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Presentation Title: The Command Team and the Non-Commissioned Member: Enhancing the Officer/NCM Dynamic Through Education

Research Focus: Discovering the most effective educational opportunities to prepare Senior Non-Commissioned Officers for their role as an advisor within their command team

School: Royal Roads University in conjunction with The Royal Military College of Canada

Student Level: Masters

Presentation Type: Oral Presentation/Poster

Abstract:

This work presents a research design to examine education alternatives for non-commissioned members employed in strategic leadership teams. The central question is whether education in isolation from strategic partners is an effective preparation for strategic employment. The research will be undertaken between September 2020 and April 2021.

An analysis of the current Canadian Armed Forces Professional Military Education (PME) for Non-Commissioned Members divides educational experiences into four groups for comparison. These groups represent a continuum from traditional post-secondary education to focused professional military education: A. university courses; B. university courses in a military setting; C. university courses in a military setting with exposure to strategic leaders; D. military university courses involving joint problem-solving exercises in strategic leadership teams. Drawing on prior survey data (Mondelli and Lagace-Roy, 2019) and interviews, the method proposed is to conduct qualitative comparative analysis (Kahwati and Kane, 2020) of the experiences of strategic leaders in each of the categories on the continuum.

The role of the Non-Commissioned Member has been rapidly evolving over the last decade. Gone are the days where the Chief Petty Officer 1st Class/Chief Warrant Officer was simply expected to maintain the discipline and deportment of the Non-Commissioned Members (NCMs), leaving the officer to make all of the strategic decisions with very limited input from his/her NCM command team partner. The dynamic nature of warfare and crisis management at the tactical and strategic levels has forced professional militaries worldwide to re-imagine the role of the 21st century operational space. Part of this evolution has seen the role of the Senior Non-Commissioned Member (SNCM) begin to transition from a strictly subordinate role to that of subject expert and strategic advisor.

To ensure the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) SNCM Corps is prepared for this role, the CAF has implemented and revised PME programs for NCMs. These programs will equip its strategic level SNCMs with the critical thinking and communication skills needed by a SNCM to effectively work with their commander in a strategic leadership team, thus strengthening the command team bond.

This research design will be of interest to other military establishments and defence universities faced with the challenge of integrating officer and SNCM education, while looking for measures of effectiveness and utility.