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PROFESSIONALLY UNDER-DEVELOPED: NAVAL LOGISTICS OFFICER TRAINING

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Service Paper

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AIM

1. The purpose of this service paper is to identify the increasing gap between Naval Logistic Officer (NLO) training and the functions they currently perform and will be expected to perform in the future to efficiently support Maritime Warfare. This paper serves as a reflection piece to invoke discussion on a way forward to position NLOs in the future as true business oriented leaders within the RCN.

INTRODUCTION

2. The future of Maritime Warfare, whether viewing at the Horizon 1, 2 or 3 timeframe, will continue to require the provision of capable and effective operational support to Force Employers spanning the full spectrum of future warfare. NLOs excel in this domain and will continue to do so. However, the future of Naval Warfare will also require increasingly efficient institutional business management processes to support the Royal Canadian Navy (RCN) as a Force Generator.¹ It is this second domain that will require NLOs to re-align their training and development to focus on best business management practices in order to improve and sustain efficiencies and effectiveness of an organization. This requirement can be attributed to a renewed emphasis at the strategic level on ensuring defence affordability is, and will continue to be, an organizational priority within DND. As stated in the *Departmental Performance Report 2014/2015*, “Defence requires a corporate governance and business framework to deliver

¹ Institution incorporates the Department of National Defence (DND) as well as the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and all organizations contained within them.

sustainable business management efficiencies, effectiveness, and accountability in order to maintain public confidence and trust.”²

3. This paper will begin by highlighting the current gap in the training methodology for NLOs. In doing so, it will prove that the current training of NLOs is too narrowly focused on sea-going logistical support and is devoid of specific training for the roles and responsibilities Naval Logisticians will be entrusted with beyond completion of their Head of Department (HOD) tour at sea. Next this paper will illustrate the widening gap in NLO training when contrasted against the institutional priorities and initiatives being implemented to ensure efficient support to future Naval Operations through the optimization of institutional business activities.

DISCUSSION

The Current Gap

4. NLOs are formally trained throughout Development Period 2 (DP2) with a core focus on effective support to operations. This is in line with the overall goal of the CAF’s Logistics Branch which is “to ensure the provision of members who are capable of effectively supporting Naval, Army and Air Force operations across the spectrum of conflict.”³ It also coincides with the emphasis the Naval Logistics community places on the criticality of a NLO obtaining the HOD qualification and successfully completing a sea-going HOD tour.⁴ The current theory is that during DP2, experience is gained at the unit level operationally whereby environmental and occupational skills are increased. While this theory is absolutely correct in respect to a NLO’s

² Department of National Defence, “Departmental Performance Report 14/15,” last accessed 29 January 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-departmental-performance/2014-2015/section-i.page>

³ Department of National Defence, “Logistics Branch,” last accessed 18 Jan 16, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/caf-community-branches-logistics/about-us.page>.

⁴ Y. Biron, DNavLog, *DNavLog Direction – Naval Logistics Officer Occupation Management* (DNavLog: file 3371-5555-1 (DNavLog 3) 19 June 2014).

responsibilities for operational support (1st, 2nd and 3rd line), it falls well short when viewing it from an organizational support (business management) perspective.⁵ Further occupational training at the “intermediate level” is also conducted during this development period.

5. The intermediate level of occupational training during DP2 is provided in the form of Logistics Occupation specialty coursing in a variety of different Logistics Disciplines. The courses range from Financial Management (FM) and Human Resource Management (HRM) to Food Services (FS) and Supply Chain Management (SCM). These courses provide logisticians with the basic background knowledge of the rules and regulations relating to the specific discipline and how to effectively apply them. They are also intended to provide NLOs with the skills, knowledge and capabilities to progress in one of the selected disciplines upon completion of the HOD qualification. It is near the tail end of DP2, after NLOs have obtained their HOD qualification, where they often find themselves posted within a shore based support organization. However, these courses do not provide an institutional level of detail on the overall functions these disciplines perform. These courses also fail to provide an in-depth knowledge of the functions or examples on how to critically analyze the outputs of the processes’ within a business oriented organization to ensure they are not only effective in their application but also efficient.

6. These organizations, such as Base Logistics, Base Administration, Fleet Maintenance Facilities and Fleet Schools on each of the coasts, along with a myriad of postings to Ottawa, are where business management functions and processes’ relevance are of increasing importance coupled with a certain level of managerial expertise. If NLOs are untrained in institutional business functions, they are unable to measure the outputs of processes they are responsible for,

⁵ For this paper, operational support refers to Logistical support to CAF operations. Organizational support refers to the daily business management functions and processes organizations within the institution utilize.

and are therefore unable to critically analyze the data in order to improve the process or amend a policy. Without process improvement, outdated functions remain in place and inefficiencies are unable to be minimized. Planning, coordinating and executing direct support to deployed ships differs greatly from managing the business oriented functions of an organization, or even an aspect of an organization, to ensure efficient outputs are achieved. Education and training on understanding proper process management needs to be incorporated into the Logistics specialty courses to begin to provide NLOs with the proper mindset and prepare them for future roles and responsibilities.

7. Once a NLO is promoted to LCdr and begins Development Period 3 (DP3), the majority of positions they will occupy are even more business management oriented. As “senior officers”, the expectation to provide managerial oversight of organizational teams or divisions involving almost all of the specialty occupational domains of Financial, Human Resource or Supply Chain management is increased significantly. The functions these positions deal with are on a much grander scale than those trained for and experienced as a sea-going HOD and involve greater amounts of responsibility. It therefore would be pertinent to provide those personnel with some knowledge and training on institutional best practices and processes. Unfortunately, during DP3 for NLOs, this is again not the case.

8. DP3 for Naval Logisticians consists of two required courses. The first course being the Advanced Logistics Officers Course (ALOC) and the second is the Joint Command and Staff Programme (JCSP). ALOC is provided to NLOs hopefully in their first couple years at the LCdr rank and JCSP historically a year or two prior to promotion to Cdr. ALOC is effectively a five week course that focuses on the logistical support planning process as it relates to the OPP. Although a great course focusing on the primacy of operations and a Logistics Officers raison

d'être in the profession of arms, it lacks other very real and important aspect a majority of senior Logistics Officer's employment will focus on. The same can be said for JCSP. The only prominent institutionally focused business knowledge one will receive is if they choose the Institutional Policy Stream. While leadership and command and control are prominent themes throughout JCSP, the effective management of the institutions business is a rarity.

The Future Gap

9. Effective business management of institutional functions is increasingly becoming more of a priority within DND and the RCN itself. This shift to defence affordability is prominent within institutional policy and various initiatives have been implemented, such as Defence Renewal, Command Analytics, and Project Management Development to name a few. If Logistics training does not adapt to this renewed focus on efficiency in business operations, Naval Logisticians and the disciplines they are responsible for risk falling further behind the curve rather than being the experts in business management that they should be.

10. In 2013, DND implemented the Defence Renewal Plan in an effort to "find ways for Defence to become more efficient and effective, with generated savings to be reinvested into operational capabilities and readiness."⁶ Defence Renewal is a main effort of focus for the department that affects almost all institutional functions at all levels. There are two primary themes within Defence Renewal: Performance and Organizational Practices.⁷ Within those themes are nine focus areas that range from materiel management to disciplined business execution. It is within those nine renewal themes that NLOs play, and will continue to play in the future, an extremely important role in affecting change.

⁶ Department of National Defence, "Departmental Performance Report 14/15," last accessed 29 January 2016, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/about-reports-pubs-departmental-performance/2014-2015/executive-summary.page>

⁷ Department of National Defence, *Defence Renewal Charter* (Ottawa: DND, 2013), 4.

11. As previously alluded to, NLOs fill a variety of positions throughout Naval Staff Headquarters (NSHQ), Maritime Forces Pacific (MARFAC) and Maritime Forces Atlantic (MARLANT) that provide, depending upon rank and position, command and control, oversight, and in most cases, management of the daily business functions that have been identified by Defence Renewal to become more efficient and generate savings. This push for efficiency requires first and foremost that one holding these positions understands the processes and functions that occur within that business, but also, and arguable more importantly, has measures in place to effectively monitor and measure the performance of the functions within the organization. Going back to the earlier argument surrounding the current capability gap in Logistics Training, the knowledge and skillset required for this type of understanding and analysis are not formally provided which makes it difficult to establish if not already in place.⁸ Even if appropriate measures are in place to monitor outputs, training and knowledge of appropriate metrics of which to assess against is also lacking. This puts NLOs at a disadvantage as these future initiatives are already three years in practice yet Logistics training hasn't adapted its training to include these initiatives.

12. An example of this currently widening gap can be found in some of the projects that DR has necessitated throughout MARFAC and MARLANT to streamline processes, rationalize inventory holdings or investigate inefficiencies. Most of these projects are completed in an ad hoc fashion internally to an organization where there was no project management expertise. NLOs, owing to their positions within these organizations were heavily involved in the planning,

⁸ This is not to state that all Naval Logistics Officers lack proper business management training and expertise. Many NLOs, on their own time have obtained various professional designations such as MBAs and are more than able and willing to put Performance Measurement processes in place to understand their business. Unfortunately, this is not commonplace and takes a lot of time and a proper baseline to begin with. While this may work for the individual educated with that knowledge, owing to continuity, the person taking over the position behind him may not have that level of development and therefore may not be able to continue with that program effectively.

coordination and execution of these projects and expected to achieve results. Yet, with the amount of projects, both major and minor occurring within all organizations within which NLOs are involved, there is no Project Management training. In 2013 The Project Management Competency Development (PMCD) initiative was stood up as it is realized that proper Project Management (PM) saves both time and effort, and therefore money. In fact, Treasury Board described it as “an appropriate capacity for managing projects, which reflects the level of project complexity and risks, and integrates decision-making across projects, will support the achievement and demonstration of value for money and sound stewardship.”⁹ This initiative has, to this author’s knowledge, never been mentioned in NLO circles and is in no way currently implemented in NLO developmental periods even though there is a requirement. This will only continue to widen the gap as the value of proper PM being utilized to realize efficiencies will continue to be exploited for NLO development to adapt accordingly.

13. Another example of the widening gap can be found with the new RCN Command Analytics Strategy. The purpose of Command Analytics is to “achieve a culture oriented towards evidence based decision making.”¹⁰ Effectively, Command Analytics will create a Business Intelligence “dashboard” that Commanders will utilize to generate reports based on information they deem critical to have. These reports, while currently being designed for the Strategic Level, will also be able to be manipulated and utilized at the Operational and Tactical level, both from an operational and institutional process perspective. The information will be based upon a

⁹ A.B. Donaldson VCDS, *VCDS Direction – Project Management Competency Development Programme* (NDHQ: file 1950-1 (DCOS(Mat)), 29 July 2013.

¹⁰ Department of National Defence, “Command Analytics”, last accessed 29 Jan 15, <http://collaboration-navy.forces.mil.ca/ent/casc/SitePages/PublicLanding.aspx>

number of input programs such as Human Resource Management System (HRMS) and (Defence Resource Management Information System) DRMIS.

14. The inputs into Command Analytics are primarily business functions where NLOs command, control and manage the business processes. The problem herein lies with what information NLOs will want to pull from Command Analytics to make the properly informed decisions to shape the organizations they run in order to create the efficiencies required. Unless proper business management function training and development (trend and data analysis, performance metrics, business process management) is implemented during DP2 and DP3, NLOs will not understand the proper methodology to utilize to even create a baseline in which to be properly measured. Once again, with this initiative taken hold, Logistics training must begin to incorporate Analytics (Business Intelligence) into Development Periods 2 and 3 soonest to close the training gap. If they do not, they risk finding themselves behind the eight ball and forced to try to play catch up

CONCLUSION

15. The opportunity now exists for the Logistics Branch to leverage the “heat and light” placed on these initiatives and update its training curriculum and reinvigorate NLO positions within the forces. In order to ensure that effective support is provided in the future across the full spectrum of warfare, and in light of the increasing importance of business functions in the CAF, NLOs need to be trained not only in operational support functions, but also in the institutional business functions aligned with ever increasing initiatives focussed on institutional efficiency. Training and development of Naval Logistics Officers in Development Period 2 is too narrowly focused on first, second and third line direct support to CAF operations. There is room to expand

this training and incorporate some business management training to include Project Management, Business Process Management and Performance Metrics. The same goes for Development Period 3.

16. Owing to increasing pressure to improve organizational efficiencies and driven by Defence Renewal Initiatives, the gap between Naval Logistics Officer training and institutional priorities and goals that require a re-vamp in training is ever increasing. This paper outlined only three of the initiatives and how the Logistics Branch has yet to change its training to meet these new requirements. Should the development and training of NLOs be updated as recommended within this paper, the Branch will ensure positive transformation of logistics processes is realized. This will then maximize capability within the current constraints placed on capacity and ensure future Naval Warfare is supported through not only effective, but efficient functions and processes.

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