

Running head: FUTURE OF THE NCO CORPS

Future of the NCO Corps

MSG Jeffrey A. Ashenfelter

United States Army Sergeants Major Academy

Class 58

CMSGT Herrick

27 Nov 07

Abstract

The following is an explanation of the Noncommissioned Officer Education System (NCOES) currently in use in the United States Army and an explanation of the new system the Army is currently implementing. Included in the current system are the four levels of NCOES and the functional First Sergeants Course. The new system of NCOES will include five levels of structured self-development and five levels of institutional training, beginning with the Warrior Leaders Course and culminating with the Command Sergeants Major Course.

Thesis statement and Outline

The future of the NCO Corps will be defined by its past, present, and future Warriors, through transforming institutional training, civilian education, and operational experience.

I. Evolution of the Non-Commissioned Educational System

A. Current NCO Education System

1. WLC
2. BNCOC
3. ANCOC / FSC
4. SMC

B. Future NCO Education System

1. SSD 1 / WLC
2. SSD 2 / ALC
3. SSD 3 / SLC
4. SSD 4 / SSC
5. SMC / CSMC / SSD 5

Future of the NCO Corps

The Evolution of the Noncommissioned Officer Educational System (NCOES)

NCOES is transforming to meet the needs of the evolving role of the NCO in today's Army. The NCO of today fulfills the role of teacher, coach, and mentor as well as the role of counselor, caretaker, financial advisor, confidant, and in some cases a shoulder to lean on in times of trouble.

Current Noncommissioned Officer Educational System

Current NCOES training is set up on a four level system for the development of NCOs through a series of courses of increasing difficulty and simulated levels of responsibility. This approach to learning reinforces previously gained knowledge through review then proceeds with presentation of the next level of knowledge based upon the rank of the student. This system begins with the Warrior Leaders Course (WLC), proceeds to the Basic NCO Course (BNCOC), followed by the Advanced NCO Course (ANCOC), and ultimately concluding with the Sergeants Major Course (SMC). An additional functional course taken by many NCOs is the First Sergeants Course (FSC), this is not classified NCOES but it does provide for specialized training for those NCOs performing the duties as a company First Sergeant.

The beginning level of NCOES is WLC, which is common core training for all developing leaders. WLC begins to challenge young Soldiers in the area of leadership based on the combat arms model of training. This course stresses using the team building process to achieve mission accomplishment. WLC places the student into leadership positions and evaluates their abilities to perform under a stressful environment as well as their ability to make decisions under pressure. This course is for the Specialist and Sergeant to prepare them for the

challenges of junior leadership positions (PLDC IS NOW WARRIOR LEADER COURSE, 2005).

The second level of NCOES is BNCOC, which starts with common core training in the first phase and continues with subsequent phases based upon Military Occupational Specialty (MOS). This method places students of various MOS groups together initially to learn the level of leadership based upon their rank and then continues in the following phase or phases with training specific to the job skills of their career field. This course is for the Sergeant and Staff Sergeant to enhance their knowledge and build upon previously learned skills.

The third level of NCOES is ANCOC, which is set up the same as the previous level of training but directs training toward the skills necessary for the position of Platoon Sergeant. Management of platoon level operations, working with junior officers, and being part of the company mission plan are all parts of ANCOC. This level of training is for the Staff Sergeant and Sergeant First Class to once again to enhance their knowledge and build upon previously learned skills.

An area not under NCOES, the FSC is a functional course for the development of NCOs to perform duties as company First Sergeants. Although not classified NCOES, this course enhances the knowledge of the NCO at the company level, to include duty rosters, UCMJ, conducting formations, and working with closely with company commanders as part of the leadership team of the unit. This relationship is essential for the success of a unit. This course is for the Master Sergeant and First Sergeant to once again to enhance their knowledge and build upon previously learned skills.

The fourth and final level of NCOES is the SMC. This course is for only those selected for duty performance at the highest-level NCO positions in the Army. The course work selected

will prepare the NCO to perform duties as a Sergeant Major in a staff position or as a Command Sergeant Major in a battalion or higher position. This course is for the Master Sergeant, First Sergeant, and Sergeant Major to prepare them for top-level positions. (Ernest F. Fisher, 1994)

Future Noncommissioned Officer Education System

The future of NCOES, as outlined to the students of the United States Army Sergeants Major Academy, Sergeants Major Course, Class 58 by CSM John Sparks, the CSM for Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), on 18 Sep 07, will be a fluid system starting earlier in a Soldier's career, including web based Structured Self Development as well as Institutional Training. Changes in the course names and curriculum will reflect the evolution of NCOES toward a system that teaches current and future needs of the NCO. This new system will require Soldiers, throughout their career, to take the initiative for their own development by completing pre-requisites and then attending resident courses for completion of that level of NCOES. The Courses for the new NCOES program include WLC, Advanced Leaders Course (ALC), Senior Leaders Course (SLC), Senior Staff Course (SSC), and the Sergeants Major Course (SMC) and Command Sergeants Major Course (CSMC). A Structured Self Development (SSD) Course that is self-initiated, self-guided, will precede each of these courses and progress tracked through an online portal.

The start of this new system will begin with SSD 1 as early as PFC up to the Corporal. Upon successful completion of SSD 1, the Soldier enrolls in WLC for the next phase of this level of NCOES. This training will prepare the Soldier for Team Leader and Squad Leader positions by developing the skills needed in the areas of troop leading procedures, decision making and casualty evacuation.

The second level of this NCOES targets the Corporal through Staff Sergeant, starts with SSD 2, and finishes with ALC. This course will prepare the Soldier for both Squad and Platoon level operations with heavy emphasis on technical skills competencies. Curriculum will include the military decision making process, issuing combat orders, preparing NCOERs, risk assessment, and leading/training platoons.

The third level of this NCOES targets the Staff Sergeant and Sergeant First Class, starts with SSD 3 and finishes with SLC. This course will prepare for both platoon and company operations and will provide training for some of the aspects of the company First Sergeant. The course subjects will include duty rosters, training management, sponsorship, NCODP, leader development, and conflict management.

The fourth level targets the Sergeant First Class and Master Sergeant, begins with SSD 4, and finishes with the Senior Staff Course (SSC). Upon completion of SSD 4, the "M" identifier is awarded to the Soldier for assignment to a First Sergeant position based on the needs of the Army. The combination of SSD 4 and the SSC prepares the Soldier for duties at the Army and Joint Staffs above the BCT levels with training in the areas of staff studies, priority management, ARFORGEN process and unit assessment.

The last level of training directs efforts at the Master Sergeant, First Sergeant, Sergeant Major, and the Command Sergeant Major. This level will be a continuation of SSD 4, the SMC, the CSMC, and SSD 5. These areas will include force management and the NCO Degree Program, which will give college level credit for the courses of study completed during the NCOES process (Sparks 2007).

Conclusion

These changes to NCOES will place more emphasis on the development of Soldiers earlier in their careers and will afford the Army better trained, better educated NCOs with a more rounded understanding of their job and of the job above theirs. This system allows Soldiers to have more influence on their careers by self-pacing and self-motivating their military education and having a defined path for advancement.

Reference

Ernest F. Fisher, J. (1994). Guardians of the Republic. In J. Ernest F. Fisher, Guardians of the Republic (p. 362). New York: Ballantine Books.

PLDC IS NOW WARRIOR LEADER COURSE. (2005, October 12). US Fed News Service, Including US State News, Retrieved November 7, 2007, from <http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1294684161&sid=1&Fmt=3&clientId=60307&RQT=309&VName=PQD>.

Sparks, J. (2007, September 18). USASMA Information Briefing Transforming NCOES. Retrieved September 21, 2007, from www.us.army.mil