

Professional Military Education

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Abstract

Professional Military Education (PME) is the means of holistic development and training of officers of armed forces. It is based on prolonged study that requires one to continuously read, study and upgrade his professional grade and competence. To remain abreast with the changing global scenario, it is incumbent on officers to educate and arm them to find solutions to a multitude of challenges that they may confront in their respective service careers. It involves grasping the basic functioning of the society, the socio-cultural and the geopolitical machinery. It is this sustained effort and development in the officers' mind and spirit which encompasses PME.

Keywords: Education, Training, Military education, Professional military education, Resocialisation, Character development, skill development, Language skills, Goldwater Nichols act, Skelton report

"Professional attainment, based upon prolonged study, and collective study at colleges, rank by rank, age by age – those are the title reeds of the commanders of future armies, and the secret of future victories"¹

Winston Churchill, 1946

Introduction

Education is the process of nurturing a person to fulfill the needs of the organisation. As the world transforms technologically at an unprecedented rate, the requirements of war and peace complement each other for a well fought war for continued peace. Aid to civil authorities, humanitarian assistance, relief & rehabilitation, Low Intensity Conflict, insurgency, and war against terrorism occupy the major role of the combat forces around the world.

The aim of the article is to analyse the essential requirements of 'Professional Military Education (PME)' in the armed forces, suggest a broad content for officers and propose a pragmatic view of the educational grooming by encompassing the present-day requirement and anticipating the complexities of the future.

A Military Officer

A military officer, being an effective leader, bridges the gap in the chain of command hierarchy. He is an epitome of professional excellence and an icon of courage and modesty, so the men he commands look up to him with pride and dignity. He must, therefore work towards earning

their respect and confidence and uphold their integrity and honour. While some are tenacious and hardworking, others display a high order of comprehension in the assigned tasks. Few remain motivated while some are ingrained with values and ethics and exhibit a very high order of innovation and creativity. As Lieutenant General PS Bhagat² has said, "be magnanimous, be loyal, be courageous, be a gentleman, and you shall be an officer in the true sense."

Regimental activities like physical training, field crafted routine exercise promote cohesiveness, camaraderie and foster motivation. A well trained and well-knit unit thus plays a critical role as a bastion of military leadership.

Military Education

Education is the development of an understanding of the guiding principles, theory and concepts. It provides individuals with the basic wherewithal to apply knowledge to perceive unique situations for better understanding of methods and procedures. The difference between training and education is that while **training is an instruction on what to think, education teaches how to think**³. The main goal of education is to make officers well-informed, competent and responsible citizens of a nation.

Military education teaches officers how to think, and to convert knowledge into skills, then the types of skills they hone in their service career. The bedrock of sustained development of an officer's mind and spirit is termed as

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‘Professional Military Education’, which has its basic premise of advancement, preservation, and communication of military wisdom for success in peace and victory in war. It is intended to develop soldiers, sailors, and airmen with unparalleled intellect and operational capabilities. The principal purpose of PME is to education in the preparation of a public trust that grows and nurtures over a period of time. Constant endeavour should be made to ameliorate the educational standards of officers. **An officer is intended to be analytical, pragmatic, innovative and broadly educated.**

PME plays an important role in ensuring that armed forces transit to a more structured and on-going learning environment. It is crucial for the effectiveness of any fighting force. The armed forces need to educate officers to arm them to find solutions to a magnitude of challenges that they may bound to confront them. An officer needs to grasp the basic functioning of a society, the socio-cultural and geo-political machinery and remain abreast with the latest military developments. Officers are expected to learn, analyse and act according to the service protocol and conventions on foreign policies, analyse consequences and prospects of warfare, its political perspective, and the national security parameters to safeguard the interest of the nation.

“We train for certainty and educate for uncertainty and meet uncertainty with innovative success”

PME is the backbone in the development of a nation’s military might, and the quality of military education distinguishes itself from the rest. It is important for a nation to invest in PME to groom officers capable of meeting the rigours of complex politico-military crises and conflicts of the future, both in war and Operations Other Than War (OOTW). PME must be developed in the following spheres: -

1. Integrated employment of land, sea and air forces.
2. National military strategy.
3. Strategy and contingency planning.
4. Command and control of combat operations.

Re-socialisation

While training methods transform a raw civilian into a budding and groomed officer through a process of re-socialisation, it is the process of education that initiates leadership qualities at the cradle of a training academy and continues to consolidate throughout the spectrum of his varied service life. Similarly, since education is a continuous process, military education never ceases to end in the career span of an officer.

PME provides ethos, culture, and core values of services, the technical and tactical skills appropriate in waging a war and provides wisdom and judgment that needs to be applied in a multiplicity of situations. It thus enhances intellectual sophistication. It is a heritage that is followed

from generations since time immemorial.

Importance of Character Development

The supreme quality of a leader is unquestionable integrity. An aspirant joining the military cadre as an officer is expected to reflect the national form, and so should be put through a credible character development programme. To become a person of character is a career long process that spans day-to-day experiences, education, self-development, coaching, mentoring and can be nurtured only through continuous study. A leader is one who holds himself and his subordinates to the highest standards of military pride. These yardsticks are spread through a regiment, squadron or a warship. Officers of character must possess the zeal and zest to act ethically, thereby creating an ethical environment. By doing so, officers feel, act and become ethical in nature and eventually develop sound character.

In a cynical and increasingly amoral society, character development is the greatest challenge for the services. Rewards and punishments must be substantiated with an exemplary corrective action to lift and maintain the highest level of moral practices. Officers need to possess the mettle and grit to stand by the truth. They must hold virtues of courage of conviction and uphold the dignity of doing what is right. History has produced men who were committed to God and their country and men who have demonstrated strong character in the face of the enemy. There are many examples in India’s military history, post 1947, both among officers and other ranks.

Formal Curriculum for PME

A formal curriculum for PME for war fighting is essential to support services as well as the frontline infantrymen. PME should ensure that military men are able to think and analyse critically, lead effectively, systematically and innovatively. They should be able to solve problems, plan for uncertainties, prepare for exigencies, express themselves clearly, become resourceful, take initiative, and possess critical judgement to a point of understanding under a constantly changing environment.

A typical program must sharpen focus on most essential skills, knowledge and attributes. The areas include moral and political instructions, network science and methods of analyses. This will also help officers prepare in a multi-disciplinary approach for research that combines techniques of social sciences, critical thinking and strategic judgement that will pave way to analyse complex problems with use of cutting edge tools. PME forms the heart of services for the officer corps that shapes their present orientation and their future vision.

A suggested curriculum for a broad and vigorous PME programme, both for officers and men, must include the following subjects:

1. Joint-training and tri-services integration. A number of directives on joint training have been issued in the armed forces wherein officers acquaint themselves and understand the training methodologies and nuances of sister services.
 2. Language skills and cultural awareness. A typical faculty in place that provides state-of-art multi-disciplinary language skills with cultural awareness is at Army Education Corps Training College & Centre (AECTC & C) Pachmarhi. The infrastructural wherewithal, availability of teaching and training pedagogies for imparting foreign languages with cultural background provides a unique and a distinctive set-up. The environment also imparts training on methods of instructions, teacher training, military music and map craft. The Centre creates a corpus in the field of education. Officers trained on foreign languages may be effectively utilised as professional language mediators and directing staff. Such skilled manpower can be channelized to raise similar educational hubs insister services. The recent proposal to create NDU under the Ministry of Defence (MoD) to meet the professional needs of the three services is a step in the right direction. This may be put to test to initiate better language learning outcomes to broaden multi-cultural and multi-lingual awareness amongst service personnel for deputation as foreign military advisors and attachés.
 3. Area Studies. Area studies cover the geo-political, socio-cultural, historical and the present day perspective of India's immediate and extended neighborhood. This has a direct bearing on the subject. Strategic studies cover a range of civil military liaison, defense issues including war and strategy, force restructuring and modernization, military readiness, logistical sustenance, research and development, and budget acquisitions.
 4. Foreign Policy. Training on India's foreign policy must be covered through studies in the field of international affairs including United Nations and Geneva Conventions.
 5. Military lessons from past campaigns and wars.
- Dr Sanu Kainikara in his working paper on Professional Mastery and Air Power Education in the Royal Australian Air Force analyses a deficit in strategic thinking and knowledge within the Royal Air Force⁴. Some of the military leaders from the fighting arms are oriented towards the practical aspect of operations as opposed to conceptualising philosophically about the reasons for, and consequences of, initiating a particular action. One of the most challenging tasks of a well-planned PME program is to produce imaginative, innovative, adaptive and critical thinking commanders. This will be possible only if the PME framework of the services is continuous, well-knit and encourages ones intellect. This involves further stress on the right subjects and choosing the most appropriate educational program. It is imperative to mention that since strategic thinking requires rigours of study and research and comes into direct competition with operational requirement, the development of strategic thinking and professional mastery must be introduced at the introductory step, i.e. from operational to the strategic level.
- The various components required for introducing PME are professional service knowledge, general education, training & education for joint operations for military and civil officers for leadership roles in national security at the strategic level. The primary focus at each level of PME, i.e. ab-initio, basic, middle, senior and general officer is as envisaged below:-

Table 1. Selection, Level and Duration for PME in Armed Forces

Stage	Level	Duration	Area of Specialisation	Outcome
Ab-initio	At training academy	1-1.5 years	Minor & Major Staff Duties, Public Speaking, Mass Communication, Writing Staff Papers	Preliminary education and foundation
Basic	Initial years	1-2 years	Military Law, Foreign Languages, IT, Security, Intelligence, Moral Values, Ethical Issues, Unit Ethos, Regimental Traditions	Focus and direction to PME
Middle	Middle years	6 months to 1 year	Staff Course, Network Centric Warfare, Data Analyses, Personnel, Financial Administration, Materials Management, Human Rights, Self-learning modules with think tanks	Continued education
Senior	High level	3 – 6 months	Advanced IT, Security, General Administration, Ecology & Environment, Self-learning modules with think tanks	Strategic and complex decision making, continued education
General Officers	> 25 years	15 – 30 days	Military Strategy, Operational Planning, International Relations, National Security, Foreign Policy, United Nations	Short term courses at NDU, Ministry of External Affairs and Home Affairs

"The society that separates its scholars from its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and fighting done by fools"

Thucydides

The role of training institutes for imparting PME may be constituted under the existing aegis of Training Command with a specific mandate to integrate the educational efforts of the three services. By virtue of a common resource pool, this would have numerous advantages. The suggested features of a proposed Unified Training Command are as follows: -

- Linking training institutes like Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), College of Defence Management (CDM), and National Defence College (NDC) through a dedicated and a secured network. This network may be configured with the proposed NDU at a later stage.
- Linking military establishments with foreign military institutions through a secured network for collaborating better exchange programmes and learning outcomes.
- Permanent research faculty for doctoral and post-doctoral military issues with formal affiliation and recognition.
- Encouragement to government approved community college schemes to give more stability and accreditation to formal education.
- Publication of papers on various subjects with opportunities of expression for research and development programs.

To improve the system of PME, we need to provide a comprehensive and established educational system at the ab-initio level. Subjects like Management, Mass Communication, Computer-Aided Instruction (CAI) must be mandated for all ranking officers⁵. In addition, salient aspects on Military Ethics, policies on Human Rights and brass-tacks on legal aspects is crucial and important for PME. Due credit should be paid for enhancing the intellectual development. Joint training modules and exchange programs among the three services and friendly foreign countries will further boost inter-services cooperation and collaboration on matters relating to education and training in the long run.

Skill Development for Officers

Skill and knowledge are the driving forces of economic growth and social development for any nation. It is important to invest in PME to groom the skills required for meeting the rigours of complex politico-military crises and conflicts of the future.

NDU, as envisaged, is slated to be an apex body under whose aegis all category 'A' training establishments including NDC, National Defence Academy (NDA), CDM, College of Air Warfare (CAW), institutions related to defence management

and strategic studies and other research bodies involved in studies and consultation will fall. NDU, perceived to be a centre of excellence and innovation, will serve as a think tank contributing to policy formulation and studies on national security and strategy. NDU in collaboration with tri-services think tanks like The United Service Institution of India (USI), Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), Centre for Joint Warfare Studies (CENJOWS) and National Maritime Foundation (NMF) may associate with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Directorate of Education and Training (DGET), National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) and National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) as training partners for formally imparting skills and development of Vocational Education and Training (VET) for officers' at the initial level of their careers. As a pilot project, Military Skill Councils, as envisaged, may be set-up at the Command and Corps level for better command and control. Such centres of learning may be approved by national statutory bodies like National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and National Assessment Board (NAB). Considering the nature of future warfare and all-round grooming of officers, such programs are an inescapable necessity. The same should be made mandatory for all arms. A few generic areas that may be mandated are as follows:

- General Administration.
- Financial Administration.
- Personnel Management.
- Material Management.
- Advanced Security, Intelligence and Interrogation.
- Foreign Languages.
- Network Centric Warfare.
- Advanced Information Technology, Data Mining and Analyses.
- Wireless Telecommunication.
- Disaster Management and Aid to Civil Authorities.
- Strategic Vision & Planning.
- Tactics in Modern Warfare.

A number of Memorandum of Understanding exists between armed forces and private universities on imparting doctoral programs. However, such programmes are not ideally suited in the context of PME. Rather, such programs become gateways for premature release from service. By offering a formalised skill development program, the nation will be able to save money to the exchequer and curb the trained human resource from early attrition. Fellowship programs at IDSA, USI and with NDU may be encouraged for officers for award of diploma, post-graduate diploma and doctoral programs to expand the knowledge base and broaden their horizons.

Historical Perspective

Goldwater Nichols Act

During the Vietnam War, an attempt was made to improve the coordination and inter-service rivalry within the United States Army. This was brought about by the Goldwater Nichols Act in 1986. It mandated a solution that required officers to have a mix of joint education, assignments and accreditation by a board of professionals to be eligible for promotion to higher ranks. A number of doctrinal issues like coordination and communication were deliberated in the act, including the importance of PME.⁶

Skelton Report

In 1989, a report on the panel of military education was presented by the one hundredth Congress in United States. The report highlighted key elements in the PME, including a framework for primary education for senior, middle and junior level officers in improving the quality of faculty by hiring civilian subject experts. It also slated the requirement of a national institute for research and education and the need for national strategy as a primary focus. The panel also questioned whether officers are prepared to face the real challenges of the future. It recommended a cadre of long term thinkers and strategists who would be able to find solutions during political turmoil and be military visionaries for their country.

The Skelton Panel was assigned for reviewing the aspects of implementing PME of the Goldwater Nichols Act with a view towards assuring that education provides proper linkage between officers who are compliant with the provisions of PME.

German military emphasised PME throughout its entire officer corps, from the pre-commissioning to the mid-career staff college⁶. It emphasised that no correct solutions existed, and debated best solutions in small groups. It also focussed its officers to think differently about military operations, resulting in warfare trends that shifted towards combined arms.

Spenser Wilkinson noted one of the ironies of military education. The intellectual advancement of officers of every army is confronted by a peculiar difficulty. "The foundation of all military institutions is authority and obedience, principles which appear to be directly opposed to the free movement of intelligence. Every army is constantly in danger of decay from mental stagnation."⁸

Future Technologies

It is important to consider multimedia instructional programs, artificial intelligence, expert systems, virtual reality, and a host of future generation bots and programs that are already helping education and training on the World Wide Web. Much sophisticated tools are being designed

to assist military users in searching through data sources. Bulletin board services provide connectivity with aids to find information and people over networks. Information agents can give the ability to train networks to gather and analyze data based on user demands. Advanced technologies and algorithms for data mining and analyses for quantitative and qualitative evaluation of information can be carried out much easier nowadays.

Services needs to institute programs for continued education for officers to pursue on their own, separate from and in addition to intermediate and advanced professional military education through contact programs and through the medium of correspondence. Officers need to be encouraged to participate and take part in discussions on forums, like Bharat Rakshak Consortium and in-house 'Defence' blogs. Professional reading and writing papers should be an integral part of the preparation for Staff College and higher studies. Personnel branch policies may be directed for offering even better educational programs for officers for optimal utilization in their career graph and in-service growth.

Conclusion

Human resource will remain a critical element to any PME system. If the principal focus at NDU is to train the future military thinkers, strategists and decision makers, the range and quality of civilian and military faculty will assume the turning point for our future leaders. While it is important to train an officer on the substance of PME, it is equally important for an officer to groom himself on the nuances of strategic sciences and become a multi-faceted personality over a period of time. The crucial role of PME is to help officers understand the changing world order. Further, since development of professional mastery contributes to the efficacy of services, involvement of education at all levels of professional glory and wisdom is imperative. Armed forces provide a cordial environment wherein officers imbibe true values of character through the prism of holistic education. The officer corps must be able to think creatively, reason critically, and act decisively in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty. A positive understanding of the future needs by improving the professional maturity in military education is the guiding dogma for success of any nation.

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