Introducing a discussion of Professional Military Education

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These notes are prepared for two events at the Canadian Forces College (CFC).   On 17 July, we invite members of International Sociological Association, Research Committee 1 (Armed Forces and Conflict Resolution) to visit CFC during the biennial Congress. On 21 August we invite Dr. Eszter Szenes to discuss frameworks and tools for understanding professional military education (PME).

We think the discussions will focus on practitioner research to support mid-career education, and tools to understand curriculum development for PME.

History of the Canadian Forces College

In October 2018 the Canadian Forces College will mark its 75th anniversary. It was founded in 1943 as the Royal Canadian Air Force War College, and has evolved since then as a pillar of professional military education in Canada. After the war, it expanded to include a staff college, headquarters, and extension school. From 1963 to 1974 the extension school was operated by the University of Toronto. As a result of integration and unification of the Canadian Forces, a new Joint course was introduced in 1966. The Officer Development Board Report (1969) led to a new joint staff college program in 1974, which continues today as the Joint Command and Staff Program (JCSP) for mid-career officers. The National Defence College, Kingston, for Colonels, Generals, and civilian executives, was closed in 1995, and in 1998 CFC added two courses: the Advanced Military Studies Course (AMSC, Sep-Dec) and the National Security Studies Course (NSSP, Jan-June). The courses were independent, although some senior officers attended in sequence. Today, CFC is one of three campuses reporting to the Canadian Defence Academy. The other two are the Royal Military College of Canada in Kingston, Ontario, and the Collège militaire royale de Saint-Jean, in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Québec.

As a result of the Somalia inquiry, the Morton Report (1995) stated the requirement for senior officers to be educated to the masters level. Working with RMC as a degree-granting institution, CFC developed the Masters of Defence Studies (MDS), which was pursued in two variations—thesis and course credit options—concurrently with JCSP.

Table 1 lists the recent evolution of mid-career (JCSP) and senior officer (NDC, AMSC/NSSP, and NSP/CSSP) programs at CFC.

Table 1 Evolution of CFC Programs

	CDS	CFC Comdt	CSC	NSP	Comment[1]
1994	deChastelaine	Nason	21	NDC	NDC Kingston closed 1995
1995			22		
1996	Boyle/Murray	Gosden	23		
1997	Baril		24	CNSS	Young Report released (March) Centre for National Security Studies
1998			25	AMSC	Advanced Military Studies Course 1begins Fall 1998
1999			26	NSSC	National Security Studies Course 1 begins Jan 99
2000		Gagnon	27		
2001	Henault		28		MDS graduate degree awarded for CSC 28 (OCGS approval based on CSC 27 curriculum)
2002			29		
2003			30	5	
2004		Gosselin	31	6	
2005	Hillier	Semianiw	32	7	
2006		Gillis	33	8	CSC changed to JCSP
2007		Fraser	34[2]	9	Course refs changed to programmes to bring nomenclature in line with RMC - ie Courses are part of a programme of study for a degree.
2008	Natynczyk		35	Ser 10[3]	JCSP DL equivalency NSP 1 begins fall of 2008
2009		Hilton	36	2	National Security Program (NSP)
2010			37	3	
2011			38	4	Leslie 2011 transformation report
2012	Lawson		39	5	
2013		Giguere	40	6	JCSP Curriculum revisions, officer study streams begin
2014			41	7	
2015	Vance	Cotten	42	8	
2016			43	9	
2017			44	10	
2018		McPherson	45	11	Revisions anticipated

More details about CFC history can be found on the College web site.

Curriculum of staff colleges

Curriculum consists of the context of delivery, content, and pedagogy (Thomas, 2013). All professional education includes elements of training and socialization: education is the cultivation of thought and problem-solving; training develops skills in response to specific situations; and socialization is the inculcation of values, attitudes, and beliefs.

Context of staff colleges

Context implies to whom, by whom, when, and why education is delivered.

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[1] Table developed from CFC documentation, interviews, and RMC Graduate Calendar offering course descriptions and credit equivalencies.e

[2] CSC 34 and JCSP 40 represent changes in curriculum. CSC was the first serial where environmental terms were replaced by a component capabilities course. The removal of environmental terms was also being done/examined in the UK and Australia at this time.

[3] See RMC graduate calendar 2009-2010 for credits awarded to AMSP and NSSP serials 4-10 Barrett era

Who attends CFC? Canadian and foreign mid-career officers of all three environments (army, navy, air force) and support services may be selected to attend staff college for the Joint Command and Staff Program (JCSP). They normally do so at the rank of Major, with 10-15 years of commissioned service and after completing sub-unit command. Combat "operators" (infantry, armoured, artillery, engineers, naval and pilot officers) tend to have different profiles from support trades and those expected to continue only in staff functions, who may attend later in their careers. The ten-day Canadian Security Studies Program (CSSP) and 10-month National Security Program (NSP) are attended by senior officers and civilian executives, who typically have more than 20 years of work experience.

CFC has about 120 staff members, of whom about 70 are officers engaged in supporting programs. As a category C unit, it is staffed to about 80 percent of establishment. There are 13 full-time academics of the "University Teacher" classification, with research, teaching, and professional service responsibilities. About 1/3 of the content of each 10-month program is delivered with academics in the classroom, and evaluation responsibilities are shared between military directing staff and academic professors. CFC has moved towards the "Defence University" pattern identified by Libel (2016).
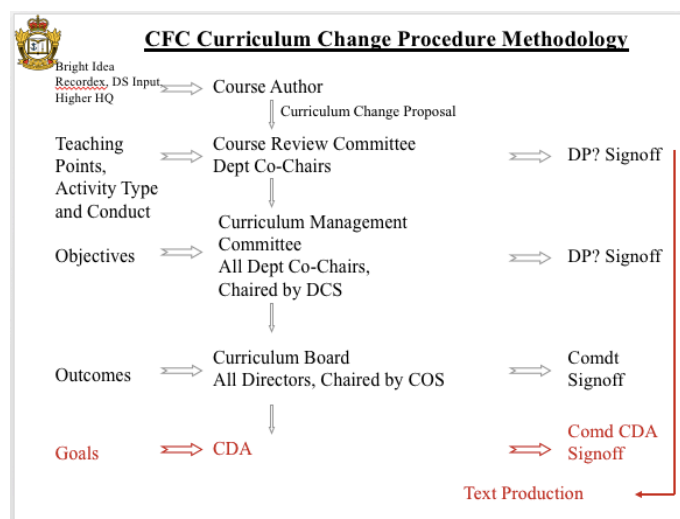
The context of staff college raises contentious questions: who are the stake-holders and clients?   What are the expected outcomes? What is the relative importance of training, education, and socialization? For example, should everyone attending staff college expect to complete a master's degree? If everyone is admitted and everyone succeeds, does it devalue the degree? Is successful completion a collective or individual endeavor? What is the relative weight given in the program to professional experience and academic knowledge? How should governance (steering and direction) be divided between the highest levels of command, the intervening headquarters, and the subject experts responsible for delivery?

Content of staff education - comparative perspectives

Curriculum content describes <u>what</u> is taught. Comparing and evaluating the content of professional military education is a challenge. The tradition of training development officers, well established in the CAF, emphases time allocation (training days), performance and enabling objectives, and lesson plans. Instructors must be interchangeable and materials must be verifiable. Development of content is a labor-intensive process by people who seldom have the collective knowledge or experience of the student body. Teaching at the "graduate level" (Morton Report, 1995) invokes university practices based on subject expertise, research-based teaching, and freedom in the classroom. This results in generic descriptions in a catalogue of courses, and learning objectives which have more to do with cognitive development than specific content.

Typical staff college content includes aspects of leadership, the profession of arms, operational planning, and defence management. NATO Reference Curricula for officer education provide a common baseline for NATO and partners for peace, but actual content is more diverse than the common list of subjects would suggest. Content is often developed by the experts delivering it, and non-expert staff will be engaged in developing or altering materials in a bottom-up process that culminates with the Commandant, before approval at the higher headquarters—the Canadian Defence Academy in Kingston. Even direction from higher headquarters goes through this process, because labour has to be applied to develop the content, readings, presentations, and so on.

Table 2 Generic Curriculum Development

CFC Curriculum Change Procedure Methodology

CFC Presentation (2004), slide re-used in 2015

Research to support curriculum development tends to be unsystematic and untutored. It may follow research methods to the extent that academics lead the process, but this may not meet military requirements and expectations. Curriculum development officers request library materials, borrow from allies, solicit advice, and occasionally mobilize resources from the Centre for the Institutional Analysis of Armed Forces or the Centre for National Security Studies, both of which are minimally resourced groupings of academic and military staff.

Several debates recur in staff colleges developing content. Is the goal of staff colleges to produce individual critical thought, or collectively capable staff action? The former suggests humanities and social sciences, while the latter suggests the practice of business schools, which have co-evolved with staff colleges since the Second World War. Should the focus be war-fighting or security? The former privileges military history, doctrine, and theories of war, while the latter suggests a broader approach to contemporary political, economic, and social problems; few professional officers spend much time fighting wars, but many focus on studying it. In a joint environment (army,

navy, and air force) what is the relative weight assigned to service competence and interaction of environmental components? Canada, like many countries, is more likely to "plug in" to a larger ally or alliance—the US or NATO—and therefore there is a premium on understanding American and NATO doctrine and practice, but there is some worry that this constrains both thought and planning options.

Operational planning processes have dominated staff college content since the Second World War in most countries. They represent formulaic ways of thinking through complex problems under stressful conditions. From the simple sequences drilled into junior officers (aim, factors, courses open, plan; situation, mission, execution, administration, command and communications) to evolved multi-stage processes practiced by groups of staff specialists, planning guidelines are designed to produce reliably adequate solutions. The realization that "good enough" solutions may exacerbate recurring and intractable problems has led to a growing movement in staff colleges to think in terms of operational design rather than operational planning, but creative design thinking remains a minority movement.[4]

Pedagogy in staff colleges

Pedagogy (or andragogy) describes how teaching occurs. Staff rides, table-top exercises and tactical exercises without troops have largely disappeared from modern staff colleges. They have been replaced by expert lectures, seminar discussion of readings, student presentations, and problem-solving exercises, which emulate typical graduate program practice. Talks or presentations by invited (or imposed) guests followed by off-the-record discussions are demonstrations of leadership style and strategic communication. Staff college programs typically culminate in "exercises" of 3-5 days which emulate problem solving for senior leaders: what should be done about… some particular policy or operational problem.

With an eye to socialization, attention in some discussions of PME is shifting towards hidden learning, informal practices, and activities in the margins of the scheduled activities (e.g. Brown, 2017).

Tools for discussing, evaluating and improving PME

This is a cursory overview of a dense and growing field; the aim is to provide superficial awareness for purposes of further exploration of tools that might be relevant for research on and support to higher PME.

Research to support PME might be conducted by practitioners to improve the quality and relevance of education provided to mid-career professionals and senior leaders. The model for doing so might be other professions that rely on evidence-based practice and continuous professional learning. Professional officers in the majority of the world's

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[4] See, for example, *The Archipelago of Design: Researching Reflexive Military Practices.*
http://militaryepistemology.com

countries might question the contribution that major-power war-fighting approaches make to human and national security.

Legitimation Code Theory (LCT)

Legitimation Code Theory draws on Pierre Bourdieu's concept of fields and Basil Bernstein's work on codes. The concept of social fields helps to explain how bodies of knowledge and practice are developed and accepted by groups. Code theory explains how meanings are encoded in social practice. Bernstein, for example, explained why lower class British children could do well in mathematics, but not in literature, because they didn't know the socially transmitted codes for the latter. "LCT enables research to go beyond endless and ad hoc empirical descriptions to explore the organizing principles underlying practices, dispositions and contexts." (Maton, Hood, and Shay, 2016, 6). LCT is an international movement in the sociology of education, and the website (www.legitimationcodetheory.com) provides useful links to explore the Framework and Foundations for research on education and the sociology of knowledge.

Maton (2014, 18) describes the theoretical framework of five legitimation devices in LCT, each of which has potential implications for the perceived legitimacy of knowledge developed and conveyed through staff colleges. Maton (2014) concentrates on specialization and semantics. The other legitimation devices are developed elsewhere, and have been applied to questions of higher education policy (Maton, 2005), and autonomy in institutions (Maton, Howard and Lambrinos, 2016). Thomson (2014) has applied LCT to studies of military inclusivity in Australia, and Szenes (2015, 2017) has explored practices of critical thinking and decision-making.

For staff colleges, questions about the nature and sources of legitimate knowledge, the kinds of expertise that should be applied to develop and teach military professionals, and the content of mandatory and optional courses for specialists and generalists might be explored using LCT concepts and tools.

Cognitive Affective Models (CAMs)

Paul Thagard has developed CAMs as a research and teaching tool. Cognitive affective mapping asks the question, what is the emotional content of concepts and how do these relate to each other: positive, negative, and neutral. CAM concepts draw on advances in neuroscience, but are also intuitive and applicable to teaching. Thagard, for example, uses CAMs to help students to explore their ethical principles and identify inconsistencies in arguments. Open-source Empathica software at the University of Waterloo allows students to create and compare CAMs. Research led by Thomas Homer-Dixon applies CAMs to negotiation and conflict resolution.

Staff college programs shape values and socialize professionals, and it would be useful to explore how values, attitudes and beliefs change over time, and how they differ, or

are similar to, the values of different professions, or similar professions in other national contexts. CAMs may provide a means to do so (Homer-Dixon et al, 2013).

Conclusion

This sort discussion paper is an introduction to a larger discussion of PME in comparative perspective. The Military Education Working Group of the International Society of Military Sciences (www.isofms.org) serves as a platform for continuing the discussion.

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