

ARI Research Note 2011-01

**Integrating Adaptability into Special Operations
Forces Intermediate Level Education**

Gonzalo Ferro, and Meredith Cracraft
Personnel Decisions Research Institutes, Inc.

Scott A. Beal
U.S. Army Research Institute



Fort Bragg Research Unit
James W. Lussier, Chief

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BARBARA A. BLACK
Research Program Manager
Training and Leader Development
Division



MICHELLE SAMS
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Gonzalo Ferro and Meredith Cracraft
Personnel Decisions Research Institutes, Inc.

Scott A. Beal
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James W. Lussier, Chief

U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences
2511 Jefferson Davis Highway, Arlington VA 22202-3926

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INTEGRATING ADAPTABILITY INTO SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Research Requirements:

Leaders at the U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, recognize that adaptive performance is critical to the effectiveness of Special Operations Forces (SOF) Soldiers as they operated in ambiguous and rapidly changing combat environments. Given the importance of adaptability for all SOF Soldiers, leaders at SWCS want to identify appropriate training and education requirements for all levels of SOF leadership. In addition, there is a need to determine whether current officer development and education programs could be modified or enhanced to better prepare SOF officers for their future operational responsibilities.

The Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD) at SWCS requested the assistance of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) at Fort Bragg, NC, to identify requirements for adaptability education. The ARI research team focused on adaptability education for SOF, Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) officers (i.e., rank of Major) who were attending the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) for Intermediate Level Education (ILE) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

This report provides a description of the assessment processes implemented by the ARI research team. These processes included efforts to: (a) determine the educational requirements for adaptability specific to the ILE SOF curriculum at the CGSC, (b) provide results based on a needs and assessment analysis for SOF adaptability training and education, and (c) offer recommendations for modifying and enhancing the current ILE curriculum to focus on building adaptive skills appropriate for SOF officers.

Procedure:

The ARI research team conducted a needs assessment to determine the core responsibilities of SOF, CA, and PSYOP officers attending the CGSC, the adaptability requirements associated with these core responsibilities, and how adaptability was represented by the ILE curriculum. Focus groups comprised of recent ILE graduates (within the last five years) provided information about their job responsibilities and the importance of adaptability, as well as recommendations for how to improve the education of adaptability during ILE. We reviewed the current ILE curriculum, and then interviewed instructors and current students to determine their perceptions of how adaptability was addressed. In addition, we obtained recommendations from the students, instructors, and guest lecturers on how adaptability skills could be developed further.

Findings:

The results from this research show that adaptability is a core component of the tasks demanded of SF officers, particularly those in staff positions. However, more educational emphasis can be given to the specific components of adaptability, as described in this report. In addition, we found that while some of the material covered by the ILE curriculum relates to adaptability (e.g., the critical thinking and creative reasoning course), there is a need for a more focused effort on providing applied lessons and exercises that allow SOF officers to demonstrate adaptable skills under conditions that better represent current operational requirements.

Utilization and Dissemination of Findings:

The adaptability components promoted in this report would leverage the training that SoF officers gained prior to attending the CGSC and would maximize the overall strengths of adaptability education included in the CGSC learning model. To maximize the teaching and training of adaptable skills, we proposed implementation of lessons on adaptability throughout the entire SoF officer assessment, selection, training, and education pipeline. These lessons would be placed under four main organizing structures: (a) Introduction to Adaptability, (b) Mental Adaptability, (c) Interpersonal Adaptability, and (d) Building and Operating in Adaptive Systems.

INTEGRATING ADAPTABILITY INTO SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES
INTERMEDIATE LEVEL EDUCATION

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Integrating Adaptability into Special Operations Forces Intermediate Level Education

Introduction

The U.S. Army John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School (SWCS) at Fort Bragg, North Carolina, recognized that adaptive performance was critical to the effectiveness of Special Operations Forces (SOF) Soldiers as they operated in ambiguous and rapidly changing combat environments. Given the importance of adaptability for all SOF Soldiers, leaders at SWCS wanted to identify appropriate training and education requirements for all levels of SOF leadership. In addition, there was a need to determine whether current officer development and education programs could be modified or enhanced to better prepare SOF officers for their future operational responsibilities.

The Directorate of Training and Doctrine (DOTD) at SWCS requested the assistance of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) at Fort Bragg, NC, to identify requirements for adaptability education. The ARI research team focused on adaptability education for SOF, Civil Affairs (CA), and Psychological Operations (PSYOP) officers who were attending the Command and General Staff College (CGSC) for Intermediate Level Education (ILE) at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Specifically, ARI was asked to identify and assess the adaptability training needs for these officers by completing a series of interviews and focus groups with ILE graduates, by reviewing portions of the current CGSC curriculum, and by interviewing instructors, students, and key personnel at the CGSC.

This report provides the results of a needs assessment and analysis of adaptability education at the CGSC. It includes recommendations for modifications to the CGSC SOF curriculum that are supported by a need to further develop adaptive leaders at an operational and strategic level. The results were analyzed and conclusions drawn from information collected from recent ILE graduates, from current ILE students, instructors, course developers, and from some of the research literature on dimensions of adaptive performance.

Defining and Training Adaptability

The research team developed operational definitions for adaptability and adaptive performance in order to guide a better understanding of relevant education requirements for SOF officers and to determine how adaptability is addressed at the CGSC, currently. The literature provided a plethora of definitions of adaptability and adaptive performance (see Chan, 2000; Pulakos, Arad, Donovan, & Plamondon, 2000; Ross & Lussier, 2000; Smith, Ford, & Kozlowski, 1997). We defined adaptability simply as an effective change in response to an altered situation (Pulakos et al., 2000). More specifically, we presented three processes relative to adaptable behavior. First, a Soldier must possess the situational awareness to recognize that changes in thinking and behavior are needed, which suggests that implementing change is at the core of adaptability. Second, needed changes must result in effective consequences relative to the current and future cause and effect relationships recognized and predicted by the Soldier. And third, that emerging changes in the environment facilitate the need to respond adaptively.

Pulakos et al. (2000) identified the dimensions that form their construct of adaptability. They developed a model of adaptability that describes many of the possible adaptive behaviors

that could be displayed while working in a given job. Their eight dimensions of adaptability are as follows:

- Handling emergencies or crisis situations
- Handling work stress
- Demonstrating interpersonal adaptability
- Displaying cultural adaptability
- Learning work tasks, technologies, & procedures
- Solving problems creatively
- Demonstrating physically oriented adaptability
- Dealing effectively with unpredictable or changing work situations

Based on these dimensions, adaptability training and education course materials had been developed previously for officers attending the Special Forces Qualification Course (SFQC), the Special Forces Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC), the Civil Affairs Qualification Course (CAQC), and the PSYOP Qualification Course (POQC). Most officers attending the CGSC ILE had already completed at least one of these courses. Therefore, the background information on the development of these course materials provided a foundation upon which the adaptability training and education developed for this current effort could be based. The topics covered in the courses were leveraged, along with the experiences of each officer, to expand adaptability education to meet new requirements for officers serving in operational and strategic positions.

The courses listed above included training materials that focused on the following types of adaptability (e.g., White, Mueller-Hanson, Dorsey, Pulakos, Wisecarver, Deagle, & Mendini, 2005):

- *Mental Adaptability* – Adjusting one’s thinking in new situations to overcome obstacles or improve effectiveness. This includes responding to emergency or crisis situations, handling stress, learning new things, and engaging in creative problem solving.
- *Interpersonal Adaptability* – Adjusting what one says and does to increase the effectiveness of interactions with other people. This includes trying to understand the needs and motives of other people, especially those from other cultures.
- *Physical Adaptability* – Adjusting to difficult environmental conditions such as heat and cold, pushing oneself physically to complete strenuous or demanding tasks, and adjusting one’s body weight and improving muscular strength or becoming more proficient in performing physical tasks that are necessary for completing job requirements successfully.
- *Leading an Adaptable Team* – Application of mental and interpersonal adaptability concepts, principles, and practices. For example, communication strategies help teams work well together and adapt to new surroundings.

The course materials were developed to focus on enhancing adaptability skills and behaviors in environments in which small tactical teams find themselves. Although the course

materials were based on similar theoretical principles, they were tailored to meet the individual operational requirements and for each set of tasks presented during the courses. The research team implemented a general approach to introduce Soldiers to the various principles related to adaptability using a combination of training materials and techniques. For example, brief lectures were used to introduce ideas, examples and case studies were used to highlight their relevance to SOF operations, and practical exercises were used to increase Soldiers' understanding of the topic areas and give them opportunities to practice adapting in controlled settings.

Based on three of the adaptability categories (Mental Adaptability, Interpersonal Adaptability, and Leading an Adaptable Team), four education modules were created for each course (i.e., SFQC, WOBC, CAQC, and POQC). The purposes for each of the four modules were as follows: (a) understand the meaning and necessity of adaptability in the SOF environment (b) use effective strategies for responding effectively to changes in the environment, (c) demonstrate interpersonal adaptability, and (d) practice the necessary skills associated with leading and developing an adaptive team.

The first module introduced Soldiers to the different types of adaptability, provided an overarching structure of the theory of adaptability, and described topic areas that would be covered during the course. The second module introduced mental adaptability and covered such topics as creative problem solving, critical thinking errors, switching mindsets, and effective decision-making. The third module dealt with a variety of topics related to interpersonal adaptability such as self-awareness, other awareness, systems awareness, and the application of these topics to persuasion and negotiations. Finally, the last module addressed the topic of leading an adaptable team and covered issues such as the role of structured feedback in developing adaptability, leadership styles, and ethics.

These topics formed the basis upon which adaptability training was first introduced to SOF officers (i.e., rank of Major) during the qualification courses they completed prior to attending the CGSC. However, adaptability training during the qualification courses was often limited to tactical situations involving small teams (i.e., ODAs, CAT-As, and PTEs). By contrast, most officers in staff positions are required to think at a more strategic and operational level, which is the focus of ILE. In order to determine how adaptability education could be presented effectively to officers during ILE, the research team initiated a needs assessment. The following section describes the methodology utilized to identify the adaptability education requirements of SOF officers.

Needs Assessment – General Methodology

The needs assessment represented a systematic process of determining the knowledge, skills, and abilities that officers needed to acquire in order to adapt effectively while serving in staff positions. This assessment highlighted areas where the current ILE curriculum needed to be modified to meet the educational needs of officers. The results of the assessment were used to provide a framework for planning and designing an adaptability education and training program during ILE.

To understand the work demands placed on officers, we reviewed the available information about the job responsibilities and functions for SOF, CA, and PSYOP command and

staff positions at the O-4 level and higher. This included reading field manuals and being taught by leaders from each military occupational specialty on the different types of positions an officer at the O-4 rank may hold, along with their corresponding responsibilities. The leaders also provided an overarching framework for understanding the structure of each officer career branch and potential career progression.

We assessed the adaptability requirements of SOF officers who recently completed their Military Education Level-Four requirement. A series of focus groups were held during which officers who had graduated from ILE within the past three years were asked to describe the adaptive performance requirements of their jobs. These officers provided recommendations on how to improve the adaptability education at ILE to support of the job requirements of SOF officers.

The final assessment focused on reviewing the current ILE curriculum and interviewing instructors and attending student officers to determine the degree to which adaptability was addressed during ILE. We obtained recommendations from the ILE instructors, officers who had completed ILE, and guest lecturers on how adaptability skills could be developed throughout the SOF education and training pipeline. Our methodology included a sequenced approach to determine the following: (a) the adaptive performance requirements of current SOF officers, (b) the degree to which adaptability skills required for success in a officer's position were included in and addressed by the current ILE SOF curriculum, and (c) identifying potential modifications to SOF education and training that will enhance SOF officers' adaptive skills and prepare them for their future responsibilities.

Adaptive Skill Requirements of Current SOF Officers

The first phase of the adaptability education needs assessment began by forming focus groups comprised of officers who graduated from ILE within the past 3 years. These officers provided information about the adaptive performance requirements associated with their jobs and the relevant adaptability training and education they received. The focus groups included four CA, four PSYOP, and three SOF officers whose current positions included Battalion XO, Battalion S3, Detachment Commander, and Company Commander. All focus group officers held the rank of Major.

During the focus groups we discussed the four topic areas of adaptability described above. Each officer listed the courses they completed at the CGSC, and elsewhere, and then described how the courses provided adaptability education and training. The officers identified and described their primary job responsibilities, the associated tasks, and the adaptive requirements needed to perform each task successfully. We obtained their recommendations for the types of training exercises they believed should be included in the ILE SF education curriculum. We concluded the focus groups by discussing any other potential training and educational topic areas that might provide appropriate contexts for acquiring and practicing adaptive skills.

The following section includes a summary of the information gathered during the focus groups. It begins with brief descriptions of the instructions and materials given to the officers prior to and during our focus groups. Then, we present the focus group results based on

descriptions of job responsibilities, tasks, and the adaptability requirements associated with each. The final portion of the section summarizes the qualitative results from our discussions, highlighting many of the officers' ideas for modifications to the ILE in support of adaptability education and training.

Focus Group Results

Materials and Protocol

Prior to attending the focus groups, each participating officer received a description of the research effort, definitions for each of the adaptability topic areas of interest, and a list of questions to be asked during the discussions. These materials are provided in Appendix A.

The agenda for the focus groups was as follows: (a) The research team members discussed the operational definition of adaptability and the eight dimensions identified by Pulakos et al. (2000), (b) The officers identified any training and courses they completed at the CGSC, and elsewhere, that focused on adaptability, (c) The officers completed a questionnaire that required them to report their primary job responsibilities, the tasks associated with those responsibilities, the type of adaptability required to complete each task, and (d) The research team and the officers discussed the officers' responses to the questionnaire that identified the type of adaptability training and education that would be useful during the CGSC ILE.

Job Requirements

The Officers were asked to identify the five most important job responsibilities that they executed, currently (see Appendix B). This information provided the research team with a better understanding of the job tasks and duties that were critical to effective performance as a SOF officer. These critical job responsibilities are listed in Table 1. The most common job responsibilities reported were Resource Management, Personnel Management, and Planning. It appears that at this level of leadership, a large part of the job includes management responsibilities and supporting activities, such as planning, making decisions, developing and revising policies, and organizing. Given that Personnel Management and Advising Higher and Lower-level Personnel were common responsibilities, dealing with people appears to be a key part of the job.

Table 1
Job Responsibilities Critical to SOF Officers

Job Responsibilities Reported	Frequency of Reports
Resource Management	8
Personnel Management	6
Planning	6
Advising Higher-Level Personnel	4
Revising or Developing Training or Policies	3
Advising Lower-Level Personnel (Mentoring)	3
Training Management	2
Decision Making	2
Teaching Students	1
Organizing	1
Budget Management	1
Tactical Combat Ops	1
Integrating Coursework and Instruction from Multiple Courses	1

Critical Tasks

A list of potential tasks developed from field manuals and from the interviews with several higher-ranking officers was provided to the focus group officers. The officers viewed this list, and then developed their own lists of critical tasks associated with each job responsibility (see Appendix B). Table 2 provides a list of the critical tasks that the officers mentioned at least eight times when describing their job requirements. (For a complete list of tasks and the number of times reported see Appendix C.)

Table 2
Frequency of Critical Tasks Listed for All Responsibilities

Critical Tasks	Frequency of Reports
Communicate effectively with others and maintain communication networks.	18
Interpret Commander's intent.	16
Create new solutions or ideas.	16
Establish and maintain effective working relationships with others.	14
Integrate one into various information loops.	13
Participate in a work group/team.	13
Establish rapport and trust with those with whom you work.	13
Set work goals and priorities.	13
Give briefings/presentations to different audiences.	12
Prepare reports and/or briefings.	12
Facilitate meetings.	11
Obtain needed resources.	11
Assess needs of self and others in a given situation.	10
Monitor operations under your command.	9
Gain cooperation from others outside your chain of command.	8
Serve as a representative of your unit/the U.S. Army to external entities.	8
Issue orders/provide direction and guidance to staff.	8

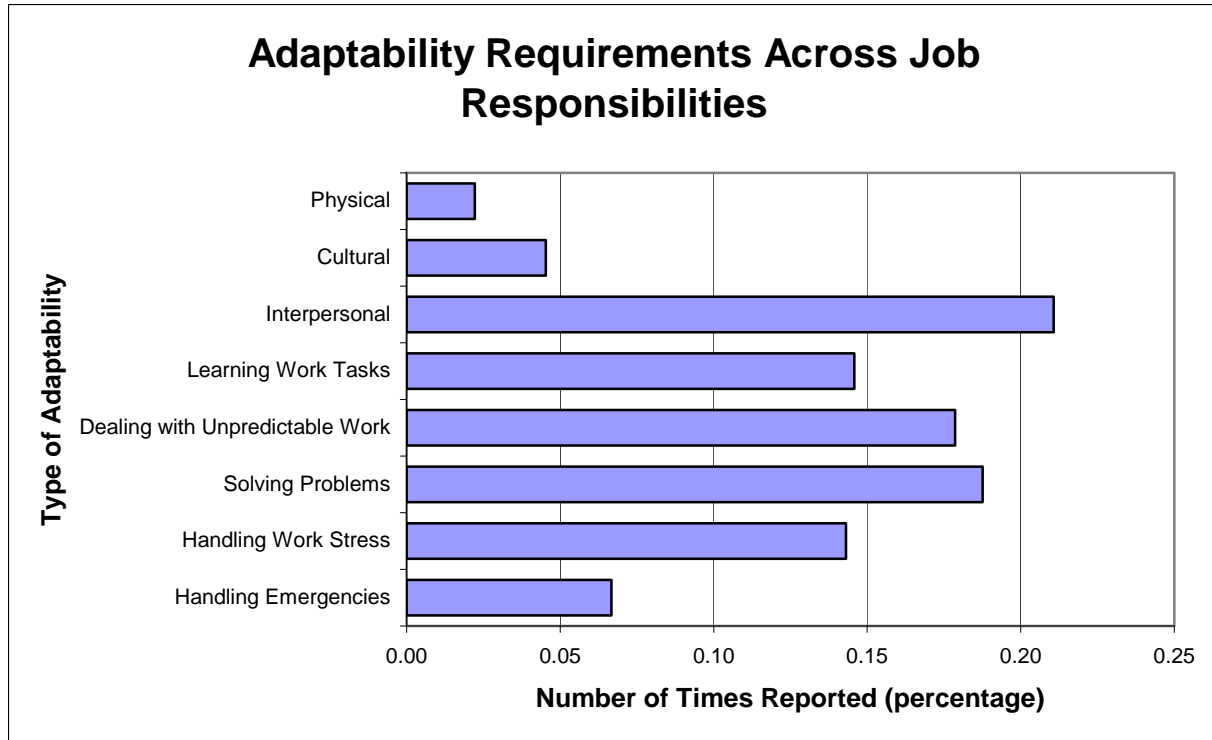
The critical tasks associated with the officers' job responsibilities showed that working well with others is an integral part of the job. For example, effective communication, building and maintaining working relationships, establishing rapport, integrating oneself into information loops, and participating in work groups emerged as the most common critical tasks. It seems that the job components associated with interpersonal skills are likely to be important for effective outcomes. In addition, officers are expected to understand the environment in which they work, draw accurate inferences from it, make appropriate decisions, and guide their subordinates effectively.

Adaptability Requirements

The research team developed a final list of job responsibilities based on the information and the list of critical tasks collected from the officers. For each critical task the officers listed, they were asked to list the types of adaptability, if any, that were associated with performing the task effectively. Figure 1 shows the percentages for the types of adaptability listed relative to job responsibilities. The officers cited Interpersonal Adaptability most frequently as an important part of their job. Other frequently mentioned types of adaptability included Creative Problem

Solving, Dealing with Unpredictable Work Situations, and Learning Work Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures. Figures 2, 3, and 4 show similar patterns of results for the adaptability requirements associated with Resource Management, Personnel Management, and Planning.

Figure 1. Adaptability requirements associated with job responsibilities.



It should be noted that, during the focus group discussions, the officers mentioned that their current jobs do not require as much physical stamina as their previous jobs required. This is reflected in the adaptability scales, in that Physical Adaptability had the lowest frequency of endorsement. The data suggest that focusing on Interpersonal Adaptability and Mental Adaptability skills that will promote effective problem solving and handling the stress of unpredictable work situations are appropriate for this level of leadership. Furthermore, these skills should be taught and practiced within the context of the job responsibilities the officers listed above.

Figure 2. Adaptability requirements associated with resource management activities.

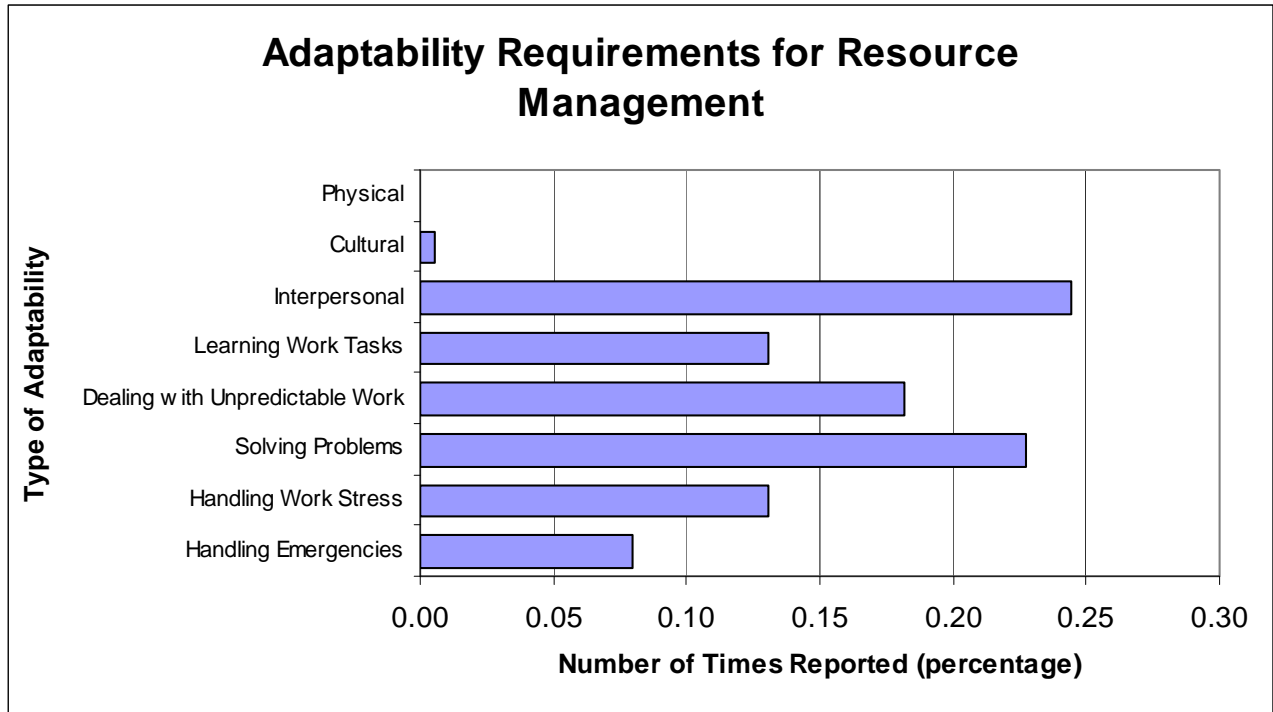


Figure 3. Adaptability requirements associated with personnel management activities.

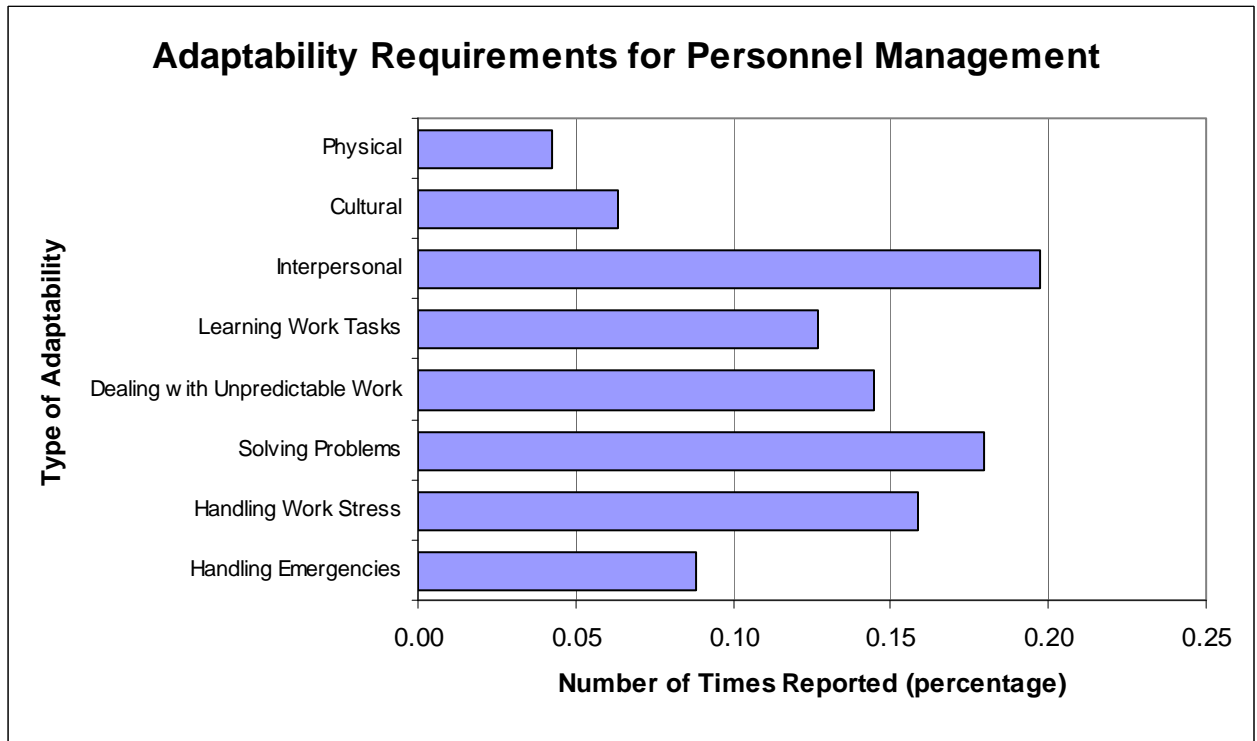
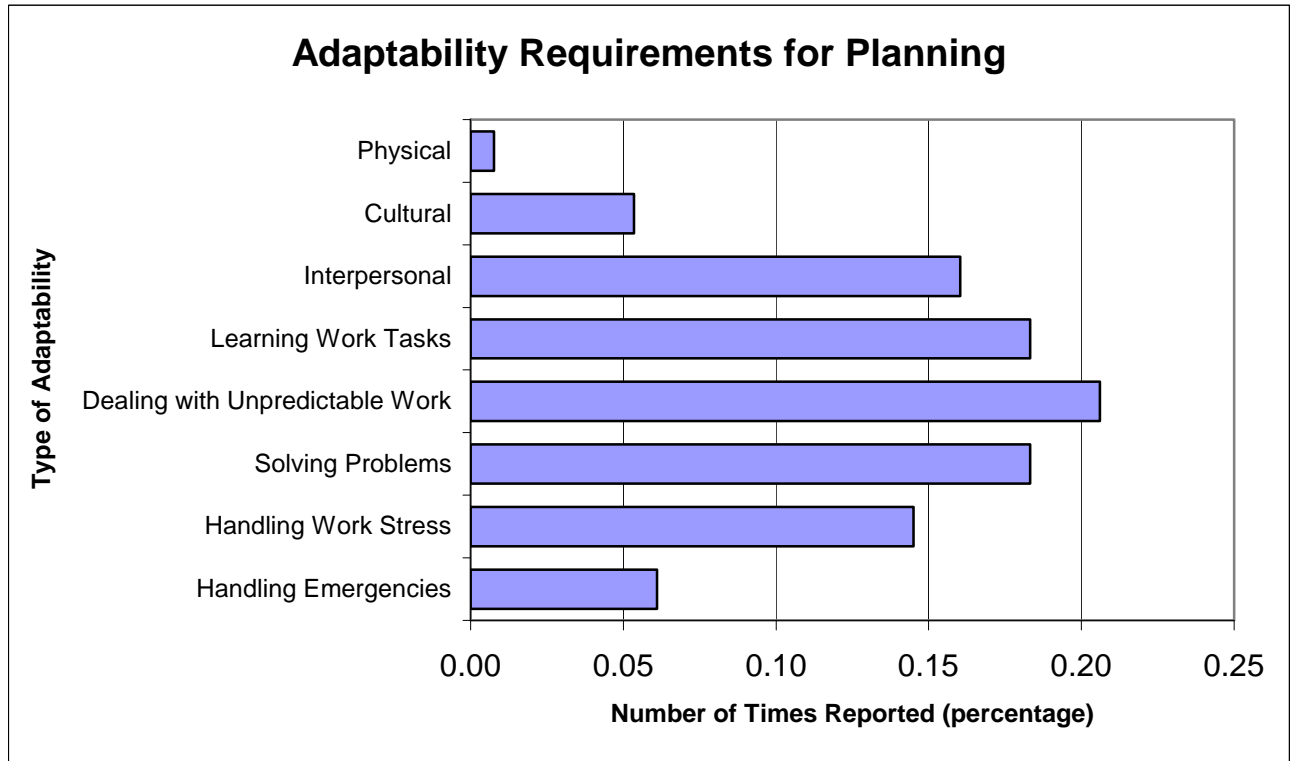


Figure 4. Adaptability requirements associated with planning activities.



Qualitative Results from Interviews

Overall, the officers were very positive about the SOF track curriculum during the ILE. However, they proposed changes that provided valuable insight into the kinds of experiences SF officers may find beneficial to their development at this stage in their careers, especially given the current operations in which the Army is engaged.

The officers stressed that real-world, hands-on experiences reflecting current issues were important. Furthermore, they felt that at the CGSC, it was appropriate to consider a variety of future scenarios such as, “What will happen in Cuba after Castro dies?” and looking at the situation with India and Pakistan. Beyond these larger scenarios, the officers agreed that as long as the exercises were well done, and that greater emphasis was placed on vignette-based exercises where they can engage in problem solving and decision-making, the educational experience would be effective.

The officers mentioned one concern about how the ambiguity inherent in their job is not well reflected in ILE structured exercises. For example, SOF officers may have a vague idea of the commander’s intent, or that a problem needs to be solved. Yet, they often have to provide a solution on their own, and then provide appropriate direction for their subordinates. As such, there may need to be enough ambiguity in the exercises to allow officers to consider different options or courses of action, rather than just applying a basic solution, which is often the case.

The officers mentioned that the situations they face on a daily basis were important for providing applicable contexts to build adaptive skills. For example, CA and PSYOP officers often struggled to present themselves in a positive light to the conventional Army units they supported. In addition, SOF officers needed to be able to work effectively with foreign officers, foreign diplomats, NGOs, and different agencies within the Department of Defense. Building relationships, integrating oneself into important social and communication networks, and maintaining political awareness were challenges that the majors felt were not explicitly addressed at CGSC.

The focus group interviews with the officers provided ideas for topics and exercises to integrate into ILE instruction. These topics and exercises would add educational value by providing officers with strategies and mental frameworks for dealing with their most pressing issues. A sample of the ideas drawn from the focus group interviews were as follows:

- Realistic, hands-on exercises that reflect current and relevant problems and issues.
- Increase the number of all planning, problem-solving, and decision-making exercises.
- Build greater ambiguity into the exercises to better reflect the operational environment.
- Ensure that officers are actively engaged in the exercises. Structure the exercises such that most officers do not always assume supporting or observational roles.
- Create educational experiences that teach officers about the systems to use for resource and budget management.
- Facilitate peer knowledge exchange, allowing officers to teach each other by using their experiences and the knowledge they have gained from them.

Adaptability Skill Requirements

The information supplied by the officer focus groups suggested that there were several important facets of adaptability required for SOF officers at the O4 level. Based on the characteristics of their work environment and their job responsibilities, interpersonal adaptability becomes an important factor for success. The social and communication networks that facilitate coordination efforts, along with the ability to form relationships with individuals outside of the Army culture, are vital to functioning at a more operational and strategic level. Furthermore, an officer must be able to understand different perspectives in order to assess the broader influences on a situation and to work effectively with key players who have different agendas. Therefore, several aspects of mental adaptability (e.g., creative problem solving, dealing with uncertain or ambiguous work environments, coping with stress) are critical skills to improve. Based on this information, the second phase of our needs assessment focused on discerning how the current SOF track curriculum addresses these issues. In support of the conclusions we drew from the focus groups, many of the ideas expressed by current ILE students and instructors echoed those put forth initially by the officers.

Intermediate Level Education at CGSC

According to the CGSC,

“The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College educates and develops leaders for full spectrum joint, interagency and multinational operations; acts as lead agent for the Army’s leader development program; and advances the art and science of the profession of arms in support of Army operational requirements.”¹

Furthermore, SOF officers have three major learning objectives at CGSC: (a) enhance their ability to deal with complex issues and situations, and tolerate ambiguity and maintaining situational awareness, (b) enhance their adaptive problem solving skills to accomplish missions for which there is little or no prior experience, little or no precedent, and/or is contrary to conventional thought on military operations, and (c) develop leadership skills and creative, thoughtful solutions to sensitive and high-risk situations.

Our conceptualization of adaptability touches on many of the skills needed to achieve the major learning objectives listed above. In order to make recommendations regarding how to best integrate adaptability concepts into the SOF curriculum, the structure and setting in which officer education takes place must be considered. Consequently, this section briefly describes the structure of the ILE curriculum, the educational philosophy upheld by the institution, and the strengths and weaknesses of the current course formats. Given the structure of the SOF-specific curriculum, the learning model that is used, and the required courses and electives provided during the SOF track, we see several opportunities to build adaptive content into the education that ILE students receive, currently.

SOF Curriculum Structure

For SOF majors attending ILE, the curriculum is divided into two parts. The first half is the core ILE curriculum, which focuses on providing the required education for the next 8 to 10 years of an officer’s career. The second half focuses on the required skills for the next 3 to 5 years. The CGSC uses the Advanced Operational Warfighter Course as its medium for instruction. During this course, officers learn to lead combat missions at the Brigade, Division, and Army Corps levels. For SOF officers the focus is on Special Operations Commands, Joint Special Operations Component Command, and Joint Special Operations Task Forces. In the first half of the course, SOF officers take classes and participate in exercises with Soldiers from all other branches and services. The second half is the branch curriculum specific only to SOF officers. We focused solely on the SOF curriculum and on examining the possibility of integrating adaptability education into that curriculum.

The SOF curriculum is comprised of two modules. The first is the core S410 Module that examines SOF in the joint, multinational, and interagency “JIM” environment. The second is the advanced module S420 Module that is comprised of a number of SOF specialization studies courses. Depending on the officer’s occupational branch, some of the advanced courses are mandatory (i.e. A580: SF Advanced Studies, A582: CA Advanced Studies, and A583:

¹ Mission statement posted on the CGSC website at: <http://cgsc.leavenworth.army.mil/about.asp>

PSYOP Advanced Studies). As it is structured currently, the two modules are divided into five distinct time periods. The first period consists of SOF electives during which officers must take 48 elective hours. The second is a joint exercise that lasts for 48 hours, during which officers assume the roles of a Joint Special Operations Task Force (JSOTF). The Third period is the core S410 SF course that is comprised of 42 hours of instruction. The fourth is a joint exercise lasting 48 hours, where officers set up and run as a Joint Force Special Operations Component Commander (JFSOCC). And finally, the fifth period consists of 48 more hours of electives instruction.

The SOF curriculum takes place over a period of six months, with significant time gaps between some of the periods. Based on this structure, it was apparent that any adaptability materials would have to be incorporated throughout the five different time periods, such that concepts were linked in a meaningful way. This idea will be discussed further in the recommendations section below.

There is one course on critical thinking and creative reasoning at the beginning of the ILE core curriculum that all officers receive. We reviewed some of the material for this course and believe that it provides some valuable information on critical thinking that could be built upon with further adaptive thinking materials. Integrating this information will provide some continuity among concepts for instruction.

Experiential Learning Model

An important aspect of the CGSC curriculum is that all course developers and instructors are asked to adhere to the Experiential Learning Model. This model is based on the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT), which states that learning occurs by the transfer of experience into knowledge (Kolb, Boyatzis, Mainemelis, 2000). The ELT proposes that learning occurs in a four-stage cycle where concrete experiences (CE) are the basis for reflective observations (RO), which in turn lead to abstract conceptualizations (AC) that imply some form of action. Once an action is initiated, active experimentation (AE) serves as a guide to creating new experiences. Research has shown that ELT provides a useful framework for instructional design, curriculum development, and educational innovation (Kolb et al, 2000).

The ELT is applied at CGSC by introducing a topic of instruction as a concrete experience, allowing officers to reflect on the experience, providing a lecture or a presentation on the topic, and then engaging in discussion of the topic in order to facilitate thinking on how the new information can be applied. Our observations led us to us to conclude that the ELT provides an effective learning model for attending officers. However, we observed that the model is not always fully implemented. This may be due, in part, to the structure of the classes. Each elective course is broken down into 12 two-hour blocks of instruction. Many of the classes utilize guest speakers (some classes have guest speakers as the only mode of instruction), followed by officers participating in discussion at the end of each class period. The discussion allows officers to reflect and to share ideas about how the instructional information can be used. Some discussion sessions were only 10 to 15 minutes long, which did not provide enough time for officers to engage in a meaningful discussion on the topic presented by the guest speaker. In addition, courses based solely on guest speakers might make it difficult to link the materials into organized knowledge structures that help officers not only make sense of the material, but

identify how to apply the concepts in applied situations. These observations influenced our recommendations on how to introduce adaptability into the ILE curriculum and structure the materials to take full advantage of the strengths of the ELT.

Recommendations

The needs assessment allowed us to determine the adaptability skills needed to be successful given the current operational environment and job responsibilities of SOF officers. It also helped us identify specific aspects of the current ILE curriculum that could be leveraged to create an advanced level of adaptability-focused instruction. While adaptability is not, and should not be the only proficiency targeted in the curriculum, we recognize that some form of adaptability permeates almost all aspects of a SOF officer's job requirements. Following are our recommendations for enhancing the adaptive capabilities of officers throughout the SOF track curriculum during ILE. We feel this approach will help officers learn how to apply adaptive strategies in different contexts and in accordance with the requirements of their jobs, and will facilitate development of adaptability skills throughout the officers' careers.

Overall Strategy

We present first a framework for adaptive education that can be incorporated throughout the SOF officer track curriculum. We propose a strategy based on four leverage points: (a) Officers need a basic framework for understanding how adaptability is defined, why it is important, and how it is incorporated into their jobs, (b) At this level of education the students should learn from each other, as they have a high level of experience and can benefit from each other's varied knowledge of current operations, (c) The curriculum already includes many excellent learning opportunities (e.g., expert guest speakers) that can be built upon to illustrate adaptive thinking or discuss the skills required to be adaptive, and (d) The experiential learning model is the approach used at CGSC.

Our proposed strategy is consistent with the experiential learning model, in that officers will receive some concrete experiences, engage in discussions, analyze ways to apply the concepts, and then practice executing adaptive strategies. These four leverage points will allow for the construction of adaptability instruction into the SOF curriculum that is effective and is incorporated into the existing educational model. Our recommendations focus on implementing an introduction to adaptability module, the use of an action planning tool that will help instructors frame the officers' learning experiences in different classroom and guest lecture activities to focus on adaptability components, the creation of learning modules where strategies for adaptive thinking and interpersonal interactions are taught, and the implementation of small structured exercises that require officers to apply different adaptive skills in simulated situations.

Proposed Learning Framework

Several learning principles are incorporated into this framework. It is important to design the course such that officers adopt a "mastery orientation," meaning that they look at difficult training situations as valuable learning experiences, rather than situations to be avoided. In addition, the materials should promote a discovery learning approach. Discovery learning is an inductive method of instruction where students explore and experiment with tasks to infer and

learn strategies for effective performance. Rather than being told how to approach particular situations, students must determine and implement strategies for themselves.

The first step in growing adaptive knowledge and strategies is to provide clear definitions and descriptions of the nature of adaptability, and to provide concrete examples of what it means to be adaptive. Lecture materials will be used to provide clarity and a framework for subsequent instructions. The second component in our framework coincides with the experiential learning model in that officers should be able to generalize and apply adaptability concepts and strategies to different situations. We suggest providing officers with a planning tool that helps them understand how their different classroom experiences (and information provided by guest lecturers) tie into the adaptability principles they have learned already. We believe that one of the greatest assets for this curriculum is the wealth of knowledge and experiences the officers have already. Therefore, providing materials that will prime questions during class discussions will help officers generalize adaptability principles to the situations with which they are less familiar.

The third aspect of our proposed learning framework involves the application of adaptability concepts and the opportunity to practice one's skills in realistic, low risk environments where feedback on performance can be given readily. Consistent with this strategy, we suggest creating practical exercises for use in different classes that are congruent with the course topics and that allow officers to develop adaptability skills in different contexts. Specific recommendations for this approach are provided below.

Specific Recommendations

Based on the information we collected, the adaptability component of the SOF ILE curriculum should focus on the following topic areas:

Introduction to Adaptability - An introductory module (approximately 2 hours of lecture) should be provided to introduce adaptability concepts and theories to participating Soldiers. Adaptability requirements at the strategic and operational level will be discussed as they pertain to Soldiers' future careers.

Mental Adaptability – This topic will be integrated throughout the curriculum and will include strategies for critical thinking, creative problem solving, decision making, dealing with uncertain or ambiguous work environments, and handling work stress (approximately 2 hours of lecture and 2 hours of practical exercises).

Interpersonal Adaptability – This topic will be discussed throughout the curriculum and will include strategies for understanding the needs and motives of other people, understanding the cultural similarities and differences among individuals who work for different organizations (e.g., OGAs, NGOs, foreign government agencies), and how these similarities or differences positively and negatively affect inter-organizational cooperation (approximately 1-2 hours of lecture, 2-3 hours of practical exercises or guest speakers).

Building and Operating in Adaptive Systems – This area should focus on the application of adaptability principles in the operation of complex systems (e.g., military organizations, OGAs, NGOs). It will include discussions of the use of research to understand other systems and leveraging information to further a commander’s intent (e.g., adaptability in IO, relations with U.S. and international media). Approximately 2 hours of lecture materials with 2-4 hours of practical exercises should be developed and implemented.

The tools to teach these topic areas will be developed based on the strategy and principles mentioned above. These tools and their potential applications are as follows:

Action Planning – Action planning is a student-centered approach that allows students to manage their own learning by setting specific goals for different learning activities. We propose a variation of this approach in which instructors would facilitate an action planning session with their entire class before guest speakers present their corresponding information. The goal for the planning session is to have students decide on several topics or questions they would like to have the speaker address. We would provide suggestions for ways to target questions toward key adaptability concepts.

Guest Speaker Discussion Sessions – The wrap-around sessions that are currently done following guest speakers do not have a specific structure and are not conducted consistently. Therefore, we propose that the curriculum schedule be structured to allow for at least one day per week where small instructor-facilitated groups engage in a discussion of the speakers’ content from that week. The action planning goals would be used to provide a framework for the discussion, which should help students better organize their knowledge of these concepts.

Classroom Lecture and Discussion – The lecture portion of the adaptability education will be in the form of an introductory module that will lay the foundation for subsequent exercises and lessons. In addition, we may create small lessons with some lecture materials and a framework for leading a class discussion on adaptability that fits into certain electives or the SOF core. The exact placement of these materials will depend on the specific needs we will identify in collaboration with course developers.

Practical Exercises – A variety of practical exercises will be developed in which students are able to practice and apply their adaptive skills. These will be developed to support the lessons learned from the lecture portions of the material, but we may also develop exercises to be used in different SOF electives or core classes. This would allow for students to gain some experience with adaptability in the context of what they are discussing in their regular classes. Specific exercises for SOF, CA, and PSYOP students can be built into the current joint exercises that would force students to apply concepts learned in the previous adaptability modules.

During our observations and discussions with course developers, instructors, and students, we identified several specific types of exercises and topics that would be important to incorporate into the current education. The following is a list of potential topics and exercises

that could be developed. Please note that while we believe these are needed and valuable materials, the extent to which these are developed will depend on what the course developers decide is important to include, and the number of hours allowed for such activities.

Working Effectively in a Joint/Interagency Environment – Several activities focused on building adaptive skills should be in the context of understanding complex systems and performing effectively in joint or interagency environments. Part of this will include helping students to recognize that it is vital for them to have knowledge of the organization with which they work. Lessons on Interpersonal Adaptability will emphasize this context and allow students to practice working through various role-play situations that teach these lessons. The components of Mental Adaptability, like switching mindsets and taking a different perspective, critical thinking, and problem-solving, can all be addressed in the context of this type of work environment.

Increasing the Realism in Planning Exercises – Some of the more complex exercises like the JSOTF and JFSOCC exercises could incorporate several additional aspects that would provide lessons on adaptability. Building a component into the exercises that requires an increased amount of future planning would increase the complexity and require students to use Mental Adaptability to figure out how to de-conflict operations. In addition, we feel that not all of the students play an important role during these exercises. As such, more tasks can be incorporated into these exercises so that all students are engaged throughout the exercise. Furthermore, tasks that are focused on building PSYOP and CA skills can be incorporated to engage those students in activities relevant to their future jobs.

Building Self-Awareness – An important part of being adaptable is having self-awareness to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses and use different strategies based on self-observations. This includes understanding the beliefs and values one has that drives his or her behavior. This topic would be discussed throughout several of the exercises. The self, peer, and instructor evaluations could provide students with feedback about what they did well and where they can improve.

Problem-Solving – One of the most common ideas emerging from our research was that students need to be exposed to current operational problems. We suggest that descriptions of current problems or situations could be obtained from individuals who are currently deployed or have recently returned from deployment, and students could participate in corresponding problem-solving exercise to develop solutions.

Decision-Making Videos – An important predictor of adaptability is experience. An excellent way to show students how experts make decisions is through case examples involving difficult decisions in stressful settings. Experts will explain the situation faced, the possible courses of action, which course of action was chosen and why, and the results of the decision taken

Debate Exercises – In this type of exercise students would prepare for a debate with another student or guest speaker on a given topic. Students would be required to use

material covered in class regarding switching mindsets and using different techniques and different types of arguments.

Incorporating these types of exercises and materials into the SOF curriculum would enhance the education that is provided currently. Focusing on adaptability and building a knowledge framework that is revisited throughout the curriculum will help students become adept at applying adaptive strategies to different environments. The ultimate goal is to provide students with experiences upon which they will continue to build.

Materials developed for the SOF track could also be incorporated into the non-SOF CGSC curriculum. All of the topics covered under the adaptability umbrella (i.e., cultural adaptability, mental adaptability, and interpersonal adaptability) are applicable to conventional Army forces. An introductory adaptability module would be helpful for building an understanding of how adaptability fits into their specific job responsibilities. This introductory module could be developed based on materials from the SFQC, CAQC, and POQC adaptability courses. These lessons could be used to introduce adaptability concepts and basic adaptability tenets to students who have had little familiarity with them. Given that conventional forces often operate in conjunction with SOF forces, and given the nature of operations that conventional forces are conducting currently, we believe it would be beneficial to build an understanding of adaptability concepts throughout the regular curriculum as well as the SOF track.

Conclusions

In this report, we summarized the results of a needs assessment to determine whether the current education SOF officers receive while attending ILE at CGSC could be enhanced or modified to include a stronger emphasis on adaptability. Our needs analysis incorporated data from focus groups with recent graduates of CGSC, interviews with current ILE SOF curriculum developers, instructors, and students, a review of the applicable literature, and interviews with guest speakers. Our results suggested that adaptability is a core component of the tasks demanded of SOF officers in staff positions and permeates the majority of required skills. We found that, although some of the material covered throughout the ILE curriculum relates to adaptability (e.g., the critical thinking and creative reasoning course); there is a need for more advanced and focused lessons and exercises pertaining specifically to adaptability and its relative components.

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APPENDIX A

Dear MAJ Smith,

Thank you for agreeing to meet at _____ to discuss current adaptability requirements and training in Special Operations.

Objectives

JFK SWCS and the U.S. Army Research Institute (ARI) have partnered with Personnel Decisions Research Institutes (PDRI) to assess whether current officer training at CGSC could be enhanced or modified to better prepare officers for adaptive performance requirements. PDRI has created several classroom-based programs of instruction on adaptability for students in the SF Officer Qualification Course, SF Warrant Officer Basic Course, and CA and PSYOP Officer Qualification Courses.

The purpose of the meeting with you is to get your perspective on adaptability training needs in CGSC. We will then compile information from multiple officers so we can make recommendations to JFK SWCS and ARI about whether any modifications to CGSC training are advised.

In preparation for our upcoming meeting, we wanted to give you a brief summary of: (1) what we mean by adaptability, and (2) the types of questions we would like to review with you. In addition, there is a brief questionnaire attached that we would like you to complete and email back to us by COB 24 January 06. Completing the questionnaire will help us tailor our questions when we meet with you in person.

Defining Adaptability

Based on previous work on adaptive performance we have identified eight dimensions of adaptability that may be applied to Army leadership roles in Special Operations. Adaptability is defined as *making an effective change in response to a change in the situation*. Note, that while individuals differ in their ability to adapt, performing adaptively is a skill that can be trained.

- **Handling Emergencies or Crisis Situations** – Reacting with appropriate urgency in life threatening, dangerous, or emergency situations; quickly analyzing options and making split-second decisions based on clear and focused thinking; maintaining emotional control and objectivity while keeping focused on the situation at hand.
- **Handling Work Stress** – Remaining composed and cool when faced with difficult circumstances or a highly demanding workload; managing frustration well by directing effort to constructive solutions; demonstrating resilience and the highest levels of professionalism in stressful circumstances; acting as a calming and settling influence to whom others look for guidance.
- **Solving Problems Creatively** – Turning problems upside-down and inside-out to generate new, innovative ideas; thinking outside the given parameters and integrating seemingly unrelated information to develop creative solutions; developing innovative methods of obtaining or using resources when there are insufficient resources.
- **Dealing with Uncertain and Unpredictable Work Situations** – Effectively adjusting plans, goals, actions, or priorities to deal with changing situations; imposing structure for self and others that provides as much focus as possible in changing situations; refusing to be paralyzed by uncertainty or ambiguity.

- **Learning Work Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures** – Demonstrating enthusiasm for and proficiently learning new approaches and technologies for conducting work; anticipating changes in the work demands and searching for and participating in assignments or training that will prepare self for these changes.
- **Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability** – Considering others’ viewpoints and opinions and altering own opinion when it is appropriate to do so; being open and accepting of negative or developmental feedback regarding work; demonstrating keen insight of others’ behavior and tailoring own behavior to persuade, influence, or work more effectively with them.
- **Demonstrating Cultural Adaptability** – Taking action to learn about and understand the climate, orientation, needs, and values of other groups, organizations, or cultures; understanding the implications of one’s actions and adjusting approach to maintain positive relationships with other groups, organizations, or cultures.
- **Demonstrating Physically Oriented Adaptability** – Adjusting to challenging environmental states such as extreme heat, humidity, or cold; adjusting weight and muscular strength or becoming proficient in performing physical tasks for the job.

Questions for Discussion

In order to discuss how these types of adaptability may apply in your job and the extent to which they are developed in various training courses, we would like you to consider the following questions:

- What are the main responsibilities and core tasks of your job?
- Which, if any, of the skills identified in the eight adaptability dimensions apply to the core tasks of your job?
- What courses or training programs have prepared you for those responsibilities and tasks? Specifically, what skills did the courses/programs train?
- Have you participated in any training that directly or indirectly addressed any of the skills listed in the adaptability dimensions?
- Are there any skills or abilities mentioned above that you think should be a training priority?

The attached Questionnaire asks for some initial information about these questions. If you want to write down additional thoughts about these questions prior to the meeting feel free to do so.

If you have any questions or concerns prior to our meeting, please contact Gonzalo Ferro at PDRI (703-812-3055), or the JFK SWCS or ARI contacts as listed below.

Thank you very much for your assistance with this effort!

APPENDIX B

Adaptability Needs Assessment Questionnaire

This packet is designed to help us capture some of the fundamental aspects of your job and what you see as the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities related to your responsibilities. In addition, we want to identify the extent to which adaptability skills are required for you to perform these tasks and responsibilities successfully. Thank you in advance for your input!

Please download this file to your computer and rename it with your last name as the file name.

Demographic Information	
Current Rank: _____	Choose One: ___ SF ___ CA ___ PSYOP
Years in Grade: _____	
Current Position: _____	
Date Graduated from CGSC: _____	Name: _____

Major Job-Related Responsibilities
Please list FIVE main responsibilities of your current job.
Example Responsibilities: Personnel Management; Planning; Advising Higher Level Personnel or Commanders; Resource Management; Complex Decision-Making
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Core Duties and Tasks

In the following tables please list the core duties or tasks associated with each of the five responsibilities you listed above. (You will write the tasks associated with each responsibility on separate tables.) You may use the task list provided and simply write the number of the task in the box, or write your own task statement. After you have listed a task, please mark an **X** in the column(s) next to it to indicate that a given adaptability skill is required to successfully complete the core task. There is a blank table at the end of this document for filling in additional tasks associated with a given responsibility if you need more space.

-- EXAMPLE FORM --								
Responsibility #1: Personnel Management								
Core Tasks	Handling Emergency or Crisis Situations	Handling Work Stress	Solving Problems Creatively	Dealing with Uncertain and Unpredictable Work Situations	Learning Work Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures	Interpersonal Adaptability	Cultural Adaptability	Physically Oriented Adaptability
48. Evaluate subordinates' performance (complete OERs).								
43. Conduct counseling sessions with subordinates.						X		
(Added task). Solve staffing problems by identifying Soldiers who are capable of performing duties beyond their current responsibilities, and gaining their cooperation.		X	X	X		X		

Task Statements

The following task statements are examples of tasks you may perform while carrying out different job-related responsibilities. In order for us to have a more comprehensive understanding of your job, we would like you to use these task statements, and any others that apply, to describe what you do and what tasks require adaptive skills.

The purpose of this task list is to provide you with *general* statements that may be applied to many different responsibilities you carry out. You may make them more specific, modify them, not use them, or add to the list. The tasks are only grouped under broad headings to make finding a type of task easier during the focus group session.

Interacting with Others

1. Make adjustments to own actions to coordinate with others.
2. Communicate effectively with others (and maintain communication networks).
3. Integrate yourself into various information loops.
4. Participate in a work group/team.
5. Establish and maintain effective working relationships with others.
6. Establish rapport and trust with those you work with.
7. Engage in effective impression management.
8. Assess needs of self and others in a given situation.
9. Resolve conflicts by reasoning or negotiating with individuals involved.
10. Gain cooperation from others outside your chain of command.
11. Facilitate meetings.
12. Serve as a representative of your unit/the U.S. Army to external entities.
13. Give briefings/make presentations to different audiences.

Reviewing, Analyzing, and Recommending

14. Advise the supported commander or other key personnel.
15. Review and advise on products or documents.
16. Interpret commander's intent.
17. Analyze how to coordinate SF/CA/PSYOP plan with other plans and objectives.
18. Identify information requirements (IRs).
19. Identify strategic implications of different operational/tactical responses.
20. Create new solutions or ideas.
21. Analyze target audience (TA).
22. Identify effects of different COAs taken by one organization on another.

23. Relate U.S. policy, goals, and objectives to the current situation.
24. Estimate and project likely outcomes.
25. Determine concept of operation and priorities of effort.
26. Conduct after action review and write report.
27. Conduct deliberate assessment of the area of operations.
28. Prepare reports and/or briefings.
29. Prepare portion of, or entire, OPLAN/OPORD.

Monitoring and Gathering Information

30. Study/gain understanding of target culture.
31. Maintain situation awareness.
32. Obtain needed resources.
33. Monitor the media.
34. Gather information from different resources.
35. Identify information by categorizing, estimating, recognizing differences or similarities, and detecting changes in circumstances or events.
36. Assess the value or importance of information received.
37. Monitor operations under your command.
38. Monitor operations conducted by other relevant organizations.
39. Establish communications with other units or organizations.

Personnel Management and Development

40. Issue orders/provide direction and guidance to staff.
41. Analyze internal processes and recommend and implement policy changes.
42. Conduct counseling sessions with subordinates.
43. Set goals and priorities of work.
44. Impose limits.
45. Impose structure consistent with mission objectives.
46. Translate policies into operational tasks.
47. Assign appropriate responsibilities to staff based on individual abilities.
48. Evaluate subordinates' performance (complete OERs).
49. Develop training for staff members.
50. Run the training calendar.

APPENDIX C

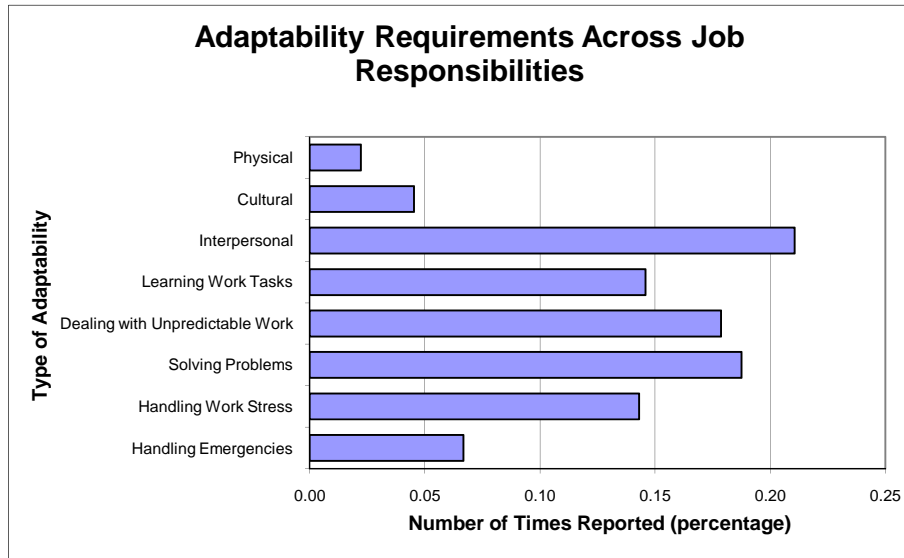
Core Task Data from Focus Groups

Frequency of core tasks across all responsibilities.

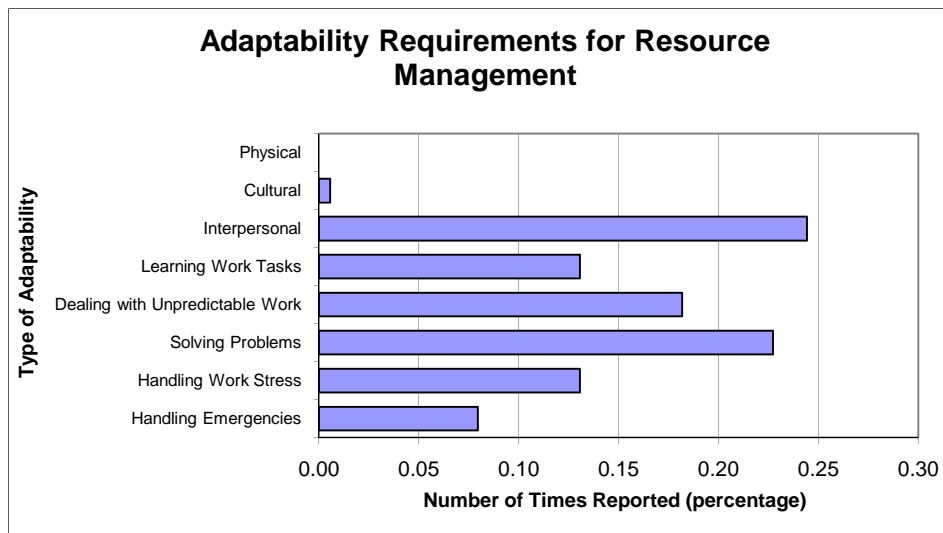
Core Tasks	Number of Times Reported
Communicate effectively with others (and maintain communication networks).	18
Interpret commander's intent.	16
Create new solutions or ideas.	16
Establish and maintain effective working relationships with others.	14
Integrate yourself into various information loops.	13
Participate in a work group/team.	13
Establish rapport and trust with those you work with.	13
Set goals and priorities of work.	13
Give briefings/make presentations to different audiences.	12
Prepare reports and/or briefings.	12
Facilitate meetings.	11
Obtain needed resources.	11
Assess needs of self and others in a given situation.	10
Monitor operations under your command.	9
Gain cooperation from others outside your chain of command.	8
Serve as a representative of your unit/the U.S. Army to external entities.	8
Issue orders/provide direction and guidance to staff.	8
Make adjustments to own actions to coordinate with others.	7
Advise the supported commander or other key personnel.	7
Estimate and project likely outcomes.	7
Maintain situation awareness.	7
Gather information from different resources.	7
Analyze internal processes and recommend and implement policy changes.	7
Impose limits.	7
Assign appropriate responsibilities to staff based on individual abilities.	7
Review and advise on products or documents.	6
Identify information requirements.	6

Identify information by categorizing, estimating, recognizing differences or similarities, and detecting changes in situations.	6
Conduct counseling sessions with subordinates.	6
Evaluate subordinates' performance (complete OERs).	6
Impose structure consistent with mission objectives.	6
Determine concept of operation and priorities of effort.	5
Engage in effective impression management.	4
Identify strategic implications of different operational/tactical responses.	4
Analyze target audience.	4
Identify effects of different COAs taken by one organization on another.	4
Prepare portion of, or entire, OPLAN/OPORD.	4
Establish communications with other units or organizations.	4
Develop training for staff members.	4
Analyze how to coordinate SF/CA/PSYOP plan with other plans and objectives.	3
Relate U.S. policies, goals, and objectives to the current situation.	3
Conduct deliberate assessment of the area of operations.	3
Assess the value or importance of information received.	3
Translate policies into operational tasks.	3
Run the training calendar.	3
Conduct after action review and write report.	2
Use appropriate disciplinary methods/deal with legal issues.	2
Engage in time management activities.	2
Study/gain understanding of target culture.	1
Monitor operations conducted by other relevant organizations.	1
Develop tracking mechanisms to account for resources.	1
Have moral courage.	1
Crisis action planning.	1
Interacting with others.	1
Handle casualties.	1
Handle combat stress.	1
Gather lessons learned.	1

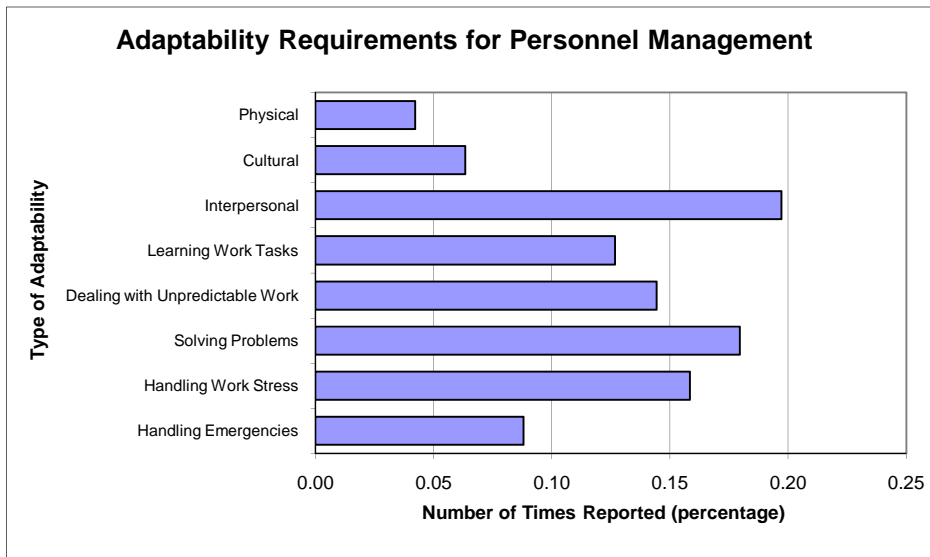
Adaptability requirements combined across all job responsibilities.



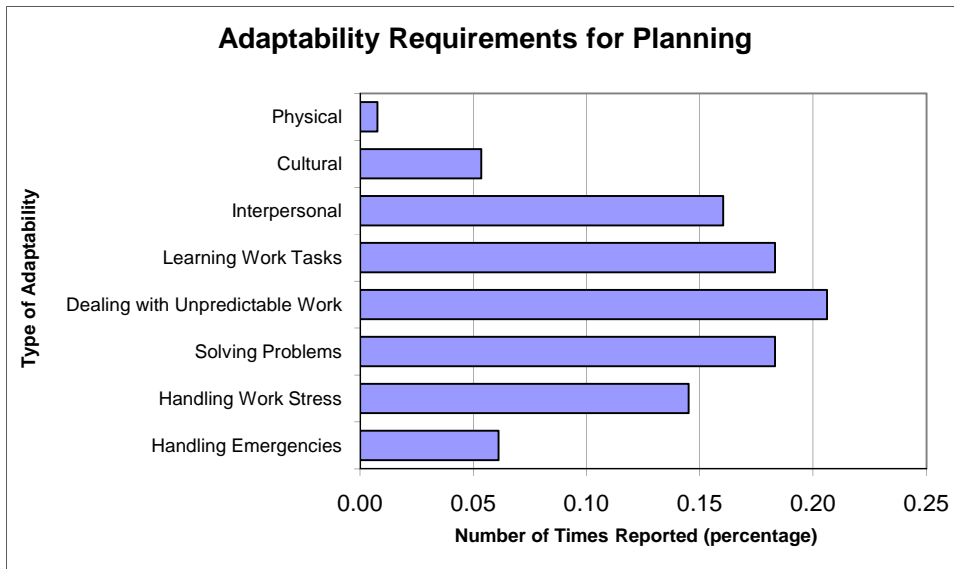
Adaptability dimensions associated with resource management activities.



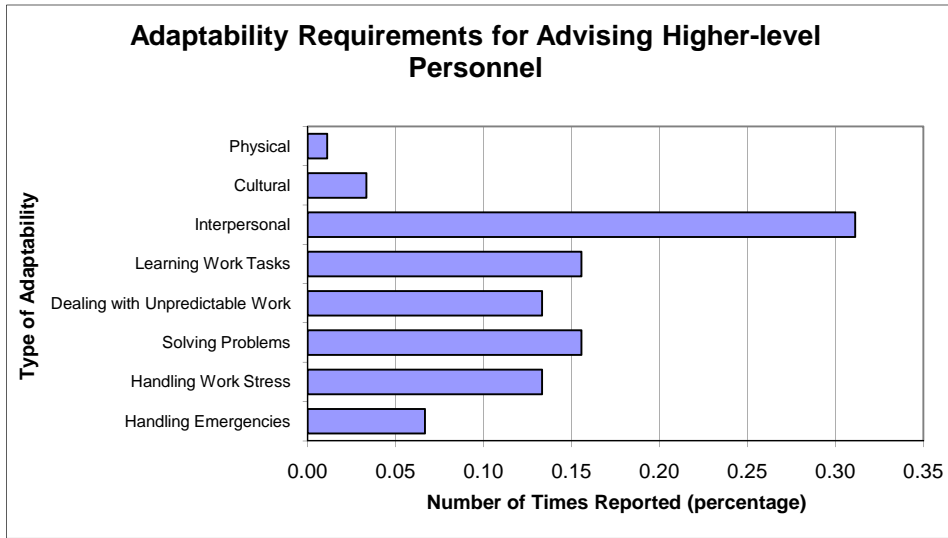
Adaptability dimensions associated with personnel management activities.



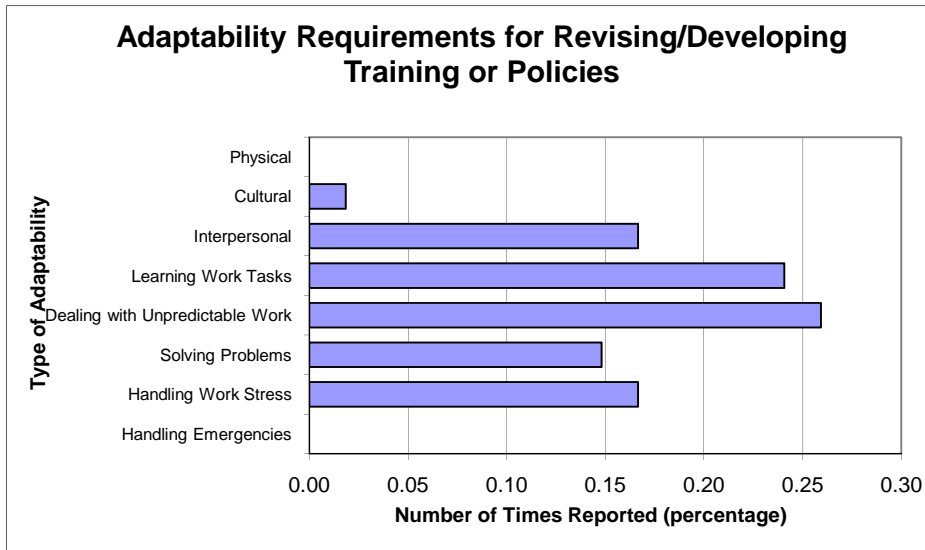
Adaptability dimensions associated with planning activities.



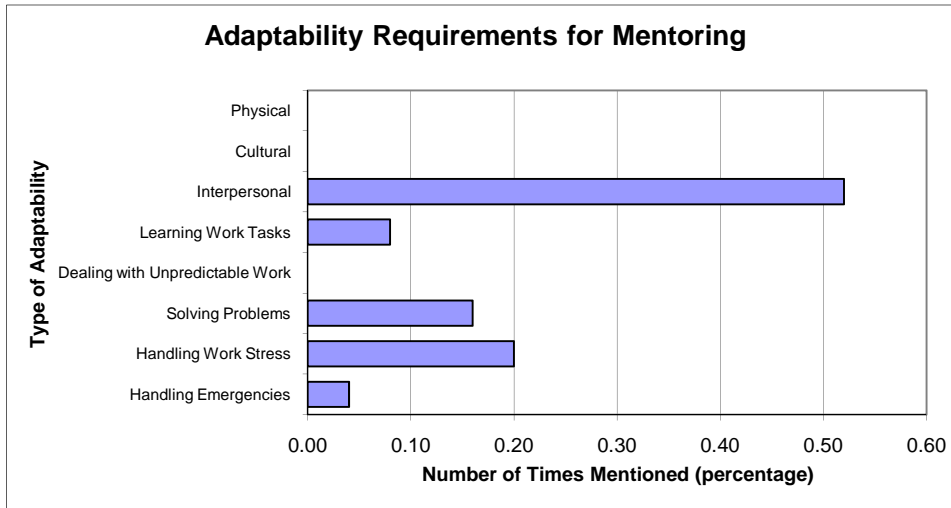
Adaptability dimensions associated with advising higher-level personnel.



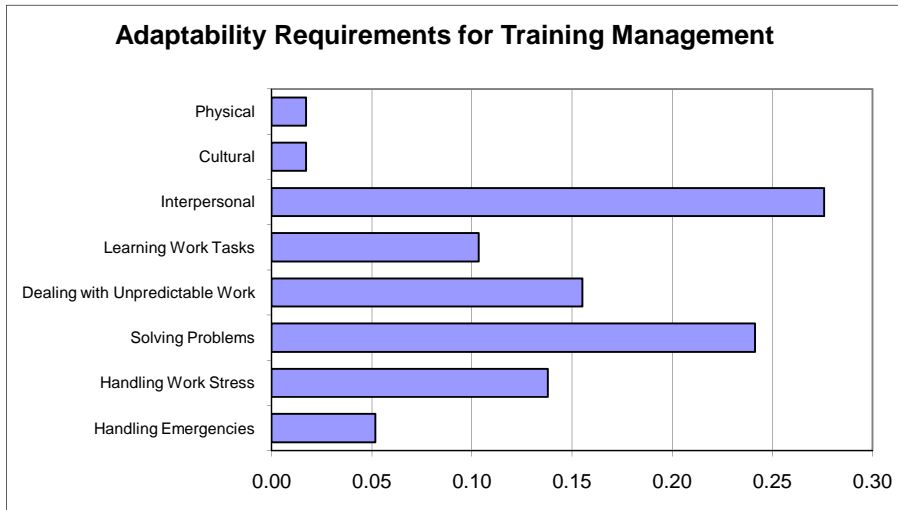
Adaptability dimensions associated with revising or developing training or policies.



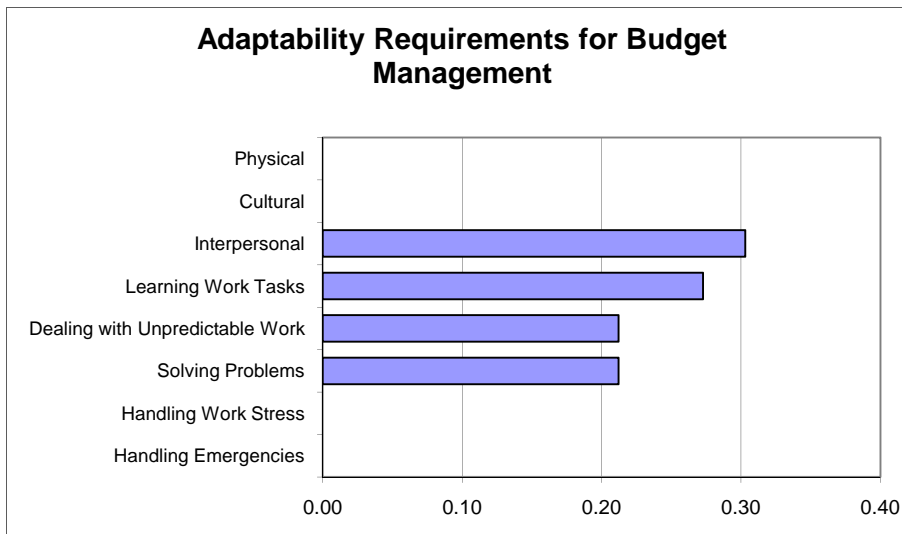
Adaptability dimensions associated with advising lower-level personnel and mentoring.



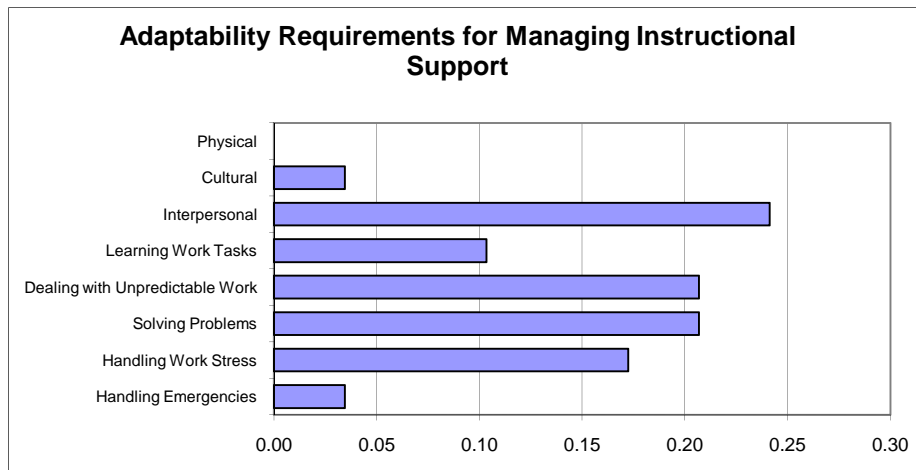
Adaptability dimensions associated with training management



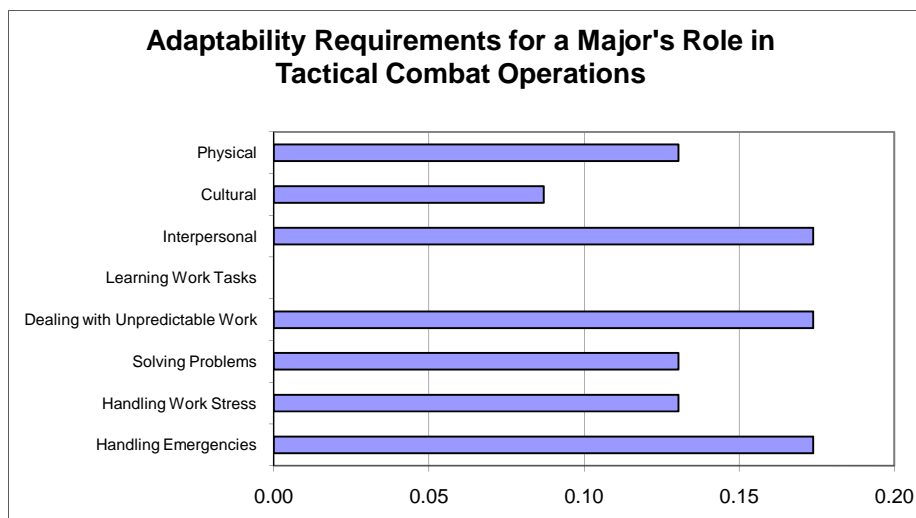
Adaptability dimensions associated with budget management.



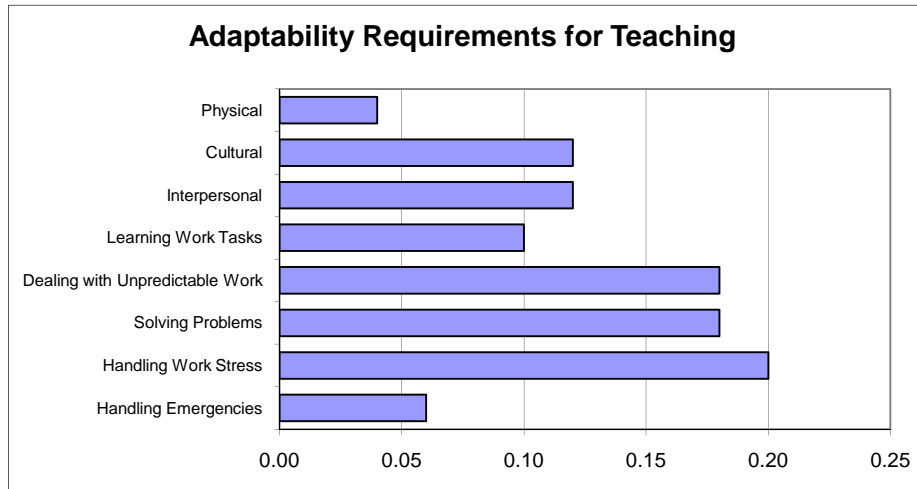
Adaptability dimensions associated with managing instructional support.



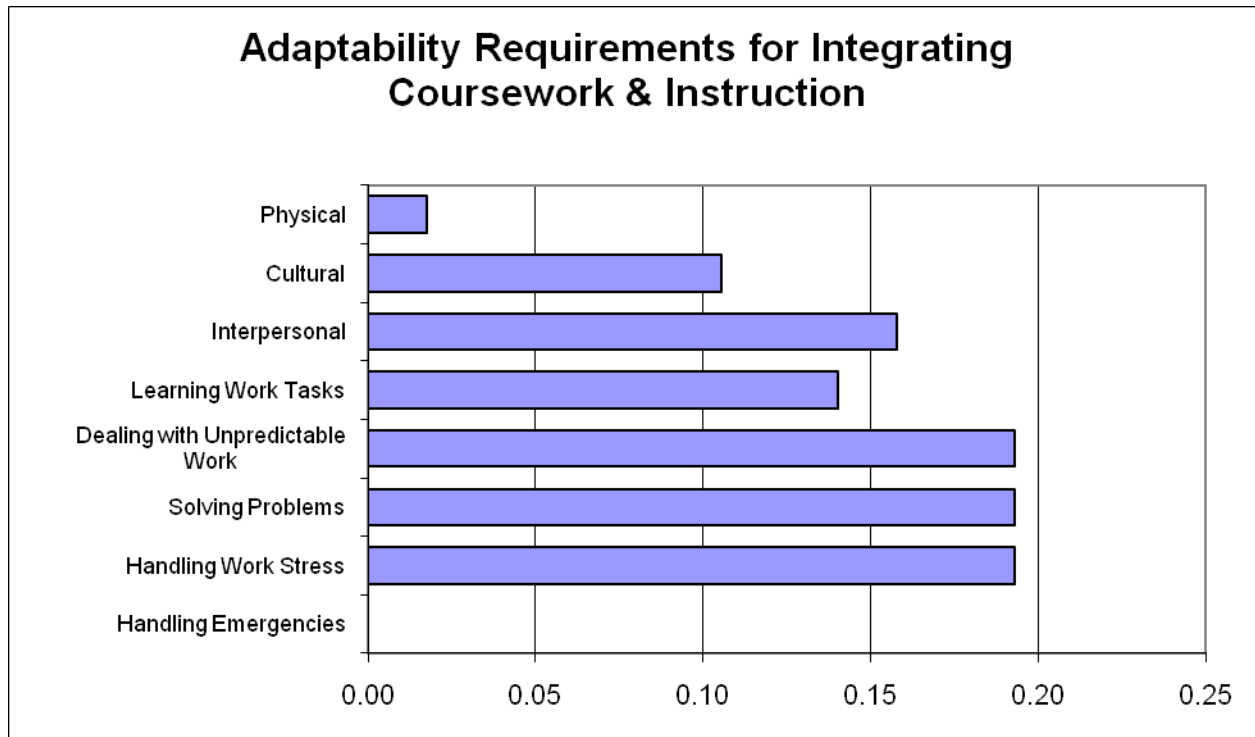
Adaptability dimensions associated with a major's role in tactical combat operations.



Adaptability dimensions associated with teaching students.



Adaptability dimensions associated with integrating coursework and instruction from multiple courses.



Frequency of all listed tasks.

