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Professional Military Education for United States Army Special Operations Forces (Part Three)

by Bradford Burris

Editor's Note: This essay is the final part of a thesis the author penned while assigned to the Naval Postgraduate School. Part one can be found [here](#). Part two can be found [here](#).

ARSOF Education Framework

ADC: Given the roles and missions we have discussed, what do you guys think about the ARSOF education process?

DOC: As a psychologist, I have the chance to talk to quite a few PSYOP, CA, and SF officers and NCOs; the two words I hear most are flexibility and adaptability. Senior leaders tell me they are looking for team and company guys that possess these qualities; team and company guys tell me these two qualities have the greatest impact on successful mission accomplishment regardless of deployment location.

INTEL: I couldn't agree more; in fact, I was talking to a mentor of mine that now works in the Pentagon's office of Net Assessment, about PME, and he turned me on to a study that his office conducted in 2003. I found the summary of the conference report he sent me profound in its simplicity. Generally, the result of this particular study pointed out that it was crucial to discover a way to have military officers inculcate an appreciation for adaptability and flexibility from their first day of commissioned service. The study went on to make the following point.

Officers have to be comfortable with thinking in terms of the art of the possible. They must be able to take in multiple points of view and different perspectives. Above all, they must be sensitive to context, and must be attuned to the fact that positioning is everything.¹

I think this is the correct philosophy to guide ARSOF's thinking about PME for everyone regardless of rank or duty position. One of the major takeaways from the conference was that those "who will be our senior leaders in 2030 not only have to have strategic vision, but recognize on their own when someone else's vision is needed."²

I agree with the conference folks and I would like to see a PME curriculum that educates ARSOF professionals on the topics of strategy and operational art at every rank while continually reinforcing tactical training. Waiting until the Army War College to address strategic thinking and planning seems too late to me. We hear a lot about tactical actions having strategic effects but I don't think the current PME structure does a very good job of helping guys grasp the

¹ United States Department of Defense, Office of the Secretary of Defense, Director, Net Assessments, *The Military Officer in 2030* (Unpublished Summary Presentation, Newport, 2003). Slide #43.

² Ibid., Slide #86.

concepts that comprise strategic theory. I think we should explore the possibility of teaching strategy, operational art, and tactics concurrently as opposed to the accepted PME structure that begins with tactical training and mechanically evolves into strategy-based education for a select few. ARSOF strategic education should “distinguish between intellect and character / personality. . . Any strategically educable person should have their capacity for sound and perhaps superior strategic judgment improved by intense exposure to the small canon of classic texts on general strategic theory”³ and I think that judgment can be improved at all grade levels if the community is willing to support several changes to the ARSOF education system.

OPS: Gentlemen, I understand and appreciate what our senior civilian leaders and Washington-based working groups have to say about ARSOF PME; however, we also need to consider what our customer units have to say about the performance levels and educational shortfalls of our people.

ADC: I am glad you brought that up; I do a lot of reading and summarizing for the CG and I have several excerpts that provide anecdotal summaries of the main arguments by branch (CA, PSYOP, and SF) for considering changes to the current PME structure. In a 2009 U.S. Army War College Monograph, LTC Miguel Castellanos surveyed his War College peers to gain a perspective from former Battalion Commanders and staff officers who commanded or worked alongside CA forces in OEF (Operation Enduring Freedom) and OIF (Operation Iraqi Freedom).⁴ Castellanos notes the following in his analysis:

Another shortfall noted was the inability for CATs to provide functional specialty capabilities, specifically in governance, rule of law, economic stability (agriculture) and infrastructure (water and electricity). Conditions in Afghanistan and Iraq both exuded vast societal and infrastructure challenges, which fostered instability and security concerns. Subject Matter Experts adequately capable of responding to problems, develop solutions [sic] and commit resources [sic] were few and far between.⁵

Dr. Christopher J. Lamb, the former Director of Policy Planning in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low-Intensity Conflict, who is now serving as the Interim Director for National Strategic Studies at the National Defense University (NDU), characterizes PSYOP shortcomings in much the same way Castellanos does those in the CA community. In a 2005 PSYOP-focused NDU publication, Dr. Lamb writes:

A recurrent complaint throughout the operations reviewed by this study concerns the quality of psychological operations products. Specifically, according to both the JFCOM and 4th POG lessons learned, CENTCOM leaders were unhappy with the quality, timeliness, and sophistication of PSYOP products.⁶

³ Colin S. Gray, *Schools for Strategy: Teaching Strategy for 21st Century Conflict* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2009), v–vi.

⁴ Lieutenant Colonel Miguel A. Castellanos, *Civil Affairs—Building The Force to Meet Its Future Challenges* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2009), 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.

⁶ Dr. Christopher J. Lamb, *Review of Psychological Operations Lessons Learned from Recent Operational Experience* (Washington, D.C.: National Defense University Press, 2005), 101.

Finally, take a look at the competency model I found in the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) Educational Requirements Analysis.⁷ It contains the best information I've seen supporting the argument for an amended ARSOF PME model.

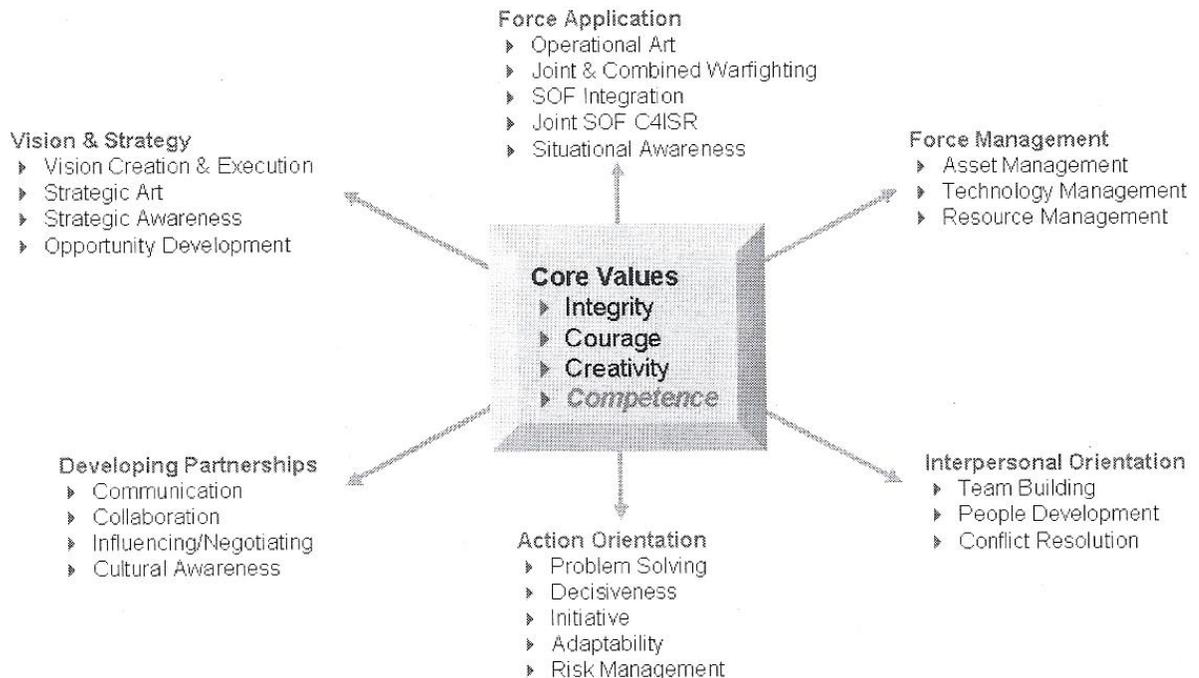


Figure One. Joint SOF Leadership Competency Model

The JSOU-commissioned study presents the results of a SOCOM-wide survey seeking to show how the four service component special operations organizations (ARSOF, NAVSPECWAR, AFSOC, and MARSOC) rank their own level of proficiency according to the twenty-four competencies that comprise the Joint SOF Competency Model. The ARSOF respondents assessed themselves as having mastered the four competencies of team building, people development, problem solving, and initiative. What I found interesting is the fact that the respondents assessed themselves at much lower levels of proficiency when it came to competencies that support the four they describe as “mastering.” ARSOF respondents graded themselves as operating at the performing level⁸ with regard to the following six competencies: joint and combined warfighting, asset management, strategic art, technology management, resource management, and joint C4ISR (command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance). Of the six parent categories JSOU uses to group the twenty-four competencies in their model, the lowest ratings provided by ARSOF respondents correspond to the parent categories of vision and strategy, force application, and force management. These self-identified weaknesses become even more glaring when you factor in a study conducted five years prior to the JSOU survey. In discussing the U.S. Army Special Forces

⁷ For detailed review of the analysis, please see Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., *Joint Special Operations University*, 16.

⁸ The JSOU study defines performing in the following manner: Individual demonstrates general ability in this area. Individual can perform some complex tasks with minimal guidance and simple tasks independently. Individual is able to contribute knowledge or ideas in this [the assessed competency] area (page 20).

Command Field Survey 2000, administered to all active-duty SF soldiers, the authors note “enlisted A-detachment leadership rated recent SFQC graduates as least proficient in the attributes of judgment and planning, autonomy, adaptability, maturity and language.”⁹ Although the weaknesses of the four studies I’ve just described do not correspond 100%, they speak to the overarching theme that the current ARSOF education system requires some amending to ensure our operators, regardless of duty assignment, are prepared to excel across the myriad of defense, diplomacy, and development activities that occur in a whole-of-government approach.¹⁰

INTEL: I think the ADC has captured the essence of the argument that ARSOF leaders are making—based on our recent operational experiences, ARSOF as an organization needs to change the way it educates its officers and NCOs. I think the best way to do that is to follow Richard Downie’s aphorism that to learn from an experience, an organization must first act to interpret, evaluate, and accept the lessons learned by individual organizational members and then make the decision to adapt organizational behavior to this new knowledge and transmit it throughout the organization.¹¹ What we need to do is come up with what we think is the educational model that will best prepare ARSOF Soldiers to fill the roles and execute the missions we have discussed thus far.

OPS: Yes sir, and if there is any way to do so, I’d like our group to propose a framework that will change with the operational environment. I can’t tell you how many working groups I have been a part of over the years where all we did was react to some event by making a short-term procedural change without planning for a long-term organizational or cultural shift. I understand that we will never get it exactly right but I do think we should do our best to propose a framework that we won’t have to revamp in two years.

INTEL: Regardless of the model, system, or program we come up with, it must speak to individual and organizational flexibility and adaptability just as Doc said a few minutes ago. Granted, most of the time we deploy as teams, but the teams are comprised of individuals and, at some point, people rotate off teams and end up like us—serving in staff positions, or possibly serving as subject matter experts or advisors in places like Washington, D.C., Kabul, Baghdad, or Bogotá, just to name a few. Our model must capture the quintessence of what LTC Christopher Gehler describes in his War College thesis. I think his analysis is pertinent enough for you to indulge me while I quote him at length:

Learning is both an individual and organizational phenomenon. Researchers have defined experiential learning as a change of beliefs (or the degree of confidence in one’s beliefs) or the development of new beliefs, skills or procedures as a result of observation and interpretation of experience. This learning happens at the individual cognitive level. Organizations, though often thought of as an organism with goals, beliefs, and memories, do not and cannot learn in the same way. Organizations learn through the experiences of their individual members by encoding these experiential lessons learned into organizational norms and routines. This is a widely accepted perspective advanced by Argyris and Schon, Hecllo, and Hedberg. Organizations learn from experiences to the extent that member experiences are assimilated into various organizational policies, doctrines, and procedures. The research describes a

⁹ Dr. Michelle M. Zazanis et al., “SF Pipeline Review: Voices from the Field,” *Special Warfare* (2000): 6.

¹⁰ United States Special Operations Command, *United States Special Operations Command Strategic Plan* (Tampa, 2009), 8.

¹¹ Richard D. Downie, *Learning From Conflict: The U.S. Military in Vietnam, El Salvador, and the Drug War* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1998), 24.

multi-stage process in which environmental feedback leads to individual learning, which leads to individual action to change organizational procedures, which leads to change in organizational behavior, which leads to further feedback.¹²

DOC: I'd like to see an ARSOF PME model that dovetails with the SF, PSYOP, and CA qualification courses. I think the program should contain three phases that students move through over the course of their entire career. Following graduation from one of the three ARSOF qualification courses, my vision is that students would transition out of the first phase following successful completion of a complement of courses introducing them to the differences between GPF and ARSOF organizations and cultures. Officers, Warrant Officers, and NCOs would transition from the second to the third phase upon promotion to Colonel, Chief Warrant Officer Five, or Sergeant Major. However, guys that don't get selected for those promotions would not be penalized and they would continue to be educated and employed according to their performance in the second phase of the program.

ADC: I think we should base the PME structure on several broad themes that will guide the education occurring during all three of the phases that Doc suggests. The SOCOM Strategic Plan for implementing the Strategy 2010 discusses three focus areas and seven objectives that will drive special operations planning and development for the next twenty years.¹³

FOCUS AREAS	
1.	The Operator
2.	Enabling Capabilities, Capacities, and Authorities
3.	Strategic Influence
OBJECTIVES	
1.	Provide fully capable Special Operations Forces
2.	Address Opportunities and Challenges to National Security
3.	Inform the National Decision-Making Process through Joint Staff to OSD
4.	Provide Strategic Guidance and Priorities to Components
5.	Support Defense, Diplomacy, and Development (3-D) Whole-of-Government Approaches to Enhanced National Security
6.	Deter, Disrupt, and Defeat Violent Extremist Threats To the Nation
7.	Integrate and Develop Capabilities in Assigned Responsibilities

Figure Two. USSOCOM Strategic Plan Focus Areas and Objectives

¹² Lieutenant Colonel Christopher P. Gehler, *Agile Leaders, Agile Institutions: Educating Adaptive and Innovative Leaders for Today and Tomorrow* (Carlisle: U.S. Army War College, 2005), 5.

¹³ For a detailed description of the focus areas and objectives, please see SOCOM Strategic Plan, December 18, 2009.

I extrapolated eight broad themes from the focus areas and objectives for the plan that I presented to the CG. I think the following themes would be excellent topics around which to build educational curricula:

- Organizational Design
- Strategy and Policy
- Doctrine, Authorities
- The Global Synchronization Process
- Major Force Program-11 (MPF-11) Capabilities
- Developing and managing Operational Narratives
- Coordination and Integration

Intel: I want us to make sure that the PME model we recommend supports and aligns with the skills and knowledge requirements of the jobs graduates will fill immediately following their education. Frequently, people are educated to develop relationships during utilization tours but they wind up filling positions that do not require them to analyze information gathered by others, which necessitates a different skill set and knowledge base. Just as logisticians must understand and support the operational plan, our PME program must produce graduates who can meet operational needs. To the greatest degree possible, the PME system we propose must educate ARSOF professionals who fit the strategic context, the requirements of customer units like TSOs, and the needs of the force providing units and deployed teams.

OPS: Our concept of PME should make it clear that, just because some of us aren't promoted to Colonel, Chief Warrant Officer Five or Sergeant Major or selected for service as a commander or command sergeant major, ARSOF education is a career-long process. Thinking back to the competency slide that the ADC e-mailed us as part of IPR #2, I believe we should recommend a model that allows for two distinct educational tracks. As depicted in IPR #2 Slide #2, the two tracks should focus on the development of relational and analytical competencies. Doing so will allow for two things. First, if a team sergeant determines that one of his guys can't comprehend what's going on during a deployment, the ARSOF PME structure must give him the assurance that when the team returns to home station, the team sergeant can get his guy into classes with a heavy focus on analytical competencies. Second, building two separate tracks will also give our senior leaders the flexibility to direct NCOs and officers to a specific track based on their demonstrated potential for a command billet or nominative assignment.

DCO: Pardon me for interrupting guys, but I stuck my head in a few minutes ago to see how things were progressing and your discussion caught my attention. The one thing I have yet to hear is a discussion of senior leader education. I'd like to give you my thoughts regarding executive education, which I assume will take place during the third phase of your proposed model. When it comes to executive managers, and that's what ARSOF professionals at my level are, I think one of the most underutilized ways for them to remain relevant is through routine education. People at my level are the ones determining the themes that your working group believes should undergird the entire ARSOF PME system. Any PME model that's implemented without a well informed plan for senior leader discussions regarding the educational themes, processes, and assessment variables are necessary to produce the best possible ARSOF officers and NCOs will be sub-optimal. Mandating ARSOF-specific executive-level education as a part

of your PME structure will ensure that senior leaders routinely come together in an academic environment to think about the future of our organization and the development of its component people according to your framework. I'd appreciate it if you gentlemen include my thoughts in your model. I look forward to your next update and I am now out the door to my next meeting.

ADC: I think I have a good idea of what everyone would like to see included in a career-long ARSOF education and utilization framework—let's call it an early day. I have duty this weekend and that will give me the perfect opportunity to create a slide that pulls everything we talked about today together. Monday morning we can look at the slide, discuss a couple different ways we could implement such a framework, and wrap up by identifying the possible impacts all of this could have on the way that USASOC presently operates.

ARSOF Education-Utilization Model

ADC: Good morning guys; here is what I mapped out over the weekend.

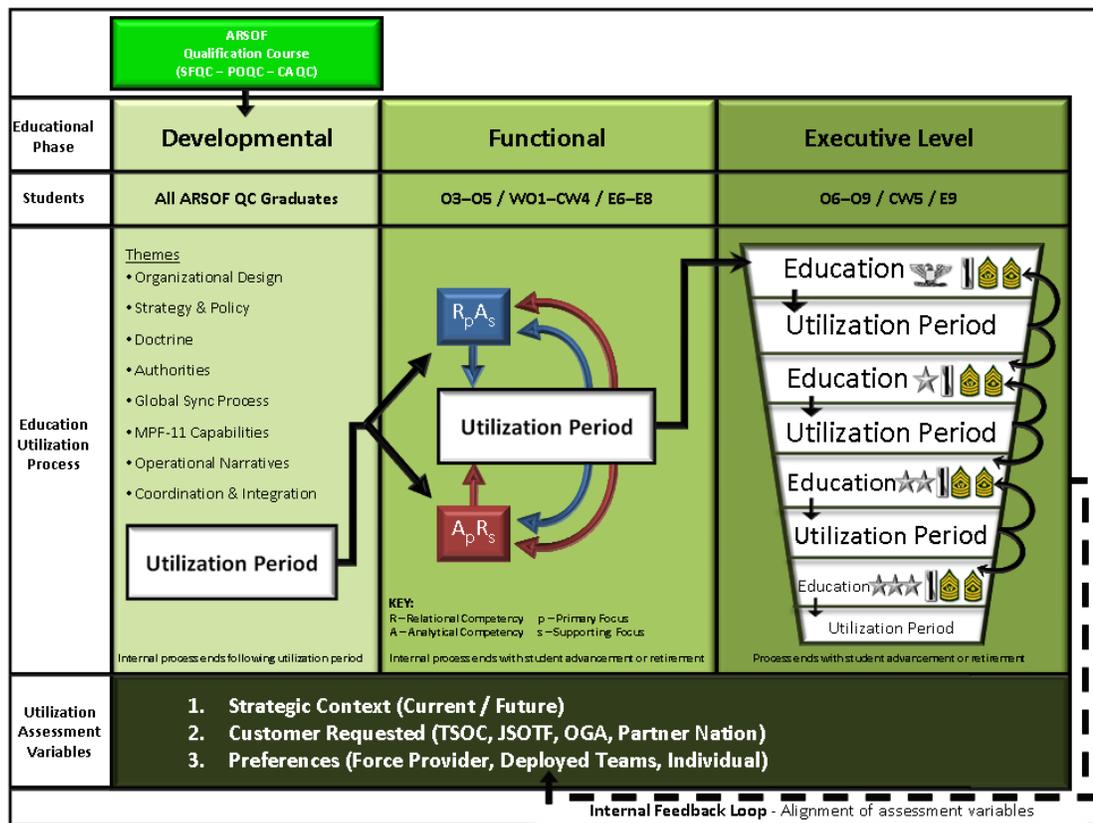


Figure Three. ARSOF Career-Long Education-Utilization Model

ADC: I think the processes outlined in this slide convey the ideas that we discussed last week. The things I like best about our model are that it supports SOCOM's themes and objective; it allows for the education of individuals who can be task organized and utilized in countless combinations; and it predicates itself on the understanding that strategic and operational contexts, mission requirements, and preferences will change over time.

INTEL: I like the way we have configured the developmental block to serve as an ARSOF basic course. I think it was a wise decision to use the focus areas and implementation

tasks from the SOCOM Strategic Plan to provide the curricular boundaries for our new operators as they transition from their qualification courses to their first ARSOF units.

OPS: Yes sir, I think it's a great idea to bring our new guys into the classroom for an introduction to the intricacies of the special operations community before sending them off to JSOTFs, Embassies, and to work as part of the Interagency process. I think the themes listed in the developmental block are both broad and specific enough to frame the entire USASOC educational system regardless of phase. However, for this phase to work, everyone must attend the basic course. The day we start allowing operators to waive this phase in deference to short-term operational needs, we will have undermined the developmental process.

ADC: One of the major selling points of ARSOF developmental education via a basic course is that we are introducing our new folks to a unique internal culture right about the time they will have completed extensive cultural and language education in preparation for service in one of the TSOC areas of responsibility. Although the following thought from BG(R) Howard speaks to service in the cultures of foreign nations, I think it also applies very well to a new operator's introduction to the world of ARSOF.

It is impossible to learn the vagaries of every disparate culture a Special Forces operator will face in a career. However, it is possible to learn the macro fundamentals of culture so that a Special Forces operator knows which questions to ask and what pitfalls to avoid before engaging those from a particular culture.¹⁴

As I am sure everyone in this room is aware, successfully navigating the SOF culture, both inside USASOC and throughout SOCOM, is oftentimes the hardest part of the job.

DOC: I understand the thought behind this phase of our model and I understand the themes that we think should drive ARSOF education across all three phases. However, I am having a hard time understanding the assessment variables and their relationship with the utilization period. Can you help me understand the linkages?

ADC: Think about it this way, we are serving in a utilization period any time we are not in an educational billet, such as Intermediate Level Education at Fort Leavenworth, the Training with Industry program, or the Sergeant Majors' Academy. The assessment variables are what the USASOC HQ folks tasked with responding to requests for forces and managing assignments should use to ensure that our people are educated to accomplish the tasks they will face after they complete whatever phase of the educational process they are in. Further, the assessment variables help raters and senior raters evaluate officers and NCOs while they are serving in a utilization period. By directing them to the educational track that will be the most beneficial to USASOC as an organization during that individual's next utilization period, we ensure the best possible fit. For example, an SF officer that shows a penchant for operational analysis while assigned as a North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) liaison officer in Brussels should be considered for attendance to the Naval Postgraduate School's Operations Research department, through which he would earn a fully accredited master's degree in his area of interest. Following his graduation, he could be utilized in a highly complex Special Operations research and analysis position. Allowing such an education-utilization process to take place ensures that the right person is assigned to the right job and the wrong person is not.

¹⁴ Brigadier General (ret.) Russell D. Howard, *Educating Special Forces Junior Leaders for a Complex Security Environment* (Hurlburt Field: The JSOU Press, 2009), 31.

To echo Army Regulation 600-100, “as leaders progress through the levels, their assignments become more complex and interdependent, and require more responsibility, accountability, and authority.”¹⁵ For this reason, the USASOC educational development model must base itself on outputs. The most pertinent USASOC outputs are SOF operators who possess the competencies required by the current context, supported organizations, and the network of associated preferences as determined by the assessment variables in our model.

INTEL: Doc, the aide is right. The ARSOF community needs to inculcate a few broad assessment variables that will allow our commanders, staffs, and doctrine managers to educate and utilize officers and NCOs in a way that will maximize efficiency and mission accomplishment. The best thing about the assessment variables is that they are useable by evaluators in both the educational *and* operational realms.

OPS: Gentlemen, I appreciate the need for assessment variables and how to use them, but we also need to clarify the thought process behind the assessment variables.

ADC: The ever-changing requirements of ARSOF customers will drive the ways in which the variables are used. For example, when an American Ambassador requests a PSYOP team to help his host nation develop an anti-terrorism campaign, his personal paradigm, to a large degree, determines who is (and sometimes who is not) deployed to support the request. When ODB commanders submit mid-tour AARs, they note competency shortfalls that should be used to adjust the ARSOF education system, and equally important, which operators and teams are deployed to execute the mission during the next team rotation.

OPS: Now that I understand how customer-based requirements influence the utilization period, I think we can also state that ARSOF operators’ performance-based reputations are extremely important. Operator reputations have a direct impact on their education and utilization during the functional phase. Along with their demonstrated potential for future performance, operators’ reputations will have a direct impact on the type and frequency of future assignments.

ADC: You’re right, and since a large portion of our community will spend most of their careers in this phase, I think it’s important for us to recommend that educational coursework during this phase meet most of the professional development requirements outlined in Department of the Army Pamphlets 600-25 and 600-3.¹⁶ If the CG approves our model, we will obviously need to discuss it with the USASOC doctrine developers and personnel managers before it will be ready for the staffing process. When we lay out our implementation recommendations, we should discuss the need for future working groups to study the impacts of this phase on current officer and NCO education systems. For instance, should the curricula derived from our model replace, augment or align with ILE, BNCOC, ANCOC, and the warrant officer basic and advanced courses?

INTEL: I know answering those questions will require additional working groups and meetings, but one thing I am certain of right now is that ARSOF senior leaders will have to foment a cultural shift to make sure that individuals who never reach the executive-level

¹⁵ United States Department of the Army, *Army Regulation 600-100 Army Leadership* (Washington, D.C., 2007), 3.

¹⁶ DA Pam 600-25 is the Army’s NCO Professional Development Guide and DA Pam 600-3 is the Commissioned Officer Professional Development and Career Management publication. These documents provide detailed information regarding the Army’s current educational requirements and career progression models for non-commissioned, warrant, and commissioned officers.

education phase do not encounter a false perception that they have failed to achieve career success.

DOC: I'd like to offer a thought about our model. As I listened to you summarize the developmental and functional blocks, I wondered how we were going to characterize the executive-level education block without opening ourselves up to criticism for having no experience at the senior executive level. I realize the value of executive-level education, outside of preparing individual senior leaders for their utilization assignments, is the way that ARSOF senior executives review and refine the themes, assessment variables, and competency requirements along with the overarching protocols that govern the career-long development process. I feel confident in saying that some flag officers may question the model because they won't think senior leaders should be beholden to specific educational wickets; if we make sure to present the executive-level education block as the phase that governs the previous two, we may be able to preclude such criticism.

ADC: Speaking of precluding criticism, there are two more issues we need to address: why our model doesn't address language education or tactical training.

OPS: We can address the lack of tactical training in the model by reinforcing the fact that education provides our operators with hard to quantify intellectual modalities, while training focuses on the enrichment of easily quantifiable skills, such as marksmanship, conducting airborne operations, or physical fitness training. I think we address this issue by pointing out that force-providing units will continue to conduct training at their level just as they have always done. I believe commanders, sergeants major, and first sergeants will be open to our proposals when they hear that we have no desire to encroach on their unit training plans.

INTEL: When it comes to language education, I think the solution lies in Special Operations Recruiting Battalion (SORB) rather than the ARSOF PME. Rather than spending millions of dollars attempting to educate the majority of the ARSOF population to speak one of a dozen national languages with an additional dozen regional dialects, I think it would be easier to recruit individuals who already possess the language skills that our future missions will require. The myriad of intelligence reports I read all agree that it's impossible to predict the future, so rather than having to restructure a language education program as contexts change and contingencies emerge, I think language education as a current component of the existing SF, CA, and PO qualification courses should be maintained.

DOC: Thinking about your comment that the SORB may hold the solution to ARSOF's language problem, I agree that it's probably easier to recruit people with the language skills we need, and I see a role for our model in that process. As the senior sergeants major work through the assessment variable validation process, specifically the customer unit requests and the preferences of the deployed teams, I guarantee you that shortfalls in language capabilities will emerge. At that point, the sergeants major could pass the requirements to the SORB, which could then begin surveying the entire Army in an attempt to identify and recruit people who already possess the required capabilities. I know this is a provocative idea and I also know that a detailed discussion of language education is outside the scope of this working group; however, in the future, we do need to address the absence of language education from our model.

OPS: I agree with you Doc, and I would finish the language argument with a twist on an often-quoted SOF truth.¹⁷ It is impossible to create language-competent special operations forces after emergencies occur. Knowing this, I would agree with Doc's assessment that the best way to deal with the language question is by showing how our model supports the identification of language requirements.

INTEL: Now that we have addressed the components that make up our model, as well as the components that we left out, let's address possible ways that our model could be implemented.

ADC: The first recommendation that we could make is that USASOC create a SOF University to implement and manage our model separate and distinct from the traditional leader development of the Army's GPF.

INTEL: As we introduce this recommendation, we will have to recognize and state that it would be a monumental undertaking, because it would create a schism between the GPF and ARSOF. The good news is that there are ways to overcome the negative responses to this recommendation.

ADC: The overarching positive associated with the establishment of an ARSOF University is that it provides our senior leaders with the flexibility required to allow the strategic context and emerging competency requirements to shape a career-long ARSOF educational strategy.

OPS: The ideal ARSOF University would provide normalizing ARSOF-focused education to all qualification course graduates as a group before newly minted operators arrive at their units. In the functional phase, I see the university providing branch and MOS-specific education through coursework tailored to support current demands and emerging trends.

DOC: I would go so far as to recommend that the university establish departments to teach all the aspects of Special Operations, as well as, an additional department to provide the education necessary for our guys that need to complete schools like ILE and ANCOG.

ADC: That is a great idea Doc. I think it makes a compelling argument to suggest that the ARSOF University should organize itself much like the Defense Analysis (DA) department at the Naval Postgraduate School (NPS). NPS is the SOCOM-funded joint educational school that currently provides premier Special Operations PME, as well as accredited graduate degrees to officers and warrant officers who complete the DA program.

INTEL: Now that we have broached the topic of Joint Special Operations PME, the second recommendation we could offer would require support from outside the ARSOF community. Because the nature of SOF operations is inherently joint, what about recommending that USSOCOM's JSOU implement and manage our education-utilization model for the entire Joint Special Operations Force?

ADC: Sir, your recommendation is one that I support. Just a few weeks ago, I participated in a SOCOM working group during which we discussed the nature of SOF

¹⁷ The SOF truths are: (1) Competent Special Operations Forces cannot be created after emergencies occur; (2) Special Operations Forces cannot be mass produced; (3) quality is better than quantity; and, (4) humans are more important than hardware. United States Army Special Operations Command, "SOF Truths," Special Operations Command, <http://www.soc.mil/sofinfo/truths.html>.

capabilities required for future operations. When we recommend asking SOCOM to manage the entire process through JSOU, I want us to make sure that we bring up the idea of JSOU transforming itself into a university organized into two mutually supporting subsidiaries. First, JSOU must contain an element dedicated to education along the lines we proposed in our previous recommendation. Second, they should have a “think tank” branch responsible for developing Special Operations theory and pushing it out to the entire SOCOM community, as well as the JSOU’s education branch.¹⁸

DOC: Although the consolidation of resources is good, this recommendation will only be palatable if it allows each Service component to retain the management of several Service-specific courses that will be mandatory for its operators. Doing this will keep Special Operators apprised of developments in their Service specific components, thus arming them for success in their parent Service, as well as the Joint SOF environment.

OPS: It sounds like implementing this recommendation would result in the creation of a Special Operations knowledge center that would create SOF doctrine and teach it all under the auspices of a single four-star headquarters. This idea is appealing because it will synergize SOF efforts into a single command, yet it will allow each Service component to maintain a degree of autonomy through the mandatory course requirements that Doc just mentioned. I like it!

ADC: Gentlemen, I think we have just completed all of our tasks. Let me send a final update to the DCO about our recommendations and then we will be finished with this working group!

To: DCO, USASOC
From: Aide-de-Camp
Subject: PME Working Group #3

Sir,

Please review the working group’s recommended career-long education-utilization model along with suggestions regarding implementation of the model.

V/R
ADC

¹⁸ Although not codified in a comprehensive fashion, the ideas contained in this paragraph are a conglomeration of recommendations made during the USSCOM 2010 Global Scout Limited Objective Experiment #1 conducted 27–29 April 2010 at USSOCOM Headquarters in Tampa, Florida. The author of this work had the opportunity to participate in the experiment and he credits retired Colonels Joseph Celeski and Grey Welborn for their impact on the ideas presented in this thesis.

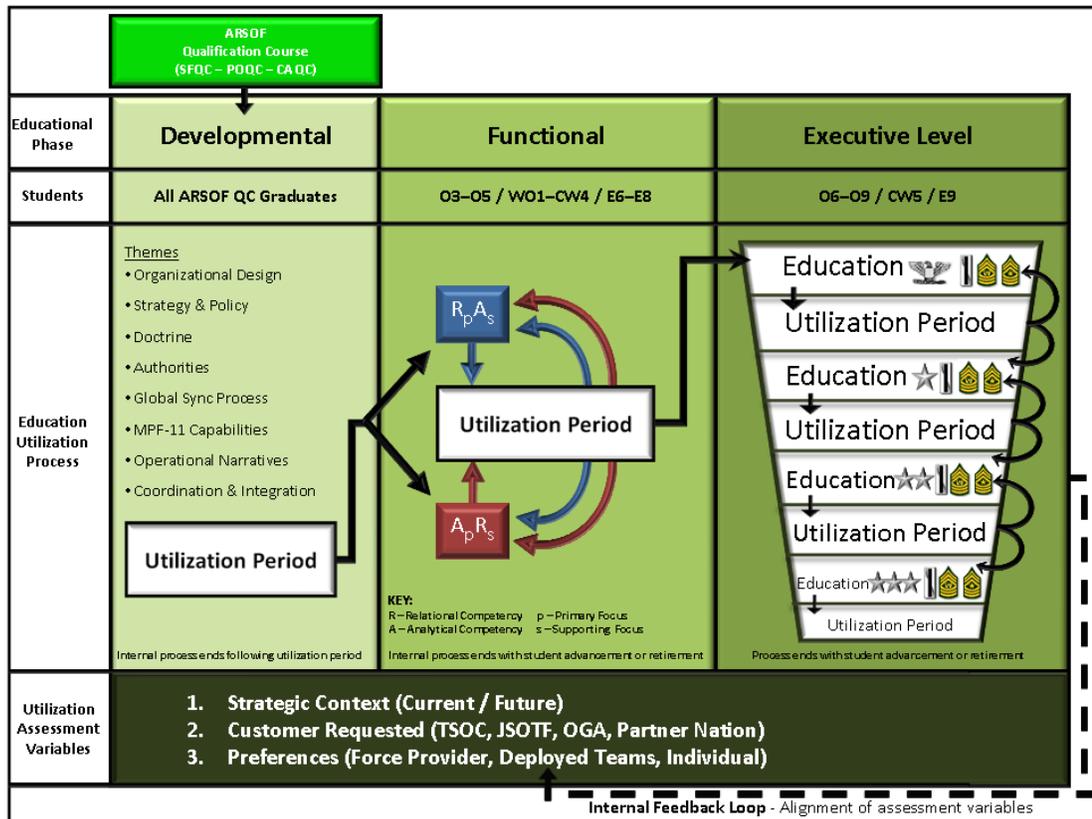


Figure Four. ARSOF Career-Long Education-Utilization Model

Model Implementation

Course of Action 1

Create ARSOF University to implement and manage the education-utilization model separate and distinct from the GPF leader development model.

PROS

- Provides ARSOF senior leaders flexibility to use emerging strategic contexts and competency requirements to shape a career-long educational strategy
- Provides normalizing SOF-centric education to all qualification course graduates as a group before initial utilization assignments
- Provides branch and MOS-specific education via tailored coursework to support current demands and emerging trends
- Establishes academic departments to teach all the aspects of special operations

CONS

- Monumental undertaking
- Creates irreversible ARSOF-GPF schism

Figure Five. Education-Utilization Model, Implementation Course of Action #1

Model Implementation

Course of Action 2

Recommend Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) implement and manage the education-utilization model for the entire USSOCOM community.

PROS

- Establishes a SOF knowledge center to create and teach joint doctrine all under the auspices of a single four-star headquarters
- Synergizes SOF efforts into a single command, while allowing each Service Component to maintain a degree of autonomy via mandatory course requirements

CONS

- Cost of JSOU transforming itself into a university organized into two mutually supporting subsidiaries
- Risk of SOF doctrine and capabilities becoming too centralized

Figure Six. Education-Utilization Model, Implementation Course of Action #2

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