



SGT Luis Garcia and 1LT Alan Roy, both with Company F, 3rd Battalion, 227th Aviation Regiment, 1st Cavalry Division, crawl through an obstacle course. (Photo by SGT Travis Zielinski, U.S. Army)

Instructor Professional Development and the Profession of Arms

By Jim Connolly

"Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand."

-Native American Saying

One of the most important things we do at the Fires Center of Excellence (FCoE) is to educate and train students and trainees and prepare them for combat or other important full spectrum operational assignments. Therefore, the education and professional development of our instructors and trainers, and their coaches and mentors, becomes a significant factor in how well we accomplish our training and education mission as an institution.

The better we train and educate our instructors (and their coaches and mentors), the better we will train and educate our students. The good news is the officers, warrant officers and non-commissioned officers coming to the FCoE have a vast amount of experience from many years in both

operational assignments and a host of other pertinent missions. We must harness these experiences and focus this knowledge to better enable a direct and meaningful transition to the role of instructor, trainer, coach and mentor.

Our instructor training and education must leverage the wealth of leadership and field experiences new instructors bring to the FCoE. Our professional development efforts must include melding the many experiences of our instructors with proven training and education approaches and new educational methodologies, tools and systems. Additionally, senior instructors, training managers, leaders and those in roles as training developers and instructional designers must also have professional development opportunities to improve training venues and discuss best practices.

All members of the training team

need professional development opportunities to improve and grow. This professional educational environment will improve the abilities of the instructors and trainers as well as improving the FCoE training and education system as a whole. Even in the shadow of dwindling resources, we cannot afford to lessen our efforts to provide the training and understanding our instructors and leaders need to be effective in obtaining the educational and training outcomes that will ensure our students are prepared to successfully enter the challenging asymmetric operational environment.

Bottom line, the FCoE's instructor training and professional development programs must set the conditions that prepare instructors to significantly challenge students through tough, facilitated learning events that have rigor in settings related to combat or job applications.

Students must be required to apply themselves, solve problems, display initiative and grow and mature as a professional Soldier in the Profession of Arms. Good coaching, mentoring and counseling by instructors must set the conditions for attribute development to further build confidence in appropriate subject matter skills and competencies setting the stage for successful integration in the Soldier's or leader's next unit of assignment.

"I don't think much of a man who is not wiser today than he was yesterday."

-Abraham Lincoln

Professional training, education and development of instructors.

When a newly assigned officer, warrant officer, NCO or civilian arrives at the FCoE to become an instructor, in almost all cases that individual has significant experience and background pertinent to his instructor duties. The goal of the Professional Development Division (PDD), the new instructor's chain of command, senior instructor (coach/mentor) and peer instructors is to assist the new student instructor to integrate the skills and experiences the new instructor already possesses and blend them with sound adult education principles, training fundamentals and instructional methodologies.

The Army Basic Instructor Course, (ABIC) Small Group Instructor Course (SGIC), the specific course technical subject matter training and certification training provides opportunities for the new student instructor to build his professional instructional delivery and expertise. The sound professional coaching and mentoring of new instructors throughout this certification period by a host of individuals is really the key to setting the conditions for success of the new instructor. How well this is done sets the foundational skills the new instructor begins with on his journey as a professional instructor at the FCoE. The impact each new instructor will have on the training and education of so many Soldiers makes this effort critically important.

"Leadership and learning are indispensable to each other."

-John F. Kennedy

What are we looking for in a Fires Center of Excellence instructor?

What we are seeking in an instructor at the FCoE is fundamentally the same strong skill sets and competencies of successful leaders in the Profession of Arms across our tactical formations. A competent and solid leader (NCO, warrant officer, commissioned officer) in a tactical unit should possess all the attributes and technical expertise to potentially become a superior instructor. However, for some reason it seems that many inbound leaders heading into instructor positions think that a TRADOC, assignment as an instructor is a totally different role than the leader role they are coming from in a tactical unit. In some cases that dynamic, adaptable, quick-thinking leader coming from an Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) or Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) assignment believes when in TRADOC those skills don't apply in the instructional realm. What should be an assignment to share a wealth of knowledge and experience and to continue to lead and develop Soldiers, somehow becomes a more rote and static 'TRADOC-ized' boring experience, bogged down in PowerPoint slides and unlinked individual tasks, conditions and standards. On the contrary, these new inbound leaders must take the perspective that this instructor assignment will enhance their tactical abilities and competencies so they must attack this instructor role from that perspective the students they teach and their own professionalism will be enhanced. I have seen this exact dynamic work very well with numerous instructors across the FCoE. This perspective makes a huge difference in the ultimate outcome of effectively training and educating students and clearly enhances the professionalism of the instructor in so many ways.

The TRADOC instructor assignment should be an extension of the good things that occur in tactical unit training (focused, tough and challenging training, development

of Soldier attributes integrated into the training, problem solving, combat applications, and a host of other areas). So the leader coming into TRADOC for an instructor assignment needs to clearly keep his unit skills fine-tuned, because they will become a significant part of his tool kit as an instructor. The goal of his instructor preparation training and education are those things the new instructor can use to enhance the skill sets already developed through unit experiences (i.e., adult learning theory, additional instructor facilitation skills, fine tuning of group assessment skills and additional instructional approaches and methods for classroom and larger group scenarios).

Bottom line, the success of new instructors is directly related to the experiences they bring from their field assignments and the attitude from which they approach their instructor assignment. I truly believe the things we teach in ABIC and SGITC and those skills taught in the subject matter expert (SME) lanes coached and mentored by senior instructors should have direct applications in any and all tactical units. If you can adeptly assess and facilitate a classroom event and make it challenging and interesting, you will be fine tuning your skills to ensure you can assess and facilitate a live-fire platoon attack in your next tactical unit. The same would apply for your students. They should be getting more than just a task, condition, standard approach if you are a real leader/instructor.

The 13 categories and skill sets listed are, in many cases, areas most inbound new instructors executed in recent jobs and/or in tactical units. These skills will significantly enhance the new instructor's ability to positively train, instruct and educate students. In reality, the same 13 areas leaders are asked to execute or manage in tactical units are a very credible and important set of instructor skills desired in TRADOC. Bottom line, the outcomes sought in developing Soldiers in tactical units or students in TRADOC are one and the same. Therefore, the skill sets a leader requires to lead and train a squad or lead and instruct a group of students are very much the same:

- a. Adaptable and prepared (PCCs/PCIs and adjustments in execution)
- b. Achieves desired outcomes or accomplishes the mission
- c. Subject matter experts (tactical and technical)
- d. Ability to facilitate training and learning
- e. Solid coach and mentor
- f. Oversees attribute development
- g. Keeps a Soldier-centered focus
- h. Understands training fundamentals and approaches
- i. Assesses training (observes, assesses, corrects, redirects)
- j. Understands combat and job application
- k. Establishes rigor and challenge in training
- l. Always a role model
- m. Establishes a positive and professional environment for development

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand."

-Chinese Proverb

New tools for instructor assessment and feedback, instructor certification, and quarterly instructor evaluations that center on these 13 criteria categories. It is important to understand that a leader overseeing some level of a tactical unit training event and an instructor responsible for training and education in a TRADOC learning event, share many of the same skill requirements. Because of this similarity the Quality Assurance Office and Professional Development Division are re-designing their assessment tools and certification tools to better focus instructor training on these 13 important areas and improve feedback in these areas for assessment purposes across the FCoE. This effort also clearly aligns with the direction of Army Learning Concept

(ALC), 2015 but more importantly focuses on fundamentally sound adult education principles and both proven and new instructional approaches and methodologies. The focus of professional development for all instructors new or experienced will now fall in primarily these 13 areas:

1. Planning, preparation and administrative requirements.

No different in combat or anywhere else, pre-combat checks and pre-combat inspections are pivotal to successful combat operations. For an instructor, the same holds true. Setting the conditions for a successful training event or class requires organization, preparation and planning. A good instructor usually has a checklist to ensure he has all the administrative requirements completed and all the training aids and tools in place and double-checked (risk management reviewed and updated, equipment checked and operable, handouts or

Soldiers attending the Army's Warrior Leader Course demonstrate the proper procedures for evacuating casualties with the use of smoke during a building clearing and courtyard exercise. (Photo by SSG Shelia Sledge, U.S. Army)





other requirements positioned and ready, all coordination accomplished, students aware of requirements, uniform, homework, rehearsals accomplished, etc.). Good instructors review instructor notes, review questions to better facilitate the class, war-game possible student options have contingencies should something fail/break. Bottom line: Setting the conditions for a successful learning event is critical to achieving the desired outcomes.

Little goes well that starts out poorly. Some criteria to think about:

- a. Instructor has materials, supplies and equipment ready at start of instructional activity.
- b. Classroom/training site is organized and fully in place to expedite learning event.
- c. Procedures for handling materials and supplies during class are efficient and effective.
- d. CRM worksheets are up to date and overall risk management plan is effective.
- e. Lesson plan is approved, current, and was used for preparation.
- f. Instructor rehearsed.
- g. Instructor can verbalize the intent of training and the desired outcomes received from the chain of command.
- h. Required administrative requirements are in place (visitors folder, lesson plan, range requirements, etc.).
- i. Exhibits acceptable personal appearance.
- j. Prepares/reviews prior to class.

“By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.”

-Benjamin Franklin

2. Subject matter expertise.

Each instructor must possess the required subject matter expertise to effectively ensure the students have met the learning outcomes and/or lesson objectives enabling learning objectives/terminal learning objectives (ELOs/TLOs). The instructor must have a total understanding of the subject matter taught so the instructor

An air assault student navigates his way down the 55-foot wall during the third phase or rappel phase of the air assault course, which was held on Camp Albertson in Schweinfurt, Germany.
(Photo by SSG Michael Taylor, U.S. Army)

can frame the context and provide well facilitated instruction. Understanding what to look for to ensure students are getting it (learning assessments) requires well beyond fundamental understanding of the subject. The instructor must know his subject so well he can easily identify shortfalls or gaps in the students learning of the subject. Every school organization or element is required to provide the required subject matter training and certification programs to ensure new instructors are well prepared and rehearsed in their presentations and training environments. The instructor must clearly understand and be able to articulate the important combat or job applications (context) of the tasks to ensure the student understands more than just mindlessly doing a task... But a deeper understanding of the 'why' behind the task, so it can be applied in a variety of circumstances. To do this, an instructor has to have a deeper understanding of the task – well beyond what the student must initially learn. It is difficult to replace a seasoned instructor's experience, but it can be mitigated by a new instructor through hard work and a solid unit technical certification and training program.

Some criteria to think about:

- a. The instructor demonstrates subject matter expertise.
- b. Articulates all important aspects of the learning event in relation to technical/tactical information.
- c. Instructor's confidence level is adequate to be credible in front of the students.
- d. Answers and correctly articulates all aspects of subject matter related to TLOs/ELOs.
- e. Grasp of subject matter is appropriate to level of instruction.
- f. Instructor implements all technical subject matter risk management measures.

"It is only through labor and painful effort, by grim energy and resolute courage, that we move on to better things."

-Theodore Roosevelt

3. Facilitation of learning.

The instructor's ability to facilitate learning in the classroom or during field training by asking leading

questions that engage students in critical thinking and problem solving activities is an extremely potent tool that challenges the learners by moving towards deeper understanding and getting them personally involved in the process of learning. The simple 'why' question in itself can get students thinking, versus the simple 'yes and no' type questions that are overly easy and can be readily guessed at. A good facilitator, using good questioning techniques, can drive the challenge and rigor in the learning environment significantly upwards. Questions also provide an excellent tool to assess how well students really get the subject matter and where re-training or emphasis needs to be focused. Facilitation is certainly an art form, but like anything else, practice perfects this skill. Just knowing you have an instructor that will ask tough questions of you that require deeper understanding and real thinking – certainly ramp up the interest in better understanding the subject, the reading material, the desired outcomes from the learning event. Articulating 'why' you personally decided to do something is so much more enlightening in comparison to just doing it! Explaining 'why' is a deeper test than just getting the right answer... It will, in many cases, illuminate critical thinking and innovation... It or lack thereof...

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Could effectively facilitate the learning event.
- b. Creates an environment that motivates students and promotes their learning.
- c. Gets students actively engaged in the lesson.
- d. Uses leading questions to better facilitate the learning event.
- e. Has high expectations and demands student engagement/participation.
- f. Responds to students effectively, supporting their understanding of the learning event.
- g. Uses a variety of methods to make instruction more dynamic and engaging (TDEs, competition, PEs, etc.).

"Don't tell people how to do things, tell them what to do and

let them surprise you with their results."

-George S. Patton

4. Instructor fundamentals.

Instructor fundamentals mainly relate to the delivery of effective instruction and how well the instructor ensures the learning objectives and desired outcomes are achieved by the students. The key areas covered under instructor fundamentals:

- Constant monitoring of risk mitigation throughout training and instruction and enforcement of safety considerations.
- Clear articulation of the learning objectives (ELOs/TLOs/Desired Outcomes/Intent).
- Explanation/introduction to the training event (why important, evaluation/testing requirements, environmental considerations).
- Explanation of learning steps/actions/key points/sequence & the "why" behind the tasks to provide context/application.
- Effective use of equipment/training aids/materials, and overall organization of learning event.
- Smooth transitions between portions of instructional blocks or training.
- Ensure all students are engaged, see, hear, and participate in learning.
- Quality training aids and visuals (correct spelling, grammar, etc., in all written materials, handouts, etc.).
- Can execute appropriate instructional delivery methods as needed in the lesson.
- Basic delivery skills: Appropriate movement and gestures, good eye contact, clear and understandable voice (tone/rate/volume).
- No distracting mannerisms or crutch words ("ummm" / "ah", "OK", etc.).
- Keeps students engaged and interested.
- Uses good questioning techniques (ask/pause/call/elaborate) gets students thinking and participating.
- Effectively manages classroom/learning environment, student behavior, disruptions.

- Manages all tools and equipment properly and in an organized manner.
- Sets the conditions for meaningful learning and performance by students.
- Conducts quality summaries, reviews, and runs meaningful after action reviews (AARs) when and where appropriate.

Mastering the fundamentals is the key to consistent success in any endeavor – a great football team spends a lot of time reinforcing the basic blocking and tackling fundamentals – that effort wins more games than any fancy plays...

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Demonstrates effective instructor techniques and skills. (eye contact,

voice, delivery, mannerisms, crutch words, use of instructional method, transitions, summaries, questioning, etc.)

- b. Is respectful to students and is professional in all actions.
- c. Takes appropriate action if any disruptive behavior occurs. (classroom management).
- d. Monitors and is aware of student behaviors, takes corrective actions as necessary (training response). Ensures that students can see and hear all activities.
- e. Effectively uses various tools and resources such as materials, media, and technology required for the lesson.

- f. Uses appropriate methods of instruction to obtain desired outcomes/objective standard(s).
- g. Provides a summary of key points of the lesson, evaluation plan, and other administrative requirements.

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.”

-Martin Luther King, Jr.

5. Learning assessments.

One of the most important areas an instructor must become proficient in is the ability to determine if the students are actually learning what

Ssg Joshua Lancaster, instructor at the Combat Support Training and Evaluation Battalion at Camp Swift, points out terrain features to Soldiers from Task Force Raptor. The Task Force hones its navigational skills in the Land Navigation Course at Camp Swift, Texas. (Photo by SSG Malcolm McClendon, U.S. Army)



they are supposed to be learning. Both formal and informal assessments are important so the instructor can obtain valid feedback from the students on whether or not they are learning. Focused observations, questioning, written assessments, and physical performance are possible avenues to obtain feedback. Good questioning can lead to determination of actual learning, the 'ask, pause, call' technique is a fundamentally good tool to obtain informal feedback. The key is to keep all students wondering who will be called upon and giving all time to think about the answer before selecting one to comment. Good instructors learn very quickly the key parts of a lesson that tend to be more difficult and require more focused assessment to ensure students get it. More complex subject matter may require a variety of assessment tools to track student progress. Formal testing and evaluation may be included as a tool for assessment purposes. A key in assessment is to actually do something with the feedback = re-direct the training or learning to re-cover areas where shortfalls are noted, and/or try a new approach if the current approach is not working. Ensure you actually assess the areas desired, and don't be afraid to admit you didn't and try it again – it is attaining the desired outcome that is really important. You can tell a batter how to hit a ball – but it is the assessment of the actual act (and feedback) that grows a hitter...

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Assesses student learning/progress and re-focuses or re-directs instruction if needed.
- b. Asks for self-assessment and peer assessments.
- c. Uses assessment and feedback mechanisms like "ask – pause – call – elaborate" to ensure students understand lesson.
- d. Uses a variety of instructional strategies for students who are having difficulty learning.
- e. Communicates assessment criteria to students and provides meaningful feedback.
- f. Conducts effective AARs and End of Lesson Critiques.

"Be a yardstick of quality. Some people aren't used to an

environment where excellence is expected."

-Steve Jobs

6. Student-centered focus.

In many classrooms the instructor is thought to be the 'center of the universe'. He is the subject matter expert and knows all the 'right' answers. However, the best way to ensure meaningful learning is occurring is to place the responsibility for learning on the student and place the initiative and effort to learn back on the student. This sounds a little backwards but the intent behind this approach is to encourage the students to take on the responsibility and initiative to set their course on what needs to happen to get them to achieve the learning event objectives. The ability to do this effectively requires some experience on the instructor's part, and a lesson that sets the conditions to improve the possibilities to make this happen. In simple terms, allowing the students to take on the role of creating how they will achieve the course/lesson objectives can place the responsibility to achieve the results on them. Instructors should be asking a lot of questions as a guide to lead the students to determine what information they need and let them solve the problem. Inexperienced instructors tend to solve the problems for the students or tell them the best right way to accomplish the mission – this discourages students seeking their own right answers. There is a fine line the instructor has to manage, we don't want to go to a complete discovery learning model nor do we want to just give the right answers... But a balanced approach that allows students to solve problems with an instructor providing coaching, leading questions and direction when needed to keep focus and on track is the direction we want to move towards. What the individual student actually learns and gets from the learning process is the most important thing!

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Establishes opportunities for student taking responsibility for learning
- b. Encourages student initiative and self-assessment

- c. Asks for student opinions, ideas, and solutions
- d. Communicates key concepts linked to students' prior knowledge/experiences
- e. Places requirements on students for solving their own problems.
- f. Encourages initiative in students and provides support for peer coaching and student feedback and input.
- g. Uses problem solving venues to engage students and challenge them to learn.

"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at twenty or eighty. Anyone who keeps learning stays young. The greatest thing in life is to keep your mind young."

-Henry Ford

7. Combat or job applications.

In most cases the instruction, training, and education developed and executed across the FCoE are directly related to specific combat or job skills and competencies. Therefore, it is very important to ensure that our instruction and training provides the context and actual applications that the students will face in their particular jobs. Using the very effective approach the Army has used for a long time, crawl, walk, run, allows the building of skills with increased challenge and eventually under a variety of combat replicated conditions. Initial task steps and tasks may be individually learned but at some point they need to be placed in context and joined to other tasks to develop competencies related to job and/or combat applications of the tasks. The use of graduated stress can replicate those job applications that will be faced in the work or combat environment (timed events, competition, multiple tasks, inserted dilemmas, etc.). In simple terms, we want to ensure we provide the fundamental foundation ensuring students understand the steps/process/procedure/sequence required in any given task... But we also want to ensure the student understands the application of the tasks in the context in which they will be required to operate.

Another key element of understanding the combat or job application is to ensure students also understand the 'why' behind the task/steps/process/procedure/sequence. Understanding why there is a particular sequence or why each step is used allows a student to understand the larger concept or outcome, and in most cases brings better understanding of how and when to apply the task. Example, for many years the Army trained the three-second rush to ensure Soldiers understood an enemy would be able to obtain a sight picture on them in approximately three seconds... (Therefore do not expose yourself for longer than three seconds when possible). A Soldier's rote execution of this task without understanding the context = moving across open terrain for three seconds and then hitting the ground - in the open - when actual cover was available only another second away means the Soldier did not understand the why - the context of the training - the application requires thought and explanation! The other important aspect to this equation is that some type of suppressive Fires are needed when Soldiers are moving in the open (even if only from their battle buddy) and that should also be part of the training. Therefore, we must ensure we train in context and explain the why behind the task to ensure the student 'gets it'-- understanding the real desired outcomes of the training. Additionally, from an educational perspective, understanding why you are doing something (the steps, the process, etc.) better solidifies the memory of the task and lends itself to an ability to better adjust the task when faced with new or different conditions in the application of the task.

Bottom line, the combat, or job application of the tasks or training received becomes the most important aspect of the training. It is the culminating learning event that provides the student the opportunity to fully feel, see, and understand how what he learned applies in action. How well the training simulates the reality of what a student will face in his job will be the deciding factor

on how good the training really is. The sequencing of the learning event and the building of a realistic level of challenge as the student progresses (with assessment feedback and coaching by instructor) is what sets the conditions for a successful learning scenario. Those scenarios should build toward the actual combat and/or job applications so students gain confidence in their ability to achieve and accomplish their missions. Students should be given the opportunity to actually apply what they learned in new situations. If the students really understand the 'why' of the tasks they will be more adaptable in executing it. This student centric approach also builds initiative, problem solving and motivation - all desired outcomes we are seeking in our students/Soldiers/leaders.

When all else is said and done - did we set the conditions for the student to execute in battle where the mission must be accomplished and death can be a reality of a failure to learn?

Some criteria to think about:

- Articulates to the students the combat or job application of the subject he is teaching.
- Gets to the 'why' behind the task so students can better understand the application over a broader context, as well as the combat or job applications.
- Is the operational environment linked to the desired outcome(s) the instructor is promoting?
- Explains the relationship of the task or the learning activity to job performance (motivation to learn).

"If you think you can do a thing or think you can't do a thing, you're right."

-Henry Ford

8. Rigor / Challenge.

We all remember that one teacher, or coach or leader that demanded more and challenged us to go beyond what we thought we could do. In some cases, maybe they told you that you wouldn't be able to do it - and that motivated you to do it to a higher level. In any case, the key point here is we want to make our training and instruction as challenging and as rigorous as possible, requiring worthwhile effort from our students

to attain high standards in interesting and meaningful scenarios. Training should not be boring, and shame on us if we allow training to be 'dumbed down' to the lowest denominator. If we are truly the best Army in the world then our training should have rigor, and quite frankly, not everyone should be able to pass everything all the time. Although, we should strive to bring everyone along, we need to ensure we don't slow down 95 percent to bring along five percent. Lesson plans need to support challenging training and more performance oriented dynamic student-centric approaches that require participation and effort by students to meet desired outcomes or objectives (TLOs/ELOs).

A simple tool an instructor can use to introduce more rigor and challenge at appropriate times is stress. As students master sub-tasks or complete tasks, stress can be used to further challenge the student and ramp up the training to higher levels to replicate job or combat stressors. Time constraints, competition between students (or crews or teams), multiple tasks executed near simultaneously, problem solving scenarios linked to task execution, new conditions or context added to scenarios, application of a learned task in a new yet untried scenario - all these venues can increase the rigor and challenge of the exercise. Stress significantly changes the dynamic of doing a task. Practice in doing things under stress, if done properly, can build more robust competencies and significantly build confidence and initiative. I am not sure how confident a trainee feels to fight a live combat foe knowing he barely qualified with a weapon at 23/40 targets that included alibis... Versus the confidence and skill gained having successfully run an assault rifle drill course where the trainee was really challenged and had to practice and finally successfully negotiated it with dummy rounds which had to be cleared, magazine changes, single and multiple target engagements, and being timed - in concert with a battle buddy - here Advanced Rifle Marksmanship (ARM) skills are trained and learned as well as attribute development, to include real thinking. In this scenario, the training



Pathfinder Soldiers with 2nd Battalion, 29th Field Artillery Regiment, pay close attention to Roy Fernandez, a civilian instructor at Camp Buehring, Kuwait, as he explains what a 'minute of angle' is at a training facility near Camp Buehring. 'Minute of angle' is a ballistic measurement that calculates the deviation a bullet travels due to gravity or air resistance, which cause rounds to travel in an arch-like flight. (Photo by SPC Brandon Bednarek, U.S. Army)

was stressful but clearly related to the combat application. That is the rigor you want to provide as a challenge to students. There is no 'boring' in those scenarios, and frankly that type of training is fun and why many civilians joined the Army – they want to be challenged. They did not join the Army to do boring training. Millennium learners are familiar with the idea of ramping up the challenge as in numerous types of video games – the game gets harder and harder – that's the fun and stress of it!

Soldiers and leaders, by the nature of their duties, need to be critical thinkers and problems solvers. Putting students in more performance oriented learning events that increase in challenge as they develop skills is one way to build rigor in training. Most

training and education can be placed in problem solving scenarios that are more challenging. During practical exercises, an experienced instructor can give different level challenges in a practical exercise (PE) based on the level a student can handle. Getting students to think critically and engage in learning events challenges students to use new skill knowledge while simultaneously using critical thinking skills and problem solving. Scenarios that require students to come up with their own solutions to problems using the skills they were taught can provide real context and not only build skill sets and competencies, but also develop sought after attributes (perseverance, initiative, confidence, responsibility, adaptability, etc.)

Meaningful homework, actual thinking engagements and discussion, immersion in problem solving (individual or group activities in practical exercises (PEs) or simulations), challenging and realistic performance-based events and evaluations/tests are all ways to get after more rigorous training. Digging into why the student made a decision and making them articulate it, defend it, or critique someone else are also ways to ramp up the challenge and rigor in the learning event.

Bottom line, boring instruction results in unmotivated students and valuable wasted time that could be used better for more engaging learning. When we see students standing in the back of a classroom because they are too bored and going

to sleep - we are probably not using the right learning formats. If the lesson is overly simple, students lose interest and learn even less long term, as their memory of an event fades very quickly if they are not truly engaged in a real, thinking activity. Although it may seem great that all students got a 'go' on a block of instruction in record time, it may well mean they will also forgot what they learned 48 hours later because they did not have to engage in any thinking to accomplish the task. Most individuals joined the Army or other services because they were looking for a challenge – don't disappoint them - give them one!

Some criteria to think about:

- Instructor challenges and engages the students; provides them opportunities to think critically answer tough questions, articulate and defend their opinions
- Immerses students in scenarios that require problem solving and adaptability
- Uses activities and assignments that challenge students at appropriate levels
- Ensures students are cognitively engaged

"Life is hard; it's harder if you're stupid. (or not well trained)"

-John Wayne

9. Coach / mentor.

The coach: Coaching is an art that has huge impacts on the learner and learning environment. An instructor inherently should be a coach, a leader that can observe and assess where a student is, where he needs assistance, and provide that assistance in a positive way, that builds self-confidence while it also encourages the student to figure things out on his own as well. A good coach has to first be a subject matter expert, as well as a good observer. Providing feedback and coaching pointers based on accurate and timely assessment of observations of students is what separates the champion team from the losing team. It is the nuance of being able to determine individual feedback that makes a good coach (or instructor) effective. Good coaches focus effort on those fundamental areas needing improvement – building to the refinement of special skills later after the fundamentals are mastered. A good coach explains why something

works best a certain way but allows the player to try different approaches and assesses the outcomes... The best coaches get the players engaged and fine tune their performance through good observation and candid two-way feedback.

The mentor: A mentor provides positive feedback in a non-threatening manner and shares stories and ideas to build the professional confidence of the individuals mentored and shows the way to build a path in the Profession of Arms. A mentor takes the time and conducts small group or individual discussions to show he truly cares about his prodigies' progress. Usually this relationship is a two-way relationship and lasts over time. Mentoring and coaching are linked but not necessarily the same thing. Coaching feedback is usually to build skills. Mentoring feedback is designed to build professional acumen, attitudes, values. The same individual can be a coach and a mentor, or they could be two different people. The mentor relationship has to be developed based on a mutually respectful relationship between the student and mentor. The intent is

Instructors take on a variety of roles and must display attributes in each of these key areas. (Illustration by Rick Paape, Jr.)



that all instructors would possess the qualities to be admired by students and be sought out as mentors; however, this relationship has to be built between both parties. It's not a given and usually can't be forced. A good instructor will attempt to become a mentor to all students and develop those professional relationships based on the time available and the reality of the number of students. In some cases, the chain of command and other personnel can fill the role of mentors in both formal and informal programs. Good coaches and good mentors can make a world of difference in the development of Soldier or leader skills, knowledge, attributes, values and attitudes.

Most successful people had a mentor to thank for assisting their development somewhere in their lives (a parent, a coach, a teacher, a NCO, a leader), someone who was willing to believe in them.

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Instructor coaches and mentors students within parameters of lesson where appropriate
- b. Instructor builds students' confidence
- c. Instructor asks students how they can improve: gets individual feedback from students
- d. Instructor gives positive reinforcement/provides tips and ideas. Directs a 'try again'
- e. Instructor engages in two-way conversations. Establishes an environment for positive discussion

"A mentor is someone who sees more talent and ability within you, than you see in yourself, and helps bring it out of you."

-Bob Proctor

10. Role model.

Be, Know, Do... My Mission, My Men, Myself... You don't have to be a rocket scientist to know all leaders in the Army are role models, as is every instructor. Even more importantly, an instructor may be the first military figure a student gets to see and know in a forum where contact is daily for hours on end. In many cases, this contact may be the first time the student has interaction with an

Army leader as a true coach and mentor. It could also be a time where experienced leaders are returning to a TRADOC school to prepare for their next assignment – a time that would be critical for interaction with the 'role model' instructor to gain insights into the next level of professional development at more senior levels or grades. In either case, the impact an instructor has on a new Soldier or returning leader is enormous.

There are a variety of roles, attributes and other key areas an instructor takes on as a role model and they are all important and detailed in the figure to the left.

Bottom line, the goal of every instructor should be to represent the 'Profession of Arms' as a role model for all students to follow. An instructor should be the embodiment of an Army leader. The instructor has to establish credibility with the students. If the instructor cannot be a role model in the student's eyes it will be significantly more difficult for the instructor to perform the required instructor duties. However, bringing the experiences of many years in the Army, the new instructor should already be prepared for this role. The key for every new instructor is to take his/her experience and carry it to a new level as a role model instructor (that will be challenge – but a good challenge).

The 'instructor experience' a student is subjected to can set the conditions for a very positive and successful student career or time in the Army, or it can make a student question whether the right decision was made in joining the Army. For FCoE instructors, there is only one option - become a role model for your students and devote your assignment as an instructor to improving your overall professionalism. Provide the best trained Soldiers and leaders to your peers in the field – you owe your peers and the Army that effort, you owe your students that effort, and yes, their lives may actually depend on what you do or don't do as an instructor, be the instructor students remember as a superb role model, the alternative is not a good one.

One of the most satisfying experiences an instructor can ever

get is a comment back from a former student saying the instructor was right and made a difference in the student's abilities to accomplish his tasks or mission – particularly in combat.

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Sets the example as a role model of the Profession of Arms (walks the walk)
- b. Models himself as a prepared, technically competent, confident, enthusiastic, motivated, positive, and in-charge instructor
- c. Encourages and motivates the students by example, interest level, knowledge, and experience.
- d. Willingly shares knowledge
- e. Demonstrates his competency in his/her specific field
- f. Encourages lifelong learning.

"Leaders aren't born they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work. And that's the price we'll have to pay to achieve that goal, or any goal."

-Vince Lombardi

11. Positive learning environment.

The instructor is totally responsible for the learning environment established in the classroom or at any learning/training event. The learning environment established by the instructor is a combination of his classroom management style and his leadership and instructor skills. Although the learning environment may need to be adjusted based on class size, how new the students are, resources, etc., it is generally important to create a positive environment where students are willing to engage in learning and not afraid to participate and ask questions. Establishing guidelines for conducting discussions, critiques, peer assessments, etc., may be beneficial to establishing the positive learning environment. In group settings, ensuring personal tact, respectfulness and keeping focused on tactical or leader related traits can keep the focus on those areas where constructive criticism can be meaningful and improve outcomes. Establishing a 'safe' learning environment where students are not allowed to put down other student's ideas ensures participation

in many cases of those that may need to grow the most. For an instructor, it is important that all students improve and meet the desired outcomes – no one ever will know which student may be given the critical combat mission once graduated, many times it is just right time-right place, or wrong time-wrong place, but an instructor owes it to all students to ensure they are engaged in learning. Not asking the question for fear it may sound dumb occurs more than you would think. Positive classroom environments help prevent that. Students will police themselves when clear ground rules are established.

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Are students participating and actively engaged in instruction?
- b. Do the students take ownership of their learning?
- c. Does the instructor show support for peer collaboration and discussion/learning?
- d. Do the students engage in a variety of learning environments?
- e. Does the learning environment set the conditions for successful and positive learning experience ensuring attainment of the desired outcomes or objectives?

"You miss 100% of the shots you don't take."

-Wayne Gretzky

12. Attribute development.

One of the more important aspects of training and educating Soldiers and leaders for an instructor is the responsibility and impact he will have on the student's attribute development. When you ask leaders from tactical units what is important for new Soldiers, NCOs, warrant officers and officers coming from TRADOC schools to be able to do - there are usually two primary responses: first, leaders feel the former student/trainee should be fundamentally competent in those areas he was trained on at Fort Sill, and be able to apply what was learned in the tactical unit environment. Second, the leaders almost always believe the former student/trainee should be able to readily assimilate into the unit as a team player, with an ability to use his own initiative, problem solve commensurate with

his rank, be adaptable, persevere on tasks, be responsible and become a positive and productive member of his new unit team. Bottom line, the expectation is twofold – skills and attribute development.

I would submit to all instructors that as role models, coaches, mentors, and leaders, part of your significant responsibilities as an instructor is to continually develop your students in as many ways as possible to better develop their attributes. This should be more than a side effort but integrated into your training and education efforts. Future lesson plans will hopefully identify key attributes for development and integrate them into both the lesson and course outcomes (as they are in some Deputy Commanding General for Initial Military Training (DCG IMT) lessons now). Instructors need to assess students not only on their ability to physically execute the performance requirements on tasks, but also assess the attribute development that may be associated with accomplishing the task (motivation, persistence, initiative, follow through, teamwork, problem solving, etc.). The key here is that attribute development feedback needs to be provided back to the student in both informal feedback (coaching / mentoring / critiques / encouragement) and more formally with counseling opportunities, to include peer assessments and other 360 degree type feedback venues (all excellent tools to develop those attributes we desire in our students and Soldiers).

Bottom line, many would argue that we need to just focus on teaching new trainees the skill sets they need in their next assignment as the priority – the unit can work on the attribute development. However, I truly believe we are missing a very important opportunity if we don't focus on both skill and attribute development. As a coach for a very successful high school football team and wrestling team for many years, I can honestly say if you only focus on the fundamentals skills without working the development of attributes (teamwork, selflessness, persistence, initiative, critical thinking, positive attitude, etc.) simultaneously, we

would not have produced players that learned the skills and could apply them in situations where there was stress and friction. The skills and attributes go together in training humans. If we just train the skills and forget about the critical thinking and attribute development - we will be creating what we always laughed at – a Soviet like Army that could only do what it was told to do.

Our Army's strength is only as good as our Soldiers' abilities to think on their feet to solve the myriad of problems they face in the asymmetrical operational environment – particularly at the individual, squad, platoon and company levels.

Some criteria to think about:

- a. Gives students opportunities to build initiative, self-discipline and confidence
- b. Counsels, mentors, and coaches to specifically help develop attributes in students.
- c. Encourages and uses 360 degree counseling tools (peer assessments etc.)
- d. Provides formal and informal feedback on attribute development
- e. Provides a learning environment that motivates and encourages attribute development and self learning

"Coaches who can outline plays on a black board are a dime a dozen. The ones who win get inside their players and motivate."

-Vince Lombardi

13. Outcome achieved.

The single most important thing in combat is accomplishing the mission. The single most important thing for an instructor is achieving the desired outcome of the learning event or training event. However, accomplishing the 'desired outcome' of the learning event may be more than just accomplishing the task/condition/standard of any given event – particularly if we are seriously looking to develop competent, confident Soldiers that can perform under pressure. Being able to perform an M16 task like "SPORTS" = slap, pull, observe, release, tap

and shoot as an isolated event may be easy; however, performing it without expecting it in a live firing event may be significantly more challenging. What the desired outcome of the event is attaining becomes important – do you want the Soldier to be able to confidently execute this task under a variety of circumstance, or just recite SPORTS? Although, this may be an over simplification of the task (and the conditions should clarify the desired outcome in the task/condition/standard statement) it is still important to give this area some significant thought. The instructor holds the key to whether or not the Soldier is really learning something that he will be able to confidently execute and apply to new situations, or just learning for the moment and dumping It, only having to be re-taught the same

skill again later. If we are training critical tasks, we should be training them to the combat outcome likely faced.

The first time a Soldier faces a skill dilemma should not be in combat. Some criteria to think about:

- a. Instructor obtains the desired learning outcomes and/or objective standard(s)
- b. Instructor's intended outcome(s) and/or terminal learning objective standard(s) are clear and accurate.
- c. The student/trainees can perform to the desired outcome level or Standard based on instruction.
- d. Instruction is fundamentally sound and gets to the combat applications or job applications.

“A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events and outcomes.

It is a catalyst and it sparks extraordinary results.”

-Wade Boggs

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The New Equipment Training Team (NETT) instructor, Dennis Patnode, inspects an Excalibur round with SGT Joseph Hatch of the 1-37th Field Artillery on Fort Irwin, Calif. The round is a precision based artillery unit that loads into a M-777 A2 weapon system. (Photo by SPC Jennifer Grier, U.S. Army)

