

PLANNING FOR LEADERSHIP WITH ARMY EDUCATION SERVICES OFFICERS AND LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to identify which leadership competencies future U.S. Army Continuing Education System Education Services Officers will need to better structure leadership development within that organization. A Delphi survey was sent to 13 Southeast Region Army Education Services Officers (ESOs) and consisted of three rounds. Nine critical competency components were identified in six core areas. The information obtained from this study can provide a framework to assist Army leaders, Garrison Commanders, and hiring officials when reviewing applications for future Education Services Officers. Current Army Continuing Education System professionals can also use the data from this study to ensure they have sought out and received the necessary training and development in each competency area and are fully qualified to meet the demands of working as future Education Services Officers.

PLANNING FOR LEADERSHIP

The struggle to define leadership and identify leadership competencies has been researched from a variety of perspectives in a multitude of organizational disciplines (Bennis, 1998; Burns, 1978; Fiedler, 1997; Northouse, 2004). Research studies that have produced definitions and theories related to the phenomenon of leadership have evolved over time, culminating in studies emphasizing leadership as a transformational activity (Bass, 1997). A number of well known researchers that have produced seminal works in the field of leadership received grants for their initial studies from the U.S. Army (Sorenson, 2005). Stogdill, Fiedler, and Bass are just a few of the notable researchers that benefited from U.S. Army research grants during the World War II era (Sorenson, 2005).

Leadership and leadership competencies required to sustain transformation in the U.S. Army training environment are an acknowledged aspect of professional development for military and civilian leaders (Garcia, Klingel, Mull, Summers, & Taylor, 2006). Research studies focusing on the competencies required by future military leaders have determined that the current competencies are ill defined and may not apply to future leaders (Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2003; Garcia et al., 2006; Horey et al., 2004). One finding common in a number of major research studies is the link between lifelong learning and leadership competencies (Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2003; Garcia et al., 2006).

Leadership competencies are a means to define and communicate leadership requirements in organizationally relevant terms (Gayvert, 1999). A leadership framework that encompasses competencies provides a common platform for leader development (Goldstein & Ford, 2002). As with values, competencies can be applied across time, at varying levels of authority and responsibility, and in unforeseen situations (Workitect, Inc., 2006). While individual situations or organizational requirements might indicate the use of different components or behaviors, leadership competencies as a whole are enduring regardless of job description, assignment, and time (Newsome, Catano, & Day, 2003). While values can shape the character of leaders, competencies can be used just as well as a guide to leader behavior (Horey et al., 2004).

The most current U.S. Army leadership guidance is presented in *Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership: Competent, Confident, and Agile* (2006b). The manual defines leadership for the Army, establishes the foundations of Army leadership, describes the linkage between military and civilian leaders, and also presents a four-chapter section devoted solely to competency-based leadership principles. The *Field Manual* provides a very clear road map to Army expectations of its professional leaders. Perhaps the single most important underlying factor in the development of leadership competencies in the Army is the incorporation of lifelong learning into a leadership development plan (Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2003).

One organization within the U.S. Army that deals almost exclusively with lifelong learning and

education is the Army Continuing Education System (ACES). ACES was created in 1972 by the Department of Defense (DoD) to manage educational services for active duty soldiers, and has been instrumental in piloting military education programs since its inception (Sticha et al., 2003). The ACES mission is to promote lifelong learning opportunities to “sharpen the competitive edge of the Army by providing and managing quality self-development programs and services,” (Department of the Army, 2006a, p. 18). One of its strategic goals is to provide lifelong learning opportunities to “enhance job performance. . .for the Army and its future leaders,” (p. 19). Within Army leadership are those members who have been charged with bringing Army Education into the 21st century and beyond: Education Services Officers (ESOs).

The title of ESO identifies the most senior ACES person working at the individual installation level (ACES Training and Professional Development, 1999). The ESO is responsible for the complete continuum of program offerings as well as for the operation of the Army Education Center and any satellite centers, if they exist (Anderson, 1995). As the Army is a mobile force, with its soldiers and families typically moving every 3 years, the Education Centers throughout the world offer similar programs and follow similar guidelines so that any soldier taking courses or working on academic programs at one installation is not subject to a new process or program as a result of a mandated move. Except for the size of the installation itself and the local partnerships that may have been established, all Army Continuing Education System Education Centers are virtually identical in program make-up and ESO program oversight.

Due to personnel cuts mandated by DoD, however, the number of ESOs has dwindled from 113 to 42, and of those remaining 42 positions, fully two-thirds of those employees are eligible to retire within the next decade (Installation Management Command, 2007). In order to present a better idea of how the Army Continuing Education System would be viewed in the civilian sector, it can be compared to a state Board of Regents. Under a state Board of Regents, there are various state universities and colleges. The ACES equivalent to those schools would be the Army installations with ACES offices and employees present and performing actions. The university or college president equivalent would be the Education Services Officer at that installation (college).

Education Services Officers are experts in the field of Army education. They not only must be aware of the “traditional” academic requirements that are available to the public at large, but they must also be specialists in military protocol and community partnerships. While ESOs are not Active Duty soldiers, they must also be conversant in the Army Personnel system to be aware of how academic preparation plays a role in soldier promotion, and be able to deploy to remote sites at the request of their chain of command. They represent their installation to the Headquarters offices and defend their budget and programming needs based on their daily experiences and interactions with soldiers and community partners. In short, ESOs are the general officers of the ACES organization and their field expertise must be practical, strategic, and theoretical in nature.

A comprehensive review of the literature suggests the need for study in the identification of leadership competencies that will be required for the success of future ESOs (Army Strategic Communications, 2003; Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2003; Garcia et al., 2006; Horey et al., 2004; United States Army, 2004). Ensuring that all military and civilian Army leaders have the required leadership competencies to be effective and meet their job objectives now and into the future is a critical readiness issue for DoD and throughout the government (Department of the Army, 2006b). Beginning in 2008, per one of the President’s Management Agenda initiatives, all Federal agencies are now required to report the results of a competency gap analysis for their current leadership, and then develop a plan for closing those identified gaps (Office of Personnel Management, 2006). There are certain competencies that may be critical to future ESOs who are assigned to steer an ever-changing and evolving organization that will lose much of its institutional knowledge through attrition and retirement. The gap in current literature lies in the specific role of ACES and the ESO in the Army’s transformation plan, and the decided lack of studies that address the vital importance of having relevant leadership competencies for such an important Army civilian leader.

Importance of the Study

Collectively, the leaders of an institution possess a deep understanding of that establishment in a way that outsiders or newcomers simply cannot replace. To preserve this resource, new leaders must be trained in competencies determined to be vital to the preservation and accomplishment of the ACES mission. While there are several studies addressing the need for leadership competencies for government civilians (Army Training and Leader Development Panel, 2003; Garcia et al., 2006; Horey et al., 2004), no studies specifically addressed the identification of future leadership competencies required of ESO successors.

Successful leadership competencies among future Education Services Officers represent an area of inquiry that requires the collection of data based on perceptions and imprecise definitions that are subjective in nature. The primary research question this study sought to answer was, “What leadership competencies will be needed by future Education Services Officers in the Army Continuing Education System?” The following related sub-questions were also addressed in this study:

1. Which identified competencies are critical for future Army Education Services Officers?
2. How are the leadership competencies identified by the Education Services Officers different from or similar to those identified in *Army Leadership Field Manual 6-22*?

This research is important to individuals as they plan to address the skills needed to prepare for future Education Services Officer positions within the Department of the Army. A study such as this will offer Army Leadership a snapshot into the long-range training and education requirements that its future education leaders are going to need. These individuals must have the tools to be able to determine the competencies that will most significantly impact their success or lack thereof as an ESO. The future ESO will be able to utilize this study to determine a path for career advancement through personal use of the identified skills and competencies.

The ACES workforce, an integral piece of the Army mission, is dwindling. As more and more of its functions are automated, the Department of Defense has, by budgetary necessity, determined that the organization must be downsized. The challenge facing future leaders in the Army education realm is to fill the leadership gap that will be created through the aging of the ACES organization and the fiscal pressures from the global war on terrorism requiring the Army to institute significant personnel cuts.

METHODOLOGY

In order to discern a consensus on opinion on needed competencies, the Delphi technique was the chosen methodology for this study. The Delphi technique was introduced in 1958 through *Project DELPHI* directed by the RAND Corporation to predict alternate national defense futures. It is a procedure to “obtain the most reliable consensus of opinion of a group of experts . . . by a series of intensive questionnaires interspersed with controlled opinion feedback” (Dalkey & Helmer, 1963, p. 458). The method used to achieve this study’s goal was that of an online, modified Delphi study. Data collected through three rounds of questionnaires utilized the expertise of those who are currently holding the position of Education Services Officer within the Army Continuing Education System. The study followed the basic guidelines for conducting a Delphi study as indicated by Turoff and Hiltz (1996): iteration with controlled feedback, statistical representations of the group response, and anonymity.

Due to the limited timeframe of the study and geographic separation of the panel experts, this study necessitated the use of a method that would allow the chosen experts to participate from their respective locations (Ludwig, 1997). All data was gathered via the Internet and e-mail was the primary mode of communication. For the purposes of this study, the sampling frame consisted of people currently serving as Education Services Officers that had held the post for at least 2 years. To create the panel of experts for this study, experts who held the desired characteristics were contacted by an e-mail containing two attachments: a letter to potential participants; and an informed consent agreement to be part of the study. The preferred number of research participants was determined to be between 8 to 13 Education Services Officers, representing a heterogeneous group, based on the research sampling literature relating to the Delphi methodology (Prest, Darden, & Keller, 1990).

Thirteen Education Services Officers were invited to participate and of those 13, 11 panelists returned informed consent forms, for a response rate of 85%. The panel size of 11 fits within the generalized guidelines recommended for Delphi studies.

Instrumentation

The first pass, titled Round One, consisted of a listing of all the competency components identified by the *Army Field Manual 6-22* and revised as a result of the pilot study (Riggs, 1983). The panel of experts was asked to select, by indicating Yes or No, which of the 56 components they felt best represented requirements of future Education Services Officers, as well as to answer the two open-ended questions and demographic data that was requested (Raskin, 1994). Frequency distributions were used to summarize the responses to this round (Hahn & Rayens, 2000). Demographic data was also collected during the Round One phase. Of the 56 components, 49 components received unanimous agreement in Round One.

The second iteration, titled Round Two, presented the panel members with those competency components that had at least one No response in the previous round, thus giving the group a chance to reach a consensus. Only those competencies that did not reach 100% consensus in Round One were included in Round Two (Murphy, 2002). The second round also gave the panel members a chance to add or delete components that were added as a result of Round One's open-ended questions (James, Lisa, & Anna, 2003). Experts were asked to confirm their original determination from Round One and were also presented with the results from the first round. This process made the panelists aware of the range of opinions and allowed them to see where their response stood in relation to that of the entire panel (Williams, 2000). Round Two included 22 competency components, 15 of which were newly added as a result of Round One and 7 of which did not receive complete consensus in Round One. There were also two open-ended questions in order to solicit qualitative feedback. Frequencies and percentages were used to finalize the responses to this round.

The final round of the Delphi was created to allow the expert panel an opportunity to rate the importance of the competency components selected. They were able to rate each competency using a five-point scale ranging from Least Important to Critical. The scale rating was used to determine the level of importance assigned by the panel as to the inclusion of the competency in a comprehensive list required by future ESOs (Raskin, 1994). Ranking percentages were used to evaluate this round's responses. There were 69 components listed as a result of the previous two rounds' outcomes, along with one open-ended question to solicit feedback about the survey in general.

In a Delphi study, panel experts must reach a consensus or "result stability" before moving on to the next round of questions (Fitch et al., 2001). The approach to measuring consensus is the least-developed component of the Delphi method (Crisp, Pelletier, Duffield, & Adams; 1997), and it varies from study to study. Before beginning the study, consensus for Round One was defined as having been reached when every participant answered Yes to a competency component (Murphy, 2002). Data was reported using frequencies of response (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996; Hahn, Toumey, Rayens, & McCoy, 1999). For Round Two, consensus was achieved when the group reached a 67% response rate in either the Yes or No category (Ludwig, 1997). Round Three was used to rate the agreed-upon competency components, and the frequency distribution was used to determine its ranking in importance to future Education Services Officers.

ANALYSIS

This study was undertaken to answer one overarching research question: What leadership competencies will be needed by future Education Services Officers in the Army Continuing Education System? Based on the responses to all three rounds of the Delphi, a competency component list was generated via a panel of Army Education Services Officers that contained 67 items. After final analysis of the data, the overarching research question can best be addressed by discussing the findings for each sub-question.

Sub-question one asked which identified competencies are critical for future Army Education Services Officers? Of the 67 competencies identified by Army Education Services Officers, 9 were

considered Critical for future ESOs. Competencies were deemed Critical if 67% or more of the panel rated the competency as such. Those items were: (a) maintains and enforces high professional standards; (b) balances requirements of mission with welfare of followers; (c) builds trust; (d) listens actively; (e) fosters teamwork, cohesion, cooperation, and loyalty; (f) executes plans to accomplish mission; (g) leads by example; and (h) maintains an in-depth knowledge of Army Continuing Education System. Of those 67 competencies, 13.4% were considered Critical, 65.7% were rated Very Important, 19.4% were referred to as Important, 1.5% were considered Somewhat Important, and none were rated as Least Important.

Sub-question two asked how the leadership competencies identified by the Education Services Officers were different from or similar to those identified in Army Leadership *Field Manual 6-22*? This particular question was subjective in nature and best answered using responses from the open-ended questions. Most respondents felt that the basic competencies were the same for all Army leaders regardless of what job or service was being performed. One respondent stated, "There is an ongoing trend throughout the military whereby civilians are increasingly tasked with performing duties once associated only with leadership managed by the active forces. These civilian leaders often report to a military authority. That military authority should have a benchmark for the evaluation of civilians in a leadership role. That benchmark should be generic competencies for civilians in leadership positions within the Army."

There were also a number of participants who indicated that while the basic premise of a competency framework should be applied across the Army, each job series should have its own set of specialized competencies established by the leadership in that field. According to one panel member, "The specialized competencies required to operate in an educational setting are unique to that setting and changing at a rapid pace." While there was an acknowledgment that ACES is a decidedly separate segment within the Army, the majority of the respondents felt that those competencies identified in *Field Manual 6-22* were similar to those required for future Education Services Officers and applicable to all Army civilians regardless of the type of work being performed.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In *Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership*, core leader competencies represent the roles, functions, and activities of what leaders in the Army do (Department of the Army, 2006b). The goals of the Army core competencies are: to lead others, to grow the organization and its component members, and to accomplish the mission (Horey & Falleson, 2003). This study was used to determine whether the competencies and their associated components in *Field Manual 6-22* were similar or different from those that existing experts determined were important to future Education Services Officers. Also determined were which of the selected competencies the panel deemed critical for future ESOs.

Table 1

Nine Critical Competency Components within Six Core Areas

Core Competency	Item
Leads Others	Maintains and enforces high professional standards
	Balances requirements of mission with welfare of followers
Extends Influence Beyond Chain of Command	Builds Trust
	Negotiates for understanding, builds consensus, and resolves conflict
Leads by Example	Leads by example
	Maintains an in-depth knowledge of the Army Continuing Education System
Communicates	Listens Actively
Creates a Positive Environment	Fosters teamwork, cohesion, cooperation, and loyalty
Gets Results	Executes plans to accomplish mission

Note. Critical rating was assigned as highest percentage of response.

Leads Others

Several current and previous Army leadership doctrines addressed the need to be able to effectively Lead Others (Department of the Army, 2006b; 1999a; 1993; 1987; & 1973). Within this core competency, there are six components that include: (a) establishing clear intent and purpose, (b) using influence to energize, (c) conveying the significance of the work, (d) maintaining high professional standards, (e) balancing the requirements of the mission with the welfare of followers, and (f) creating a shared vision for the future (Department of the Army, 2006b). As evidenced by the responses from the panel of experts, all of these components will be necessary for future Education Services Officers. Of those competencies that were added by the Delphi panel members, two related to this core: (a) leads with flexibility, and (b) evidences adaptive leadership ability.

Two of the eight competency components were rated as critical for future ESOs: (a) maintains and enforces high professional standards, and (b) balances requirements of mission with welfare of followers. Throughout the history of ACES, it has always been on the leading edge of academic trailblazing, due in large part to its expectation to set the standards in its field (Anderson & Kime, 1990). This was reflected in the Education Services Officers' panel of experts that ranked setting and following high professional standards as a mandatory component for future ESOs. These results are consistent with a situational leadership study by Corbett (2000) which found that leaders needed to be astute at scanning their environment, setting high workplace standards, and keeping abreast of the welfare of their subordinates. By suggesting that subordinate welfare is crucial to the effectiveness of future ESOs, the current study participants confirmed the Army's priority of this aspect of leadership (Sticha et al., 2003).

Extends Influence beyond the Chain of Command

Bergman (1996) found that each person that works in the Army, be they civilian or military, is part of a chain of command. Within this core area of Extending Influence beyond the Chain of Command, there are four competencies: (a) understanding sphere of influence and limits of influence, (b) building trust, (c) negotiating to build consensus and resolve conflict, and (d) building and maintaining alliances (Department of the Army, 2006b). The group of Education Services Officers in this study believed that the four components were needed for future ESOs. The Delphi panel members added two additional competencies to this category: (a) use tact and diplomacy in all interactions, and (b) encourage innovation, for a total of six components in this core.

Two of the six competency components were rated as critical for future Army Education Services Officers: (a) builds trust; and (b) negotiates for understanding, builds consensus, and resolves conflict. A recent study (Workitect, 2006) stated that in order for leaders to be effective, they needed to have a trusting relationship with their employees and employers, and have the ability to manage conflict. This finding is supported by the information reported by the Delphi panel. Building trust has always been viewed as a critical leadership component, but it is especially important to current and future ESOs as they must establish relationships between all stakeholders: Army, other services, colleges, soldiers, Department of the Army civilians, and the local community (Anderson, 1995). Negotiating, consensus-building, and resolving conflict are also viewed as critical pieces to being a successful ESO due to the broad nature of the job responsibilities (Workforce Compensation and Performance Service, 1974).

Leads by Example

A confident, purposeful Army leader is always, and in all ways, an example to those being led (Wong, et al., 2003). Within this core competency, there are seven components that include: (a) displaying character and modeling the Army values, (b) exemplifying the “warrior ethos,” (c) demonstrating commitment to the Nation and Army, (d) leading with confidence despite adversity, (e) demonstrating technical and tactical knowledge, (f) understanding the importance of critical thinking and modeling that to others, and (g) seeking diverse opinions (Department of the Army, 2006b). The panel reached a consensus on all of the competencies except for “exemplifies the warrior ethos.” All of the other components were identified as necessary for future Education Services Officers. There were three additions made by the panel members that are similar in nature and would be categorized under this core area: (a) understands the role of the Army within the Department of Defense, (b) maintains an in-depth knowledge of the Army Continuing Education System, and (c) has knowledge of Army-specific structure. These three components were combined into two and titled: understands Army structure within the Department of Defense, and maintains an in-depth knowledge of ACES, for a total of eight components in the core area “leads by example.”

Only one of the eight competency components in this core area was rated as critical for future ESOs (not including leads by example as that is also the title of the core): maintains an in-depth knowledge of ACES. This is not surprising as this study is focusing on the Army Continuing Education System. These results are consistent with the Sticha et al. (2003) findings that ACES is a critical component in allowing soldiers to be functional in many tactically-relevant areas and Education Services Officers must also be conversant in varied methods in order to be effective in their positions. It is noteworthy that while the component of “exemplifies the warrior ethos” did not make the final competency list, it was passionately defended by one Education Services Officer who believed that the warrior ethos was what makes ACES and ESOs different from most organizations and leaders in the Army and in education.

Communicates

Leadership studies have consistently found that communication is one of the keys to a successful organization (Garcia et al., 2006; Newsome, et al., 2003; Northouse, 2004). Within the theme of Communicates, there are six components that include: (a) listening actively, (b) determining information-sharing strategies, (c) employing engaging communication techniques, (d) conveying thoughts in such a way so as to ensure understanding, (e) presenting recommendations so others understand benefits,

and (f) being sensitive to cultural factors in communication (Department of the Army, 2006b). The study respondents indicated that all of these components will be necessary for future Education Services Officers, although the component of “determining information sharing strategies” did not meet initial consensus in Round One. None of the competencies added by the Delphi panel members fit within this general theme.

Out of the six components included here, one was considered critical for future ESOs: listens actively. These results are consistent with several leadership studies that have reported listening skills to be of utmost importance in any leadership interaction (Fitton, 1993; Fiedler, 1997; van Maurik, 2001). Education Services Officers will certainly need this skill, now and in the future. Due to the varied nature of the responsibilities that encompass work performed by ESOs, the ability to actively listen is essential to excelling in the position. An ESO must plan, develop, coordinate, administer, and evaluate the installation’s continuing education program (Workforce Compensation and Performance Service, 1974). In order to perform those tasks, the ESO must show the ability to correctly interpret and take action on information that is provided.

Creates a Positive Environment

In their 2006 research study on transformational leadership, Garcia and his team discussed the importance of a positive environment with regards to competencies. Other studies have consistently found that the health of the surrounding environment offers a positive correlation to effectiveness (Bass, 1985; Department of the Army, 1999a; Horey et al., 2004). Under this topic, there are nine components that include: (a) fosters teamwork, (b) encourages initiative, (c) creates a learning environment, (d) encourages open communication, (e) encourages fairness, (f) demonstrates caring, (g) anticipates people’s on the job needs, (h) sets high expectations, and (i) accepts reasonable setbacks and failures (Department of the Army, 2006b). Respondent answers indicated that all these components will be necessary for future Education Services Officers, although the components of “anticipating people’s on-the-job needs,” and “accepts reasonable setbacks and failures” did not meet initial consensus in Round One. None of the competencies that were added by the Delphi panel members were added under this particular topic of creating a positive environment.

The panel of experts deemed only one component to be critical out of this grouping, “fosters teamwork, cohesion, cooperation, and loyalty.” Researchers (Corporate Leadership Council, 1998; Spencer, McClelland & Spencer, 1990) have acknowledged that teamwork and loyalty play a significant role in all aspects of leadership, ranging from business to academia. Future Education Services Officers must, along with other Army leaders, incorporate teamwork and engender loyalty from their team. In order for an ESO to effectively lead the installation education programs and administer those services, it is crucial for that individual to have a strong, cohesive group that understands the mission and provides the ESO with the structure that promotes success (ACES Training and Professional Development, 1999).

Prepares Self

The core area of Prepares Self refers to leaders who ensure they are fully educated on their own strengths and limitations and continue with lifelong learning to better themselves (Department of the Army, 2006b). This area includes eight competencies that encompass: (a) maintaining mental and physical health; (b) maintaining self awareness and recognizing impact on others; (c) incorporating feedback from others; (d) expanding knowledge of technical, technological, and tactical areas; (e) expanding interpersonal capabilities; (f) analyzing information; and (g) maintaining relevant cultural and geopolitical awareness (Department of the Army, 2006b). In this study, respondents indicated that all but one competency – “maintains relevant geopolitical awareness” – should be included as needed by future Education Services Officers. Three of the additional competencies that were added by the Delphi panel members can be added under this particular topic: (a) utilize strategic planning and decision making methods; (b) conversant in data and information analysis; and (c) open to [learning] technical, virtual, and Internet-based systems. All of the above areas relate strongly to the guidance in the *Army Transformation Roadmap* (United States Army, 2004). Williams (2000) stated that lifelong learning (i.e. self-preparation) is a cornerstone upon which leaders must develop.

Develops Others

There are seven components included in the core competency area of Develops Others: (a) assessing current developmental needs of others; (b) fostering job development; (c) counseling, coaching, and mentoring; (d) facilitating development; (e) supporting formal development opportunities; and (f) building team or group skills (Department of the Army, 2006b). Several current and previous Army leadership doctrines addressed the need to be able to effectively develop others (Department of the Army, 2006b; 1999a; 1993; 1987; & 1973). In order to be fully effective, formal development plans of employees or subordinates should be linked to strategic planning and goal-setting exercises (Garcia et al., 2006). The study participants reached a consensus that all of the components in this core area will be necessary for future Education Services Officers. This topic area was also one that the panel of experts felt did not include any competencies critical to future ESOs. None of the competencies that were added by the Delphi panel members were added under this particular topic as they do not fit the theme of the topic.

Gets Results

A leader's ultimate goal is to accomplish positive organizational results. Horey and Falleson (2003) state that leadership requirements can be described in either behavioral or attributional terms, but that the ultimate test of accuracy lies within the results derived from leadership actions. Within this core competency, there are 10 components that include: (a) prioritizing tasks for teams or groups, (b) identifying and accounting for group commitments, (c) designating and clarifying roles, (d) identifying and managing resources, (e) removing work barriers, (f) recognizing and rewarding good performance, (g) seeking and taking advantage of opportunities to improve performance, (h) making feedback part of the work process, (i) executing plans to accomplish the mission, and (j) identifying external influences and adjusting as needed (Department of the Army, 2006b). The panel of experts reported that all components in this core area are important to future Education Services Officers, although "identifies and accounts for individual and group capabilities," and "commitment to task" did not reach full consensus in Round One. The Delphi panel members added two competencies to the category: (a) understand budget development and fiscal planning, and (b) identifies personnel and contracting requirements and understands both systems. With the two additions, there were 12 components in this core.

The expert panel rated one of the 12 competency components as critical for future ESOs – "executes plans to accomplish mission." While many leadership competencies are necessary, the bottom line in each organization is that there must be something produced or completed to realize an actual measure of success (Newsome, et al., 2003). The Army certainly feels that mission completion is of the utmost importance (Department of the Army, 2006b), and the panel of ESOs who participated in this study backed up that sentiment by selecting this component as critical to future ESOs.

CONCLUSIONS

The Army appears to be correctly interpreting the need for an updated leadership competency framework that can be applied across organizations within its purview. This study found that Education Services Officers within the Army Continuing Education System agree with almost every core competency and leadership component that is listed in *Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership*. As determined through the Delphi technique, Army Continuing Education System Education Services Officers understand the need for a complete, detailed list of leadership competencies, both for the Army and for ACES. Their participation in this study helped to confirm that the Army has created a solid foundation of core competency requirements that can be adapted by ACES to assist in its leader development and training efforts with future Education Services Officers. The findings of this research are consistent with the study by Horey et al. (2004) that concluded the majority of the competencies discussed were agreed to be of importance by other Subject Matter Experts in relation to Army civilian and military leadership.

Utilizing a competency framework should provide measurable actions and behaviors that are associated with leadership functions (Department of the Army, 2006b). One respondent stated that, "It

is useful for the Army to create generic competencies of its civilian leaders because it affords the Army greater flexibility/mobility within the workforce and for professional upward mobility opportunities. It also provides strategic linkage for grooming future leaders.” Another felt that, “You have to know where you have been to know where you are going. Without standards there is no means to measure performance.”

The results of this study suggest that current Education Services Officers have a clear understanding of what the Army Continuing Education System needs, both now and in the future. There was only a slight variance between the competencies in *Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership*, and those that achieved a consensus rating in this research study, and that variance consisted almost entirely of ACES-specific topics that related to the organization rather than leadership as a whole. While it is possible that prior exposure to *Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership* may have impacted the participants’ selection of the critical components, it is also believed that: (a) selecting those critical components makes sense for any leader, regardless of organization, and (b) that *Field Manual 6-22* is on target and should be used by ACES as a foundation from which to establish measurable outcomes with regards to leadership competencies.

The information obtained through this study should demonstrate to Army leadership and current Education Services Officers that the Army is in fact keeping up with current trends to ensure sustainability. Army *Field Manual 6-22* can assist ACES and other Army organizations in continuing to seek ways to strengthen their civilian and military leaders. The results from this study could also have implications outside of ACES and the Army. Given that leadership in non-school educational settings has limited research available, the findings could be applied to many leadership positions in large corporations, non-profit organizations, prison education programs, and other non-traditional settings.

Prospective Education Services Officers will be able to utilize the findings from this study to prepare for their chosen career path. Further, application of the research findings can provide potential ESOs with a roadmap for competency development. Garrison Commanders and Human Resource Specialists within the Army who will be evaluating and hiring ESOs in the future will be able to utilize the information to more effectively choose new ESOs, and to evaluate their on-the-job effectiveness based upon competency and component descriptions outlined in the study.

Current Education Services Officers who wish to supplement their knowledge base and become eligible for leadership opportunities elsewhere will be able to use this information to improve and build upon skills and knowledge needed for future ESOs within the field of Army or military education. The final list of competency (see Table 1) components provides a foundation for successful leadership development of future ESOs and is applicable to Education Services Officers throughout the Army. Headquarters ACES can also work on an ESO training program that looks specifically at those components deemed critical by the panel of experts and provide special training just in those areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers have suggested the following recommendations:

1. Further research should be conducted in other Army organizations such as the Directorate of Logistics or the Directorate of Public Works using a similar method to see if the competencies are consistent across the spectrum of Army offices.
2. Future studies should include Education Services Specialists and Guidance Counselors (GS-11’s and below) to see if the competencies remain the same at differing pay-grades and/or ranks.
3. *Army Field Manual 6-22, Army Leadership*, should be used to strategically plan and coordinate a competency framework course for Education Services Specialists currently within ACES, and supplement that course with ACES specific training as recommended in this research study.
4. Studies that evaluate leadership competencies for ACES Regional and Headquarters offices should be included to measure whether the same competencies are needed for staff work as well as field work.
5. The study should be replicated in the future to determine if ACES leadership competency

requirements remain the same after time has passed and a different set of Education Services Officers are assigned.

The Army Continuing Education System is changing at a rapid pace; with drawdowns, budget cuts, advanced technology, and a requirement to learn new technology rapidly, it is sometimes difficult to remember that ACES is, at its foundation, an organization that strives to prepare students for an uncertain future. The current research shows that ACES and the Army are moving in a positive direction with regards to its leadership.

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