also review self-directed learning (SDL) as described in adult education theory and employed in civilian industry to determine its relevance for the Army. It concludes with recommendations to enhance the role of self-development in the Army's leader development process. At the very least, this SRP should increase awareness of a neglected concept and generate dialogue on self-development.

To assess the validity of the ATLDP findings and their recommendations, it is important to understand the Army definition of self-development in comparison to other definitions of self-development, and to understand where self-development fits within the Army Leader Development Model.

DEFINITION

Self-development is defined in numerous doctrinal manuals including FM 22-100, Military Leadership: Be, Know, Do; DA PAM 350-58, Leader Development for America's Army; DA PAM 600-3, Commissioned Officer Development and Career Management; and most recently, FM 7-0, Training the Force. DA PAM 350-58 defines self-development as a planned progressive and sequential program designed to enhance and sustain job-related competencies. The pamphlet then specifies self-development components as individual study, research, professional reading and writing, practice, and self-assessment.⁶ FM 22-100 defines self-development as follows: "a process you should use to enhance previously acquired skills, knowledge, and experience. Its goal is to increase your readiness and potential for positions of greater responsibility. Effective self-development focuses on aspects of your character,

knowledge, and capabilities you believe need developing or improving. Self-development is continuous: it takes place during institutional training and operational assignments.⁷

Although consistent, both DA PAM 350-58 and DA PAM 600-3 describe self-development as a process leaders should use to enhance *previously acquired* (my emphasis) skills, knowledge, and experience. FM 22-100 and FM 7-0 also acknowledge the importance of enhancing previously acquired skills (individual strengths), but their emphasis appears to shift to minimizing weaknesses and achieving individual development goals. Why this subtle change was made is not clear. FM 7-0 defines self-development as:

a planned process involving the leader and the subordinate being developed. It enhances previously acquired skills, knowledge, behaviors, and experience; contributes to personal development; and highlights the potential for progressively more complex and higher-level assignments. Self-development focuses on maximizing individual strengths, minimizing weaknesses, and achieving individual development goals. Initial self-development is very structured and generally narrow in focus. The focus broadens as individuals understand their strengths and weaknesses, determine their individual needs, and become more experienced. Each soldier's knowledge and perspective increases with experience, institutional training, and operational assignments, and is accelerated and broadened by specific, goal-oriented self-development actions.⁸

FM 7-0 offers the best definition for self-development because it succinctly defines self-development as a process that occurs between a leader and a subordinate, then it offers three rationale for self-development: (1) to enhance previously acquired skills, knowledge, behaviors, and experience, (2) to minimize weaknesses, or (3) to achieve individual development goals. Additionally, the manual cites the importance of self-development for preparation for more complex and higher-level assignments. It asserts that self-development enhances a leader's effectiveness and thus makes it every leader's responsibility. Perhaps the authors of FM 7-0 clarified the definition of self-development in response to recommendations contained in the ATLDP Officer Study, since one of the recommendations of the ATLDP Officer Study was to publish a definition for self-development.⁹ Obviously the authors of the ATLDP Officer Study Report were not satisfied with prior definitions.

SELF DEVELOPMENT IN THE ARMY LEADER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

DA PAM 350-58, Leader Development for America's Army - The Enduring Legacy (1994), describes the Army's overall approach to leader development. It states that Army leaders gain their skills, knowledge, and behavior (SKB) through a combination of institutional training and

education, operational assignments, and self-development. These components identify the three pillars depicted in the Army Leader Development Process model.¹⁰

The model below clearly shows the three pillars of leader development as interconnected, progressive, and sequential.

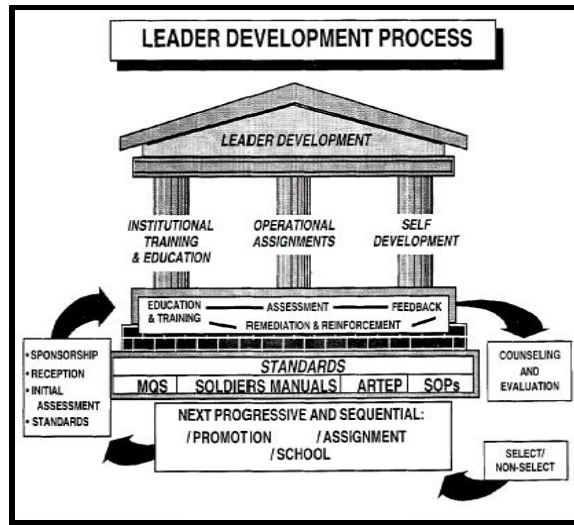


FIGURE 1. LEADER DEVELOPMENT MODEL

DA PAM 350-58 then elaborates on the concept:

Self-development initiatives focus on maximizing leader strengths, minimizing weaknesses, and achieving individual leader goals. The concept is more than fixing weaknesses or reinforcing strengths. Self-development is a continuous process—taking place during institutional training and education, and during operational assignments—that should also stretch and broaden the individual beyond the job or training. It's a joint effort involving commanders, leaders, supervisors, and subordinates. The individual and his leader structure self-development actions to meet specific individual goals and needs. Initial self-development is generally narrow in scope. The focus broadens as individuals learn their strengths and weaknesses, determine needs, and become more independent. Leaders prepare developmental action plans to map self-development efforts and set priorities for improving performance and achieving maximum potential. Self-development actions may include self-study, reading programs, and civilian education courses that support development goals.¹¹

DA PAM 350-58 then anchors the leader development system in two principles and twelve imperatives (see Appendix A).¹² Of these principles and imperatives, only the final two imperatives pertain to self-development: Imperative 11 asserts that the Army should stress the individual's responsibility for leader development and that the best career manager is the individual, something many leaders hear frequently over the course of their career—but an

imperative that may not serve officers well. Indeed, the recent publication of FM 7-0, Training the Force, clearly states that self-development is a shared responsibility between a leader and a subordinate. Imperative 11 also asserts that appropriate remedial or reinforcing action is crucial to the leader's success, then states that self-development programs should include activities that stretch the individual beyond the job or institutional training, such as a university action.¹³ Many unidentified activities could "stretch the individual." It is unclear why only university education is mentioned. Imperative 12 asserts that leaders must identify, specify, and refine self-development requirements, noting that the Army can help individuals by identifying appropriate resources contributing to self-development.¹⁴ Although Imperative 12 accurately identifies a core self-development requirement, anecdotal feedback from peers and the results of the ATLDP Officer Study Report to the Army indicates that Army leaders fall short in executing this imperative.

A figure in DA PAM 350-58 outlines Leader Development responsibilities.

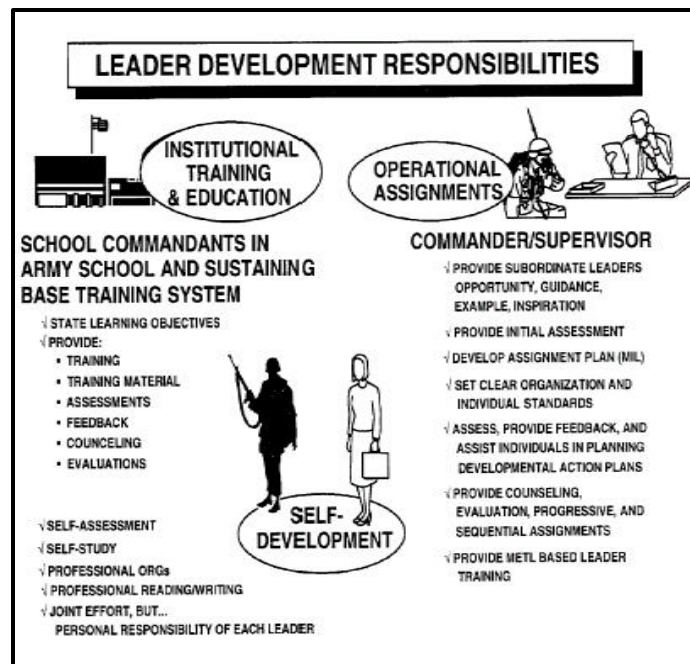


FIGURE 2. LEADER DEVELOPMENT RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to Figure 2 above, DA PAM 350-58 explains in Chapter Four the concept of self-development, clearly specifying commanders', leaders', supervisors' and subordinate leaders' responsibilities.¹⁵ Although DA PAM 350-58 emphasizes self-development as an important pillar of our leader development process, it does not provide adequate details on how

to fulfill many of these identified responsibilities. It does not tell leaders, supervisors or commanders how to provide the initial assessment. It assumes that leaders have been trained on how to do this and that they have the tools to do this. Unfortunately, as LTG Ulmer points out, neither the military nor corporate organizations do this well.¹⁶ He further states that “methods for measuring unit or individual efficiency and effectiveness are the most neglected element in managerial education, and both kinds of organizations assume leader competence to perform these delicate and important tasks.”¹⁷ The Army does not do a good job of educating leaders on how to provide feedback and assist individuals in preparing developmental action plans. FM 22-100 addresses the importance of developmental action plans, but the Army does not devote sufficient time and effort in our Officer Education System (OES) to address this important requirement. This SRP thus focuses on the “missing links” in our leader development process – assessment and feedback. Without these, self-development will not be a viable component in our leader development process.

One ATLDP Officer Study Report recommendation was to publish a definition of and doctrine for self-development.¹⁸ As we have seen, FM 7-0 has already offered a good working definition of the concept. However, the real issue may lie in how the Army operationalizes self-development in our doctrine. Nonetheless, DA PAM 350-58 and FM 22-100 clearly address the importance of self-development within our leader development process. Perhaps the ATLDP finding is based on research on self-directed learning (SDL)—the civilian equivalent to self-development.

SELF-DIRECTED LEARNING

The civilian education community refers to self-development as “self-directed learning”.¹⁹ One of the self-directed learning (SDL) pioneers, Malcolm Knowles, describes SDL as “a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identifying human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes.”²⁰ Although the roots of self-directed learning can be traced to such Greek philosophers as Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, interest in self-directed learning has exploded around the world in recent years.²¹ Three major factors contribute to this increased interest in business and industry: unprecedented rates of technological and societal change requiring increased flexibility and continuous learning; trends toward self-directed teams in the workplace; and research findings that consistently demonstrate a positive relationship between

performance and an individual's readiness for self-directed learning.²² All these factors are equally applicable to our transforming Army.

Knowles believes that self-directed learning starts with learners becoming aware of some need for training. He speculates that because adult education has been tied so closely to pedagogy for so long, little attention has been given to developing procedures and tools for helping adults diagnose their own needs.²³ This 1975 observation is interesting in light of LTG Ulmer's 1998 conclusion that most organizations do not train supervisors or commanders on how to provide an initial assessment. Although Army leaders have attempted to emphasize the importance of assessments and feedback (most notably by the publication of FM 22-100 in 1994 and the implementation of the Junior Officer Developmental Support Form), most would agree the Army is not where it needs to be when it comes to individual learning and self-assessments. In his guide, Knowles discusses how to design a learning plan, the role of the teacher, and resources for learning.²⁴

In a summary on self-directed learning, Hiemstra, another pioneer in the SDL field, offered the following conclusions:

Individual learners can become empowered to take increasingly more responsibility for various decisions associated with the learning endeavor; self-direction is best viewed as a continuum or characteristic that exists to some degree in every person and learning situation; self-direction does not necessarily mean all learning will take place in isolation from others; self-directed learners appear able to transfer learning, in terms of both knowledge and study skill, from one situation to another; self-directed study can involve various activities and resources, such as self-guided reading, participation in study groups, internships, electronic dialogues, and reflective writing activities; effective roles for teachers in self-directed learning are possible, such as dialogue with learners, securing resources, evaluating outcomes, and promoting critical thinking; and some educational institutions are finding ways to support self-directed study through open-learning programs, individualized study options, non-traditional course offerings, and other innovative programs.²⁵

Subsequent studies have investigated learning and its relationship to change or problem-solving by examining self-directed preferences in the workplace. Research has determined that individuals can be tested and classified as falling somewhere along the individual learning continuum. That is, they either prefer to learn independently, or they prefer to learn with the help and cooperation of others. As a result, individuals can be classified as seekers, performers, participators, or supporters. These researchers anticipate that increased knowledge about such styles will be useful to helping teachers and trainers find ways to enable individuals to deal with learning and changes in the workplace and other settings.²⁶

It does not appear the research on SDL characteristics and theory have made their way into the Officer Education System or influenced how the Army educates officers on self-development. Commanders and supervisors need a tool to help assess individual learning attitudes. This would enhance the commander/supervisor's ability to assist subordinates in developing realistic individual learning plans. Many studies on self-directed learning address the teacher's role and discuss what teachers can do to assist students to become better learners. The results of this research would be beneficial for Army leaders striving to fulfill leader development responsibilities. As supervisors and leaders, Army officers need to be sensitive to how individuals learn. Also, clearly defined objectives are critical in an effective individual learning plan.

The self-development doctrine in DA PAM 350-58 is consistent with Knowles' definition of self-directed learning and with Hiemstra's summary of research. However, research in the civilian community on self-directed learning is more thorough; it offers considerably more information and identifies resources to assist individual leaders and supervisors. Much of this information applies to the Army's concept of self-development. Part of the problem may lie in our education system. If the Army decided to enhance the quality of education we currently provide commanders and supervisors on self-development in the leader development process, this initiative would likely result in a positive impact on a subordinates' ability to develop individual learning plans. However, the other challenge we face is time: Commanders and supervisors currently do not have adequate time to fulfill all of their responsibilities. Even so, Knowles' discussion on how to develop a learning contract is excellent and consistent with the Army War College requirement to develop an individual learning plan. His discussion, similar to FM 22-100's counsel on developing a plan of action, is more thorough. More thorough self-development guidance could be provided in DA PAM 350-58, but I not believe that is where the problem lies. The guidance currently provided in DA PAM 350-58 and FM 22-100 is adequate to make self-development a viable part of our leader development process. The most critical shortcoming is execution at the field level.

EXECUTION IN THE FIELD

The development of leaders is a shared responsibility between the individual and the Army; leaders must invest their own time and energy if they are to attain the levels of competence demanded today.... Every one of us has the responsibility to teach and provide the opportunity for subordinates to contribute and to grow.

—GEN Carl E. Vuono, CSA²⁷

The ATLTP Officer Study authors concluded that Army leaders do not emphasize the value of self-development, and the Army does not provide the tools and support to enable its leaders to make self-development an effective component of lifelong learning.²⁸

In 1992, five lieutenant colonels (one of whom became the director for the Center of Army Leadership) wrote an excellent paper on developing conceptual competence. These officers concluded that although self-development is acknowledged by the Army and prominent behavioral scientists as a critical element in the complete development of leadership skills, it is the least stable pillar of the Leader Development Model. They also concluded that responsibility for this area resides squarely with the individual officer. Perhaps for this reason, self-development is not uniformly accepted, structured, disciplined, or evaluated.²⁹ They cite neglect of self-development at the junior officer level:

The stated self-development objectives are impressive, "... to teach officers to think critically, to have an appreciation of relevant military history, and to further their understanding of contemporary thinking in selected areas." The implementation, however, is as disappointing as the objectives are impressive. Self-development during this phase has been relegated to the back burner and consists primarily of a professional reading program consisting of nineteen books considered to be "... definitive works in the field of military and military-related writing." An officer is required to read ten of these books prior to promotion to Major - normally occurring about the twelfth year of service. This may seem to be an overstatement because of variations in emphasis at unit level, but in effect the minimum Army-mandated self-development program for the first twelve years of an officer's career is to read ten books. Furthermore there is no control measure to ensure compliance, even at the minimum level. This laxity does not seem to indicate a strong commitment on the part of the Army, it does little to develop conceptual competence, and it certainly does not imbue the officer corps with an attitude that self-development is important to future success. This is unfortunate, not only because the Army has under-utilized twelve years of developmental time, but also has failed to lay the proper groundwork for a major shift in emphasis that occurs in the next phase.³⁰

They conclude that self-development cannot succeed without acceptance of a "self-development ethic" throughout the officer corps. They believe that the responsibility to design an effective self-development program should be shared by the organization and the individual officer.³¹ They then identify the real challenge the Army faces in developing any type of viable self-development program: "It seems logical that in order to continue in any domain, continual assessment of and feedback on progress is essential."³²

In a very well-researched CGSC monograph written in 1998 on self-development and the art of battle command, Madigan analyzed President Truman and GEN Patton's self-

development practices and the subsequent impact their self-development had on their ability to lead. Madigan's research led to the following conclusions:

Most officers do some form of self-development, but do not have a disciplined approach to its execution....Often officers are not given nor do they take the time to maintain a level of skills, knowledge and abilities (SKA) to ensure they retain the minimum level of proficiency and knowledge necessary for the profession of arms. Every individual should prepare his self-development plan as early in his/her career as possible.. The self-development process is shelved because of poor time management and conflicting requirements. Commanders and leaders enforcing discipline (self and directed) is the most significant contribution Army leadership can make to ensure leader development success .³³

Both of these Army studies cite reasons for the Army's relative neglect of self-development as a more viable component in our leader development program. My own experience confirms their findings. Most officers do not have a disciplined approach to self-development. This should not come as a surprise—since the Army does not emphasize the importance of self-development in our institutional schools, particularly in the Basic Course, Captain's Career Course, and Command and General Staff College. Additionally, we need to acknowledge that operational requirements are always going to be paramount; surely there are going to be times when self-development is going to be placed on the “back burner”. Serving as a new lieutenant or a new squad leader in a unit may be one of those times. Leaders must focus first on learning technical skills, but this should change over time. Because we do not emphasize the role leaders, supervisors, and commanders play in self-development, many leaders do not emphasize the importance of self-development in operational assignments. If we ask officers what is the best thing they can do to develop their leadership skills outside of formal schooling and operational assignments, most would answer “Read,” because that is how we have been raised. But self-development is about more than just simply reading. For NCOs, the response would likely be “correspondence courses” because of the promotion points associated with successful completion. Junior soldiers would likely respond “Army University.” None of these answers are wrong, but leaders should not promulgate such a narrow view of self-development. First, we should advocate an accurate self- assessment and then help soldiers identify steps needed to enhance their strengths or improve deficiencies.

ASSESSMENT AND FEEDBACK: THE MISSING LINKS

We do not learn or grow in a vacuum. Most of us are part of a larger group or organization. Sometimes we have the good fortune of receiving feedback and support for our growth, sometimes we don't. We need to get feedback from others and take the time to reflect on our experiences. Feedback and reflection allow us to assess how we are doing, what's working, and how we need to change. We also need acceptance,

advice, and encouragement from others and support from our organizations if we expect to grow. We simply cannot do it all alone.

— Cynthia D. McCauley, Russ S. Moxley, and Ellen Van Velsor.³⁴

ASSESSMENT

Over the course of the past 5-7 years, numerous studies and many articles have espoused the use of developmental assessments for individual assessment and selection.³⁵ The multi-rater, or 360-degree assessment, provides feedback to the leader and rater by way of survey. Although the method of implementation differs widely, all of these recommend self assessment and feedback from subordinates, peers, and supervisors. In some organizations, feedback is solicited from customers as well. Some psychologists have estimated that in 1995 up to 40% of business and government agencies employ some form of multi-rater performance evaluations.³⁶ By 2001, the percentage was estimated to be 65%.³⁷ Some of the better known corporations that have adopted the 360-degree evaluation are Ford Motor Company, Levi Strauss & Co., Hewlett Packard, and Digital Equipment Corporation.³⁸ According to researchers at the Center for Army Leadership (CAL), the utility of properly administered multi-rater assessments for self-development has been proven.³⁹ Multi-rater assessment programs are almost universal in corporate America; likewise the Department of Defense and Energy has successfully used them.⁴⁰

Although reliance on multi-rater assessments for promotion selection is likely to be a subject of debate for some time, there can be no question about the utility of multi-rater assessments for individual development. The Army has long recognized the utility of multi-rater assessment tools and routinely uses them at their senior service college and in their general officer leadership development programs. But this comes too late in the leadership development process to be a useful leader development method. The Army should embrace and implement the use of developmental assessment tools (like multi-rater assessments) earlier so leaders can capitalize on identified strengths and develop individual learning plans to improve or overcome identified shortcomings.⁴¹

Although the Army is now introducing multi-rater assessments in the Basic Officer Leader Course, we are still not making use of multi-rater assessments in operational assignments. We need to introduce multi-rater assessments in all PME schools and concurrently provide the opportunity for multi-rate assessments in our operational assignments.

The Army should endorse automated multi-rater tools and make them available to all leaders. They should be introduced in the Officer Basic Course and used throughout officers' careers. However, the ATLDP Officer Study, reinforced by LTG Steele, finds that "the Officer

Evaluation Report (OER) does not meet officer expectations as a leader development tool. The leader development aspects of the OER are seldom used, and senior raters seldom counsel subordinates."⁴² The Army may have the right doctrine and policy, but we are not executing to standard. Unlike evaluative assessments (e.g., officer evaluation reports), multi-rater assessments provide leaders the means to determine their strengths and shortcomings. Certainly, officers must accept these assessments as constructive before they pursue an action plan that reinforces strengths and eliminates shortcomings. Leaders must know where they're at in order to know where they need to go.⁴³

In addition to endorsing and making automated assessment tools available, the Army needs to identify a proponent to review the results of these assessments. Obviously, this will cost money. But investments in leader development and unit performance should justify the expense.

We also have to do a better job educating officers both about the importance of periodically assessing their individual leadership skills and about the commercial tools and techniques available to assess and improve their leadership skills. But as it stands now, many leaders are simply not aware of many of these tools and techniques. The best developmental experiences frequently occur at our Combat Training Centers because they are rich in assessment data, perhaps due to the large amount of tactical feedback that is made available to Observer Controllers. Assessments give people an understanding of where they are and what their current strengths are. Assessments convey levels of performance of leadership effectiveness and they identify the individual's primary development needs.⁴⁴ To make self-development a viable component of our leader development process, we have to do a better job of assessing leader strengths and weaknesses and providing feedback to identify ways to improve.

The Army Training Leader Development Panel (ATLDP) Officer Study stated that in order to be an efficient learning organization, the Army must set standards and provide effective assessment, evaluation, and feedback systems for leaders and units. While the After Action Review (AAR) process is a time-tested and proven system for units, there appears to be no approved mechanism for extending the AAR from the group to the individual.⁴⁵ However, Army leaders are addressing this shortcoming. For example, TRADOC plans to introduce officers to multi-rater assessments in the Basic Officer Leader Course.⁴⁶ This is a positive change, but this initiative does not go far enough. Without a plan to reinforce the use of multi-rater assessments in operational assignments, the initiative will likely fail. If we do not take the multi-rater assessments from the schoolhouse to operational assignments, we run the risk of emphasizing

something in our professional military education (PME) and then not applying it in operational assignments. This disconnect represents a lost educational opportunity in leader development. Before he retired as Commander of TRADOC's Combined Arms Center, LTG Steele made this same point in his response to the ATLDP Study. He succinctly and truly admitted: "Our leaders will not believe us if we do not practice what we say."⁴⁷

FEEDBACK

Feedback is a genuine catalyst for leader development. We must improve leaders' ability to assess individual effectiveness and give and receive effective feedback to and from subordinates. Unfortunately, although our doctrine in this area is sound, little attention is spent in our leader development process to educate Army leaders on giving, receiving, or obtaining feedback. Most positive responses to feedback come tacitly and informally through practical experience on the job. However, LeBoeuf accurately points out that, "this experience is nonexistent at worst, or uneven at best."⁴⁸ If feedback is to become an important leadership tool, it must be developed and used at the earliest opportunity and practiced in operational assignments.⁴⁹

Leaders must learn the value of feedback as a means to improve their own performance and effectiveness, as well as a means to increase subordinates' effectiveness. Despite the emphasis our Army has placed on the importance of feedback and counseling, CAL findings and ATLDP studies indicate many leaders do not provide their subordinates with effective feedback. Further, many subordinates are not comfortable receiving feedback. Implementation of the Junior Officer Developmental Support Form, with its requirement to document feedback for lieutenants and junior warrant officers on a quarterly basis, and the requirement to conduct noncommissioned officer counseling on a quarterly basis, are positive steps to improve developmental feedback. But we must do more. Junior Officers and Noncommissioned Officers are not the only leaders that need to be developed. Leaders must standardize the use of feedback for all subordinates, not just junior officers and noncommissioned officers.⁵⁰

Capitalizing on the results of multi-rater assessments certainly has the potential to improve the effectiveness of feedback and counseling. However, regardless of the tools available, we have to continue to emphasize the importance of periodic developmental feedback. This feedback should complement feedback from performance assessments. If leaders do not make this a priority, this neglect will continue to be a shortcoming in future leader development studies.

On a positive note, the revamped Captain's Career Course (the Combined Arms Battle Command Course) is being modified to include an on-site experiential Combat Training Center (CTC) component led by a branch qualified mentor (former Company Commander / Observer-Controller). Leaders will then learn how to diagnose unit training requirements, assess performance, and develop corrective steps to address training deficiencies, in addition to their lessons on how to provide effective feedback to subordinates.⁵¹ This is a step in the right direction; it capitalizes on the proficiency of our Combat Training Center (CTC) Observer Controllers (OC), who are required to give leadership feedback throughout rotations. A more effective approach will lay the groundwork for feedback in the basic courses and reinforce it in follow-on schools.

We also have to encourage leaders to solicit feedback as a means of enhancing their effectiveness. We need to encourage all leaders to solicit feedback from multiple sources and then to incorporate this feedback into an Individual Development Plan (IDP). This IDP should stay with leaders and augment their OER Support Form objectives.

We need to educate officers about the tools available to enhance their strengths or address shortcomings. This tactic has been echoed by many leaders inside and outside the Army, and the Army appears to be moving in this direction. Nonetheless, assessment and feedback will be useful only if they reinforce what a leader is doing well and compel a leader to modify or change ineffective behavior. Supervisors must take the time to sit down with subordinates; together they should create an ILP addressing ineffective behavior. Feedback that identifies strengths and shortcomings, and increases self-awareness must be the basis for this plan. For maximum effectiveness, ILP goals should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-based).⁵²

TOOLS

Current resources to assist leaders with self-development are too numerous to list. A search on the Internet search engine Google on the topic "self -development – Army" rendered 2,180 hits. A Google search on the topic "leadership assessment" identified 228,000 hits. There is also an Army Self-Development web-site: (www.geocities.com/stuart_edick/self_development.html). This site alone, which focuses on Noncommissioned Officers, has fourteen primary links. A sampling of links include: the U.S. Army Training Support Center, University Access Online, Army Corresponding Education and Training System, Army Continuing Education System (ACES), and Distance Learning Directorate. The Army also has an Army Leadership "Tool Kit" Link

(www.leadership.army.mil/nonjavatoolkit.htm) with sites for soldier and self-development, leadership tools, leader related publications, leadership research, and leadership links. It is astonishing how much information is available to assist leaders. I explored the Big Dog's Leadership Page (<http://www.nwlink.com/~donclark/leader/leader.html>). This site provides information for anyone wishing to move through the ranks as a leader. It provides background on leadership as well as chapters on skills and knowledge needed to implement effective leadership.⁵³

Increasingly, companies are developing learning resource centers for their employees or expanding existing centers and staffing them with trained facilitators to assist in locating needed information, materials, and services. Resources include: data-search capabilities and assistance to retrieve specialized information from books and periodicals, audio-visual materials catalogued by topic, computer-assisted instructional materials and self-instructional texts, an index of individuals within the organization with expertise in specific areas, an index of available workshops, training sessions, and courses arranged by topic, as well as consultation on learning plans and resources.⁵⁴

Following release of the ATLDP Officer Study, LTG Steele indicated that "we must develop, fund, and maintain an Army wide Warrior Development Center using information technology where soldiers, leaders, and units go to find standards, training, and education publications, doctrinal manuals, assessment and feedback tools, and access distance and distributed learning programs for self-development."⁵⁵ Accordingly, the Army developed the Warrior Knowledge Network (WKN), originally scheduled for release in Spring 2002. But it is not yet fully operational.⁵⁶ WKN will be a web-based knowledge system providing Army leaders and soldiers with tailored, timely, and relevant knowledge and information. The dominant WKN structure will be Online Communities of Practice (COP) that provide a powerful new model for knowledge sharing and learning.⁵⁷ The basic community infrastructure will consist of five components: a content center serving as a central library focused specifically on the community needs, a knowledge center, a collaboration center which enables soldiers to link to their peers or other Subject Matter Experts (SME), a mentoring center to link junior "community members" with seniors, and a delivery center that provides a web-based system to configure outputs and products.⁵⁸ WKN sounds impressive, but the site alone is not going to eliminate the self-development shortcomings identified in this SRP. It is clearly a resource worth exploiting to the fullest. However, we will be hard pressed to either determine its limits, or assess WKN's value to self-development without first seeing definitive details on its offerings (e.g., the kinds of assessment and feedback tools and responsibility for monitoring and coalescing the findings).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, a primary criticism concerning training doctrine is simply that leaders are not following the principles or the training management process. Increased taskings, high personnel tempo, excessive operational pace and undermanned units seriously degrade unit efforts to apply the doctrine.

—LTG (R) William M. Steele⁵⁹

This SRP has reviewed definitions of self-development and Army doctrine. It has addressed ATLDP findings on self-development, identifying shortcomings. The epigraph above indicates that our doctrine is right, but our implementation is insufficient. Yet this SRP has identified some minor shortcomings in the doctrine. Clearly, though, our doctrine does address self-development. Unfortunately, our leaders are not complying with the doctrine, so the single most significant shortcoming is in execution. Many raters and senior raters are not emphasizing the importance of individual assessments and they are not providing feedback to subordinates. Additionally, this SRP has identified other shortcomings that must be addressed in order to make self-development a viable component of our leader development process. A summary of these shortcomings are provided below:

- DA PAM 350-58 does not provide adequate details on how to fulfill many of the responsibilities identified for leaders in self-development.
- The Army does not sufficiently educate leaders on how to provide feedback and assist individuals in preparing developmental action plans.
- There is no tool currently available for commanders and supervisors to assess individual learning attitudes.
- Most officers do not take a disciplined approach to self-development.
- We have not endorsed the use of automated multi-rater assessment tools in operational assignments.
- The Army needs to identify a proponent to assess the results of these assessments for leaders.
- We must improve leaders' ability to assess individual effectiveness and give and receive effective feedback to and from subordinates.

To address the shortcomings addressed above, the following recommendations are designed to make self-development a more viable aspect of our leader development process. The recommendations address three different audiences: individual leaders, commanders and supervisors, and the Army as an institution.

INDIVIDUAL LEADERS

Individual leaders must accept responsibility for their fundamental role in self-development. Early in their careers—at least by the time an NCO is a Squad Leader or an officer is a Captain—they must recognize how self-development can enhance their effectiveness as leaders; they must set aside time to enhance skills or address shortcomings. Individual leaders need to understand that self-development—as a critical component of their professional development cycle—is more than reading books. At the very least, on the basis of a self-assessment individual leaders need to:

- Develop an Individual Learning Plan. Minimum ILP components should include: a self-development strategy; goals; resources necessary to achieve those goals; and exit criteria so they know success when they see it.
- Develop an ILP in the basic course (or Advanced Noncommissioned Officers Course in the case of NCOs) and update it semi-annually.
- Understand that receiving a formal assessment of strengths and deficiencies, as well as receiving feedback on progress toward accomplishing goals, is valuable but this is not a substitute for self-development. If individual leaders receive an assessment or feedback that identifies a particular strength or deficiency, they have both a personal and a professional obligation to take steps to address that particular deficiency.
- Realize that self-discipline is an important part of self-development.

COMMANDERS AND SUPERVISORS

Commanders and supervisors need to emphasize the importance of self-development during all assignments, whether institutional or operational. They are role models for subordinates, so they need to fulfill the requirements inherent in such a critical position. They need to fulfill the responsibilities outlined in DA PAM 600-3, DA PAM 350-58 and The Army Leader Development Model (Figure 2, above). Regardless of how much is written on self-development, commanders and supervisors are always going to face time and resource constraints in duty performance. They have to find time to sit down and provide assessments and feedback to subordinates and help them identify resources. They must review ILPs with their subordinates. Commanders and supervisors should provide adequate time for subordinates to pursue self-development activities consistent with the objectives specified in their ILPs.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

As part of the common core curriculum in the Officer Education System, the Army should teach junior officers self-development doctrine, increase their awareness and understanding of the tools available to enable self-development, and identify specific self-development expectations for officers. We also need to do a better job of educating commanders and supervisors on individual assessment and feedback techniques. We need to periodically assess the effectiveness of this training in operational units.

A fully functional Warrior Knowledge Network should provide “one-stop shopping” for self-development. Specifically, it should either define or provide links for self-development standards, training and education publications, doctrinal manuals, and assessment and feedback tools. The Army should embrace and implement the use of developmental assessment tools (e.g., multi-rater assessments) in the basic courses as well as in all operational assignments so leaders can capitalize on their strengths and develop individual learning plans (consistency in terms) to improve or overcome their shortcomings. Further, the Army should develop an on-line Leader Development Portfolio accessed through the Warrior Knowledge Network.⁶⁰ This will allow an officer to track his self-development activities and update his individual leader plan. Finally, the Army should expand the leader responsibilities outlined in DA PAM 350-58 for raters and senior raters as a means of emphasizing how critical self-development is to Army leader development. This can be accomplished by adding a requirement for raters to review subordinate ILPs as part of in-processing / initial / re-enlistment counseling, and by requiring raters and senior raters to review subordinate ILPs semi-annually and/or at the OER / NCOER due date.

CONCLUSION

The Army has an excellent leader development system. This SRP recommends ways to do better self-development. For too long for too many leaders, self-development has been an ignored pillar of our leader development process. Individual leaders, commanders and supervisors, and the Department of the Army can collectively make self-development a viable pillar of leader development.

Word Count: 6817

APPENDIX A: LEADER DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES AND IMPERATIVES

IMPERATIVES

- Retain progressive and sequential training and education system
- Train leaders in critical tasks
- Develop total Army
- Keep quality instructors
- Select best qualified for resident courses
- Produce qualified students and instructors
- Right mix of resident / non-resident instructions
- Provide leader development assignments
- Provide adequate training opportunities
- Assign based on leader development priorities
- Stress individual's responsibility for self-development
- Identify, specify, and refine self-development requirements

PRINCIPLES

- Properly sequence institutional training, operational assignments and self-development
- Retain progressive and sequential career development models in all developmental areas

ENDNOTES

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⁶ Department of Army, Leader Development for America's Army - The Enduring Legacy, 92.

⁷ Department of the Army, Army Leadership: Be, Know, Do, Field Manual 22-100 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 1 October 1998),5-15.

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¹⁰ Department of Army, Leader Development for America's Army - The Enduring Legacy, 1-2.

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¹⁵ Ibid, 31-34.

¹⁶ Ulmer, 14.

¹⁷ Ibid.

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²⁴ Ibid, 25,33,47.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Heimstra.

²⁷ Carl E. Vuono, Collected Works of the Thirty-first Chief of Staff, United States Army, available from http://call.army.mil/products/apc_prod/cofs/vuono.html Internet, accessed 8 February 2003.

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²⁹ Emil K. Kluever, William L. Lynch, Michael T. Matthies, Thomas S. Owens, and John A. Spears, Striking a Balance in Leader Development: A Case for Conceptual Competence National Security Program Discussion Paper Series, 92-02, 137.

³⁰ Ibid, 138.

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³² Ibid,157.

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³⁴ Cynthia D. McCauley, Russ S. Moxley, Ellen Van Velsor. Eds. The Center for Creative Leadership Handbook of Leadership Development, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc, 1998), 2.

³⁵ Numerous studies have been conducted by the Army Research Institute and the Center for Army Leadership on the potential of multi-rater assessments to enhance leader development. Most of the studies I have reviewed have been positive.

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⁴⁰ Rovero & Bullis, 5.

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⁴³ Burnette, 122.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁵ Department of the Army, The Army Training and Leader Development Panel Officer Study Report to the Army, OS-3.

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⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Burnette, 122.

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⁵⁵ Steele and Walters, 2.

⁵⁶ Patrick A. Swan, "Warrior Knowledge Network Coming Soon to AKO," ArmyLink News, available from <[www://dtic/armylink/news/Apr2002/a20020408warriornet.html](http://www.dtic/armylink/news/Apr2002/a20020408warriornet.html)> Internet. Accessed 11 January 2003.

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