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# PROFESSIONALIZATION OF DND'S PROCUREMENT WORKFORCE: THE CANADIAN ARMY SUCCESSION PLAN ISN'T HELPING

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**JCSP 45**

***Exercise Solo Flight***

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## PROFESSIONALIZATION OF DND'S PROCUREMENT WORKFORCE: THE CANADIAN ARMY SUCCESSION PLAN ISN'T HELPING

### INTRODUCTION

Canada's defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged* (SSE) was published in 2017 after much consultation across government, industry and the Canadian population. It provides the Department of National Defence with a clear vision and a fully funded plan for the next 20 years. With the possibility of multiple concurrent operations, "effective defence procurement is vital to ensuring the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) is equipped and ready to fulfill the important missions we ask of it. It is also essential for ensuring public trust."<sup>1</sup> In order to implement the procurement plan, the Defence policy vision "provides \$108 billion for the development and acquisition of capital equipment over the next 20 years."<sup>2</sup> However, one of the key takeaways is the acknowledgement that the defence procurement process needs improvement and "the timely delivery of projects remains a significant issue."<sup>3</sup> Richard Shimooka, a defence analyst and senior fellow at the MacDonald Laurier Institute, argues that "Canada has the worst military procurement system in the Western World."<sup>4</sup> A limited comparison with its closest allies is provided to substantiate this exuberant claim. He does, however, highlight a few reasons why Canada's defence procurement system is flawed. Much of the literature attributes the delays to the highly politicized and bureaucratic nature of the process itself, but as David Perry, a senior analyst with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute points out, "a mismatch between the procurement workload and the capacity of the procurement system to

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<sup>1</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canada's Defence Policy: Strong, Secure, Engaged*, (Ottawa, ON: Canada Communications Group, 2017), 74.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 74.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Shimooka, "Canada has the Worst Military Procurement System in the Western World," *The Hill Times* no. 1598, 21 January 2019.

maintain it...’’<sup>5</sup> is also to blame. Consequently, the Department is set to ‘‘[g]row and professionalize the defence procurement workforce in order to strengthen the capacity to manage the acquisition and support of today’s complex military capabilities.’’<sup>6</sup> Not only are there plans to increase the workforce, but it is acknowledged that specialized training and professional certification is also necessary.

The Canadian Army Commander (CCA) has also recognized the importance of prioritizing personnel towards the delivery of the Army capital acquisition program. This includes ‘‘maximum staffing in the Directorate of Land Requirements (DLR), and prioritization of key positions within ADM(Mat).’’<sup>7</sup> Although the Army plans to reassign additional human resources to augment the capacity of the procurement system, are all officers well-suited for this type of employment? This paper demonstrates that the CAF career management model and more specifically the Army Succession Plan is not well adapted at generating officers with the specific knowledge and experience required to manage highly complex acquisition projects.

Too much focus is given to individuals who demonstrate the potential for command that it reduces the talent pool of project managers by narrowing its search to proven tactical leaders only. As a result, Assistant Deputy Minister (Materiel) (ADM(Mat)) and other level 1 organizations such as Vice Chief of Defence Staff and Chief Military Personnel (CMP) sometimes receive inexperienced and ill-prepared officers to manage this very important institution. In order to limit the length of this paper, its analysis will be limited to Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

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<sup>5</sup> David Perry, ‘‘Fixing Procurement,’’ *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canada’s Defence Policy ...*, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canadian Army Regular Force Staffing Priorities – Active Posting Season 2019*, (National Defence Headquarters Ottawa: Canadian Army, 2018), 2.

(RCEME) officer progression through the Canadian Army (CA) succession plan and the relationship with employment within ADM(Mat).

In order to prove the thesis, the academic literature on project management best practices will be analyzed. Secondly, the tools and processes used by the CA to manage its Officer Corps are discussed. Finally, a comparison with the Australian Army Officer Career Management Strategy is conducted in order to consider other potential solutions.

## **PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

In order to determine if the ASP produces the right type of officers to become competent project managers of major capital acquisitions, it's important to first understand what type of characteristics are exhibited by these individuals. Furthermore, the significance of the project manager's role and its impact on the project results is explained. The section concludes with an analysis of the Project Manager Competency Development (PMCD) framework as it contributes directly to the development of project management talent within the Department.<sup>8</sup>

J. Rodney Turner, a reputable scholar in the fields of project management and organizational theory defines competence as “the knowledge, skills and personal attributes that lead to superior results or to meet defined performance standards.”<sup>9</sup> The methods of quantifying competence have been a debate in academia and organizational management alike throughout history. Whether competence is evaluated by the outcome of the project or supervisors evaluate their own subordinates, or vice versa, contention

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<sup>8</sup> Project Management Institute, *Building High-Performance Project Talent — A Transformational Initiative* (White Paper. December 2015), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Rodney J. Turner, Ralf Muller, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, Handelshögskolan vid Umeå universitet (USBE), and Umeå universitet, “The Project Manager's Leadership Style as a Success Factor on Projects: A Literature Review,” *Project Management Journal* 36, no. 2 (2005): 58.

still exists on how to measure it.<sup>10</sup> The issue with evaluating the project manager's competence based on the results of a complex project is that numerous imponderables have much influence throughout the lifecycle of the project. Political interference, economic downturn, and labor strikes are examples of situations which are outside the control of the project team but can have a substantial impact on the outcome. Therefore, a qualitative analysis of the skills and competencies necessary to succeed is recommended.

A 2006 in-depth study of experienced project managers using the Delphi method was able to identify “117 project management success factors, 78 of which were identified as trainable competencies.”<sup>11</sup> The success factors were regrouped in broad categories for further analysis. Based on the findings, to be competent these individuals “must possess problem-solving expertise, leadership skills, context knowledge, and analytical, people, and communication expertise...”<sup>12</sup> Equally important is the necessity to master the more common project administrative skills such as “setting and managing scope, timelines, and budgets.”<sup>13</sup> More specifically, context knowledge which is acquired through experience includes knowing how to leverage the resources available and being empathetic towards the many stakeholders both internal and external to the organization.

Major public capital acquisitions are complex projects that require methodologies that are constantly evolving throughout the lifecycle of the project. Emergent methodologies, as explained by Owen et al. are “based on the actors’ experiential

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<sup>10</sup> Jennifer M. Brill, M. J. Bishop, and Andrew E. Walker, “The Competencies and Characteristics Required of an Effective Project Manager: A Web-Based Delphi Study,” *Educational Technology Research and Development* 54, no. 2 (2006): 116.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

knowledge, their roles in the project, and the contextual nature of the project/issue.’’<sup>14</sup>

The project leadership requires substantial knowledge and experience of the environment in order for the organization to exhibit enough trust to allow flexibility in their approach to handling emergent issues ‘‘ranging from managing stakeholder expectations, scope clarity, planning and re-planning, resource allocation, ensuring adequate control, and knowledge transfer.’’<sup>15</sup> The issue of trust in the project manager’s competence is further discussed within a DND context and the PMCD framework later on in this section.

Although much of the literature continues to debate between the exact skills, it does settle on the equal importance of hard project skills and the ‘‘soft skills’’ such as leadership, communication, motivation, and team building.<sup>16</sup> As project management research evolves, leadership is becoming a prevalent topic of discussion. In a military context, transformational leadership is about ‘‘the leader holding a vision and taking his or her followers there.’’ This is quite contrary to what is required from project managers that need to recognize an issue, negotiate with stakeholders, and evolve their strategy to achieve the intended goals.<sup>17</sup> As Turner compared the leadership styles of project managers versus functional managers and military leaders, he concluded that ‘‘project managers prefer task-oriented to people-oriented leadership styles.’’<sup>18</sup> He arrived at this conclusion by comparing ‘‘a sample of 1,009 military officers and managers from

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<sup>14</sup> J. Owen, Connor, J., & Linger, H. (2012), *The role of leadership in complex projects*. Paper presented at PMI® Research and Education Conference, Limerick, Munster, Ireland. Newtown Square, PA: Project Management Institute. 4.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Sumner, Douglas Bock, and Gary Giamartino, ‘‘Exploring the Linkage between the Characteristics of it Project Leaders and Project Success,’’ *Information Systems Management* 23, no. 4 (2006): 49.

<sup>17</sup> Owen, *The role of leadership in complex projects* ..., 4.

<sup>18</sup> Turner, *The Project Manager's Leadership Style as a Success Factor on Projects* ..., 57.

different sectors from around the world ... with a sample of 414 project managers.”<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, the research indicates that some leadership dimensions are significantly different between these two groups. Sensitivity and conscientiousness, which are both emotional competencies, are considered more important predictors of success to project managers than military leaders.<sup>20</sup> To summarize, project managers require distinct knowledge, skills and personal attributes in order to succeed in the highly complex environment of capital acquisitions.

Next, the significance of the project manager’s role and its impact on the project outcome is demonstrated. Historically, research by academia “... has largely ignored the impact of the project manager, and his or her leadership style and competence, on project success.”<sup>21</sup> This is perhaps due to the fact that most studies did not distinguish between the project manager and the overall project team. Another potential reason is that the surveys were primarily administered to the manager themselves, which out of modesty did not consider their contribution (good or bad) as significant to the project outcome.<sup>22</sup> This last hypothesis was confirmed in an American study of project managers, whereas “the data provided by the managers using self-assessment instrument were not significantly associated with the success of the project.”<sup>23</sup> In comparison, the data provided by the supervisors, subordinates and peers of these same project managers clearly indicated that their competencies were substantial predictors of project success.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Rodney J. Turner, Ralf Müller, Vic Dulewicz, Samhällsvetenskapliga fakulteten, Handelshögskolan vid Umeå universitet (USBE), and Umeå universitet, “Comparing the Leadership Styles of Functional and Project Managers,” *International Journal of Managing Projects in Business* 2, no. 2 (2009): 207.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 208.

<sup>21</sup> Turner, *The Project Manager's Leadership Style as a Success Factor on Projects* ..., 59.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Sumner, “Exploring the Linkage between the Characteristics of it Project Leaders ...”, 47.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.



Furthermore, as highlighted by Dr Anantatmula, a well-published professor in project management at Western Carolina University, a project manager's role can contribute to the success or failure of the project.<sup>25</sup> “[F]ailing to define processes and roles, failure to develop and use a project selection process, [and] not mandating consistent processes . . . ,”<sup>26</sup> all contribute to project failure. In addition, since the project manager's performance is directly linked to the probability of project success or failure, assessing that performance and emphasizing corrective action such as supplementary training or project reassignment if necessary must be considered.<sup>27</sup>

In brief, the evidence shows the importance of the project manager's role in the outcome of projects. It is therefore critical that these individuals be properly selected and trained. The Project Manager Competency Development (PMCD) framework was developed in 2007 within the Department of National Defence “to effectively develop and formally qualify all project managers to position the organization for ongoing project management success.”<sup>28</sup> The program also enables DND to quantify a project manager's competence and experience in order to manage this talent and assign increasingly more complex projects to these individuals. Not only is it important to train the individuals with the necessary skills which were identified in the previous section, but a holistic long-term approach to managing talent is necessary. As Mr Hoe, Director General at Assistant Deputy Minister (Information Management) explains, “[p]art of having a good employer/employee relationship is having that career path and training and having the

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<sup>25</sup> Vittal S. Anantatmula, “Project Manager Leadership Role in Improving Project Performance,” *Engineering Management Journal* 22, no. 1 (2010): 15.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Phil Nixon, Phil, Megan Harrington, and David Parker, “Leadership Performance is Significant to Project Success Or Failure: A Critical Analysis,” *International Journal of Productivity and Performance Management* 61, no. 2 (2012): 212. <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/915982338?accountid=9867>.

<sup>28</sup> Project Management Institute, *Building High-Performance Project Talent* . . . , 1.

human resource function that recognizes the value of talent management – including defined career paths for project managers.’’<sup>29</sup> As the literature demonstrates, assigning the right project manager and the appropriate team to a specific project will increase its chances of success. Consider the project’s stakeholders, the technology, the industry and the required knowledge of the field, and match them to the appropriate project manager.<sup>30</sup> In order to define the right project approval and expenditure authority levels, the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) implemented a model of analyzing the risk and complexity of each project.<sup>31</sup> By evaluating similar criteria, the Department matches the Project Complexity and Risk Assessment (PCRA) level with a project manager with the proper PMCD level of knowledge and experience.

The PMCD framework is not simply a way of categorizing the levels of talent. One of the roles is to enable individuals to develop technical and leadership skills and acquire the necessary experience to lead major capital acquisitions of ever-increasing importance. Unfortunately, very few if any RCEME officers outside of those serving in ADM(Mat) have the opportunity to acquire enough training and project management experience to obtain the PMCD qualification. According to Mr Finn, the current ADM(Mat), ‘‘more often than not, organizations make the mistake of taking a limited view of project management and underestimating it as a core, strategic competency.’’<sup>32</sup>

It has been shown that although project managers require soft skills such as leadership and communication, they also need hard project administrative skills. It has

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>30</sup> Rodney Turner and Ralf Müller, ‘‘Choosing Appropriate Project Managers: Matching their Leadership Style to the Type of Project’’ *PM Network* 22, no. 4 (2008): 79.

<sup>31</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat, ‘‘Project Complexity and Risk Assessment Tool,’’ Last modified [or accessed] 24 April 2004. <https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/information-technology-project-management/project-management/project-complexity-risk-assessment-tool.html>

<sup>32</sup> Project Management Institute, *Building High-Performance Project Talent...*, 4.

also been shown that the project manager's competency does have a significant impact on the project outcome. Finally, the PMCD framework is successful in professionalizing the procurement workforce given enough time to gain experience and training.

## **CANADIAN ARMY SUCCESSION PLAN**

The Canadian Army Commander has correctly emphasized in the CA staffing priorities for active posting season 2019 that personnel resources must be aligned with the Defence Policy Strong: Secure, Engaged (SSE). However, it was demonstrated in the previous section that in order to “move projects” effectively, officers with particular characteristics and experience must be selected, not just any individual.

The next section of this essay focuses on the way the CA manages its succession planning. Firstly, a brief overview of the succession planning literature is discussed. Subsequently, the Army Succession Planning tool is analyzed in detail from a RCEME officer's perspective with a short and long-term view.

According to Ren Nardoni a reputable consultant in the field of human resource management, succession planning “is the process of developing key organizational people through a process that identifies candidates and tracks their progress and development.”<sup>33</sup> The TBS identifies succession planning as “an integrated, systematic approach for identifying, developing, and retaining capable and skilled employees in line with current and projected business objectives.”<sup>34</sup> To elaborate, the aim is to identify talented individuals to occupy specific positions or group of positions that harmonize with the organizations' long-term goals. From family businesses passed on to their

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<sup>33</sup> Ren Nardoni. “Competency-Based Succession Planning.” *Information Systems Management*. ( Fall 1997, Vol 14 issue 4): 60.

<sup>34</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat, “Succession planning and management guide,” Last modified [or accessed] 24 April 2004. <https://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/gui/spgr/spg-gpgr-eng.asp?for=hrps#whsp>

children or large multinational corporations such as Apple, all organizations need some type succession plan if they want to survive when a key leader or expert retires, moves on or passes away.

Much literature exists on human resources management and best practices but the approach can vary depending on the circumstances which are inherently different between the military, the public and private sectors. In the CAF “... the requirements for standardization and consistency to ensure equity in a number of HR career decisions such as promotions leads to centralized, common decision making rather than a distributed, flexible approach.<sup>35</sup> In contrast, our allied partners such as the US Forces operate a more devolved human resources system by enabling COs and their personnel to make important choices such as “postings, course selection and other career decisions.”<sup>36</sup> Based on the CAF career management model, the Army has published the Land Force Command Orders (LFCO) 11-79 or Army Succession Planning (ASP). Although the ASP tool was last updated in 2012, it is still one of the relevant guides used to manage careers within the CA. Along with the 5000 series of the Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DOAD), the B-GL-005-100/FP-002 Military Personnel Management Doctrine, and the CA staffing priorities, these documents influence the progression of its members over the short and long term.

As stated in the ASP, the aim of succession planning activities is “to place the most suitable person, in the right position, at the right time.”<sup>37</sup> Although the process is

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<sup>35</sup> Alan Okros, “Becoming an Employer of Choice: Human Resource Challenges within DND and the CF,” in *The Public Management of Defence in Canada*, ed. Craig Stone (Toronto: Breakout Education Network, 2009), 147.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> Department of National Defence, *Land Force Command Order 11-79 Army Succession Planning* (Ottawa: Land Staff G1, July 2012), 2.

controlled and led by the CA, an effort is made to harmonize the approach with other CAF agencies and level one organizations.<sup>38</sup> The Corps Directors and Branch advisors from all Army managed trades also provide advice throughout the process to ensure their interests are considered.

The first step in the succession planning process according to the TBS is “Identify[ing] which positions, if left vacant, would make it very difficult to achieve current and future business goals.”<sup>39</sup> Within the ASP the short term goal is to select individuals for command at the unit and formation level as well as a few key staff appointments for the short-term success of the Army. The Long Term Succession Plan is focused on identifying a pool of likely candidates for future institutional leadership opportunities with a five to ten-year horizon. This is done through a process of assigning a tier level compared to their peers. Based on the findings of Theresa Tedesco, it can be argued that the process is more of an art than a science.<sup>40</sup> Multiple factors such as sudden retirement, family obligations, and medical releases can drastically change the outcome of this plan and therefore the pool of potential candidates must as broad as possible.

Contrary to popular belief, the succession plan does not guarantee a promotion. However, those who have not commanded a unit will never be promoted to the next rank. This eliminates a significant number of individuals and therefore the talent pool for potential Colonels (Col) is quite limited. This lack of potential candidates is even more pronounced at the general officer level since candidates need to have commanded a

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat, “Succession planning and management guide . . . , 2.

<sup>40</sup> Theresa Tedesco, “THE BIG HAND-OFF,” *Financial Post Mag* (11, 2009): 23. <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/325277634?accountid=9867>.

formation. These opportunities to command are ultimately decided by the succession plan.

The ASP specifically highlights which unit and formation command positions are managed by the Army. For example, the only command position that is exclusively available to RCEME Lieutenant-Colonels (Lcol) is Commander of the Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical School. There are however seven (7) units that are commanded by either a RCEME or Logistics officer within the Army.<sup>41</sup> In short, there is an average of four (4) RCEME officers commanding units at any given time and therefore only two (2) who are completing their term.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, with an average of two (2) promotions to the rank of Col every year within the Corps of RCEME, the probability of promotion is quite high.<sup>43</sup> To summarize, so few unit command opportunities exist for RCEME officers that once this command is successfully completed, the individual is almost automatically promoted to the rank of Col. This officer usually goes on to assume a program manager's role within ADM(Mat) regardless of his experience in the domain. On the other hand, if a RCEME officer does not have the opportunity to command for whatever reason, he will never be promoted to the next rank even though he may be an excellent project manager with a wealth of experience serving within ADM(Mat). As retired Lt. Col Michael J. Colarusso, a historian and senior researcher at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point argues, such a situation is more akin to replacement planning and is indicative of a "shallow" succession hierarchy. For that reason, the military must have a significant talent pool available "so it can get the right people in the right place at the

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<sup>41</sup> Department of National Defence, *Land Force Command Order 11-79 ...*, Annex B, Appendix 4.

<sup>42</sup> Based on a study of information compiled by the RCEME career manager from 2004-2012.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

right time.’’<sup>44</sup> In brief, it enables the senior leadership to consider multiple candidates and choose the best one for each specific role and not just the next one on the list.

The CF career management system and current rank structure offer little flexibility in the event of unforeseen circumstances especially for support trades such as RCEME Officers. As an example, Colonel Karen Ritchie, unfortunately, passed away suddenly in 2008, which left an important gap in the senior leadership of the RCEME Corps. In the same way, the unexpected retirement of Brigadier-General S.G. Kennedy, then Director General Land Equipment Program Management (DGLEPM) in 2015, required a public servant to assume this important role as the senior leadership within the Army and ADM(Mat) scrambled to replace him. These examples highlight the importance of developing a broad talent pool of individuals capable of leading the institution. While it was made clear in the first section of this essay what were the characteristics of good project managers, the next section will highlight the personal attributes necessary to be considered for command.

To determine the potential of members, the Army Succession Board (ASB) uses Tier descriptors. To illustrate the extent to which the ASP focuses strictly on identifying command potential, only descriptors for command positions exist. To be considered for unit command an individual must demonstrate ‘‘considerable field experience and oriented training...’’<sup>45</sup> In addition, ‘‘he/she must have proven field expertise ... and must be a decisive leader with knowledge of the tactical command.’’<sup>46</sup> Finally, the officer must

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<sup>44</sup> Micheal J. Colarusso and David S. Lyle, ‘‘Talent Management: Six Constraints on Senior Officer Succession Planning,’’ *Army* 64, no. 7 (07, 2014): 23.  
<https://search.proquest.com/docview/1543043852?accountid=9867>.

<sup>45</sup> Department of National Defence, *Land Force Command Order 11-79 ...*, Annex A, Appendix 2.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*

be “a practitioner of the military art at the tactical level.”<sup>47</sup> It is apparent that significant importance is put on an individual’s performance while working at the tactical level. The requirement for experience at the operational or strategic level is never mentioned. And yet, as demonstrated by the shallowness of the rank structure, these unit commanders will ultimately be required to work and lead teams at these higher levels in the near future. Unfortunately, as the ASP maintains, “Command is Command.”<sup>48</sup> Leading a unit possess’ distinctive challenges and the experiences gained are inimitable.

In comparison, a Land Equipment Management System Project Manager is expected to coordinate “competing demands for scope, time, cost, risk and quality; stakeholders with differing needs and expectations, and identified requirements.”<sup>49</sup> Additional tasks include but are not limited to the “preparation of synopsis sheets for project approval ... and the delivery of project documents at various stages of a project, including the Statement of Work, the Project Implementation Plan and the Project Profile and Risk Assessment.”<sup>50</sup>

The evidence shows that while the qualities promoted in the ASP help identify great unit commanders they are not significant predictors of success for the highly complex roles of project managers in defence procurement. It is unwise to assume that a RCEME officer that has commanded a unit has the required “technical knowledge, ..., contextual understanding of the procurement and project management processes in

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>49</sup> Department of National Defence, A-PD-055-022/PP-001, *The Canadian Armed Forces Military Employment Structures Manual – Volume 2 Occupational Specifications – Part 1 Officer Occupations: Electrical and Mechanical Engineering* (Ottawa: DND Canada, 2017), C15.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.



DND...’’<sup>51</sup> to succeed in their future job. A secondary effect of the ASP is that it also hinders the willingness of young officers to serve at ADM(Mat) by putting so much importance on the experience gained and their performance while in command of platoons, companies and units. While managing the career progression of all Army officers in a broad and generalist approach may work well to prepare them for command appointments, it is not in the best interest of organizations such as ADM(Mat) to manage their future project managers in the same way.

### **THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY’S WAY OF DOING THINGS**

The Corps of RCEME is hindered by the current CAF career management system and the ASP in successfully generating the required project managers to support the SSE initiatives. An illustration of how the Australian Army manages its Officer Corps may lead to potential solutions for DND. Australia has an Army of comparable strength and has had similar difficulties with defence procurement in the past. In order to compare between the two organisations, this section begins with a short narrative of the historical context. Ongoing initiatives within the RCEME Corps will also be discussed.

The Australian Army Officer Career Management Strategy has undergone significant change in the last decade. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) recognized the importance of generating specialized officers with distinct career paths, so in 2009, the *Career Pathways* initiative was implemented.<sup>52</sup> This led to the creation of eight (8) distinct pathways divided as follows: “Command and Leadership (C&L), Operations, Planning and Training (OPT), Intelligence (INT), Aviation (AVN), Logistics (LOG),

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<sup>51</sup> Chris Thatcher, “Building Procurement Capacity,” *Canadian Army Today*, 17 December 2018: 1. <https://canadianarmytoday.com/building-procurement-capacity/>

<sup>52</sup> Australian Defence Force, *Army Officer Career Management Strategy*, (Australian Army Headquarters. Canberra: Australian Army, 2014): 1.

Information Management (IM), Capability and Project Management (CPM) and Personnel (PERS) pathways.’’<sup>53</sup> These have not replaced the existing occupations or Corps affiliations, but are more of a ‘‘line of education and employment.’’<sup>54</sup>

To assess if the changes to the career management strategy delivered on the intended objectives, a comprehensive review was ordered 5 years after implementation. The findings concluded that although there were important benefits to some pathways, the numerous possibilities produced ‘‘unbalanced and unsupportable career expectations.’’<sup>55</sup> As a result, only the Capability and Project Management and the Personnel streams were maintained.

In consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders inside and out of the Defence team, they recognize that ‘‘in some instances deep technical skilling and experience is required to undertake a small number of more demanding appointments at more senior levels in the organisation.’’<sup>56</sup> This strategy allows officers who have advanced technical skills and experience to benefit from improved fidelity in career progression and for some, greater promotion prospects. Similar to RCEME officers who serve within ADM(Mat), ‘‘... CPM positions are primarily focused on the acquisition, development, delivery, sustainment and through-life support of Army capabilities.’’<sup>57</sup>

The Australian Army continues to generate excellent well-rounded or generalist officers with a traditional command and leadership background which represents 70% of the Army requirements.<sup>58</sup> Officers who are selected in one of the two pathway career

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<sup>53</sup> Australian Defence Force, *Army Officer Career Management Strategy ...*, 4.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, D2.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

models follow a distinct succession plan and continue to progress through the rank structure. Across all services, for example, CPM pathway officers have the opportunity to compete for many senior positions up to and including LGen, mostly within the Capability Acquisition and Sustainment Group. While this is the case, they must manage their expectation for advancement as they are usually less competitive for a wider choice of opportunities.<sup>59</sup> Official selection towards a distinct career stream away from the traditional command path is not permitted until the third year as a Major, which allows all officers to develop their leadership skills and gain field experience. This does not preclude them from gaining education, technical skills and project management experience earlier on in their careers.

It has been shown that the career pathways initiative undertaken by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has provided rewarding and challenging career opportunities for its members. More importantly, this initiative has significantly contributed to an increase in acquisition and project management expertise. As a result, numerous projects successfully delivered much-needed capabilities to the Army. Although the scope of this essay does not allow for a detailed investigation into the possibility of implementing the Career Pathway Strategy in the CAF, the lessons learned from the ADF could provide advice to senior leaders who may be considering a force employment model restructuring.

David Perry highlighted the many various sources of Canadian defence procurement underperformance, one of which was the lack of relevant experience by project managers. He goes on to propose the creation of “procurement occupational classifications with their own promotion and career advancement tracks, selected from

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., D1.

the top ranks of the military cohort in order to professionalize the military's procurement activities."<sup>60</sup> The Corps of RCEME conducted an occupational structure review in 2016, so the idea is not new. The review recognizes like many others that RCEME Officers "must be very knowledgeable and skilled in procurement, contracting and acquisition processes."<sup>61</sup> According to the findings, separating the occupation between field operations and Equipment Program Managers would create specialists, but could "create a gap of knowledge between the sustainment activities taking place in the field and those taking place in ADM(Mat)."<sup>62</sup> Although the advantages of creating one single EPM occupation across the services are also considered, this creates the risk of "civilianizing" the entire defence procurement process.<sup>63</sup> Ultimately, the review concluded that a single occupation structure or status-quo best met the needs of the CAF and the occupation and demonstrated less risk to implement. As explained previously, the Australian approach of formalizing the line of education and employment of Capability and Project Management specialists without eliminating their core occupations would mitigate some of these risks.

As with any significant transformation to an organizational structure, some members are reluctant to change. Considering that officers have been indoctrinated in the Army that command is everything, it can be concluded that even minor changes to succession planning would be met with resistance or 'cultural friction'. Especially if a select group of individuals were to be disadvantaged by the amendments. As explained by Dr Okros, one of the considerations of succession management is "ensuring that

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<sup>60</sup> David Perry, "Fixing Procurement," *Canadian Global Affairs Institute*, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> R. Dixon, *Feasibility Report – Electrical and Mechanical Engineering Officer Occupational Analysis* (5555-00187-EME O (DPGR 2-10), 24 March 2016); 2.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*

career decisions are based on the merit principle and ensure equity and fair treatment.’’<sup>64</sup> While the Australian Army continues to refine their career management strategy and improve their project management expertise, it would be useful for the CA to consider all opportunities at improving the delivery of future critical equipment capabilities.

## CONCLUSION

It has been demonstrated that the CAF career management model and more specifically the Army Succession Plan is not well adapted at generating officers with the specific knowledge and experience required to manage highly complex acquisition projects. After examining the key characteristics required of project managers, it is clear that although leadership is equally important in the field force and equipment program management, the latter requires distinct knowledge, skills and personal attributes to succeed. That aside, the defence policy proposes to ‘‘... enhance training and professional accreditation for defence procurement personnel,’’<sup>65</sup> and the PMCD initiative delivers this requirement but only for officers who have the opportunity to serve long enough within a capital project to gain the required training and experience. While the qualities sought after in the ASP help identify great unit commanders they are not significant predictors of success for the highly complex roles of project managers in defence procurement. Allies such as Australia who exhibited similar difficulties with major equipment acquisitions have adapted their career management strategy to allow for the specialization of a select group of officers which has resulted in positive results. Any changes to the current career management model or the ASP will undoubtedly be met with cultural resistance, but this may be the ideal time while the CAF senior leadership is

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<sup>64</sup> Alan Okros, ‘‘Becoming an Employer of Choice ...’’, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Department of National Defence, *Canada’s Defence Policy ...*, 75.

already considering some amendments brought on by the initiative commonly known as “The Journey”.

Although this essay has concentrated its research on RCEME officers, it could be argued that while the Army Succession Plan is concentrating on identifying the next Regimental Sergeant Majors, it is not compatible with the development of knowledgeable and experienced life cycle material managers. This subject deserves further investigation as these individuals are key enablers in the acquisition of future capabilities and essential to the ongoing in-service support of current equipment. Another suggestion for further research would be the analysis of the succession plan of Aerospace Engineering and Marine Systems Engineering Officers who have similar roles and responsibilities within their respective services.

To conclude, the evidence shows that the effectiveness of the defence procurement workforce within ADM(Mat) and their capacity to achieve the SSE mandates are at risk. As BGen Benson, the current DGLEPM acknowledges “our people will require our best efforts and focus as it takes time to ensure they have the required experience, education and training in program management.”<sup>66</sup> If RCEME officers continue to be managed by the current succession plan, it will be critical to strike the right balance between all aspects of the occupation, specifically project management. As the Corps of RCEME motto states, ‘Arte et Marte’ by **Skill** and by Fighting.

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<sup>66</sup> Thatcher, “Building Procurement Capacity ...,” 1.

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