

Objective Force Warrant Officers; Education and Leadership –

“How Do We Get There?”

By Colonel Christopher Acker

In the near future, the Warrant Officer Career Center (WOCC), TRADOC Executive Agency for the Warrant Officer Education System (WOES), in coordination with all warrant officer proponents, the Army National Guard, and the Army Reserve must address a myriad of complex issues paramount to the warrant officer corps.

These issues surfaced through the Army Development System XXI (ADS XXI), the continual interaction of students and cadre at the WOCC, and feedback from the field. The Commandant of the WOCC has the responsibility to orchestrate the concepts and initiatives arising from this deluge of information.

We must address issues such as the following:

- What are the roles, missions, and functions of the objective force warrant officer?
- Should advance degrees and training with industry (TWI) be part of the lifelong learning process of the warrant officer force?
- How long should warrant officers go without receiving technical updates in their MOS?
- Is assignment orientated training (AOT) viable for all warrant officer branches?

At this point in time, we have not determined the definitions, roles, skill sets, and knowledge requirements of warrant officers for the objective force. Those who rely on the leadership and technical expertise of today's warrant officers count on the objective force warrant officers to remain highly specialized, and both tactically and technically proficient. Warrant Officers must continue to demonstrate potential and performance through progressive levels of assignments, institutional training, and education. Warrant officers must continue to possess the technical expertise and leader attributes necessary to make our Army successful in the operational environment of 2010 and beyond.

The proliferation of technology and information change is projected to continue unabated throughout the 21st century. This makes periodic technical updates and educational opportunities for warrant officers paramount to mission accomplishment for the objective force. The conversion from an analog to a digital world has modified the definitions, roles, knowledge, and skill sets required of our 21st century technical experts. To be relevant in the objective force, warrant officers must have timely training and education, tailored and commensurate to assignment utilization, or better known as AOT. Assignment orientated training is an approved recommendation emanating from the ADS XXI.

Our challenge is to get the right education to warrant officers at the right time and place in their careers. A combination of accumulated field experience and timely institutional training, coupled with technical updates, will ensure the objective force has technical experts who can lead soldiers and manage the complex systems of the 21st century Army. We must investigate training with industry as an education enhancer for certain warrant officer MOS. Our 21st century warrant officer must possess self-awareness and adaptability. They must receive critical, creative, and adaptive thinking training to enhance their decision-making skills and make them confident and competent in their respective tactical and technical military occupational specialty (MOS).

The continuing advancement of technology makes the set piece legacy education syllabus used today to train warrant officers obsolete for the future. The warrant officer education system (WOES) used today will not suffice for the warrant officers destined to serve in the objective force of 2010 and beyond.

The current WOES includes the following: the Warrant Officer Candidate School (WOCS) as pre-appointment training; Warrant Officer Basic Course (WOBC) for newly appointed WOIs; Warrant Officer Advanced Course (WOAC) for CW3s; Warrant Officer Staff Course (WOSC) for CW4s; and, the Warrant Officer Senior Staff Course (WOSSC) for CW5s.

Relevancy requires revision of each course in the WOES. Army transformation has established the irreversible momentum needed to revise the WOES and posture these training programs to make warrant officers contributing members in objective force. A complete top down, side-to-side review of the WOES should begin in late FY02 or early FY03.

We must identify and commit the resources necessary to conduct this comprehensive revision of the WOES now. This comprehensive review of the WOES must include several diversified, full spectrum, all-encompassing, warrant officer MOS specific task selection boards (TSB). The TSB determines teaching requirements, modems of instruction, and the task, condition, and standard for each MOS specific or common core element taught. In addition, we must determine what instruction we can teach using distance learning (DL), resident institutional training, interactive multimedia instruction (IMI), simulation, or several of these in combination. Once developed and on line, DL and IMI courses should provide an opportunity to reduce some resident training requirements.

Some questions we must answer in revising the WOES follow:

- What should be taught in warrant officer candidate school (WOCS)?
- How much of WOCS should be distance learning (DL) versus resident training?
- Should TRADOC common core only be taught in WOCS, thus leaving more time for proponents to teach technical MOS related subjects in their WOBC?
- How much of our reserve component warrant officer training should be resident and/or nonresident?
- What courses in the WOES, or portions of courses, lend themselves to DL, IMI, simulation, or interactive electronic technical updates for training?

Whatever instructional method we decide upon, we must have input from the reserve components. The “Army of One” concept dictates that our reserve components have the same educational opportunities, and indeed receive the same training, as the active force. Therefore, any revision of the WOES must consider the challenges our reserve component warrant officers face when attending resident training. Distance learning and IMI must enhance training opportunities for active and reserve component warrant officers without incurring a substantial increase in resident training.

Training warrant officer technical experts and leaders for the objective force requires a future investment of training resources and funding on the part of our Army. Identifying the resident and nonresident training tasks needed to educate the 21st century warrant officers is not an easy or simple task. Changing the current WOES model may be part of the solution. (The shape of a revised WOES is yet to be determined.) For warrant officers to be successful in the objective force 2010 and beyond, the WOES must provide them the opportunity for learning throughout their career. The 21st century leadership competencies of self-awareness and adaptability must permeate all WOES institutional training in the future. Warrant officers must possess good leadership skills, excellent technical and tactical knowledge, and solid mental, physical, and emotional attributes if they are to be successful in the transformed Army.

Field Manual (FM) 22-100, Army Leadership, is the logical starting point when addressing leadership. The FM defines what Army leaders must BE, KNOW, and DO. It establishes the fundamental principles by which Army leaders act. While FM 22-100 is a valuable tool for leadership training in itself, it may not suffice for the warrant officers serving in the objective force of 2010 and beyond.

Self-awareness and adaptability are the enduring competencies our 21st century warrant officers must possess. Self-awareness is the ability to evaluate one's own abilities, determine strengths and weaknesses, and learn how to maintain the strengths and correct the weaknesses. Adaptability on the other hand, is the act of recognizing any changes to the operational environment, determining what is new, and what must be learned to be effective.

The warrant officer who understands self-awareness but does not understand adaptability is one who does not understand his strengths and weaknesses in relationship to the operational environment. Conversely, someone who has adaptability but is not self-aware is someone who is changing for change's sake, not understanding the relationship between their abilities, duties, and the operational environment.

The operational environment of 2010 and beyond is fraught with unknown, poorly defined, and asymmetrical threats. Regardless, warrant officers are expected to remain technical experts on our combat systems and operate with tactical proficiency across the full spectrum of operations. In this new operational environment, the leadership competencies and capabilities of warrant officers must continue to expand.

These are the important issues our Army must address in the near future concerning the WOES. If we are to have a warrant officer force that remains committed to technical expertise, to remain the experts on our combat systems, and possess the leadership skills, knowledge, and attributes required of the objective force soldiers, then **we must revise and transform the WOES sooner rather than later - NOW!**

The author was Commandant of the Warrant Officer Career Center, Fort Rucker, AL at the time of writing this article.

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