

Joint Education for the



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21st Century

By ROBERT B. KUPISZEWSKI

The Armed Forces must educate officers in the same way that they plan to fight—jointly. This calls for an educational structure that is more economical but that continues to produce leaders who are able to perform on an increasingly complex battlefield. With the exception of the National Defense University (NDU), military education is conducted by the individual services. There is no DOD or joint agency charged with integrating resources, manpower, and academic programs for the efficient and cost-effective operation of the educational system. Though this system has served the military well, it may not be suited for the tremendous changes that education will face in the next century. Technological advances, budgetary constraints, and enhanced jointness will call for new ways of doing business. We require a vision

of education based upon unity of command, a joint learning environment, and consolidated assets. Education, like other aspects of preparing for war, should be accomplished in a joint setting.

The services are reviewing how to meet future education requirements. Their emphasis is on developing the classroom of the 21st century and curtailing redundant programs. Consideration is also being given to consolidating programs to conserve resources, but these efforts are largely focused on unilateral needs. There is no effort underway to consolidate service programs. A joint command is needed to oversee and integrate doctrine as well as education. In essence, education—like operations—should be a joint rather than a service responsibility. While it is impossible to offer a detailed plan on making education more efficient and cost-effective, this article includes a concept to stimulate thinking on the development and implementation of a better educational system.

The Goldwater-Nichols DOD Reorganization Act upheld the relevance of service education but stressed joint education.

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Through the efforts of the House Panel on Military Education, Joint Staff, and services a new approach has emerged on how to train and educate the total force for the future. Goldwater-Nichols brought about innovations that hint at a structure for military education. The Chairman, for example, is responsible for formulating policy on military education.¹ As part of that responsibility, he formed a Military Education Division (J-7)

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on the Joint Staff and released CM-1618-93, *Military Education Policy Document*, which provides a comprehensive framework for Professional Military Education (PME). Placing responsibility for PME under the Chairman is a major step toward unity of command over a complex, diverse, and somewhat redundant system.

The Armed Forces are gradually accepting a more unified notion of PME. Service colleges are conducting joint wargames and planning to link their library systems and automated networks. The trend since Goldwater-Nichols has been toward joint educational planning and greater sharing of resources by the services. Much credit for these initiatives must go to the Military Education Coordination Conference (MECC) which is chaired by the Director of the Joint Staff. Recently the MECC has recommended significant improvements. But despite this progress more must be done. Congress advocates more consolidation of service educational functions, resources, and facilities. One member of the House, for instance, called for a study on collocating the service colleges with service academies.² Similarly, the Senate directed DOD to report on "potential cost savings from consolidation of military command and staff and war colleges, and their administration."³ It seems that Congress is clearly proposing a more efficient and cost-effective educational system.

Some Assumptions

My proposal for a joint education command visualizes a system comprised of universities that provide a joint environment for developing doctrine and teaching while offering service-unique curricula. This university system would be interconnected,

leaner, and adaptable to change. When introducing a concept, one must postulate a point of departure. These then are the assumptions on which I base this proposal:

- ▼ all services must move toward greater jointness in education
- ▼ Congress will continue to drive consolidations across all services
- ▼ limited resources will force radical changes in the DOD infrastructure resulting in multipurpose, efficient installations
- ▼ joint doctrine will eventually replace most service doctrine
- ▼ the classroom will remain the focal point of training and education
- ▼ technology will reduce classroom instruction time and expand opportunities for self-development and operational assignments
- ▼ technology will foster greater interaction among industry, government, and educational institutions
- ▼ learning through resident faculty-student interaction will remain important.

Some of my assumptions are controversial and speculative. While many may find it hard to accept the idea that joint doctrine will replace service doctrine, doctrinal development does seem to be moving in that direction. And as joint doctrine takes the place of service doctrine it requires an educational system that fosters a joint learning environment. That the classroom will remain the focus of education, with learning relying on faculty-student interaction, is debatable. Many feel that interactive learning utilizing computers will replace classrooms as we know them. In that case continued need for universities with multi-purpose facilities would diminish. But such a proposal envisions a requirement for the classroom—with faculty members and students engaged in face-to-face dialogue—which sustains the need for multipurpose facilities.

An Organizational Approach

As stated above, I propose forming a joint command to oversee every aspect of education under a four-star general or flag officer who is nominated on a rotational basis from the services and reports to the Secretary of Defense. Oversight for education policy, however, would still rest with the Chairman. Universities would serve as the operating elements of this command. Separate universities would be formed at each distinct level of military education. For

example, universities would be created for initial entry-level training as well as intermediate- and senior-level education. Additionally, functional universities could be formed to conduct instruction in specialized areas like integrating battlefield transportation from the tactical to strategic level. In carrying out its mission, the university system would offer individual training and education from accession to retirement. Even service academies, Reserve officer training programs, and officer candidate schools would come under a university.

Each university would teach a joint core curriculum as well as service specific instruction. In the case of intermediate-level education I envision a university with a single campus but separate Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force colleges. Like the current system, residency would be about a year; students would be majors or lieutenant commanders as well as equivalent rank civilians. Curricula could be configured in various ways. One model would devote the initial phase of the course to service-specific

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instruction followed by joint instruction similar to that offered in the Program for Joint Education (PJE) at the Armed Forces Staff College (four months of hands-on application in a joint learning environment). Devoting the first eight months of the course to service-unique instruction would enable students to bring that expertise to the joint learning experience during the latter part of the course.

More than 2,250 officers currently attend the four service intermediate-level colleges which is approximately the enrollment at a small liberal arts college. Given that total, the students eligible to attend an intermediate university could be situated in one complex with common areas for joint instruction and individual Army, Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force faculties and halls for individual service instruction. The university might include the Coast Guard which in the next century may have missions closely aligned to those of the other services. Since the number of resident intermediate-level

students is partially based on seating capacity, the size of the student body would have to be resolved before creating an intermediate university. The Air Force, for example, sends only about 20 percent of its officers to intermediate college in residence. Given a larger facility, it and the other services may increase enrollment levels. Student capacities and service needs must drive the design, composition, and operation of an intermediate university.

Some advantages of a single intermediate university are obvious. Foremost, it would allow both service and truly joint learning to be carried out in one place. Students would no longer have to go on temporary duty for joint instruction as they do under the PJE phase I and phase II system. Also, all students could undergo advanced joint education, not just a small number like those who now attend phase II at the Armed Forces Staff College. Another advantage is a joint faculty on one campus that teaches comprehensive service and joint curricula. This would rapidly lead to faculties highly talented in service and joint matters. And finally, a single location would have a tremendous impact on resources and costs by consolidating facilities and support required to operate the present system of five joint and service intermediate-level colleges.

The Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness sent a report to Congress in March 1994 which discussed various consolidation initiatives including relocation of all intermediate-level education to Fort Leavenworth.⁴ The report concluded that consolidation would not be cost-effective. While that may be the case today, will it be true twenty years from now? Probably not. The answer is to develop an educational plan and system that would make it cost-effective to move intermediate-level education to Fort Leavenworth by the year 2015.

Forming universities to consolidate educational activities is a natural development and has a number of precedents. NDU consolidated several colleges in the late 1970s under one president. Likewise, the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force collocated their senior and intermediate colleges at Newport, Quantico, and Maxwell, respectively. The Army recently formed the Combined Arms Support Command at Fort Lee to consolidate



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education related to battlefield support. But what is required for the 21st century is to take these initiatives to another stage—across service lines—with a dual aim of realizing greater economies through consolidation and enriching the learning process by offering education in a joint environment which corresponds to the way we will fight.

Key Decisions

One critical planning consideration is that a joint education command and university system should be designed to maintain the same level of excellence for all members of the Armed Forces. It must ensure that the Reserve force and DOD civilians are afforded educational opportunities that are comparable to those of the active force. This is important since the Reserve, National Guard, and civilian work force are likely to have enhanced roles within DOD in the 21st century. Likewise, because of the increased emphasis on coalition warfare, the system must afford allies and partners greater opportunities to share in our educational facilities. Too often, the services have not had a coherent policy on integrating the total force and international community into the learning process. This educational structure must change that by having a combined as well as joint perspective.

The new system must also be devoid of bureaucratic layers. It should eliminate unneeded headquarters and staffs that duplicate functions or merely coordinate activities. A joint education command should be

small and mission-focused. The worst approach would be to establish a large headquarters that stifles the innovation and initiative needed at the university level.

The principal focus of the universities must be on warfighting and operations other than war. DOD and the services will not be able to expend resources on programs that only marginally relate to military operations. Courses that teach such subjects as executive skills should be offered outside the university system, possibly in partnership with civilian institutions or industry.

The system must be structured to nurture joint attitudes and perspectives from initial entry training through senior-level education. As farfetched as it may seem, the day could come when all accessions to the Armed Forces undergo basic instruction on warfighting at one location. Planning for that should occur as part of the transition to a joint command.

Educational resources will become more scarce in the next century. Therefore the planning for and use of facilities will be critical. DOD must use installations wisely to take advantage of the superb facilities at places like Carlisle, Newport, Quantico, and Maxwell. However, those that are no longer cost-effective must be closed and new ones constructed when needed. The goal must be to create an education system that is second to none at all levels.

Planners must thoroughly address the issue of resident versus nonresident education before changing the current system. Based on technology alone, it is highly likely that nonresident and distant learning will increase considerably in the 21st century. Since this impacts on the number and size of facilities, careful planning must ensure balanced resident to nonresident student ratios.

Such a university system will not succeed unless it has “world class” faculties selected by rigorous screening processes to acquire the operational, technical, and educational skills needed for the 21st century classroom. Once recruited, faculties must undergo intensive preparation followed by professional development to ensure sustained performance. Carefully selected and well trained faculties would be the most important aspect of a new university system and the services should equate faculty positions to key operational assignments in

terms of promotion potential and other forms of advancement. Teaching in such a university system must be a premier assignment for military personnel of all specialties, grades, and services.

Blueprint for Change

Creating an education command requires deliberate planning to transfer responsibility from the individual services to joint universities and could take as long as twenty years. A hypothetical phased plan to execute such a decision might unfold as follows:

▼ *Phase I—Planning* (1995–2000). The services consolidate educational assets to achieve greater economies and efficiencies. As internal reorganizations occur, DOD establishes criteria for designating installations for multi-purpose, cross-service applications. The key event is tasking the Joint Staff to develop a campaign plan for a joint education command and a university system for DOD approval.

▼ *Phase II—Transition* (2000–10). A joint education command replaces service-unique activities under a campaign plan developed by the Joint Staff. DOD begins construction projects, upgrades facilities, and creates a command and control system. During this phase the colleges are initially reconfigured into consortia. For example, senior-level colleges form a consortium to share overhead costs and conduct joint curriculum planning (as found in the Defense Acquisition University). Converting to the new system requires an extraordinary effort by all services and takes a full ten years.

▼ *Phase III—Execution* (2010–15). A joint education command assumes command and control of all doctrinal development and education activities. The result is a single organization dedicated to integrating joint doctrine and educational programs, resources, and facilities.

This proposal for a new organizational structure for education in the 21st century is based on the premise that the services must train and educate in the same way they will fight. Trends in jointness indicate significant movement in that direction. The services are consolidating training facilities and collaborating in projects of mutual benefit to realize economies of scale and operating efficiencies, developments that will continue. But we must accelerate the process by rejecting the status quo and outlining a vision for education to meet the

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demands of warfare in the next century. That vision should include a joint command and university system which comprises every level of education. If the Armed Forces fail to seize the initiative and create a more efficient, cost-effective system, Congress is likely to step into the picture and legislate one. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Chapter 5, paragraph 153, Public Law 99-433, Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act, October 1, 1986.

² U.S. General Accounting Office, “Military Education: Information on Service Academies and Schools,” September 1993.

³ Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness, “Consolidation of War and Staff Colleges Study,” March 1994.

⁴ *Ibid.*