USMC Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning

The Staff Noncommissioned Officer
Advanced Education Program Proof of Concept

Assessment: Enlisted Professional Military Education
19 July 2012

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Executive Summary

In 2010, the Marine Corps was tasked by then Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Lieutenant General George Flynn, to re-evaluate its special educational requirements to ensure it is equipping Marines with the needed capabilities to fill critical billet requirements. During the resulting Marine Corps education requirement realignment study conducted in 2010-2011, several organizations voiced requirements for enlisted Marines with advanced degrees but lacked a means to formalize the requirement or create the capability. The Marine Corps decided to initiate a proof of concept to assess the impact on organizational ability to accomplish mission and the potential return on investment of placing such capabilities within the enlisted force in select organizations to determine if the Marine Corps should institutionalize its investment in SNCO advanced education. Marine Corps University – Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) volunteered to participate in the proof of concept, stating it had a requirement for SNCOs with advanced degrees in the field of education to fill curriculum developer positions. The conclusions herein are drawn from 19 interviews of EPME staff during February and March 2012.

EPME is tasked with developing and delivering all of the curricula for the enlisted academies. As the Marine Corps' force employment strategies have changed to meet emerging requirements and more demands have been placed on enlisted Marines, EPME has transformed its educational philosophy, organization and curricula to prepare enlisted Marines for the challenges facing them as leaders in 21st Century operating environments. To be a successful and effective curriculum developer at EPME, one must be able to develop the content and translate it into an effective learning tool and also possess certain key individual attributes. The first requires familiarity with the enlisted Marine reality; the second, an academic foundation in adult learning and curriculum development, exposure to the Marine Corps learning environment, and research and writing skills; and the third, adaptability, openness to new ideas, creativity and the desire to educate.

EPME has several tools available to bring in capable staff and to develop them once on board; however, these tools present some challenges for EPME. Specifically focusing on the enlisted force, EPME relies on Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA) and the SNCO Degree Completion Program (SNCO DCP), through which enlisted Marines can obtain a Bachelor's degree in a specific field, to fill EPME billet requirements. EPME has two types of billets for enlisted Marines – those which any Marine can fill and those requiring a Bachelor's degree in the field of education. The overwhelming consensus is that this process is broken, resulting in a misalignment of capabilities and position requirements. EPME has no involvement in the screening or selection of candidates. This makes it very difficult for EPME to predict and plan

for their human resources; who they get in terms of experience, skills, educational background and personality is essentially 'luck of the draw'. Additionally, the military occupational specialty (MOS) designator for SNCO DCP Marines – 8015 – serves as a catch all for all five bachelor's degree fields[1] available through the SNCO DCP. EPME receives all flavors of MOS 8015 Marines since M&RA emphasizes faces (those with the MOS) and spaces (organizations with the MOS on their table of organization), while EPME, who is absent at the selection board, emphasizes requirement (those Marines with the education specialty under MOS 8015). Furthermore, the field of education at the undergraduate level presents challenges as it is too expansive, non-existent depending on location, or directed at the wrong level of learning. Therefore, the Marines coming in are not necessarily as prepared for the job as EPME needs, resulting in EPME's having to do in-house capability development. EPME sends Marines to the Curriculum Developer's Course, conducts professional development sessions, and mentors new arrivals. The course is of minimal utility as it emphasizes a training versus education model, and mentoring – beyond initial job orientation – negatively impacts productivity because it redirects scare resources away from the mission.

When a person with the right capabilities, experience, and attributes arrives at EPME, the impact on the mission, quality and productivity is positive and noticeable. The faculty advisor's course is a testament to that. However, when these tools do not yield the needed capabilities, there is a significant potential for wasted time, money and human resources. EPME will work with the Marine to develop capacity; however, there have been times when, even after expending much time and effort, the Marine could not grasp it and had to be reassigned, potentially staining a great Marine's service record.

Determining the validity of the underlying assumption driving this assessment – that investing in advanced education capabilities will enhance EPME's performance and advance its mission – requires isolating the factors of education level and field within the enlisted force at EPME. The expectations on each curriculum developer, no matter the educational or experiential background, are the same when it comes to productivity. Therefore, how impactful are educational level and field on EPME's organizational performance, efficiency and effectiveness? The professional insights and observations from the staff at EPME reveal there still is a capability gap at EPME when it comes to translating a Marine's expertise into educational materials, especially effective materials to be delivered at resident school houses by a variety of different people, as currently takes place with EPME. This process requires a unique, higher level understanding of the adult learner and those educational theories and tools designed to enrich the adult learning environment, which in turn comes through exposure to education, and specifically, to the field of education. Any education is better than none, as it fosters the development and sharpening of critical skills; however, the true value comes when the learning is in the specific field of adult learning theories/methods and curriculum development. Such education significantly enhances organizational performance –in terms of both efficiency/productivity and effectiveness of the product.

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[1] The five degree fields are business, safety, music, psychology, and education.

The degree level also matters. Both a Bachelor's and Master's in education serve EPME well, as they not only provide an informed staff but also demonstrate an individual's desire to educate[2], an attribute identified as a key to success at EPME. However, there are some challenges with the Bachelor's degree in education that make it less attractive as an organizational tool for EPME. Were these to be resolved, the Bachelor's degree in education would become a more useful tool to help EPME meet its requirements. The Master's degree in adult learning theory or curriculum development hits the bulls-eye on EPME's requirement, allowing Marines to elevate the complexity of the curriculum, strategically approach each individual lesson, and seek creative solutions to EPME's challenges.

However, this does not mean that every enlisted billet at EPME needs to be filled by a Marine with a Master's Degree in the field of education. Course coordinator positions require more logistical and administrative skills than an educational and theoretical orientation. Course coordinators would benefit from an undergraduate degree in any field for the skills gained; however, it should not be a requirement. For curriculum developers and those functional area managers supervising and managing their work, there is a strong argument for all to have advanced degrees in the field of education or to have a blended approach establishing a hierarchical capability structure. The latter would involve having functional area managers with advanced degrees with the developers equipped with Bachelor's degrees in the field of education paired with civilians with advanced degrees. There is a strong argument against employing Marines with only a high school diploma as curriculum developers. Marines without additional education place a significant burden on the organization. Not only does the organization have to invest considerably in the development of these individuals and management of their work, it also at times has to reposition them within EPME or send them to another organization. The participants agreed that developing these capabilities was a sound investment but cautioned they only are worth the cost if the requirement, selection, and use of the capabilities are well managed.

The Marine Corps has stated that enlisted education is important. Whether it is a global requirement or a selective requirement for curriculum developers and functional area managers, it is one that requires attention and action from Marine Corps leadership. EPME's reach into the Corps is significant and its potential to effect global change within the organization considerable. Maximizing its impact by investing in the small number of individuals creating the materials that go out to the force will have a long term influence on the development of the future leaders of the Corps.

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[2] This does not mean that others do not have a desire to educate; however, a degree in education is a visible marker of those dedicated to education.

Recommended Actions

Interim Solutions:
1) Recommend that EPME draft and submit an MOS Manual change request for the SNCO DCP MOS 8015 to update the language. As currently drafted, it lacks language about curriculum development or adult learning theory and does not mention the billets at EPME; therefore, it does not accurately represent EPME's requirements or expectations.
2) Recommend that EPME work with MR&A to incorporate additional language about curricular requirements to the MARADMIN soliciting candidates for the SNCO DCP to better inform candidates about job requirements and expectations. Currently, other degree fields (business and safety) have taken advantage of this approach to better guide candidates applying for their billets; however, education has not.
3) Recommend that M&RA extend the opportunity to participate in specific selection boards to those organizations that hold the requirements to ensure the candidates and courses of study selected match organizational requirements. Currently, either the organizations are excluded from or uninformed about participating in the board process. Having them represented could help improve the alignment of course work and requirement.
4) Recommend that Marine Corps University, specifically EPME, survey the universities within commuting distance from key Marine Corps bases to determine if there are any available resident undergraduate education programs that would serve the organization's needs and expand beyond the commuting range as time permits to facilitate a Marine's ability to find a suitable program to fill organizational requirements.

Long Term Solutions:
1) Recommend that EPME establish education requirements for all functional area manager and curriculum developer billets. Due to the institutional burden associated with developing such capabilities, the recommendation is to establish Master's level (in adult learning theory, instructional design, or curriculum development) requirements for the functional area managers, including the SEPME Deputy Director position, and bachelor's level (specifically in the field of education) requirements for the curriculum developers. For the course coordinators, a bachelor's in any degree field would be beneficial but should not be required. The challenge to pursuing this course of action is that the institutional processes are currently not in place. In the interim, it is recommended that EPME convert all of the functional area manager and curriculum developer positions to MOS 8015, requiring a Bachelor's in education, adjust the MOS Manual and MARADMIN language to inform candidates of the job requirements, and work with M&RA to participate in future selection boards.
2) Recommend that the Marine Corps establish a mechanism similar to the Officer Special Education and Advanced Degree Programs to create graduate level capabilities in the enlisted force to provide a mechanism for organizations to formalize these requirements and create their needed capabilities. Having the structure in place will streamline the development process, minimizing the time from the identification of a need to its fulfillment.
3) Recommend that the Marine Corps invest in improving selection, manpower, and requirement oversight processes to ensure that faces, spaces, and skills match requirements

to increase the return on investment for Marine Corps undergraduate and graduate education programs. This may require repositioning program oversight and management responsibility within the Marine Corps enterprise and providing the necessary structure to provide requirement oversight.

4) Recommend that the Marine Corps examine the management of occupational field 44 – Legal Services to see how the Marine Corps manages the education requirement and manpower processes to garner lessons learned on how the Marine Corps manages a professional field to apply to the field of education.

5) Recommend that EPME with Marine Corps University, Total Force Structure, and M&RA formalize the position of the Education Officer (MOS 8802) on EPME's table of organization.

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Assessment: Enlisted Professional Military Education

Introduction

In 2010, the Marine Corps was tasked by then Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Lieutenant General George Flynn, to re-evaluate its special educational requirements to ensure it is equipping Marines with the needed capabilities to fill critical billet requirements. During the resulting Marine Corps education requirement realignment study conducted in 2010-2011, several organizations voiced requirements for enlisted Marines with advanced degrees but lacked a means to formalize the requirement or create the capability. Existing requirements for such capabilities currently are restricted to officer-coded billets with the exception of a select number of enlisted billets within the Marine Corps band structure. The Special Education Program (SEP) and Advanced Degree Program (ADP) are Marine Corps programs that develop advanced degree capabilities within the force but are currently not available to the staff noncommissioned officers (SNCOs). With the rise of the concept of "Strategic Corporal," the decentralization of authority inherent in emerging operating concepts, and the increasing complexity of 21st Century operating environments, recognition grew that current and future operational demands may require senior enlisted personnel with skills and knowledge above those gained through undergraduate education and professional experience to fill specific critical billets throughout the enterprise and that the Marine Corps may benefit from investing in advanced education for select SNCOs to address these requirements. The Marine Corps decided to initiate a proof of concept to assess the impact on organizational ability to accomplish mission and the potential return on investment of placing such capabilities within the enlisted force in select organizations. The following report provides the results of the assessment of the first test case, which took place at Marine Corps University – Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME).

Project Description

Background

EPME was one of the organizations that identified immediate requirements for personnel with advanced degrees and elected to serve in the proof of concept.[3] EPME "offers enlisted Marines progressive and career-level educational opportunities to improve their leadership, critical thinking capability, and sound tactical skills in an increasingly distributed and joint

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[3] EPME is one of several organizations participating in the proof of concept. The Marine Corps Information Operations Center (MCIOC) and organizations with specific Intelligence Department billets are also participating. Organizational impact will be assessed when the capabilities have been in place at the respective organizations for sufficient time.

environment"[4] through developing and delivering rank appropriate curricula throughout enlisted Marines' careers. When providing justification for the advanced degree requirement for select curriculum developer positions[5], EPME explained,

> Curriculum developers are intricately involved in task analysis and course design. Knowledge of adult learners and methodologies are crucial to the development of curriculum that forces students to use higher order thinking skills. Curriculum developers work closely with Instructional Systems Designers (ISDs) who hold master's degrees and doctorates in higher education; [SNCO Advanced Degree Program][6] Marines need strong educational backgrounds to work with both ISDs and the staff of the Marine Corps University -- primarily senior officers and PhDs. An advanced degree is required because the curriculum developers must also have strong writing skills. The materials they produce will be used in all six academies and must meet the highest standards. Because materials will be used at remote locations by many instructors at multiple locations, curriculum developers must be able to write clear, detailed lesson plans with complex steps that are still easily understandable and do not need further clarification. . . .

> A bachelor's degree in education does not adequately prepare Marines to write curriculum for the SNCO Academies. Universities that offer bachelor's degrees in education generally only offer the degree for those who desire teaching degrees and licensure at the K-6 and the early childhood education levels. A master's degree is necessary for Marines in these billets to design, deliver and assess lessons and faculty advisors at the academies.

EPME worked with Total Force Structure Division to attach two proof of concept billet education evaluation certificates (BEECs) to select billets on EPME's table of organization (T/O), signaling a requirement to Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA). To expedite the assessment process, M&RA looked within the enlisted force to identify a candidate that already had a Master's Degree in the field of education to move him into EPME.[7] This individual joined

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[4] Taken from Marine Corps University-Enlisted Professional Military Education home page, https://www.mcu.usmc.mil/enlistedPME/default.aspx, accessed 6 June 2012.

[5] Justification for the requirement can be found in EPME's submitted billet education evaluation certificate (BEEC) for the proof of concept. The BEEC is the Marine Corps' mechanism to establish billet education requirements. BEECs are submitted to and held at Total Force Structure Division (TFSD). TFSD flags the corresponding billet with a military occupational specialty (MOS) that has a specific educational requirement, which indicates to Manpower & Reserve Affairs (M&RA) the need to identify a Marine with that particular educational capability to serve in that billet. If none is available, M&RA develops the capability through the Marine Corps' various educational programs. In the case of the proof of concept, TFSD is using the MOS 8015 as a placeholder, which is the MOS for enlisted Marines who have obtained their baccalaureate degree through the Marine Corps' SNCO Degree Completion Program.

[6] Interim program name for the proof of concept, used in the text of EPME's proof of concept billet education evaluation certificate.

[7] There are two ways to obtain these capabilities. One is to create the capabilities by sending a Marine to school, and the other is to leverage existing capabilities within the fleet. As the first takes at least a year to accomplish, the Marine Corps elected the latter to expedite the process. The other test cases underway involve sending Marines to the Naval Postgraduate School. Their assessments will occur once sufficient time has passed to evaluate organizational impact.

two others already on station at EPME with advanced degrees in education. One of these individuals obtained his degree while at EPME to improve his[8] work performance. The other obtained his degree on his own initiative and is filling a billet at EPME that currently has no education requirement. This assessment took place fifteen months after the placement of the third individual within EPME to allow sufficient time to gauge organizational impact. The Center for Advanced Operational Culture Learning (CAOCL) conducted the assessment; the conclusions herein are drawn from nineteen EPME staff interviews carried out in February and March 2012.

Purpose

This assessment seeks to validate the assumption that placing these capabilities generated by advanced education within the enlisted force at EPME improves organizational performance, efficiency, and effectiveness, specifically in the curriculum development process. Furthermore, the results of this assessment will establish an initial data point to help determine if the Marine Corps receives a significant enough return on investment to warrant institutionalizing its investment in SNCO advanced education. These data will be combined with future assessment results to inform the Marine Corps decision making process on this issue.

Sample

EPME provided CAOCL with the names and contact information of nineteen individuals who fell within one of five categories. The five categories are as follows:
1) EPME leadership: four individuals (two civilian, two officers)
2) Civilian team members: four individuals
3) SNCOs with high school or some college: two individuals
4) SNCOs with bachelor's degrees: six individuals
5) SNCOs with Master's degrees in the field of education: three individuals

The EPME proof of concept sample size limits the ability to draw representative conclusions for the impact of advanced education on the Marine Corps's overall ability to carry out its mission; however, the assessment will offer insights and professional observations on the impact of advanced education on EPME's specific mission and on the ability of individuals placed within EPME and of their coworkers to support EPME's mission.

Methodology

CAOCL reviewed various doctrinal, policy, and programmatic documents for context and reference and conducted semi-structured interviews with each of the project participants during February and March 2012. This assessment was determined not to be human subjects research by the Marine Corps Combat Development Command's Institutional Review Board on 17 January 2012.

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[8] To reduce identifying information, when referring to the gender of Marine participants, the researchers used the male gender.

CAOCL researchers contacted each participant via email to schedule the interview, providing a representative question set for their individual category and an informed consent form to describe project intent and their rights and responsibilities as research participants. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions about the project and how their data would be used in advance of the interview. All participants voluntarily agreed to participate, understood that there was no guarantee of confidentiality due to the small sample size, and agreed to be audio-recorded. CAOCL researchers used textual analysis of the interview transcripts to identify trends and key themes in the data.

The Assessment

The assessment is broken out into the following sections. The first section provides the organizational context in which curriculum is developed at EPME, exploring EPME's mission and transformation over the last several years to meet the ever-evolving demands on the enlisted force. The second section focuses on what it takes to make the curricula to support EPME's mission and on the tools available to EPME to obtain the needed staff, the challenges EPME faces with those tools, and the impact the capabilities brought into the organization have on organizational performance. The third section isolates the factor of education, examining how education level and field impact the staff's ability to develop curricula and on whether participants think that it is worth the cost to invest additional education in the enlisted force. Lastly, the assessment closes with a discussion on the findings, concluding thoughts, and a list of recommended actions.

Section 1: Organizational Context

EPME's Mission

EPME's mission is to develop and deliver rank appropriate curriculum for the six regional academies. Leadership #4 explains, *". . . EPME's mission is to provide the curriculum to the six regional academies that instruct the Marines - staff NCOs and NCOs - on leadership, critical thinking, warfighting during their professional military education."*[9] The curriculum touches every enlisted Marine at some point in his/her career, as Marine #10 discusses,

> *I look at the entire Marine Corps as our customer, not necessarily just one individual unit or whatever, but it's the entire Marine Corps that we're actually infusing and we're touching. And to me, that's a very sobering thing to know that we have that much influence over the entire Marine Corps and the culture that is out there.*

Each of the academies has Marine faculty advisors who teach from the curricula. These faculty advisors do not necessarily have educational backgrounds. To account for this, EPME must provide very well crafted curricula to ensure clarity for the faculty advisor and impactful learning for the student. It has also developed and delivers a faculty development curriculum and program. Marine #7 notes, *"[G]ranted [the curriculum] still has to get taught. So you're relying*

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[9] Note: Italicized text represents quotations by assessment participants throughout this paper and does not signify emphasis. CAOCL uses this method to help the reader distinguish between such quotations and the rest of the paper.

heavily on those faculty advisors. But that's why they go through a faculty development – or faculty advisor course." Furthermore, the minimal time available to teach enlisted Marines demands that the learning materials be well honed, as there is not time for extraneous information or poorly designed curricula. Leadership #3 offers some perspective on this challenge facing EPME by comparing the amount of time officers spend in professional education with that set aside for enlisted Marines,

> *An interesting fact -- and I don't know if you want to look at this -- by the time an officer retires right now in our current system, an enlisted -- or sorry -- the lieutenant will have six months of TBS and then a follow-on professional MOS school. . . . Then for Expeditionary Warfare School, if they go to the resident course, it is nine months. If you go to Command and Staff as a major, it's another nine months, which you can get a master's degree out of. You go to Marine Corps War College, you're looking at another six to nine months. There's also another intermediate school in between there called the School of Advanced Warfighting which is about six months.*
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> *By the time that you retire as an officer going from lieutenant to officer, you can actually earn a couple different Master's degrees by just going to professional schooling in the Marine Corps. I'm not doing the resident course, because I did my Master's degree, so I'm doing the distance education, EWS, which is still 66 weeks that I do over two years, and I still get college credit for that I can transfer into upper level college classes to work on the additional master's if I wanted.*
>
> *Our enlisted Marine, a corporal gets two-weeks corporal's course, a six-weeks sergeant's course, a six-weeks career course, a six-weeks advanced course, and a five-week senior enlisted course. And I don't know what the math is on that real quick, but six, six, six --*
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> *. . . .*
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> *So over the course of a career, we give an enlisted Marine, what, 5 months of formal education in the formal schoolhouses. . . . We give a lieutenant, a second lieutenant, newly commissioned, more education and training, if you will, at TBS, at one shot, than we do an enlisted Marine over a career from the time that he's a private to the time he retires as potentially a master gunnery sergeant or sergeant major.*

Lastly, the ever evolving and increasing requirements for enlisted Marines result in a fast pace of work, as curricula are constantly needing to be rewritten, updated, or completely reoriented, but the time lines remain unchanged. When asked about the continual need to update or evolve curricula, Marine #2 explains,

> *That's a good question. That's a source of frustration for a lot of Marines when they come to EPME, and the best way I can explain to them is the adaptive response. The world is changing constantly. The fight that we are engaged in is changing constantly. Perfect example is three years ago, that first lesson that I spent six months trying to develop was called "unit training management," and it was the new big thing of the Marine Corps. Unit training management, we got to get all the Marines on board with this, this is very important, they're not understanding, blah, blah, blah, on all the topics. Roger.*

So we got together, and we worked hard, and we sent this curriculum out to the academies, and all 6,000 of our students went, "What is this?" and there was pushback, like, "I don't understand this. This is too hard. This is too complicated. We can't get this." Two years later, we're taking it out of the curriculum. Do you want to know why? Because all the Marines got it now.

. . . .

Now, okay, what used to spend -- we used to spend 40 hours on, we're squishing it down to five hours now, because the institution as a whole has got it. Now let's focus on the next thing. Now we're doing values-based leadership. Now we're doing this. And so we'll constantly have to adapt to what our stakeholders, all these unit commanders out here, need.

. . . .

We got a Marine over there right now who is stressing out, because he just found out that he has to take this 40-hour package to figure out what the Marines -- what is institutional knowledge now, because we've been doing this for two years, and how do I squeeze it down to four hours, so -- and that's his role right now, you know, how do I take this 40-hour thing and turn it down to four hours and, you know, what goes, what stays.

. . . .

Our stakeholders, our unit commanders, the directors, commanding generals, everybody that wants these products in there, you don't want to be the guy, you don't want to be the director of the EPME and say, "Stop. I can't do that right now. We are working on other things," because everything is a priority. So it's a balancing act that they have to work.

EPME – A Transformation

A principal theme in the data about EPME as an institution is that, over the last several years, EPME has undergone a significant transformation. As the Marine Corps' force employment strategies have changed to meet emerging requirements, more demands have been placed on enlisted Marines. Marine #5 explains,

[W]e are fighting what we call "small wars," and they're fought at the lowest level. And there's no longer that big, you know -- big force on big force. We have the situation that the squad, they find themselves in a situation, and that corporal and the sergeant are the one making the decision. . . . They usually used to have somebody telling them what to do. They are looking for that performance, "If I do this, I should get that," and that's not -- that's not how the world is anymore. . . . [T]en years ago when -- you know, when I was, you know, a sergeant . . . My mentality was like, "Hey, this was my last order. There's nothing I ought to think about," and you went ahead with it. Now you asking the Marines, like, "Hey, you got your commander's intent. Think about it."

Leadership #3 continues,

When you think about a platoon going into a distributed operational environment like we have in Afghanistan or even what we had in Iraq, you would have a platoon go on patrol, but that platoon, three squads -- one, you'd get one squad going down one street with a lieutenant who has a college degree and six months of education at the basic school. Going down another street, you have a squad led by a sergeant maybe if you're lucky. It might be a corporal, but typically, the staff and CO[10] of the platoon or the platoon sergeant might be going down with them, with years of experience but not necessarily education. That third squad you have going down another street, you might again have the sergeant leading it, if you're lucky, but it might be a corporal. Those three squads are all on patrol at the same time. They are all subject to the same threat. They all have to make independent decisions. The scenario that you find that lieutenant in, that staff sergeant, or that corporal are no different, yet we have invested so much time in education into this lieutenant, not the staff sergeant, hardly any in the corporal, but they have the same responsibility, and they are all responsible for the lives of those Marines that are with them.

The Marine Corps leadership through strategy has emphasized the value of education in preparing its forces for these challenging environments. In Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025, the 34th Commandant of the Marine Corps, General James T. Conway, tasked the training and education supporting establishment with creating a first class training and education structure that "continue[s] to build thinking, decisive, innovative Marines, imbued with initiative and empowered to act within the construct of commander's intent and in the face of potentially confusing, chaotic and unclear situations." The 35th Commandant, General James F. Amos, has continued this push to elevate learning within the Marine Corps to prepare Marines "to succeed in distributed operations and increasingly complex environments," [11] calling for increased investment "in the education of our NCOs and junior officers, as they have assumed vastly greater responsibilities in both combat and garrison."[12]

In response, EPME has transformed its organizational structure, its philosophical approach to education, and curricular offerings to prepare enlisted Marines for the challenges facing them as leaders in 21st Century operating environments. Marine #1 provides, "*[T]he Commandant took [education] seriously back in 2004, and that's why we started transforming the enlisted PME, and we went from four master sergeants in a basement to what we have here, you know, 30-plus employees. So education is important.*" The staffing changes involved not only increasing the table of organization but also investing in additional capabilities by bringing in civilians with advanced degrees and establishing education requirements for six of the enlisted Marines to have bachelor's degrees in the field of education. Furthermore, EPME took advantage of an available Education Officer and placed him at the helm of the curriculum development team to oversee and manage EPME's curriculum development process.

Over the last several years, EPME has shifted away from the Marine Corps training model and, guided by Marine Corps University's Strategic Plan, 2012-2017, is pursuing an educational

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[10] Commanding Officer

[11] 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps, Commandant's Planning Guidance, 2010, pg 9.

[12] Ibid.

model that is infusing adult learning theory and alternative instructional methods into the classrooms at the academies. Leadership #1 provides the impetus for the change,

> *[P]art of the obstacles that we face is that so much of the Marine Corps is training-centric, and a lot of the Marines who come here and work at the academies are in a training mind-set, where everyone is revolved around T&R[13] manuals. And there are T&R events that are very formulaic and specific about when you teach something, there is a condition, a behavior, and a standard. So it's very, very narrow and very focused and doesn't take into consideration any kind of prompts. It's, you know, do something in eight seconds in the dark, and do it to a standard, no more than two things are missing. But that doesn't really prepare the Marine for instances where those behaviors, conditions, standards aren't prevalent. Now we have thrown a brand-new problem at them, and there's nothing there to guide them in the direction. So we need to be able to create lessons and create an environment in which people are kind of taken out of their comfort area and forced to think of solutions on their own.*

An education approach using adult learning theories and teaching methods has been adopted to fulfill this need. Before the teaching method was more like "*Sit down, shut up, my lips are moving; therefore, you're learning*" type instruction, explains Marine #3, "*and it is a totally different approach now.*" Team Member #3 adds, "*the old way of teaching, you tell this Marine something, he regurgitates it, it's gone. Now we're going to – we want to make them critical thinkers.*" Marine #5 continues, "*No, we don't follow that training spectrum. We go – it's like 'hey, I don't want you to tell me how to disassemble an M16A2 rifle. I want you to tell me why you didn't pull that trigger that time, why would you pull that trigger that time.'*"

This shift in philosophy has prompted a complete overhaul of the curriculum content and delivery methods used as EPME. Marine #10, who has been with EPME through the transition, explains,

> *I mean the transition that I've seen in the past three years has leaned towards a higher learning style of development and education delivery system. We've gone away from just -- for example, the mass classroom, you have all the students there together, 100-plus students together. We still do that, but we lean more now towards cognitive-style thinking, more towards the small group interactions, more towards the student-led, student-based-type teaching style to try to inspire more thought and creativity.*

Marine #1 concurs, "*We have to create a learning environment where, you know, they're able to challenge, ask with non-attribution, you know, really get into their psyche, really get into their decision-making process, and challenge those thoughts. . . . That never existed before until a few years ago.*"

Team Member #1 provides a summary, based on his observations, of EPME's transformation in organizational structure, philosophy, and curriculum development,

> *I've been around here for a couple of years, and there has been some changes really in the way that we operate. A lot of that has to do with resources. We started off next door at the university -- and you probably heard this story many times -- in a basement with three or four contractors and three or four Marines over there, and it took everything that the staff had just to maintain the curriculum that was on the shelf. And the curriculum was really*

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[13] Training and Readiness.

targeting -- you know, it was very simplistic stuff, probably targeting ninth, tenth grade education. The lessons did not really build upon themselves. You could take one lesson from week two and move it to week three, and it really didn't impact the curriculum. There was no real structure. Evaluations were the fill-in-the-bubble-type thing, multiple guess, not a lot of real practical application stuff. Did the student really come away with an understanding how to take all these tools that they've been given and apply them? I don't think so.

We had a lot of things in the curriculum that dealt with, you know -- and this is my opinion. It probably dealt with things that were commander's responsibilities. Uniform inspections, how to drill a platoon, things of that nature, do you really want to send your NCO or your staff NCO to me for six weeks to teach him how to march a platoon from point A to point B with parade ground precision? Is that what you really want to, or do you want to send him to me to where you can have a Marine that can interpret and support your commander's leadership philosophy? Wouldn't that be much more a force multiplier?

. . . .

So we've completely redesigned the way we do curriculum. . . . We don't have a single lesson. If you were to go out on the shelf and say, "Hey, we are going to take this lesson, and we want to move it from week two to week three," you have thrown the entire continuum off for that student, because the curriculum builds upon itself throughout the entire 33 training days. . . . It has just been a complete overhaul, the curriculum. I mean, I can probably sit and talk about it for hours on how the curriculum has changed over the years.

Section 2: The Task at Hand – Curriculum Development

So what does it take to create this type of curriculum?

With mission demands evolving and increasing, timelines remaining short, and EPME transforming its overall approach to learning, EPME's organizational workload and the complexity of the work have increased. EPME's mission is to create curricula that meet these new criteria within given timelines. Each participant was asked about their concept of the ideal curriculum developer. What capabilities and experiences does a person need to succeed in EPME's work environment and to be a productive member of EPME's work force?

Three principal themes emerge in the data in answer to this question. To be a successful and effective curriculum developer at EPME, one must be able to **develop the content** and **translate it into an effective learning tool** and also **possess certain key individual attributes**.

Developing the content

Three components emerged as critical to developing effective curriculum content at EPME: 1) sufficient rank to understand the demands on and expectations of enlisted Marines at the various ranks, 2) sufficient MOS spread and depth to address scope of Marine Corps requirements, and 3) topical familiarity. According to several participants, uniformed curriculum developers should

be drawn from the enlisted force and be of sufficient rank to ensure they appreciate the rank responsibilities of the curriculum they are developing. Marine #4 explains,

Well, I think it should be enlisted, just because, obviously, we're writing for enlisted, and a lot of the times, if you ask an officer what he needs, this is what I need an enlisted to know, it can be completely different than what he actually does need to know, because he may see, "I need a gunnery sergeant to do this," and a gunny goes, "No, that's not what I -- actually, that's the sergeant's job or that's the staff sergeant's job."

On the issue of rank, he, like many of the other participants, thinks that the enlisted members should be at least gunnery sergeants or higher. He continues, *"[a staff sergeant with seven years in] is not going to understand what the gunnery – what he may be writing curriculum for a gunnery sergeant, or if they start writing curriculum for senior enlisted PME, they are not going to have any idea what they need to know.*" Furthermore, according to participants, EPME needs curriculum developers with significant MOS experience and who are drawn from a *"good mix of MOSs"* (Marine #5) so that EPME has access to *"a MAGTF spread"* (Leadership #1) of expertise. Also, curriculum developers need to be familiar with the functional area in which they are working, as Team Member #1 explains,

If you take a Marine that, say, has a ground combat element background and you put him in warfighting, he's probably going to succeed because of his background that he's done. If he was successful in his MOS, he's going to succeed there. If you take a Marine that is just a naturally good leader and you put them in leadership, then they're going to probably succeed in the leadership area. Same thing with administration, because they're subject-matter experts in their area, which means they probably had a little bit of common sense they probably developed themselves along the way, because they're a staff NCO.

Translating knowledge into learning tools

Another critical component to effective curriculum development is knowing how to translate content knowledge into comprehensible and meaningful lesson plans. Leadership #1captures this when he says,

[I]f [Marines] come and they have all the experience, that's fantastic, but if they can't help us translate that and synthesize that, so that they can get this -- you know, get this out in multiple types of media for different types of learners, it can get lost. . . . [I]t's just so important to have someone who has the experience and can figure out -- if they don't have the experience, they can figure out who to talk to, get in touch with those subject-matter experts, and then translate that into a format that anyone -- not anyone, but that our faculty advisors can pick up and run with.

This ability to translate requires an understanding of the curriculum development process, instructional design, adult learning theories and teaching methods. Curriculum developers need

at the very minimum, a comprehension on the educational process, of alignment of objectives to the curriculum itself, understanding how it all ties together and how to develop that curriculum, specifically skills that are obtained usually through some type of degree in instructional design or some type of -- even an education degree where you touch on the curriculum development concepts,

explains Leadership #3.

Furthermore, because EPME's curriculum developers are creating curriculum for others to deliver at the academies, having an understanding of the learning environment and the challenges facing faculty advisors is critical. Many of the curriculum developers at EPME have prior experience as an instructor at one of the academies or the School of Infantry. Marine #7 points out, *"If you have never really taught . . . it's almost impossible to really know how to actually write curriculum that is going to be taught."* Marine #10 further explains,

> *Because I was a former instructor, I know what those guys go through. So when I tailor the classes, I pull off of that experience, so I could say, "Okay, I know they are going to have these problems, these pitfalls." The students are going to be asking these types of questions, and I want to make sure that that instructor has enough ammunition to be able to... to field those questions and everything.*

Finally, being able to translate knowledge into effective learning tools requires certain specific skills, to include writing, research and critical thinking. EPME leadership weighed in heavily on this one. Leadership #3 explains,

> *They need to be strong writers, a good set of research skills. A lot of the materials that we have, we have to go search Gray Research. We have to use different type of journals and databases to find this information. We provide referencing. So a lot of those academic skills that you actually attain while earning a degree are very beneficial in this organization.*

Additionally, he includes the *"ability to communicate both orally and in writing, the – just the general way to look at the abstract concepts and think outside of a very predetermined course to really experiment and throw ideas around"* as force multipliers for curriculum developers. Leadership #1 expands on the need for curriculum developers who can critically think through the curriculum development process, stating

> *We need individuals who can start thinking and try to figure out how do we get that into a lesson plan where we can challenge people beyond the comfort level and get them to think critically and come up with new solutions on their own where we are not telling them this is exactly what's going to happen and do it exactly as we tell you to do it.*

Possessing individual attributes

Many participants noted the importance of the individual to a successful outcome. Marine #9 captures this, simply stating, "*depends on the person.*" Individual attributes such as adaptability, openness to new ideas, creativity and desire to educate were identified as important to the curriculum development process because they promote problem solving and the development of innovative and imaginative lesson plans. Marine #7 explains,

> *If you don't have that creativity or even a remote understanding of writing and these other things you are going to struggle. And you're not going to be able to do it. .. You have to be, like I said, open-minded. And flexible. And Marines who come in who are not – and there's plenty out there – would, I think, have a very difficult time. Because we are constantly having to adapt and change the way we approach things.*

When asked what the characteristics of a successful or effective curriculum developer are, Marine #3 answered in one word, "*Desire.*" He explained further,

> *Yeah, you have to have the desire to educate. You have to have just -- almost a passion. You have got to want to educate people, and you've got to want to step out of the box and take*

risks and not sit there and make excuses of, you know, a corporal can only achieve this level on Bloom's taxonomy because he's only a corporal. I don't believe that. I believe a kindergartner can achieve the highest level of Bloom's taxonomy. So don't sit there and tell me that you've got to hold it here or you can't do it here. This isn't a rank thing; this is education.

Organizational tools to create the staff

To complement this understanding of the needed capabilities to create effective, impactful curricula, it is helpful to briefly examine the tools currently available to EPME to create the staff it needs to support its mission. To gain its enlisted staff, EPME relies on M&RA to send Marines to fill billet requirements at EPME. Currently, EPME's T/O has two types of enlisted positions, those tagged with the military occupational specialty (MOS) 8014 and those with MOS 8015. Per the 2011 Marine Corps MOS Manual, the MOS 8014 "will be used in T/Os to designate a billet to which any enlisted Marine may be assigned but will not be assigned to an individual."[14] There are no prerequisites or requirements for individuals to serve in these billets. Any available Marine from any MOS with any variety of experience and education may be selected to fill an open 8014 billet. The MOS 8015 – the College Degree Enlisted MOS – signals to Manpower to send Marines with Bachelors' degrees to fill open EPME's 8015 billets. 8015 Marines come to EPME through the SNCO Degree Completion Program. Through this program, M&RA solicits candidates interested in completing a Bachelor's degree in education through a MARADMIN and allows them 18 months to finish up their Bachelor's degrees. In return, Marines incur a service obligation during which the Marine Corps can utilize the capabilities in organizations with billets tagged with the MOS 8015.

To gain its civilian curriculum developers, EPME solicits candidates, using the government hiring system. Candidates must fill the requirements of the General Schedule 1750 Series: Instructional Systems Specialist.[15] To meet basic requirements, candidates must have had 24 semester hours of specialized instruction in the field of education. However, for EPME, civilian curriculum developers are required to have a graduate degree in education. When asked about the qualifications for her position, Team Member #2 explains, "*You have to have a Master's degree in education, adult education or instruction, some kind of instructional technology or design.*"

When possible, EPME takes advantage of available resources to augment its curriculum development capability. Currently, EPME has an Education Officer (prior enlisted with a Master's degree in education) who oversees the whole curriculum development process. This position exists on an 'as available' basis as there is no education officer billet written into EPME's T/O. As Leadership #2 points out, EPME only has this officer capability "*by coincidence, not by design, but it's indispensible.*"

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[14] Marine Corps Order 1200.17C, Military Occupational Specialties Manual, dated 29 June 2011, pg 3-589.
[15] Please see Instruction Systems Series, 1750 description on the Office of Personnel Management's website, http://www.opm.gov/qualifications/standards/IORs/gs1700/1750.htm, accessed on 22 February 2012.

Once the staff is onsite, EPME has several other tools available to help bring individuals up to speed. EPME sends uniformed personnel to the Train the Trainer School's Curriculum Developer's Course, which is a two week course at Camp Johnson on board Camp Lejeune in North Carolina. This course

provides the skills required to succeed as a curriculum developer in the Formal Schools and Training Centers. This course includes instruction and student application in conducting a learning analysis, writing learning objectives, writing exams, writing instructional materials and developing media. Students are also taught the processes associated with developing and generating a Program of Instruction (POI) using the Marine Corps Training Instructional Management System (MCTIMS).[16]

Furthermore, EPME supports the mentoring of new arrivals. Marine #2 states,

You know, obviously, any new Marine that shows up, we pair them up with somebody that has been doing it for a while. . . . For my particular case it was a civilian who was the operations manager, who he was – you know, he was on our challenging timeline running operations. So it wasn't a full-time commitment on his part to train me up. He just did it as needed.

EPME also has developed an in-house monthly professional development session, "*where the whole faculty over at EPME gets together and we go over things such as adult learning theory and – or just PowerPoint development. Just various other things that we incorporate into our daily job*" (Marine #7).

Challenges with the tools

There are a number of serious deficiencies in some of the available tools. The biggest challenge is the selection process. Fourteen of the 19 participants addressed the screening and selection process. Leadership #2, EPME's director, stated, "*I don't assign people. I receive people.*" The way in which the selection process is officially structured makes it very difficult for EPME to predict and plan for their human resources; who they get in terms of experience, skills, educational background and personality is essentially 'luck of the draw'. Sometimes it works out, such as in the case of Marine #10, who explains,

I needed to go somewhere, and he said there was a spot, so that's where he sent me. It just happened to work out. Call it a divine appointment or whatever you want to call it, but it just happened to work out to where I was the right fit for the position that I am holding right now, because of the experience that I've had in the past. It just worked out that way.

Marine #1 points out, though, that "*that is a rarity. . . . That is not something that is very common.*" Many times it does not, much to the detriment of the individual Marine and the organization. Marine #11 offers, "*As a Marine, they kind of put you in a spot and they expect you instantly be able to bloom right then and there with no leeway,*" and some Marines just are unable to adapt.

To mitigate the chance element in the official selection process, EPME uses informal channels, whenever possible, to obtain qualified Marines and civilians. Marine #1 offers an example,

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[16] Prerequisites for the Curriculum Developers Course, Train the Trainer School website, http://www.marines.mil/unit/tecom/t3s/Pages/cdc/prerequisites.aspx, accessed on 13 June 2012.

I was an Academics Chief [at the SNCO Academy at Camp Pendleton]. While I was there, I worked alongside Mr. [name removed-EPME leadership], Mr. [name removed – former EPME leadership]. You know, there was only four master sergeants here at the time and a gunny. So I worked along with them in order to get the curriculum pushed out to the academies, and so that's how I kind of knew what EPME was. And they wanted me to come up here at that time. This was in 2006, but I have a regular job, which is, you know, motor T maintenance. So my community said, hey, no, you need to do this, and so I went back to my community. And then my time was up with them. Three years came around, and Mr. [name removed-EPME leadership] e-mailed me while I was in Afghanistan, asked if I wanted the opportunity again to come to EPME, and I said yeah, sure, let me see if my -- my MOS will do that. And they did. They allowed me to come out here for 2 years, at least 2 years.

When it comes to whom EPME receives through the SNCO Degree Completion Program, again, Leadership #2 states, "*We don't have any, even voting rights on the board that does the selection. . . We are strictly in receive mode.*" At the end of the interview, he adds, "*I don't know what the selection process is. I don't have the faintest idea. We have no involvement in that at all.*" This is important because there are challenges with the M&RA assignment process and with the degree field that EPME requires. First, the MOS 8015 is a catch all for all five bachelor's degree fields available through the SNCO Degree Completion Program.[17] Therefore, EPME has received all flavors of MOS 8015 Marines. Leadership #3 notes that the Marines "*coming out of the Staff [NCO] Degree Completion Program have a broad range of degrees.*" Marine #3 continues, "*the degree makeup here is so scattered throughout the spectrum of education, of not even of education. We've got history, math, computer. They're all over. Psychology. They're all over the place.*"

Also, the field of education presents challenges at the bachelor's level. During the selection process, a Marine has to present the curriculum he/she will be studying. Being absent from that process prohibits EPME from being able to address problems or reorient a Marine's choice to better align with the requirement. In some cases, the degree field is too expansive. For example, in the case of Marine #9, he selected to study human services to prepare for his position at EPME because in his school the field of human services fell under the education department. He explains,

the stipulation was it had to be an education degree, which human services was, you know, at the school I went to, so . . . . As far as the selection process for the board, they put out -- you know, they put out a Marine Corps University hat, an education position, so you had to apply to a school. You had to meet with, you know, an advisor at the school and develop a -- your, basically, roadmap to getting your degree, and you had to send that up as part of your package for the selection process, so --

. . . .

You know, human services fell under the College of Education, so that, I guess, met the requirement.

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[17] The five degree fields include business, safety, music, psychology, and education.

He adds, *"[I]t was kind of - I won't say frustrating, but it would have been good to know exactly what I would have been doing when I came. . . so then some of my elective credits, whatever I could have, sought opportunities in curriculum development."* In the case of Marine #7, he found that the State of Virginia did not offer bachelor's degree in education[18] and raised this with M&RA, providing,

> *And at the time I'm guessing EPME isn't actually involved in the process for selecting Marines for the degree completion program. Because when I was contacting MMEA, the manpower and reserve affairs Marines who monitor and supervise the degree completion program, because there's -- there isn't -- in the state of Virginia you can't get a bachelor's degree in education. You can only get a master's. . . . And I explained to them - I was like they don't have, you know, in Virginia. I'd have to go another state. And at the time I was here in Virginia already. So I didn't want to have to move to another state to come back. . . . And I told them that. And they basically told me it didn't matter what my degree was in. I go, "I'm going for the MCU education position on the degree completion program," and he said, "I don't -- it doesn't matter."*

And lastly, the education degree at the Bachelor's level, when it exists, is primarily designed for those who want to work in the K-12 school system; there is little to no instruction in adult learning theory or curriculum design. Marine #2 explains,

> *[T]here's really not a lot of undergraduate degrees in education. If there is, they're also focused on like the primary school level, elementary, middle school type, not on adult education.*
>
> *. . . .*
>
> *But the problem that we have with [requiring Bachelor's in education] is, one, there's very few undergraduate programs out there that cater to adult education, very few, and two is how relevant -- or the -- the scope and background that you get with an undergraduate degree gives you the barest minimum qualifications to do the job as a curriculum developer.*

With this focus on primary and middle school, Marine #3 notes that those graduating from such programs "*aren't taught really, truly how to write curriculum. They're taught how to teach the curriculum, but they're not taught how to write the curriculum and how to come about the objectives and things like this*." He did identify an alternative undergraduate education degree – workforce education – that touched on adult learning; however, he notes that it was still "*such a broad area of education and just getting, just hit with all the learning theories.*" Leadership #1 agrees,

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[18] The Virginia Department of Education publishes a list of approved teacher education programs at http://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching/educator_preparation/college_programs/approved_teacher_ed_programs.pdf, accessed 16 July 2012. While there are a few undergraduate teacher education programs in the Commonwealth, many emphasize either elementary or middle school education or the content area, such as English or history and yield a Bachelor's degree in that specific field and a teaching certificate or minor in education, or are part of a joint Bachelor's/Master's degree program with the Bachelor's degree in the content area and the Master's in education. Some also require additional course work, which adds time in school making these programs challenging for Marines to complete within the time period allowed under the SNCO DCP.

Where [a bachelor's degree] still probably is not the ideal solution for us -- is even if they get a degree in education at a bachelor's degree, the bachelor's level education degrees tend to be in either elementary education, like my own was, or workforce or safety education. It's not really at the next level.

The available training course for new arrivals also presents challenges for EPME management. The Curriculum Developers Course emphasizes the training model. Leadership #1 explains,

The only course that really is available within the Marine Corps is the curriculum developer's course, which is at . . . the Marine Corps Train the Trainer School, which kind of gives an indication from the very beginning what that mind-set is. My understanding is they are trying to be a little bit more open and include a little bit more of what we're doing, but, one, it's only a two-week long course, and it is very -- I think it's still very much training-centric, because that is the -- I mean, the vast majority of their students who attend that are coming from training command who are going to write the lessons for all the training schools, all the MOS-producing schools, all those formal schools, and include the recruit depots, so -- although there may be a little bit more education on it, it's really not very much.

When asked how the course was, Marine #20 responds, "*It doesn't apply.*" Team Member #1 adds,

Really, we found out it really has not been beneficial. . . . There's no place really in the Marine Corps I can think of where you can go and say, "Hey, we're going to send you away to get spun up on how to develop education." Where are you doing to do that in the Marine Corps? No school exists.

Marine #11, like some of the others, did find it helpful in teaching him about MCTIMS, noting "*But the only thing the curriculum developer course was – I got a lot of good information on – was how to use the – oh, what's it called? MCTIMS.*"

Impact on Organizational Performance

The tools described above that EMPE uses to generate its curricula in support of its mission create various positive and negative outcomes for the organization.

On the positive side, when Marines with a background in curriculum development are selected to work at EPME, they hit the ground running. This has a significant impact on productivity at EPME, as scarce resources do not have to be redirected away from curriculum development into extensive mentoring and training. For example, in Marine #5's case, it was clear that giving him training would have been *"wasting money"* since he had already earned a Bachelor's degree in education. Leadership #1 explains when participating in Leadership #2's interview,

[T]he big advantage of that education is that it's an accelerated timeline. It doesn't take as long to train them. . . . It just allows them, instead of us trying to explain adult learning methodology, you know, backgrounds, different types of learners, they get all that, and they can just go in and start attacking and writing curriculum right away. So that can be several months, I think, in the time savings.

Marines who have an in depth understanding of the curriculum development process are also able to 'think outside the box' and produce creative solutions for EPME. One example is the

faculty advisors program. This program began in September 2010 to address gaps in faculty advisor preparation to create the type of learning environment that fosters critical thinking and that EPME is required to deliver. Leadership #4 states that EPME was

> *trying to transition from a training environment to an education environment, and that became very difficult, because our faculty advisors didn't understand what the delivery method was. They didn't understand how to deliver and didn't understand a lot of the learning theories that were being thrown around the curriculum.*

Marine #2 describes the learning environment at the academies at the time, noting *"The academies were very didactic, very straight lecture. We call it the 'knife-hand approach,' similar to what recruits get at basic training."* and explaining *"We understood. We all know that learning was not occurring in the classroom."* At the outset, EPME met with faculty advisors at each academy to introduce them to alternative teaching methods. However, that proved insufficient, as Marine #2 further explains,

> *[W]e'd sit them down for an hour, and we'd talk about why the Socratic lecture method is probably a better fit for this lesson than doing straight lecture. And we thought we were making headway. We'd leave and then come back six months later; nothing changed. Everything stayed the same. So we were basically coming by and giving haircuts, is what we were doing; and then we'd leave, the hair would grow out. Nothing changed.*

To resolve this problem, two Marines with a background in adult education and curriculum development were tasked with leading the effort to address this problem and ended up completely revolutionizing the way in which faculty development takes place. According to Marine #2, episodic training out at the academies was replaced with a *"whole new course, an immersive course"* at MCB Quantico. Marine #1explains that during this 14 day course the faculty advisors learn to understand *"what the adult learner is, how to use different teaching techniques in the classroom, [and how] to be more student centered."* Leadership #3 adds that they try to *"really indoctrinate them with adult learning theories and the process by which to lead Socratic questioning, small group discussions, case study methods and things like that back in the actual classroom."* In addition, Marine #2 explains, *"we allow academic freedom and non-attribution policies in play. So they're allowed to question and ask why [of] policies, orders and directives and a lot of them are very uncomfortable with that, but they get to leave here knowing why."*

Beyond attending the faculty advisors course, faculty advisors must complete a three year follow-on program in which they are monitored and mentored and required to get a number of *"credit hours in communications, in adult education"* (Marine #2) and English, and may progress from being a Basic Faculty Advisor to a Senior and then Master Faculty Advisor. Due to the motivation and background of some of the curriculum developers at EMPE, the best faculty advisors are also encouraged to continue on and complete an advanced degree in education. Out at the academies, the cumulative results of these changes have been significant. For example, Marine #1 reports that he has

> *seen drastic change in the students. They went from . . . you know, not really dialoging and having a discussion to really putting their opinions out on the table and other students, you know, objecting to those opinions, and not always is it the facilitator that is saying, "Hey, you know, that's wrong. You shouldn't think like that." It's the other students saying, "Hey,*

you know, that's not right. That's not the way we should be doing business, and this is the reason why. So the [faculty advisor's] role really has changed. It went from "I am the instructor, this is how you should learn, this is what will make you a leader," to where they're more of a facilitator. They sit back. They watch the discussion. They inject when they need to inject, but they still run the facilitation. But they... have allowed the students to really interact and collaborate. So I've seen drastic change.

According to Marine #1, this change in the way the students are thinking and acting is crucial because out in the fleet,

we have been having to operate on a battlefield where I have to be, you know, an independent thinker. You know, I'm not always going to have that officer there. I'm not always going to have that senior enlisted guy there, and I have to think about that decision and have to make sure that it's the right decision. . . . I mean you've got lives at stake. You've got other host country lives at stake. You've got the mission at stake. You've got every -- you've got all of these things at stake, so there is a lot on the[ir] shoulders.

Another positive impact when Marines come in with skills and academic background aligned with requirements is on the quality of materials and rate of production. Marine #20 explains,

I've been a part of the organization since '06, so I've seen quite a bit of the transformation, and even the material that you saw, then, was substandard to what you see, now, and I think you can directly tie that into the quality of Marines that we have, and tie that into what they bring to their table, because of their education. . . . You know, I think, one is the drastic shift away from the training type of environment; that's what we were -- most of our material was revolved around. Also, with that type of -- comes the whole copying and pasting directly from orders. There's no synthesis, application, and analyzing of any of the information. Where now -- these guys that come in, I guess, to include myself, too, but we come in, we take the information, we do the extensive research, and we synthesize that information into a lesson plan that's going to be what the student needs to learn new concepts, and it's just not a copy and paste, here you go, out the door; we're done with it. We're actually producing educational material.

Marine #2 has noticed a positive impact on productivity, stating, "*[W]e have a super star team right now of the Marines that are over there that either have an undergraduate or graduate degrees or had experience in curriculum development. So our rate of development, I would argue, has been the best that EPME has ever had.*"

While there are positive outcomes, there are also negative impacts when the tools do not produce the needed capabilities, resulting in significant potential for wasted time, money, and human resources. Marines who are selected without a strong background in education and curriculum development must be quickly brought up to speed. To do this they are typically sent to the 'training-centric' curriculum developers' course at Camp Lejeune. As noted above, this two-week course does not provide the education background these Marines need but is the only one available that at least introduces them to the terminology and computer systems. In addition, extensive in-house mentoring is offered. For example, one Marine with a Bachelor's degree in a field other than education arrived with no instructor experience or academic background in adult learning theory or curriculum development. This Marine was really not prepared to develop curriculum, as Marine #1 describes,

[This Marine] had never been through an instruction course, never been through CDC, doesn't even know how to write curriculum when [this Marine] came to me. So mentoring [this Marine] and guiding [this Marine] took me, I want to say, a good six months.

. . . .

We have a high tempo to get the curriculum out, so – and to get it out right, that adding six months to that is – is it's very time consuming.

Marine #2 adds, *"Any time you [pull] another Marine or civilian off their duties to train a new guy, production just stops. So that [is] . . . a delicate balancing act that we had to do here."* Leadership #4 discusses the impact of extensive mentoring from the organizational perspective, providing

Obviously, it's going to slow down their work. If they are helping someone else out, it is going to slow down the work, but in order to get people brought up to speed, it's just an investment we have to make. . . . Marines are here for three years. So the longer it takes us to train them up, the less we get out of them.

If after expending resources on training and mentoring, a curriculum developer is still struggling, an attempt is usually made to shift them to other duties. According to Leadership #2,

[I]f they continue not to be able to perform at the level you need them to, then you kind of shuffle them off to a less important – you know, you can't have an anvil tied around the ankle of the people that are producing the curriculum for all our enlisted education venues. So you move them off to the less challenging curriculum development tasks, just like anywhere else, I suppose.

Finally, if the Marine still cannot adapt, they may ultimately be transferred out of EPME altogether. Marine #10 mentions that EPME has had as much as a 50% attrition rate in the past. Marine #1 explains,

It just didn't work out for them, because they – it just was too fast. You know, it was too fast. It wasn't – they just did not understand how to put it together, how to put the curriculum together. It – it – you know, it's hard to do that, and if you don't come in with that knowledge or that experience, then you can't do it. It's very hard. It's very hard to put curriculum together, put words on paper. It's very hard for a Marine to do that.

This outcome does not only negatively impact EPME in terms of wasted resources and lost productivity; it also impacts the individual Marine involved. Marine #2 notes,

Those are always very touchy times, because you're taking a guy that's a combat engineer [for example], and he has 17 years in the Marine Corps. And never once has he really had to sit down and do a job like this. . . . [W]e try to be very sensitive to the fact that we just put this veteran in a position he's never faced before with very limited training. So nothing adverse happens to those Marines when we – when we move into new positions, but the appearance is what really hurts, you know. Even though the Marine's record is fine, we found a position that better suits his skill sets, probably back into his regular MOS, but you are here for 3 ½, 4, 5 months, and all of a sudden now you couldn't hack it, and you're moved somewhere else. It's not a good thing, so it's not fair.

Section 3: The Factor of Education

Isolating the Factors of Education Level and Field

Determining the validity of the underlying assumption driving this assessment requires isolating the factors of education level and field within the enlisted force at EPME. As noted above in the section on what it takes to develop the type of curricula needed by EPME, it is not only academic background that can determine success, but rather it is a combination of factors. The expectations on each curriculum developer, no matter the educational or experiential background, are the same when it comes to productivity, as Marine #6 notes, "*We all work the same way. We all have to get out curriculums, the same time, the same professionalism, looks the same, so there is no difference between the civilians and the Marines, when it comes to curriculum development.*" Therefore, how impactful are educational level and field on EPME's organizational performance, efficiency and effectiveness? This is the heart of the research question. As Marine #2 puts it,

> *I don't want to always just bump it all the way down to a business terminology, but it's productivity. There's so many things that one delayed or missed cutoff date happens, everything from the logistics of printing the stuff, the subject-matter experts that are scheduled to come into review the material, to the editing department who's got all of this stuff to do, and it's one person, and she needs to block off the time. If you're late, you just set a whole – a whole thing in motion. So it is – I don't want to say productivity is our mission, but it's a big part of it, being on time.*

By capturing the observations of the individual Marines, their peers – both military and civilian – and EPME leadership on performance levels (quality, quantity, accuracy, speed, communication, motivation, problem solving, etc) and mentoring/training time savings of groups of Marines based on education level, one can better understand how education level and field impact EPME's ability to accomplish its mission. This will then assist in answering the question of whether the Marine Corps should invest in advanced education for enlisted personnel, in this case, at EPME.

1) High School Diploma/Minimal College

Many of the enlisted Marines who come to EPME are filling 8014 billets – those that can be filled by any Marine and that have no academic requirements. This opens the door for those with a high school diploma or minimal college credits to fill curriculum developer slots. "*That is a critical failure. . . . You cannot expect a generic Marine just to come in here*," states Team Member #1. Marine #7 notes, knowing what he knows now about all the researching and writing demanded of curriculum developers,

> *If you pulled – like I'm an infantryman by trade. And if you had pulled me out of an infantry battalion ten years ago and thrown me in as a curriculum developer here at EPME in the way EPME has developed right now, I would probably have struggled really bad because I would never have been prepared to show up and do this kind of stuff.*

The majority of those interviewed agree that having just a high school diploma or minimal college is not enough to prepare a Marine to be an effective curriculum developer at EPME.

Marines without a degree tend to place a burden on the organization because they struggle conceptually and with communication and require more mentoring than those with additional education, which impacts productivity. In some cases, they simply cannot adapt to EPME's fast paced environment and have to be reassigned. Team Member #3 discusses the impact on his productivity,

> *I had some pretty bad experience with a Marine that was sent to me . . . He had no prior -- he was not a prior, a former instructor. He had no knowledge about curriculum development. He had no college degree, and it was pretty hard to try to explain to him what was needed from him. Actually, the explaining was not that hard. It was hard for him to comprehend what was needed.*

Continuing later on in the interview, he explains, "*He couldn't grasp the concept of what an education was or what curriculum development was. It was very difficult for him. We tried everything. Mentoring, we tried everything, and he just wasn't able to grasp.*" In the end, this individual was transferred to another section. The impact on Team Member #3's productivity was significant; he explains, "[*M]y productivity -- because if I gave him something to do, I had to do it. I mean, after he did it, I have to do it again. I would give him three, four opportunities to do it, but I had a deadline to meet. So I ended up doing his work.*"
Leadership #3 explains the challenge faced conceptually,

> *Even after working for two years with a particular individual, I still [had] to go back and explain, "Look, this is why we do this. This is why it's done this way. This is what the literature says about why this is, and from a theory to practice perspective, this is the way that we actually need to do this" - after two years.*

There are challenges with both oral and written communication. For example, Marine #3 notes, "*[T]hey cannot stand toe to toe. They might have a good idea, but they don't know how to explain it in educational terms, especially when you're talking to a higher up.*" Leadership #4 points out,

> *I've been here long enough where we've even moved one Marine, because they didn't have a degree, and they were struggling, and versus them failing their mission, which no Marine wants to fail a mission. We moved them to prevent that because the individual is truly struggling just to write.*

These challenges demand a lot of internal resources and impact EPME's ability to accomplish mission. Marine #2 explains,

> *Think about the young Marine that shows up that maybe has an associate's degree. He's probably taken, what, six credit hours of English composition or something similar? That will slow his productivity down immensely because we are spending more time editing and drafting and rewriting.*

There are, of course, exceptions when a Marine's experiential background, familiarity with Marine Corps learning environment, or their individual attributes push them ahead. Marine #10 comments about a non-degreed Marine, "*He's one of the quickest curriculum developers that we have in the building, and he puts out top-notch information. He's got a high school diploma, and he's got experience. When he came here, we had to teach him. We taught him this is how the curriculum is to be developed.*" Through mentoring and training, this Marine has become a productive developer. However, as noted above in a previous section by Marine #1, such an occurrence is a rarity. And without a functioning process that allows selection based on these

factors, it becomes more luck of the draw. As Leadership #2 points out that "*if I could reach down and select people, the right people, even the nondegree would be useful, but I don't have that ability.*" Additionally, those Marines currently at EPME without a Bachelor's degree recognize that having more education is an enabler. According to Marine #10,

> *[E]ducation has tremendous value. Do I think that I could do my job better if I was better educated, like if I had a degree? Absolutely, I think I could, because I would have a better understanding of the process. But does that eliminate me from being able to do the job effectively? No it doesn't.*

2) Bachelor's Degree in Field Other than Education

Having a Bachelor's degree is recognized by all the participants as being a force multiplier in the curriculum development process. Leadership #2 states,

> *I mean, having uniform people developing curriculum that are college graduates is important, period, not just because of the nature of the job, and automatically having made it through at least a four-year program and attaining a bachelor's of arts, you are capable of doing most of what we require you to do. It's just automatic. There's no way you could have achieved that without having the skill set we need to develop curriculum.*

While "*it doesn't guarantee success, it just – it increases the likelihood of success,*" according to Marine #7. Five of the six Marines with bachelor's degrees have their degree in a field other than education, as defined by EPME. While not directly relevant to the curriculum development process, participants recognize that a Bachelor's degree brings with it certain skill sets germane to EPME's mission. Whereas a high school education is "*not quality everywhere you go,*" (Team Member #2), according to Leadership #4, an individual with a Bachelor's degree comes to the job with a known ability "*to research, write, be a critical thinker, [and] analyze material,*" all skills that are vital to the production of quality curriculum. Leadership #3 explains,

> *The intangibles of a degree, again, those research skills, ability to communicate both orally and in writing, the -- just the general way to look at the abstract concepts and think outside of a very predetermined course to really experiment and throw ideas around. These are all some of those intangible skills that getting a degree helps individuals obtain.*

Leadership #2 phrases it a bit more bluntly,

> *[T]he degree is useful . . . even a liberal arts degree proves you're not an idiot, if nothing else. If there's no other tangible skill set that goes along with that specific degree, you have a minimum threshold of research ability, communication skills.*

Leadership #3 has not seen the same skill sets resident in the non-degreed Marines. He notes,

> *The Marines with the degrees are doing research. They are meeting with professionals in the field. They are having these discussions. They are coming up with ideas. They are throwing things out there. They are having just things that you typically, in my experience, have not seen Marines without the degrees do.*

In addition, having a Bachelor's degree in a field other than education improves a Marine's productivity because it lessens the amount of time it takes to bring developers up to speed. While he still has to teach them the "*theoretical underpinnings of curriculum development*" when these Marines first arrive, Leadership #3 explains,

[S]imply because they have a lot of these skill sets already and they are adaptive and they are able to – and have proven themselves able to pick up on these materials by earning a college degree, it's a much shorter time to get them into our production loop and become a productive member of the actual team itself.

Later in the interview, he continues, *"I don't know why that distinction is there or how could you actually measure that distinction, but I definitely do see a higher level of productivity, and I have seen that this organization has been greatly impacted by having Marines with degrees in it."*

Having a Bachelor's degree also signifies experience with adult educational practices and a familiarity with education according to participants. Having engaged in classroom discussion and facilitated learning as is practiced in most resident Bachelor's degree programs, students have been exposed to some adult learning theories and teaching methods. Marine #7 explains,

I think having come directly from college . . . it was -- I -- at that time it was all the upper level classes I were -- I was in, were small groups. Focused on guided discussions and these things and incorporating adult learning theory into it. So that actually, my experience in it helped.

Furthermore, as Marine #9 points out,

[U]understanding an education and how the education process works at a university, being able to, I guess, talk with other people that, you know, have an education, to be able to at least have that confidence that, you know, you've gone through something similar to, you know, put yourself on at least equal terms or whatever the case may be helps you with your job and also provides credibility, especially when communicating and working with officers.

Despite the overall value of Bachelor's degrees in fields other than education to EPME, they lack two fundamental content areas for EPME: adult learning theories and the curriculum development process. When asked whether an accounting degree helped prepare him to work at EPME, one 8015 Marine responded "*absolutely not*." Another explained that, after obtaining a psychology degree, he "*wasn't prepared*" at all to write curriculum at EPME. A third with a degree in history, while feeling prepared because of the research and writing skills obtained through his degree, felt that he would have been better prepared with education coursework. He explains, *"I think that the biggest thing I could have done to be even more [prepared] was -- actually have been more education on actual education theory type stuff and curriculum development."* However, Marine #20 was able to see the connection between his business major and the process of curriculum development, noting

[E]ven though my degree is not in education, the processes of management and the application of development cycles, still are relevant. You know, I have a degree in business, but a development cycle is a development cycle. You're just plugging in different steps, and the concept of developing software is the same thing as developing curriculum, just in a different context, and so the application still applies. So I think the general concepts is really what is important.

Lastly, a Bachelor's degree cannot satisfy all capability gaps that Marines may have. As stated at the start of this section, a degree cannot guarantee but rather increases the likelihood of success at EPME. Thinking back to the three key capability areas (content development, translation of content into learning tools, and possession of individual attributes), if a Marine lacks the

experience to develop content or does not possess the individual attributes for success, no degree will compensate. Leadership #2 recalls,

> We had a Marine check in who . . . I guess he was in degree completion, undergrad, who is a shop steward MOS. He's one of the probably dozen or two dozen Marines in the Marine Corps that work in Navy Exchange. The problem there is that we have -- again, going back to broad, generalist writing curriculum on a whole range of different topics, when you have someone who is so out of the mainstream of the Marine Corps with such an off-the-beaten-path experience level and perspective on things, regardless of degree, he's at a disadvantage when we're talking logistics, MAGTF operations, ground combat; whereas somebody from one of the larger MOSs, you know, whether – okay, the guy is a logistician, but he served in an infantry battalion. The guy is a grunt, but he understands air support. The larger MOSs, you just have a perspective as a Marine, aside from being an educator.

3) Specific Degree in the Field of Education

Is the value in just having a degree or does the specific field matter? Most of the participants agree that having individuals with an academic background in the field of education is value added for EPME. Marine #4 notes, *"If you had people there that didn't have degrees in education, our curriculum would look like the way [the] Advanced Course curriculum does now because it was written by people without degrees, and it's kind of way far out there."* When asked to explain further, he states,

> It's just -- it's just not organized very well when you read it. When you read stuff, you usually like for it to flow a certain way, and it's just not organized well, and I think the testing, it's just like they read through the book and said, "Oh, I'll make that a test question. Let's write that. Oh, that's a good test question for that." It doesn't test the way it should.

According to Team Member #2,

> [W]hen it comes to developing curriculum, I really think it's going to be beneficial for them to have some kind of higher education or further training on how to do that, because there's a method to the madness. It's not just gathering a bunch of information and throwing it down. It's there for a reason. It's organized this way. You're using certain strategies and methods to organize the content that you're delivering, and if I didn't have my degree, I'd think like, "Oh, they're just taking a bunch of information and throwing it down," and if I just had a high school degree, I wouldn't understand why people are doing the things the way they're doing them.

Marines with an academic background in education recognize how their education contributes to their ability to do their jobs. When asked if he could envision doing his job without his degree, Marine #5 states, *"No. . . . I can do my job as -- I'm not going to give you -- I hate cliches, but I'm going to tell you I'm going to do the job because we're Marines, right? But would I be doing it effectively? No. No, I wouldn't be doing it effectively if I didn't have my degree in education."* Furthermore, having the academic credentials and understanding provide confidence and credibility to challenge the old way of thinking and of providing education to the Marine Corps. Marine #5 explains,

> For Marines, it's the hardest part, because Marines -- it's by design that they're created like, and everything else -- hey, everything that you learned, you already learned it by this time.

You should be good, and then you have this guy, me, coming over saying, "Look, man, you're going to have to engage your students on this. Come on, that's not how it's done.". . . "What are you talking about? I went to the drill field. I made Marines. I made Marines." Well, how can you argue with that? "I made Marines when I was in drill field, and you're telling me that you have a better way to teach people?" But if you don't have that guy in education, how do you -- how do you explain to him? . . . How do you challenge that? How do you -- how do you come over and say, "Well, you know, you can." Because you can't -- you can't put yourself in academic -- hey, you can't have an academic discussion with him is like, "Hey, look, listen" and discuss this, because you don't have that background.

Several participants mentioned how such an education would increase the efficiency of the organization. "*I think we'd be a lot more efficient. There wouldn't be quite so much of the figuring out how it's going to fit together,*" offers Team Member #1 when asked what would change if the enlisted personnel at EPME had a similar academic background as the Education Officer[19]. He continues,

I think we would just be more efficient with the entire process that we're doing, the whole -- from my perspective, the whole front-end analysis when we look at the stuff. Instead of saying, "Hey, let's try and start figuring this stuff out. I kind of want to do this," it just seems like we would have the ability to get to the brass tacks so much quicker instead of having that discovery process going through, which is not a bad thing, because you want to really eliminate the bad paths to go down in ways to development the curriculum.

Marine #5 agrees,

You have to have education degree . . . in education. And I say – and I say that because of, you know, I think it will be more efficient. . . . I just think it would be more efficient to the big picture. . . . because I think that you will be able to start the ground running when you get those kind of – that kind of background on you, because then everybody is speaking the same language.

Furthermore, it reduces the time needed to make them productive members of the team, according to Leadership #4. When asked how important degree field is, Leadership #4 responds, "*I'd love to have education, just because then they are able to arrive at the table with an understanding. . . . A Marine who hasn't been exposed to the education setting or educational theories or curriculum development, it takes them a lot longer.*"

Speaking the same language was one of the skills that several participants noted as a benefit from having an academic degree in the field of education. This facilitates communication and deepens collaboration as well as provides a common conceptual framework that promotes efficiency. When that is not shared, it can be overwhelming for curriculum developers and puts a burden on the organization. As Marine #3 points out, "*But to be able to discuss learning theory and to understand what we're talking about when we say Kilpatrick or Bloom and it's going up and over your head. It's too much.*" Later in the interview, he continues,

They don't understand what blended learning is, Socratic questioning, some of the absolute basic things that even someone with a bachelor's degree in education understands. You know, you just sit there and talk about Kilpatrick's levels or you talk about Bloom's, and

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[19] Education officers are required to have an advanced degree in the field of education.

they're like, "Bloom's? What are you talking about?" Bloom's. And then you have to break down verbs and how to establish objectives, and then they're kind of like, "Huh? What do you mean?" And then you go, "Well, this has -- the objective has to tie to the evaluation. The evaluation has to tie here." So it takes a huge process and a lot of stress.

An 8015 Marine with a degree in a field other than education states,

[A] degree in education is always a good thing. . . . It just brings that -- everybody's speaking the same language. . . . I mean, it's good to be speaking the same language, you know, and . . . somebody's talking to me about educational theory -- they're going to have to show me the paper, so I can read it myself, so I can be able to apply those same concepts and theories, the same.

When all are on the same page, speaking the same language, it helps, as Leadership #3 points out, "*From the minute that he walked in the door, I was able to talk with him about the theories of curriculum development. He knew exactly what I was talking about.*"

One theme that emerged under the value of the specific field of education is that "you don't know what you don't know." To explain, those without academic experience and a theoretical background are not aware of their deficiencies or that there may be a different, more effective way of doing things. They are producing; therefore, it must be working. When asked to explain further his statement "you don't know what you don't know" when discussing the value of education, Team Member #1 states, "*Somebody referenced it to the iPad out there. . . . The American public did not realize they wanted the iPad until the iPad was presented to them. . . . So until you get the exposure, it is going to be difficult to say, 'Hey, I don't need that.'*" Team Member #2 describes it as follows,

The best way I can describe it is somebody can tell me how to do something, and I can do it to the best of my abilities how I think it's supposed to be done, but just because it's how I think it's supposed to be done doesn't mean it's the right way. And I think a lot of that might be going on.

Marine #5 adds, "*when you go to the academies and you see – see things that we're – that supposed to be education, if you're an educator, you'll be able to – you'll be able to 'Hey, that's not.' But if you're not [an educator], you're not going to be able to tell.*" Marine #1 explains that the specific degree field opened up an entirely different understanding of education and how to educate, and now he involves different strategies, resources, and concepts into his curricula, noting,

I never would have thought about introducing doctors to the Marine environment. I would have never thought about technology. I would have never thought about ethics. I would never have thought about critical thinking, how – how, you know – how to – what are the questions to ask in order to get them to critically think. I would have never known those things. And I know my partner, we would have been stuck in what we learned and how we learned in the Marine Corps and thinking that was the best way to learn. So I would have never – I don't think I would have been able to see that.

The next question is whether the level of the education degree matters with regard to organizational performance. By understanding EPME's experience with those with both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in the field of education, one can get a step closer to better understanding the capability requirement at EPME.

a. Bachelor's Degree in Field of Education

The majority of participants agree that a Bachelor's degree in the field of education brings added benefit to the organization beyond just any Bachelor's degree. A Bachelor's degree in the field of education combines the skill sets offered through undergraduate education with the education content. According to Marine #3, the value lies in productivity. *"It's very important,"* he notes, because when Marines arrive at EPME, immediately *"you have to be able to hit the ground running."* and they cannot do this unless they have already learned how to develop curriculum. Leadership #4 adds, "*[I]f they come able to talk and walk the walk, obviously that's going to give us more ability to employ them for the full 3 years versus the time spent training them up."* When asked if he was prepared to hit the ground running, Marine #5, who has a degree in the field of education, responds,

> *Oh, yeah. Oh, in education, for me, it made a huge difference, because I was able to align. I was able to see, and when they told me, "Okay, this is what we're teaching," I already knew about it, because my major was education. Secondary was my content. Major in education, I already knew the classroom environment. When they talk about the classroom environment, that I already knew about strategies. I already knew about the learner, you know, the things that you face with a learner, the different ways you can tap into the cognitive, the difference between the cognitive, the affective domain, and the psychomotor domain when you're trying to reach a student. So I already knew all about this, and it was much easier for me when they were talking.*

Furthermore, the organization did not have to send him to the curriculum developer's course, reducing training time. Leadership #3 offers his experience of working with a Marine with an education degree and one with a degree in another field to demonstrate the value he sees from the Bachelor's degree in the field of education,

> *[The] Marine that has the degree in [education] has been phenomenal in the Marine's performance. So just that degree in education, right off the bat, I'm able to talk, again, the learning objectives outline the assessments, because in that teacher education that he received.., they had a good portion of it cover curriculum development. So when I start talking about the theoretical underpinnings of curriculum development, he gets it right off the bat. I don't have to teach him new vocabulary, a new language, a new construct or theories, where I suppose the individual with a Bachelors degree in [another field] never heard this stuff before. So yes, they have an ability to write, to communicate, to research, but the curriculum development process is completely lost to them.*

Leadership #3 does add, however, that this Bachelor's degree in education has an area of concentration that is "*not ideal, because I . . . would prefer the curriculum development.*" A program that is fully focused on creating curriculum versus a specialization in a content field, like social science, English, or mathematics, would better suit EPME. It is important to keep in mind the discussion from the section, **Challenges with the Tools**, on the limitations of the Bachelor's degree in the field of education. Those will not be reiterated here. As noted in that section, Marine #9's education degree was in human services. When asked if that degree prepared him for a curriculum developer's position, he responds, "*I don't believe my degree did.*"

b. Master's Degree in Education

Many of the participants agreed that an advanced degree in education brings benefits to EPME above and beyond anything a Bachelor's degree can offer. First and foremost, with an advanced degree in education, one can specialize in adult learning or curriculum development, both of which are directly in line with EPME's requirements. Leadership #1 explains,

If we can get someone who is at the master's level, what they are teaching at a graduate school, is the adult learning. They already -- if you think of it for high school teachers, they already have a bachelor's degree in whatever they want, so they know the subject area, whether it be math or English or whatever, and now they're going to go to grad school and learn the education part of it.

An advanced degree in education teaches you "*how to get today's generation of adult learners to interact and to learn*" (Marine #3). This is important because, as Marine #3 further notes, "*I don't want to look at the -- the academies as being high school. These aren't high school kids anymore. These are adults. We're doing adult learning, and having that master's degree really focuses in on those adult learners.*" It is critical that the focus area be narrowly defined on adult learning or curriculum development. There is a potential to encounter similar challenges faced with the Bachelor's degree at the Master's level, in that there are multiple varieties of Master's in the field of education. For example, education leadership prepares individuals for a career in school administration, others for school counseling, and others for particular fields like reading. Marine #9, whose degree in human services fell under the Department of Education, explains,

[I]t needs to be a very specific thing that they're looking for or a very specific set of skills that they would be looking for. I would hope that it wouldn't just be a master's in education, you know, because -- like I got an education degree, but I'm going to fill this position, but it really doesn't fit, you know, what I'm going to be doing at this point. If I had been thrown into a curriculum developer's position, I'd be way behind the power curve at this point. So I think with any of the degree programs, they should try to, I think, fine-tune it down to more of a -- instead of a general degree, have a specific thing that you're really looking for, because on, say, education, education is a broad, broad range of degrees.

An advanced degree also provides in depth exposure to current educational philosophy, theory and teaching strategies. Marine #3 noted the lack of depth in the Bachelor's degree in education programs, that it provides only introductory level understanding of learning theories, stating "*you know, my bachelor's being so – such a broad area of education and just getting, just hit with all the learning theories.*" He explains the impact of this, as "*You don't know enough to understand what you are doing.*" In contrast, in a Master's program, students learn through in depth study about "*methods of educational research, theories and practices of curriculum development, the adult learning.., evaluations...*" (Marine #1). Marine #1 comments, "*What my master's degree opened me up to was this whole new teaching philosophy and, you know, how you can use the learning environment to your advantage.*" In addition, an advanced degree allows students to "*go to the next step, which is the overall scheme of things, how do -- how do you evaluate a curriculum at a greater level, not just on [a] class level and . . . what kind of data do you need to make a curriculum, you know, to better your curriculum*" (Marine #5). Marine #9 adds that an advanced degree would allow him "*to theorize and understand how [the curriculum] would be implemented in the academies.*"

Due to the specificity and depth of the education provided, curriculum developers with advanced degrees arrive at EPME well prepared and ready to hit the ground running. Therefore, the impact on organizational performance and productivity is positive. When asked if he saw a difference in the level of preparedness of those Marines with advanced degrees and those without, Leadership #1 states that the difference is noteworthy,

> *right from the very beginning, because they've already written lesson plans. . . . You don't have to go down and break down simple things. You don't have to say this is Bloom's Taxonomy. Yeah, they're much more prepared to hit the ground running and engage right away. Usually, they're excited and can't wait to start making their own stamp on the lessons.*

These Marines also tend to lessen the need for long term mentoring and training. Marine #1 notes,

> *I mean, I came in with a lot of knowledge already, so I didn't really need to be mentored or coached or shown the curriculum development process, because I already knew it. I already knew how they were operating; whereas, other -- other folks that came in, you know, they needed an extensive amount of this is how we do business. . . . I was confident coming here, yeah. I was confident, really confident coming in.*

And lastly, Team Member #1 points out the difference in quality of work that he sees coming from those with Master's degrees, "*Those guys that have the master's here, I think they're sharp people to begin with, and we have enhanced what they already are. But the quality of their work is far superior.*"

Additionally, Marines coming to EPME with a graduate degree in education have developed higher order skills. This is important because, as discussed in the above section – **Translating knowledge into learning tools**, to be an effective curriculum developer at EPME, Marines need to be able think critically, write clearly and research, as well as inspire critical thinking in others. According to Marine #2, Marines with advanced degrees "*have a great foundation and better critical thinking skills.*" He continues, *"Having that graduate degree also ensures that they can write well, [which is important] because that's another slow point for our Marines that come here."* A higher level of education also brings with it more experience with research, and "*you definitely have to know how and where to find that information*" (Team Member #4). Advanced degrees also have provided certain curriculum developers at EPME with the tools to really think outside the box. Leadership #3 comments,

> *I have two [Marines] who have master's degrees who not only have exceeded expectations in leading curriculum development teams, but they also have developed our faculty advisor's course and are responsible for preparing our instructors that we send out to our regional academies to actually be teachers in our academies.*

As discussed above, the organizational impact of the faculty advisors course on EPME and the Marine Corps as a whole is quite significant. It is very unlikely the course would exist in its current form if its designers had not been equipped with advanced degrees.

Finally, having an advanced degree allows the curriculum developers to communicate clearly with their colleagues, many of whom have advanced degrees. According to Leadership #4, "*when you're in this environment and developing curriculum, it will serve the Marine better to*

have the same education requirements as their civilian counterpart[20] to be able to talk and discuss, to work collaboratively as a team." In addition, an advanced degree makes it easier for the Marines to communicate with EPME leadership as well as the various officers they interact with in the process of researching and building curriculum. Marine #3 explains,

That master's degree, I think, is vital to be able to speak intelligently to the director, the deputy director, the operations manager that we have here, and all the way up. We just don't deal with our inner selves here. We are spread out, talking to you all, CAOCL, talking to TECOM. If you don't know that language, they're going to push you aside, and I think that language, that master's degree is vital.

Should the Marine Corps invest in these capabilities?

The curricula that EPME creates impact the whole of the Marine Corps. The Marine Corps "*[looks] toward EPME as the – the tool that they can use to fix all the problems within the Marine Corps, whether it be leadership, communication, warfighting, because we touch every Marine throughout their career*" (Marine #2). Since every enlisted Marine comes through the academies and courses at some point throughout his/her career, what EPME does "*is very important for the shaping of the Marine Corps in the future, the way we fight, the way our Marines are better educated*" (Marine #10). Furthermore, it is important, in Marine #20's words,

because, as we move, and as we've seen, through the various conflicts we have, we're putting more and more responsibility on our young Marines, especially enlisted Marines, and we're asking them to do more, with less, and, you know, at the age of 20, we're asking young NCOs and . . . staff NCOs to make some critical decisions that sometimes . . . can have disastrous effects. So providing them the education to be able to make those sound, timely decisions, I think, is important.

The challenge is the time available, as Marine #2 explains,

[L]ook at an entire Marine's career from cradle to grave. Their only opportunity for education on the government dime is to attend these little courses that we have. That's it. So through a Marine's career, if he attended every course from a two-week corporal's course when he's a young 20-year-old all the way up to when he gets here at the SEPME course, if you added up all those weeks, you are looking at 27 weeks over a 22-year career. . . . You have six weeks with them. How are you going to spend the six weeks? I mean, of course, everyone would say we want more time, we want more time. You're not going to get more time, especially in today's day and age, but if you maximize the amount of time you have by utilizing the learning environment to the fullest potential that it could be, putting the sharpest, smartest people we have in front of them for the six weeks, we can effect change.

The role of the curriculum developer in this process is critical to ensuring the Marine Corps gets the capabilities within the enlisted force it needs to carry out its mission. As a curriculum developer,

[Y]our words mean something. And what you put together as a master lesson file means something to that student. So it means something to that faculty advisor. So you're not just -- you're not just one little person in this pie. You're impacting 200,000 plus Marines when

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[20] As noted the section, **Organizational tools to create staff**, civilian curriculum developers at EPME are required to have a Master's degree in the field of education.

they go through the resident course. So it's important that we get the right guy here or gal here with the right credentials to put out a good product. (Marine #1)

But in terms of education level and field, what are the right credentials? When considering what the requirement should look like, the participants' answers covered the entire spectrum from there should be no education requirement to every position should have a Marine with a Master's degree in the field of education. The former, while represented, was not a popular response. Most agreed that having an academic background was critical to the curriculum developer's ability to advance EPME's mission. When it came to discerning whether it should be a Bachelor's in any field, a Bachelor's or Master's degree in education, or a mixture, that is where most of the discussion was concentrated.

At the most basic level, the majority of participants felt that the more education the curriculum developers have, the better they are able to advance EPME's mission. For example, Marine #7 asserts that,

If you had an EPME and there was no requirement for any specific education background whatsoever, I think... I mean I'm not saying it would be entirely bad. But I think the quality of the product would be less. And the more you invest in the – say the Marine who's actually producing the product, the greater the product is going to be.

When considering the actual level and field of education required, many of the participants felt that a rigorous Bachelor's degree, regardless of major, is a good thing for a curriculum developer to have because *"you know how to read, write and obviously you have some basic understanding of professional education"* (Marine #7). Marine #2 corroborates this point by saying,

[T]hose Marines that do have an undergraduate degree – I don't want to use "from the right schools," but from schools that are well accredited generally come here with the writing and communication skills necessary to succeed as a curriculum developer, much better than someone without.

While many of the participants felt that a Bachelor's in any field is good, the majority asserted that a more specific degree in education is even better preparation for curriculum development. Leadership #3 makes this point by saying that if he were 'king for a day', *"every Marine that worked back here would have a Bachelor's degree, first and foremost. If I then had the ability to shape the total force the way I wanted to, everyone would have a Bachelor's degree in education with that concentration in curriculum development."* Marine #6 suggests that *"If you have an education degree and come to work at EPME, then that would benefit EPME a whole lot more than – right now, we have four or five different degrees, back there, and it's kind of difficult at times."* Marine #7 agrees, stating *"I think if I were to have [an education academic background], and I think if everybody were to have some sort of actual education background, it would strengthen . . . and definitely improve the product."*

Some participants did clearly feel that a specific Bachelor's in education is enough. For example, in discussing the level and type of degree most appropriate for curriculum developers, Leadership #3 argues that, *"the distinction between the Bachelor's and the Master's isn't*

necessary in as much as the right degree - and definitely a degree over the non-degree." Marine #9 agrees, *"I would think a bachelor's degree . . . would be sufficient."*

However, the majority felt that a specific advanced degree in education is good or even preferable preparation because of its greater depth and narrower focus, the capabilities it provides Marines, and the limitations associated with finding an appropriate Bachelor's degree program in education (see section, **Challenges with the tools**, for more details on this last point). Marine #1 explains, *"All I know is that if I didn't have that knowledge that my master's degree gave me, I would have been – it would have been very hard for me to adapt and be able to create curriculum in this fast-paced world that we have here."* Team Member #2 shares this sentiment,

> *If I didn't have my master's degree, I seriously would not know how to do my job. My background is in [a different field] . . . I had no idea what instructional design was, instructional technology. I didn't know that there was a special way to develop curriculum, and if I didn't have that degree, I wouldn't have – I wouldn't know how to do my job now.*

Marine #3 emphasizes the value of curriculum developers[21] having advanced capabilities by saying,

> *If my writer was not – did not have a master's degree in education, I would be swimming right now with both hands just barely above the water.*
>
> *. . . .*
>
> *[W]without her, I mean, it would just – it would be crazy.*

Many participants felt that a mix of degrees would be appropriate for the curriculum developers, with some holding specific advanced degrees and others just a Bachelor's in education, depending on their exact position and responsibilities. As an example, Marine #3 says that,

> *Master's degrees would be wonderful. I think if you have a Master's degree that would be the level of the functional area manager. Writers and so forth, Bachelor's degrees would be fine, because you are under the guidance of someone with a Master's degree, and I think that would be – that would be fine.*

It is one thing for the organization to seek out Marines who currently have advanced degrees, it is another to have the Marine Corps pay for it in terms of time away from the fleet, moving costs, and associated school costs[22]. When asked if the Marine Corps should invest in advanced

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[21] In this case Marine #3 is discussing his civilian counterpart on his two-person team.

[22] Through Marine Corps funded education, Marines are responsible for tuition costs for advanced degrees in the fields of education and history and bachelor's degrees under the SNCO DCP, as there are no Department of Defense (DoD) schools to develop such capabilities. For Master's degrees in fields for which there are Department of Defense schools, tuition is covered by the individual service. For more information, please see the Marine Corps orders for the SNCO Degree Completion Program (MCO 1560.21D) and the two officer education programs (MCO 1520.9G – Special Education Program and MCO 1560.19E – Advanced Degree Program), DoD Instruction 1322.10, dated 29 April 2008, Policy on Graduate Education for Military Officers, and OPNAV Instruction 1520.23B, dated 1 October 1991, Graduate Education.

degrees, 14 of the 19 participants explicitly said yes[23]. Marine #7 captures the majority's sentiment when he says, "*I think it's definitely worthwhile.*" He continues, providing his rationale,

> *[T]he more you invest in the -- say the Marine who's actually producing the product, the greater the product is going to be. I think if we had every Marine within EPME was a -- had an advanced degree in education, I think it'd be great. I think it would be -- I don't know. I couldn't imagine. Because I just -- I think it'd be -- I would say successful. But I don't want to say too successful. It'd just be really overachievers I guess.*

Leadership #4 frames it as a responsibility of the Corps,

> *Obviously, I think they should because, obviously . . . you have to train your force. You have to educate your force, and these individuals are part of that process. The ones with advanced degrees are writing that curriculum for those Marines that come to the professional military education, and it impacts the Marine Corps overall in the fact of a better educated force is obviously a better force for you.*

When asked why it is a good investment, Marine #5 explains,

> *Because . . . we need it. We need it. . . . [W]e don't have the assets that the other schools have, EWS. I mean, every instructor that goes there already has a 4-year degree. Command and Staff College. Probably a Master's degree. War college. Doctors are teaching them. So if there's anybody that needs it, it's us, because we're -- we're doing a lot with little right now, you know.*

Marine #1 agrees, adding "*I mean, it's needed. . . [I]f we are trying to build strategic thinkers, the only way they're going to do that is if they invest the right folks here to develop the curriculum. So . . . it is an absolute must.*" "*It is important to have a couple of those narrow experts,*" explains Marine #20, "*because that's what a Master's degree individual is, someone who has narrowed their field of research. I think that is important, because that helps to provide a certain level of expertise.*" Team Member #2 provides,

> *because the quality of our curriculum is – it's going to be so much better, and I think Marines that have that degree and are passionate about taking care of other Marines are going to just pump out work that's awesome. And those Marines that are out in the fleet. . . they're going to really get a good education, what they're supposed to get for their PME.*

When asked if it is worth the cost, the answers were a bit more reserved. Most said, yes. Marine #20 captures this sentiment, stating "*Oh, I definitely think so. I think this is a game changer for the institution.*" Marine #1 agrees, "*I would definitely say it is worth the squeeze to get a guy here with a master's degree in education for the Marine Corps. It would definitely benefit the curriculum.*" However, participants, while thinking it was worth the cost, also emphasized the need to ensure the right people are selected and that the capabilities are used appropriately. Marine #1 raises concerns about the selection process, explaining,

> *I just think that whatever program is out there, that they look at . . . those categories or . . . selection process appropriately. So I believe that in order to get the right guy here, you know, they have to have . . . a certain amount of. . . concentration in a certain degree,*

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[23] Of the other five, two explicitly said no; the other three were asked about investing in Bachelor's or Master's degrees and thus, their responses could not be attributed to a particular degree. Other data indicate that one felt Bachelor's level was sufficient (resoundingly worth the investment); one thought it was great if everyone had a master's degree; and one was not sure as to appropriate degree level.

whether it's instruction, whether it's curriculum, whether it's technology, whether it's education, but it all needs to be revolved around curriculum development. That's what it needs to be revolved around. And I believe that is what the program is missing somewhat, and there has to be -- on top of that, there needs to be somebody here at EPME involved in that process to where they're . . . a part of the selection process, making sure that . . . that guy or gal has the right tools before they're accepted on the program. So that's where I believe we're a little bit faltering.

Leadership #2 shares this sentiment, emphasizing the need to get the right person into the education program,

I would say "all things being equal," the advantage of a postgraduate education degree is that the individual has already gotten an undergraduate degree, presumably somewhere else in the liberal arts, and with the addition of the postgraduate education degree, that's a pretty unique and valuable skill set for us, probably more so than an education undergraduate, which I guess there's not that many of anyway. So I guess what I'm saying is the "all things being equal" statement, it's not just the degree. It's getting the right person into the school seat for the degree, so that when they pop out on the other end . . . they are what we want.

Failing to use the capabilities correctly makes it not worth the cost, as Team Member #1 explains,

[T]he critical failure is getting these -- one, the screening process has to be great, but, two, they have to be -- that payback to where they have to be actually using that degree, not stuck someplace like, "Well, it's a billet where it's" -- no. That's a waste of taxpayer dollars. It really is, and we see it over across the street over there with what they're doing with some of the education officers over there. It's a waste of money. It's a waste of time. It's a waste of resources.

Therefore, while most agree these capabilities are a sound investment, they only are worth the cost if the requirement, selection, and use of the capabilities are well managed.

Section 4: Results

Findings

There are several key findings[24] in this assessment.

    a.   The Requirement

. . . our civilian counterparts or ISSs are required to have a graduate degree in specific fields, yet we put a Marine on the desk right next to them with a GED and say, "You're responsible for producing just as much as this person." I don't know if that's the right way of doing things.

<div align="right">Marine #2</div>

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[24] As noted in the section, **Sample**, above, the small sample size limits the ability to draw representative conclusions for the Marine Corps as an institution; however, these findings offer professional observations and insights into the impact that advanced education can have on an individual organization and its ability to accomplish its mission. When combined with other organizational assessments in the future, it may be possible at that time to draw representative conclusions.

EPME's mission is to create impactful curricula to provoke critical thinking, inspire ethical leadership, and prompt decisive action from enlisted Marines of all ranks. Such curricula demand curriculum developers intimately familiar with the enlisted Marines' reality and the educational theories and techniques that enable the adult learners to transcend the limitations of their own understanding to seek solutions to the complex challenges facing Marines in the field. The idea that any Marine can be a teacher or develop effective teaching materials is reflective of the "Every Marine a Rifleman" concept, and manpower selection practices mirror this thought process; however, in contrast, these data present the notion of an effective curriculum developer and educator as someone who possesses a specialized mix of capabilities, to include Marine Corps experience, theoretical and methodological preparation, and specific personal attributes. The ideal is having this specialized capability resident within the enlisted force at EPME. EPME has the enlisted billets available and seeks a quality spread of MOS capability to ensure subject matter expertise.

However, there still is a capability gap when it comes to translating a Marine's expertise into educational materials, especially effective materials to be delivered at resident school houses by a variety of different people, as currently takes place with EPME. This requires a unique, higher level understanding of the adult learner and those educational theories and tools designed to enrich the adult learning environment, which in turn comes through exposure to education, and specifically, to the field of education. Any education is better than none, as it fosters the development and sharpening of critical skills; however, the **true value comes when the learning is in the specific field of adult learning theories/methods and curriculum development. Such education significantly enhances organizational performance –in terms of both efficiency/productivity and effectiveness of the product.**

The degree level also matters. **Both a Bachelor's and Master's in education serve EPME well**, as they not only provide an informed staff but also demonstrate an individual's desire to educate[25], an attribute identified as a key to success at EPME. **However, there are some challenges with the Bachelor's degree in education** that make it less attractive as an organizational tool for EPME. Were these to be resolved, the Bachelor's degree in education would become a more useful tool to help EPME meet its requirements. **The Master's degree in adult learning theory or curriculum development hits the bulls-eye on EPME's requirement**, allowing Marines to elevate the complexity of the curriculum, strategically approach each individual lesson, and seek creative solutions to EPME's challenges.

b.   Requirements within EPME's Organizational Structure

Does every enlisted position at EPME need a Master's degree? No. The course coordinator positions, filled by enlisted personnel, do not require such a degree. Those positions require more logistical and administrative skills than an educational and theoretical orientation. Course

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[25] This does not mean that others do not have a desire to educate; however, a degree in education is a visible indicator of those dedicated to education.

coordinators would benefit from an undergraduate degree in any field for the skills gained; however, it should not be a requirement.

When it comes to the curriculum developer positions and those functional area managers who supervise the curriculum developer teams, however, the answer is more nuanced. **There is a strong argument that all curriculum developer and functional area manager uniformed positions be filled by enlisted personnel with advanced degrees**. While this was not the clear recommendation from all participants, other indicators support it. EPME civilian personnel in equivalent positions are required to have advanced degrees in instructional design or technology, and the expectations for productivity are the same. This would suggest that those in the curriculum developer position and those managing them (functional area managers) should have at a minimum an advanced degree to be considered qualified for the job. Furthermore, there was much discussion on the need to elevate the enlisted education to that of the officer because of the operational demands facing enlisted personnel. Marine #3 states, "*We have Ph.D.s developing the officers. Why shouldn't we have at least Master's degrees developing our enlisted personnel curriculum?*" This raises a good question. On the officer side, those with academic specializations in their respective fields develop and deliver materials in that field. The challenge facing EPME is somewhat different. These Marines are expected to develop curricula across all fields in a way that is accessible for those without the necessary teaching credentials to deliver. This requires a certain level of proficiency in both the field and the practice of education, thus, the emphasis on the need for both enlisted experience and exposure to educational theory and method.

There is also a strong argument for a blended approach, having a hierarchical capability structure. Positioning capabilities astutely throughout the organization maximizes the organizational return on investment, creates organizational efficiencies, and improves outcome effectiveness. Improperly employing capabilities is a waste of resources and a strain on the organization and negatively impacts organizational performance. Having those enlisted with advanced degrees overseeing and managing teams of civilians with advanced degrees and enlisted with bachelor's degrees would provide each team with the theoretical framework and vision, skills, and tools necessary to accomplish the job. This assumes finding sufficient available and appropriate Bachelor's programs in the field of education or would require more internal dedication of resources to train and mentor if the Marines came in with a Bachelor's degree in a field other than education. Additionally, it would depend on full staffing, which currently is not the reality. Without full staffing, the strain on the organization is considerable and often leads to employment of resources based on gapped positions versus organizational efficiency and effectiveness. Furthermore, several of those who stated that a bachelor's degree was sufficient either supported as desirable the placing of advanced degrees in certain positions or saw the value of the education officer position. As stated earlier, this billet currently is not officially in EPME's T/O; therefore, the capability brought by the current education officer is not structurally guaranteed.

There is a strong argument against employing Marines with only a high school diploma as curriculum developers. Such Marines, when sent to EPME, may be better used in the course coordinator positions. Based on the discussions with participants, Marines without additional

education place a significant burden on the organization. Not only does the organization have to invest considerably in the development of these individuals and management of their work, it also at times has to reposition them within EPME or send them to another organization. While there will always be those special individuals who, based on their Marine Corps experience or individual attributes, can adapt, they will still be limited by what they do not know. Consider the comparison of two individuals describing the role of the curriculum developer:

But the real educator's idea is that they have effected change. So a curriculum developer that can present curriculum where they are getting the student to change their way of thinking, that is key, and not anybody can come in and understand that. They have to really understand what the affective domain is, what the behavioral domain is, what the cognitive domain is, and how to enhance the learning environment to get them to possibly change the way they're thinking. That's what the -- that's what this school environment is about. It's -- it's getting them to think outside the box. You know, it's not the old way where I was trained, do this, like this, like exactly how I said and you'll be a good leader. No, it's not like that anymore. It's I want to know why, why do you think like that, what -- what led you to that process. And those questions are thrown in there by the curriculum developer, not by the faculty advisor.

A Marine with an advanced degree

I think once they learn the [curriculum development] process and steps on the first class they write, then it doesn't change. So once you know it, it stays the same all the way through, so -- and that's what you got editors and everybody else to help you out with, so –

A Non-degreed Marine

Both are producing curriculum. As quoted in a previous section, Leadership #1 notes,
We need individuals who can start thinking and try to figure out how do we get that into a lesson plan where we can challenge people beyond the comfort level and get them to think critically and come up with new solutions on their own where we are not telling them this is exactly what's going to happen and do it exactly as we tell you to do it.

When one considers this and the importance and enormity of EPME's task, it seems that the approach of the Marine with the advanced degree rather than the non-degreed Marine may serve EPME's mission more efficiently and effectively and is more in line with EPME's educational philosophy. It is not that those without degrees lack abilities, work ethic, adaptability, or experience. What they lack is an academic foundation, both in terms of the skills acquired and educational theory and method. Marines without degrees should be expected neither to possess these nor to perform at the same level of proficiency or productivity as those who do possess the academic background. However, currently, EPME has to hold Marines without degrees to these expectations because it must accomplish its mission with available staff.

c. Selection Process

The selection process is the key to ensuring the right people with the right experience, credentials, and attributes are sent to EPME, and it is broken. The section, **Challenges with the tools**, highlights the problems within the current system. This process does not maximize the Marine Corps' return on investment because it is not aligning skills and learning with

organizational needs. If the selection process remains as it presently is, the burden to develop the capability will continue to fall on EPME, redirecting scarce resources away from their mission. The currently available internal tools are insufficient to address the capability gap. The curriculum developer's course, the only available course for new arrivals, is of marginal value, and the in-house professional development sessions, while useful, are not in-depth enough to fill the gaps. Therefore, as currently constructed, the selection process results in strained human resources and potentially negatively impacts the quality of the output. The organization relies on the Marine Corps culture to press ahead, as Marine #1 states when asked about the burden of mentoring a new arrival without a background in education,

> Well, you know, I'm a Marine, so we're just going to make it happen. You know what I mean? We're going to work 24 hours a day in order to make it happen, so it didn't really impact my timelines. I met my timelines. I think I had a few more gray hair than normal days doing that.

However, while this might work in the short term, it is a potentially short sighted solution being inflicted on Marines who are always prepared to go the extra mile.

Adding the requirement of a Master's degree in education to key organizational billets would help mitigate some of these issues. When asked about the need for a filtering system to address some of the deficiencies in the selection process, Marine #2 states, "*I don't think it's necessary if, let's say, that this [SNCO Advanced Degree Program] was to go forward and we would have an advanced degree completion program for Marines. That is the filtering system. If you can pass the curriculum there, you sure as well can develop curriculum for us.*" However, there is no institutional mechanism to allow EPME to establish this requirement nor for enlisted personnel to gain a Master's degree in education to fill the requirement.

Conclusions

EPME is charged with developing and delivering the education for the enlisted force throughout the career continuum; however, the resources available to develop the materials do not match the requirement. Expectations that the education will be effective without investing the appropriate capabilities in those developing it are ungrounded and unrealistic, strain the organization and the individuals within, and reduce the effectiveness of the curriculum. Marine Corps culture and individual commitment and drive will push Marines as far as possible, but for many Marines assigned to EPME, they are still limited by what they do not know, and this drains the limited organizational resources, at times puts a black stain on the career of great Marine, and does not optimize curricular effectiveness. Relying on "luck of the draw" resource management is challenging for an organization that has a high priority, time sensitive mission that impacts the total force. However, when the right capabilities show up, it is a game changer for the organization and for those delivering and receiving the curriculum.

This assessment shows that education field and level matter. Bachelor's degrees in any field add value; Bachelor's degrees in the field of education add more value; and Master's degrees in education add the most. The Marine Corps has stated that enlisted education is important. One Marine notes, "*I think Emerson said, 'I can't hear you over your actions.*" Marine #3 adds, "*You are wanting a smarter Marine Corps, and we're one of the Commandant's*

top five. . . . If you say it is important, then we need to develop Marines, smarter Marines, and invest in the programs. . . . so we can take the education up to where it needs to be." **Whether it is a global requirement or a selective requirement for curriculum developers and functional area managers, it is one that requires attention and action from Marine Corps leadership.** EPME's reach into the Corps is significant and its potential to effect global change within the organization considerable. Maximizing its impact by investing in the small number of individuals creating the materials that go out to the force will have a long term influence on the development of the future leaders of the Corps.

Recommended Actions

    a.   Interim solutions

There are certain actions that can be taken immediately as interim solutions to mitigate some of the challenges identified within this assessment. Currently, two of the documents that serve to inform enlisted Marines about the requirement for Bachelor's in education and the SNCO Degree Completion Program – the MOS Manual and the MARADMIN released soliciting candidates – are not being used to their fullest potential. As written, the MOS Manual entry for MOS 8015 lacks language about curriculum development or adult learning theory and does not mention the billets at EPME. Therefore, Marines looking to see what the requirements are for the MOS 8015 education specialty will assume that the following are their duties:

    (1) Advise/Assist the Academic Officer and Director of Formal School in assigning and supervising formal school course teams, coordinate and conduct formal/informal observations of instructors, and maintain instructor training records.
    (2) Coordinate the conduct of Course Content Review Boards (CCRB) and coordinate revision of all courseware to include master lesson files, lesson plans, and instructional methodology/materials.
    (3) Provide education counseling and administer test to military personnel.[26]
By expanding this language to include EPME's needs and including potential billets at EPME, Marines will better understand the requirement and can use this as a guide when selecting courses. **Therefore, we recommend that EPME draft and submit a change request for this MOS to update the language.**

The MARADMIN that solicits candidates to complete their Bachelor's degrees has flexibility in language inclusion; however, this is not being used for the degree field of education. In the most recent solicitation, dated 12 April 2012, four degree fields were listed: business, safety, education, and psychology.[27] In it, both the business and safety entries have language clarifying the areas of emphasis being sought. For business, there is an emphasis in accounting or financial management; for safety, environmental safety, environmental health management, occupational safety, safety management, waste management or hazardous material and waste control. Furthermore, for the business degree field, paragraph 4 adds additional requirements for

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[26] Excerpt taken from the 2011 MOS Manual, p. 3 - 590.
[27] MCBUL 1560. Fiscal Year 2012 (FY12) Staff Noncommissioned Officer Degree Completion Program (SNCODCP) Selection Board, MARADMIN 208/12, dated 12 April 2012.

particular course work. For education, there is no additional language informing candidates that the education degrees should emphasize adult learning theory, teaching methods, or curriculum development or that there is an additional requirement of documenting needed credit hours in curriculum development, for example. **We recommend that EPME work with M&RA to add such language, as appropriate to the particular field of education, for each solicitation MARADMIN.**

Additionally, **we also recommend that M&RA extend the opportunity to participate in specific selection boards to those organizations that hold the requirements to ensure the candidates and course of study selected match organizational requirements**. It would also allow the organization to establish a relationship with the students in advance of their going to school. Currently, either the organizations are excluded from or uninformed about participating in the board process. Participation does not have to be required but rather accommodated to ensure those organizations wanting to participate can. Having them represented could help improve the alignment of course work and requirement.

Lastly, **we recommend that Marine Corps University, specifically EPME, survey the universities within commuting distance from key Marine Corps bases to determine if there are any available resident undergraduate education programs that would serve the organization's needs**. As time permits, this should also be expanded to include other university programs beyond the commuting areas. Having such a list available will help direct Marines to appropriate programs and potentially lessen the misalignment of program and requirement.

  b. Long term solutions

There are several recommendations with a longer implementation time horizon. First, we recommend **that EPME establish education requirements for all functional area manager and curriculum developer billets. Due to the institutional burden associated with developing such capabilities, the recommendation is to establish Master's level (in adult learning theory, instructional design, or curriculum development) requirements for the functional area managers, including the SEPME Deputy Director position, and bachelor's level (in the field of education) requirements for the curriculum developers.** For the course coordinators, a bachelor's in any degree field would be beneficial but should not be required.[28] The challenge to pursuing this course of action is that the institutional processes are currently not in place. In the interim, we recommend that EPME convert all of the functional area manager and curriculum developer positions to MOS 8015, requiring a Bachelor's in education, adjust the MOS Manual and MARADMIN language to inform candidates of the job requirements, and work with M&RA to participate in future selection boards. Once the mechanism to create graduate capabilities is in place, it is recommended that the enlisted leader positions at EPME be converted to Master's degree requirements.

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[28] Should EPME choose, there is the possibility of selecting "desired" versus "necessary" on the Billet Education Evaluation Certificate to indicate a desired versus required capability.

Second, **we recommend that the Marine Corps establish a mechanism similar to the Officer Special Education and Advanced Degree Programs to create graduate level capabilities in the enlisted force to support such critical requirements**. When the need arises, as potentially seen here, there should be a mechanism for the organizations to formalize these requirements and create their needed capabilities. Having the structure in place will streamline the development process, minimizing the time from the identification of a need to its fulfillment.

Third, there is a need to improve the selection, manpower, and requirement oversight processes to ensure the faces, spaces, and skills match requirements to increase the return on investment for these undergraduate and graduate education programs. This is not an unknown problem, but rather one that has been documented over the years.[29] One Marine participant notes, "*the Marine Corps is always just throwing people wherever need be. This is where we need to fit you because we have an opening, instead of logically thinking about what's the greater impact, what's the ROI on it, what's the return on investment.*" As identified in this assessment, MR&A supported Marines applying for the SNCO DCP selecting any degree field and endorsed that human services satisfies the requirement as does history, and furthermore Marines with degrees in fields other than education were placed at EPME. As one Marine points out, "*with the degrees in history and psychology . . . why did the Marine Corps bring them here? Talk about diminishing returns, they're developing curriculum on warfighting, and you're scratching your head, going, 'what are you doing?'*" As discussed in the section, **Findings**, this parallels the "Every Marine a Rifleman" concept and perceives education as something that anyone can do, not as a profession requiring certain capabilities and attributes. While recognizing the staffing challenges Manpower faces, **we recommend that improving alignment between skills and requirements needs to be addressed to ensure Marine Corps organizations are best positioned to accomplish their missions. This may require repositioning program oversight and management responsibility within the Marine Corps enterprise and providing the necessary structure to provide requirement oversight**. Furthermore, **we recommend that the Marine Corps examine the management of occupational field 44 – Legal Services to see how the Marine Corps manages the requirement and manpower processes**. The legal field has broader acceptance as a profession that requires specialized knowledge and skills and could provide insights and lessons learned to improve how the Marine Corps manages the field of education or serve as a model for transforming the field of education within the Marine Corps.

Lastly, **we recommend that EPME work with Marine Corps University, Total Force Structure Division, and M&RA to formalize the education officer billet on EPME's T/O**. While some participants recommended that this be filled by an enlisted member with an advanced degree, having the officer perspective and orientation in a leadership position within the organization is useful to EPME's mission. **The recommendation is to establish this as an officer 8802[30] billet**.

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[29] See U.S. Marine Corps Education Requirements Study Conveyance Letter, dated 28 June 2011.

[30] MOS 8802 is the Education Officer MOS. This is assigned to those Marine officers who have an advanced degree in the field of education. Please see the 2011 MOS Manual, p 1-232.