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Transforming NATO's Education and Training

A transformation of NATO Education and Training was needed — from “Build us a course” to a systematic match of identified requirements and effective solutions

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THE OLD WAY

Until 2012, NATO Education and Training (E&T) was driven by requirements detected in quasi-isolation by elements within the NATO Command Structure. These requirements were usually satisfied by single course offerings and occasionally introducing a new exercise objective. The E&T effort was not focused on what the Heads of State and Government had told NATO to do, at previous summits. A close examination of courses revealed that some were linked neither to definable requirements, nor to collective behaviour as demonstrated in exercises. Staff, whether they were competent or not, were thrown into exercises in the hope that they somehow succeeded. There was no systematic review of the validity of the E&T solutions, ensuring that Lessons Identified arrived at the institutions that needed to integrate them and make them Lessons Learned. Because there was no unity of effort in E&T, NATO had no idea of the gaps or unnecessary duplication of efforts. This approach was ineffective, inefficient and unaffordable.

TRANSFORMATION WAS NEEDED

The takeover of the responsibility for collective training by Headquarters Supreme Allied Commander Transformation (HQ SACT) created the opportunity to look holistically at E&T. Since the individual's preparation is a prerequisite for collective effectiveness, we view individual training and collective training as a closely interconnected continuum. Once that link is realised, the operational requirements constitute the drivers for all E&T efforts.

In order to manage the mass of requirements, we group them into disciplines. For every discipline, a Requirements Authority (RA) collects and expresses the requirements for E&T and acts as the final evaluator. Starting from these requirements, HQ SACT's Joint Force Trainer (JFT) leads the development of a discipline-specific Strategic Training Plan (STP). This STP is a comprehensive picture of the considered discipline, identifying E&T needs and envisaged solutions.

The approval of the STP by the North Atlantic Council (NAC) sets off the next steps: the appointment of the RA and the Department Head

(DH) as well as the Training Requirements Analysis (TRA). The TRA captures existing training and education opportunities potentially available to the Alliance. It refines the intended target audiences, develops their performance objectives, and eventually matches the performance objectives with the available opportunities. In doing so, gaps in E&T within the relevant discipline are identified.



Training of Public Affairs Officers at the NATO School in Oberammergau, Germany. Photo: MC2 Bennett, ACT

The DH receives the result of the TRA and leads the Training Needs Analysis (TNA) to define the learning objectives required to eliminate gaps previously identified. This TNA initiates a systems approach to training. This ultimately results in the provision of quality education and individual and collective training-solutions that satisfy NATO's needs.

The DH is responsible for the translation of the requirements into solutions for the individual and collective training spectrum, and for the coordination of the solution providers. The DH will assemble a discipline E&T programme and strive to ensure that solutions are delivered in the most effective, efficient and affordable manner through NATO, its member nations, partners and other non-NATO entities. The DH is a volunteer organisation, normally from outside the NATO Command Structure, with sufficient expertise in the pertinent discipline and specifically the capacity to manage solutions. It is not necessarily involved with the delivery of education and training.

The Annual Discipline Conference (ADC) is the annual forum revisiting the discipline E&T programme. The RA reviews, confirms or modifies the requirements while the DH reviews the adequacy of the individual

and collective programmes used to satisfy NATO's requirements. The intent is to ensure E&T remains aligned with evolving needs, available technology and resources.

Supported by the ADC, the Training Integration Process (TIP) constitutes the production planning, resulting in annual updates to the Individual Training and Education Programme and the Military Training and Exercise Programme. The pivotal event in the TIP is NATO's Training Synchronisation Conference that serves as the final stage for identifying solutions to meet NATO's education and training needs by assembling nations and stakeholders.

To make the E&T opportunities known, there is the Training Management System. This is an integrated, transparent and on-line system that provides execution and administrative details, with an embedded Education and Training Opportunities Catalogue.

INVOLVING ALL

To conduct E&T activities continuously in the most effective, efficient and affordable manner, the commitment of all stakeholders is necessary. We must leverage the knowledge of NATO and member nations' Subject Matter Experts to ensure the optimal usage of all available resources. NATO Education and Training Facilities, NATO-accredited Centres of Excellence and NATO-recognised Partner Training and Education Centres as well as National/ Multinational Training Institutions, education and training facilities from partner nations, Intergovernmental Organisations (like UN, EU), and Non-Governmental Organisations (like ICRC, universities) are all invited to offer matching solutions.

By integrating continuous improvement and connecting individual preparation to collective training, E&T in NATO is transforming. Evolution from a 'Build-us-a-course' approach towards a systematic, holistic approach of matching requirements with solutions is occurring and represents a new era in NATO E&T.

Our NATO E&T system: an engine of transformation in full transition. ■