

DRAFT

Marine Corps

Concept for

Enlisted Professional

Development and Enhancement



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1 Introduction

Threat actors, technology, and global interconnectivity are transforming at revolutionary speeds. Diplomatic, Information, Military, and Economic (DIME) actions are having near immediate Political, Military, Economic, Social, Information, and Infrastructure (PMESII) effects. Succinctly, a Tweet can cause a city to burn. America needs a Marine Corps capable of tackling adversaries in this new age; this force requires training and education that moves at the speed of the adversary. Our guiding directives, such as Training and Readiness (T&R) manuals and Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) Manuals, which align to Program of Record (PoR) material solutions, are multi-year events. These practices were not designed for dynamic response. Currently, the largest adaptable resource the Marine Corps possesses is its enlisted force. A pronounced investment in these Marines could prove the deciding factor in the next national conflict.

The Marine Corps Concept for Enlisted Professional Development and Enhancement (EPD&E) presents a modernization strategy for Marine Corps training and education. Classifying *training* as the method for replicating a known skill and *education* as the study of a particular tradecraft or subject matter, informs the discussion with a common lexicon of understanding. Marines need both. Moreover, any approach that dismisses the strategic value of continuing academic education ignores the degradation of training an uneducated workforce.¹ This professionalization concept aims to promote future development of Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities and Policy (DOTMLPF-P) solutions to address the challenge. These solutions must cultivate a core of enlisted professionals in both military operations and warfighting skills that do more than contribute to a joint warfighting force; they must reaffirm the Marine Corps' role as the nation's rapid response force. It blends the merits of academia, industry, and military tradecraft development into a central, cohesive program that tracks progression from recruitment to retirement.

This concept's central idea revolves around two key themes: (1) adopting a revolutionary approach to Enlisted Professional Military Education (EPME) and (2) developing a training philosophy with Occupational Professional Enhancement (OPE) that collectively provides an institutional investment in the individual enlisted Marine's career. It combines these paths of skill enhancement into a central education continuum. While EPME establishes a standard baseline, OPE complements the continuum in a stair-step model. Each tier of personal achievement and investment has an institutional reward that points toward an even higher goal. These incentives keep Marines focused in areas of institutional need while satisfying the individual's desire for personal development. This concept also provides an opportunity to attract, recruit, and retain high-caliber talent by employing strategies successful in the academic and commercial sector.

¹ Kime, S.F. & Anderson, C.L. (1997). Education vs. Training: A Military Perspective. *Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*. 3-8. Dr. Kime's research paper also suggests that intellectual agility, a forgone requirement for servicemembers, occurs when broadly educated individuals are allowed to widen intellectual horizons instead of technically trained to perform physical tasks.

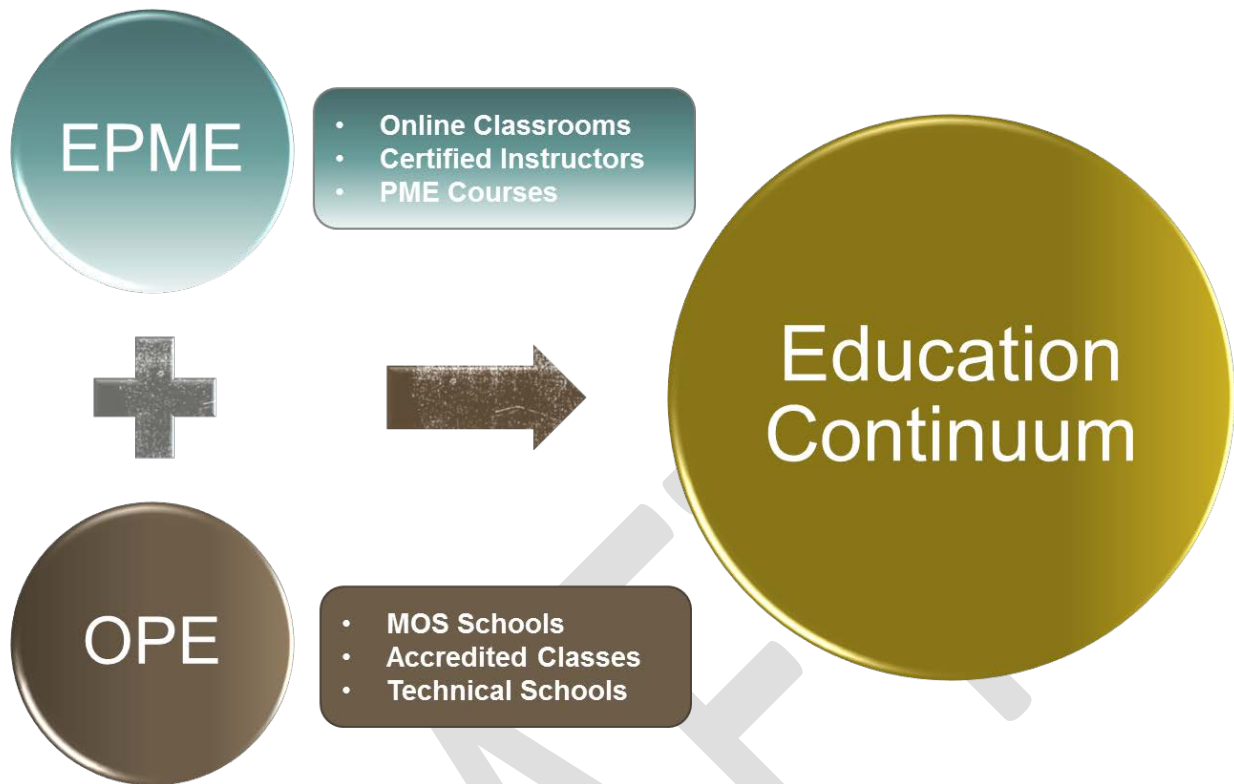


Figure 1.0 Education Continuum Flowchart, derived from author - September 2016

2 Future Operating Environment

The Commandant's Planning Guidance of 2015 identified the battleground of today as the proliferation of conventional, asymmetric threats, cyber weapons, violent extremism, transnational crime, and piracy.² Today's battlefield presents young servicemen and women with mature challenges that require an enhanced ability beyond core MOS specialization. The Strategic Corporal is the baseline of a young leader, defined as:

*"...a soldier that possesses technical mastery in the skill of arms while being aware that his judgment, decision-making, and action can all have strategic and political consequences that can affect the outcome of a given mission and the reputation of his country."*³

The Joint Operating Environment (JOE) 2035 describes the future security environment as "contested norms and persistent disorder... [with] increased significance of systems and systems integration,

² Dunford, J. (2015). *36th Commandant's Planning Guidance*. 5. Washington, D.C.: Headquarters Marine Corps. These attributes were echoed in the 37th Commandant's Planning Guidance referred to as FRAGO #1: Advance to Contact.

³ Lynda L.M. (2005). The Strategic Corporal: Some Requirements in Training and Education. *Australian Army Journal*, II (2), 139-148.

emerging countermeasure competitive space, proliferated information technologies, and capital intensive capabilities". The Secretary of Defense (SecDef) presented his "Force of the Future" initiatives on November 18, 2015, that specifically outlined strategies for talent management, recruitment and retention against generational changes, technologies, and labor markets.⁴ Many of his strategies promote deliberate partnerships with industry and academia to bridge the gap between proficiencies.

The CMC has implemented Marine Corps Future Force 2025 concepts that challenge what it means to be *expeditionary* in this environment. Global crisis response will remain a Marine Corps core task, along with advanced aviation employment and maritime presence. These efforts require the active pursuit of professional enhancement for the enlisted workforce. The Marine Corps Operating Concept (MOC) issued a critical task for developing Marines for complexity, defined as complex terrain and chaotic environments, which included a direct focus on weaponizing cognitive capabilities⁵. From procurement of new technologies to manpower reapportionment, the Marine Corps must revamp its enlisted education and training model to be ready to answer the nation's call.

3 Military Challenge

Talent management in the military is challenged by a competitive commercial job market, positive economic and social trends, and military rightsizing after a decade of war.⁶ Efforts to retain talent are challenging at best, with bonus packages being the most relied upon method for keeping leadership and expertise on the rolls.

Industry's vision of talent management identifies it as the most significant component of competitiveness. Companies discovered that new products are quickly improved upon, prices are constantly challenged, and lucrative markets become crowded, but high-quality, highly engaged workforces are hard to develop and are the most competitive advantage an organization possesses over another.⁷

A major hurdle with evolving a Marine Corps talent management strategy is addressing *objective* versus *subjective* talent markers. The Marine Corps' method today uses Military Occupational Skills (MOS) designators and the completion of registered formal military training to denote a talent or skill. The understood informal approach regarding the quality of that skill rests in the subjective opinions of

⁴ Carter, Ash. (2016). The Next Two Links to the Force of the Future. *Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments*. 1-2. Secretary Carter has openly stated his willingness to petition Congress for support and authorization in many programs identified in this initiative.

⁵ Neller, R.B. (2016). The Marine Corps Operating Concept. *How an Expeditionary Force Operates in the 21st Century*. The MOC defines complexity as "complex terrains crowded with multiple adversaries and disparate threats intermixed with populations of various loyalties and motivations, and Marines must be able to understand the battlespace with sufficient clarity to identify the points of advantage and disadvantage."

⁶ Brown, R.B. (2015). Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond. *United States Army Combined Arms Center*. 6-11. The challenges identified in this research paper that negatively impact the Army directly translates to each service component, and is especially concerning towards Marines.

⁷ Wellins, Richard; Smith, Audrey; Erker, Scott (n.d.). Nine Best Practices for Effective Talent Management. *Development, Inc.* 1.

leadership. An objective approach that matches subjective opinions has yet to be developed. Enhancing objective markers provides granularity and transparency to an individual's abilities, invalidates the effects of bias and nepotism, and minimizes the influence of the strategic paper tiger.

Another challenge lies in cyberspace. Cyberspace is the warfighting domain where information, technology, access, and intent define dominance over an adversary.⁸ The Department of Defense (DoD) has illustrated its interest in this space by the establishment of U.S. Cyber Command (USCYBERCOM). Industry security professionals and intelligence reports outline several nation-states and non-state actors operating at a high level of proficiency in this space. Exponential and dynamic technology improvements allow for innovative breakthroughs to spur additional advances, which output highly efficient technologies at cheaper costs, making them more readily available to our adversaries and us.⁹ Dominance in the cyber and information warfare space will require a Marine Corps approach to training and education that moves at the pace of technology instead of the pace of history.

The industrialized training model for military talent started as a factory-driven model for the mass production of like resources. Adaptability, mental agility, and creativity are not attributes developed in that model; it was never designed for that. These deficiencies present an opportunity. As the U.S. adjusts national defense strategy to combat cyber and information warfare and the DoD service components re-organize military forces to improve support to joint operations¹⁰, there is an opportunity to evolve training and education principles into a modern era of progression. Academic rigor, on-line classrooms, workshops, and internships can complement the cultural strength that sets Marines apart while creating flexibility for attracting and retaining strong talent.

4 Central and Supporting Ideas

The Marine Corps must develop a layered professionalization strategy that will entail a concerted effort to increase Marines' formal academic education, enhance basic knowledge, and further enable the Marines' ability to analyze, evaluate, and synthesize information.¹¹ It must complement training, and amplify the practical experience of performing functional skills. The merger of these two aspects will assist in creating realistic training, challenging education, and cognitive resilience in the occupational areas in which Marines are assigned.

⁸ Brandes, S. (2013). The Newest Warfighting Domain: Cyberspace. *Synesis: A Journal of Science, Technology, Ethics, and policy*. G:90-91

⁹ Hagel, J., Brown, J.S., Samoylova, T., Lui, M. (2013). From exponential technologies to exponential innovation. *Deloitte University Press*. 3. Part 2 of 2013 Shift Index Series. The first example provided in this research is the impact Tesla Motors had on the automotive industry with their breakthroughs in automotive computer power, data storage, and bandwidth for their vehicles.

¹⁰ Obama, B.H. (2015). Cybersecurity. *National Security Strategy*. 12 -13.

¹¹ Emilio, G.A. (2000). Promoting Critical Thinking in Professional Military Education. *Air Command and Staff College – Air University*. 4-10. Major Emilio's research paper emphasizes the importance of critical thought in all aspects of military leadership, planning and warfare, for all branches of service.

The foundation of this strategy starts at EPME. Marines between the ranks of Lance Corporal through Master Sergeant/First Sergeant already have prescribed course requirements at each leadership level that, if modified, could open the doors to academia. The Lance Corporal Seminar, Corporal's, Sergeant's, Career and Advanced Courses, and Senior Enlisted Professional Military Education (SEPME) course all have ACE accredited hours associated with their curriculum. Each course has prerequisite computer based learning requirements, delivered via the service's Learning Management System (LMS) MarineNet. Because these prerequisite knowledge requirements are computer based, aligning and modifying (if necessary) this portion of EPME curricula to maximize college credit translation is relatively straightforward. All non-resident course material could migrate to a virtual, interactive education platform that would turn prerequisite requirements into an on-line classroom. This change would allow for increased academic rigor and oversight, student interaction, verbal and written communication, and debate.¹² Instead of Marines studying ten or twelve subjects of rote memorization before taking a final exam, they would engage in a progressively dynamic environment with a certified instructor. A formal instructor certification program ensures each educator has the requisite knowledge and teaching tools to present the enhanced material.

Cost savings and the preparation of Marines for follow-on military and civilian education opportunities are two of the most immediate effects of this change and represent a foundational principle. This impact is similar to the U.S. Army Learning Concept for 2015 that focused on continuous education, adaptive instruction, competency-based progress, task-based learning, and personalized teaching.¹³ Since all Marines attend PME, this exposes the force to an academic baseline for entry-level students, much like a first-year student in college. Building on this foundation is a simple manner of developing modular approaches to professional and skill enhancement.

OPE focuses on enhancing a specific trade or skill and improving the overall knowledge of a particular subject matter. Central to this philosophy is the modified acceptance of how the Marine Corps determines proficiency. There will be a training, an education, and an application element to all technical skills, similar to technical progression in the academic and civilian sectors. OPE will use the same principles as EPME to perform this. It will employ non-resident training prerequisites before attending career progression schools and translate credit hours for both resident and non-resident courses to a select major. All of this must be leveraged through articulation agreements with accredited universities and colleges.

A support system needs to ensure the Marines have the guidance and information to navigate these roads. Tutors, mentors, counselors, and adjunct faculty should reside at each Marine Corps base. Active duty education counselors must be available to provide additional assistance when needed. This community could consist of senior Marines who have used the program to achieve their higher education goals or commissioned officers with a background in a particular subject matter. The Joint Education Centers (JEC) would sponsor this support community.

¹² Means, B., Toyama, Y., Murphy, R., Bakia, M., Jones, K. (2010). Evaluation of Evidence-Based Practices in Online Learning: A Meta-Analysis and Review of Online Learning Studies. *U.S. Department of Education*. 17- 48. This study focused on K-12 but the implications translate to adult learners using online tools and resources today.

¹³ Bell, H.H., Reigeluth, C.M. (2014). Paradigm Change in Military Education and Training. *Educational Technology: May-June 2014*. 52-54.

Increasing the academic environment of EPME, and adding OPE, changes the commonality of education. Enlisted Marines who attain associate's and bachelor's degrees would occur more frequently. The EPD&E strategy takes that academic growth into account with a full spectrum continuum, presenting an opportunity for a Marine to retire with either multiple degrees or graduate level certifications. Exceptional opportunities for doctoral level achievement could prove fruitful for specialized career fields that match Marine Corps needs. The Marine Corps could reduce costs by educating a senior Marine in a highly technical area and requiring a payback tour within a particular position (i.e. Personnel Chief with a Master's in Organizational Management). The opportunity also exists to completely cancel the selective reenlistment bonus program in its entirety and reinvest that money in furthering education incentives.

The full spectrum continuum also takes into account the value of an Executive Fellows Program similar to the Secretary of Defense Executive Fellows Program (SDEF). SDEF positions active duty military into internships with top industry leaders such as Microsoft and Amazon, with the expectation that they learn and are exposed to business practices that can improve military processes.¹⁴ The Marine Corps internship program would invest in industries that are succeeding in areas where the Marine Corps needs growth. A Career Intermission Program (CIP) is also in line with this philosophy. Allowing active duty members an opportunity for an academic sabbatical to pursue rigorous study at a top university or participate in a unique project under a high-end research lab, reframes the Marine Corps investment in career Marines. For every effort the Marine puts forth in the institution, a program exists to match their efforts and guide them to greater challenges.

A method to ensure the Marine Corps will not waste all of these investments revolves around comprehensive talent management. Graduates, returning interns, and experienced professionals will be mapped to specific Billet Assignment Codes (BIC) throughout the force. As one of the most critical efforts of the entire program philosophy, ensuring the utility of employing those Marines' new skills while they are excited, engaged, and fresh from an education opportunity, is essential for the success of the system. Job satisfaction drives retention in industry. The Marine Corps must follow a similar design.

This model of education directs Marines down a designated path directly associated with their career field and occupational specialty but does not prevent Marines from pursuing study outside of the prescribed track. It provides indoctrination to academic learning, increases the common denominator, and directs a Marines trajectory toward a new level of personal growth and enhancement. It also positions the workforce to handle challenges that are both complicated, and complex.

- Academic Lifecycle Vignette #1: GySgt Randy Smith (0231 – Intelligence Specialist)

PFC Randy Smith entered the Marine Corps right as Operation Iraq Freedom (OIF) was ending, and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was slowing deployment cycles. A single deployment to Afghanistan capped his combat operations exposure. PFC Smith knew that to remain competitive with his peers and sharpen his knowledge he would need to pursue all means of self-improvement. As an All-Source Intelligence Analyst, his options were wide-ranging as it pertained to job opportunities. Improving his

¹⁴ Carter, Ash. (2016). The Next Two Links to the Force of the Future. *Memorandum for Secretaries of the Military Departments*. 3.

PFT, CFT, MCMAP and swim scores helped his meritorious promotion to Lance Corporal but when he started his non-resident classes to attend Corporal's Course, he truly discovered his personal hunger for knowledge. Smith completed eight on-line classes and attended Corporal's and Sergeant's Course during his first enlistment.

Sergeant Smith re-enlisted at his first opportunity and registered for the Intermediate Analyst Course. He had to complete two pre-requisite on-line classes with George Mason University in Data Analytics before attending. Three years into his second enlistment, Staff Sergeant Smith had attained the required hours for his Bachelor's in Data Analysis. He deployed with the 22nd Marine Expeditionary Unit and supported Foreign Humanitarian Assistance operations with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Response Forces off the coast of Europe. He built a flow diagram that illustrated the logical challenges for support personnel who worked to provide aid and relief. His analysis of the data provided by open source media, joint and coalition partners, and Marines on the ground, provided him the necessary information to generate a holistic assessment of the environment. His efforts improved aid support tenfold and saved hundreds of civilian lives. SSgt Smith was awarded a Navy Commendation Medal for his work.

At an Amazon sponsored town hall, Gunnery Sergeant Smith reminisced about his time with the 22nd MEU. He told the audience that his acceptance into the internship to work with their data scientists reminded him of the challenges he faced while deployed. He offered that the power of accurate, timely intelligence that helped save lives is what drove him to seek further professional development. Being able to take what you have learned and give back is what kept him running. He knew the Marine Corps would employ his skills in the most efficient manner. He witnessed it first-hand. This truth is the reason he continued to wear the uniform and maintained faith with his team, and the institution.

- Academic Lifecycle Vignette #2: LCpl Ann Adams (3521 – Automotive Maintenance Technician)

LCpl Ann E. Adams entered the Marine Corps from her hometown of San Antonio, Texas. Her grandfather, father, and both uncles were all diesel mechanics working for the oil companies along the Gulf. LCpl Adams grew up around all sizes of engines and knew more about replacing head gaskets than anything else among people her age. She enlisted as an Automotive Maintenance Technician and began her first tour in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina after being meritoriously promoted from boot camp.

She spent all of her free time, and weekends, rebuilding her 68' Plymouth Road Runner at the base auto hobby shop. LCpl Adams attended the Lance Corporal Seminar sponsored by her First Sergeant at 2nd Marine Logistics Group and learned that the Marine Corps has sponsored career enhancement training through Universal Technical Institute (UTI) located nearby in Mooresville, NC. Marines were credentialed in programs such as Automotive Technology, Collision Repair & Refinish Technology, and Diesel & Industrial Technology.

LCpl Adams knew that promotions had slowed in her field but decided to extend her contract for another year to gain the obligated service to participate in this program. Diesel & Industrial Technology is the field she has gained the most experience, but she has always possessed an interest in Automotive Technology. Incorporating fuel efficient engines and renewable energies into the family business is

something that inspired her. Extending that extra year gave her an opportunity to gain work experience by working on Marine Corps equipment with her newly acquired skills before returning home and working with her dad and uncles.

- Academic Lifecycle Vignette #3: MGySgt Jorge Hernandez (0111 – Administrative Specialist)

MGySgt Jorge Hernandez had spent the past 26 years of his career accepting every challenge the Marine Corps had presented. As he reflected on his achievements as well as his failures, he reconciled the question of when to retire. He had four kids, three in college and one in high school. His wife was enjoying a successful nursing career, employed at the Naval Hospital aboard Camp Pendleton. MGySgt Hernandez could have retired the following day and felt content with a successful career. There was just one thing bugging him: the image of *Sergeant* Jorge Hernandez.

As an administrative specialist, drill instructor, administrative chief, and faculty advisor at the staff academy, MGySgt Jorge Hernandez had always found himself in a position of leadership. He enjoyed leading Marines. One memory that stuck with him was his days as a Sergeant, completing Sergeant's Course, and looking outside the Marine Corps for all the opportunities available to him and finding limited answers. He hadn't known of any options aside from Special Duty Assignments which is what led him to a successful tour at Parris Island. He never regretted that tour but remembered how many of his peers graduated Sergeant's Course with the same questions, only to find empty answers. *What options do we have to progress our careers? Does professionalization pertain to us?*

MGySgt Hernandez attended LCpl Seminar, Corporal's Course, Sergeant's Course, Advanced Course and the Senior Enlisted PME during his career. Completing this training, along with prerequisite classes, warranted 100 total credit hours towards a Bachelor's in Leadership. He completed the additional 20 credit hours after a round of CLEPs and resident classes, earning his B.S. from Excelsior University. His devotion to personal development was matched by the Marine Corps as he went on to pursue a Master's in Adult Learning and Education through Penn State University, sponsored by Marine Corps University. His pay-back tour teaching at the staff academy proved to be almost as rewarding as his tour on the drill field. He had decided to give the Marine Corps two more years of service for a new position at the Joint Education Center as a career guidance counselor/education mentor. He intended to find every Marine searching for a way to progress their careers and educate them on the opportunities the Marine Corps provides.

5 Required Capabilities

The Marine Corps must integrate academic models and industry exposure into career progression to achieve a synergistic approach to professional development. Marines like GySgt Smith need an academic authority that coordinates all efforts into a single comprehensive program. Articulation agreements between supporting colleges and universities, which allows credit hour reciprocity between different

academic institutions¹⁵, identifying a responsible body who will track and direct progression in specific career fields, and linking the education model to functional operational requirements for both the MAGTF and the joint environment is where this academic authority will begin.

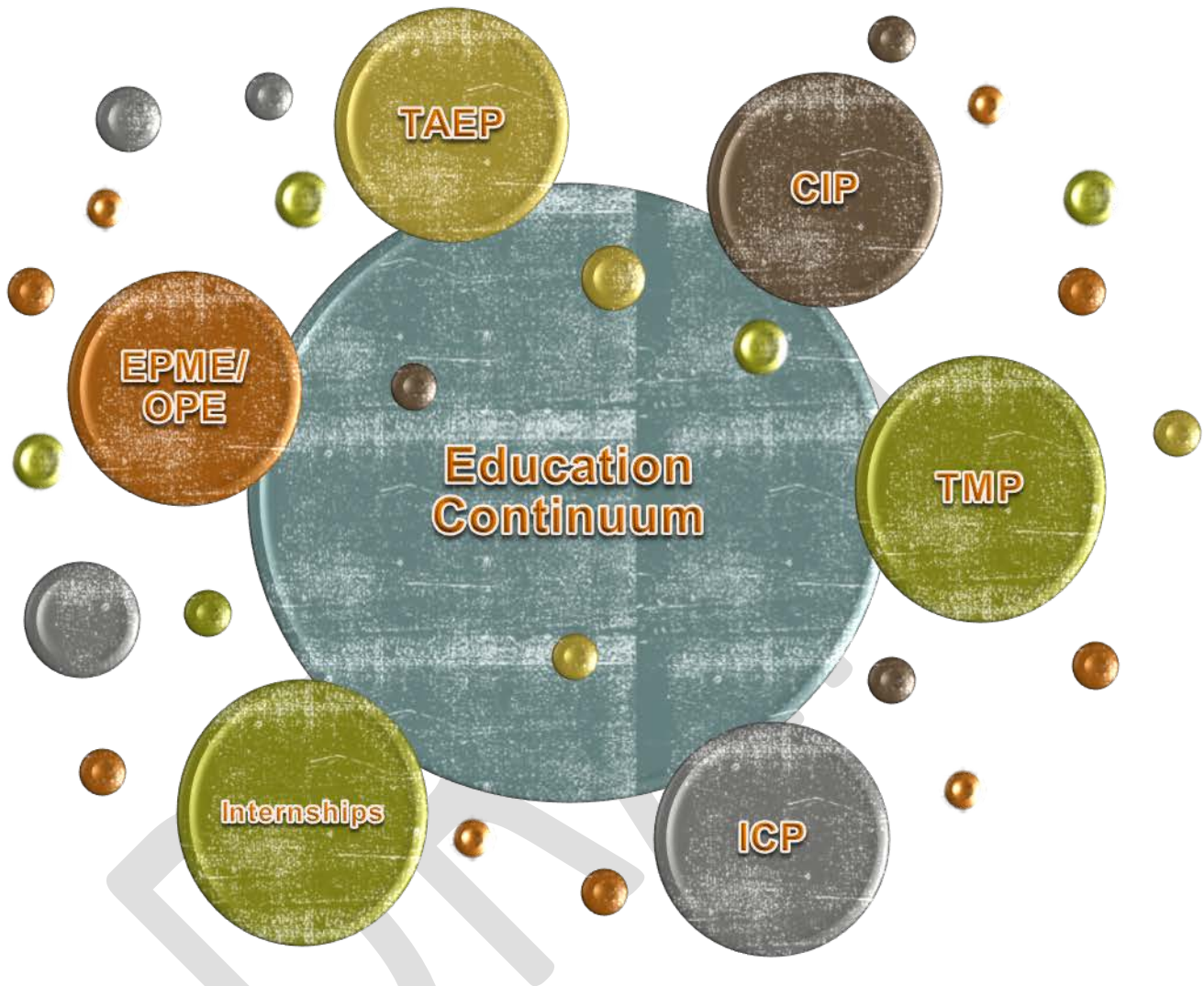


Figure 2.0 Education Continuum Ecosystem, derived from author - September 2016

- A Marine Corps accredited academic authority

The Marine Corps University (MCU) stands as the current academic authority for the Marine Corps. Enhancing that capacity beyond the certified staff for Command and Staff College and developing an education continuum workforce that included teachers, mentors, tutors, and guidance counselors,

¹⁵ Portland State University (2014). Articulation Agreement Guidelines Manual. *For Deans and Department/Program Chairs*. 5.

resident at each academy and education center, would establish a foundation for a modern academic support system.

Employing programs at each Marine Corps base would increase exposure for all Marines. Many academic and industry-driven opportunities are region-specific. Having an academic authority, with Marine Corps-wide presence, aligns resources to exploit those regional, national, and professional opportunities within a central location. Articulation agreements between regional institutions for specific programs ensure that a Marine's Permanent Change of Station (PCS) move would have minimal impact on his/her professional development and enhancement.

Degree-specific agreements with Servicemembers Opportunity College (SOC) approved universities will simplify career roadmaps. These academic atlases diagram a Marine's career using a modular design. Any Marine can navigate their career training options, explore their education opportunities, and see an illustrated method for comprehensive career progression. A Marine would be able to track their progress using Marine Corps academic transcripts. Each transcript would provide transparency and oversight using valuable criteria for measuring skill proficiency, such as classes completed, grade-point averages, a focus of study, workshops attended, and special projects. Accessible by all Marines, leaders would have more than previous fitness reports and a Marine's professional resumes to gauge a Marine's skill level for proper placement and employment.

- Instructor Certification Program

The Instructor Certification Program (ICP) is a comprehensive program devoted to training and credentialing instructors at the staff academies and Marine Corps formal schools. Marine Corps University might require all instructors teaching Sergeant's and Career Course to possess a bachelor's degree and instructors teaching Advanced Course or higher to possess a graduate certification. This requirement would be a Fully Operations Capable (FOC) goal. Initial Operable Capable (IOC) objectives might strive for an associate's degree for Sergeant's Course or a bachelor's degree for higher EPME.

TECOM would follow a similar model by employing the Special Education Program as outlined in MCO 5311.1E. Billet Education Evaluation Certificate (BEEC) coded BICs are enlisted, college-level education prerequisites billets, that require additive criteria to perform.¹⁶ The program enables this requirement by sponsoring a scholarship modeled pipeline similar to the Army's Sergeants Major Fellowship Program. Marines boarded and selected as qualified instructors would spend the first ten to twelve months completing their degree requirements before teaching in the academies. The investment not only ensures the most qualified and educated instructors are teaching the program, it also ensures that those instructors have the skills to handle an enhanced curriculum. ICP would also train instructors in adult learning to improve mentorship and successful tutoring programs at the academies and schoolhouses.

- Tuition Assistance Extension Program

¹⁶ CMC (2015). Marine Corps Order: 5311.1E *Total Force Structure Process Enclosure (2)*, 9-12 – 9-13.

The Tuition Assistance Extension Program (TAEP) is an HQMC initiative that acknowledges individual pursuit of higher education and rewards those efforts with scholarship support to tuition costs. All Marines have access to Tuition Assistance (TA), albeit they meet eligibility criteria outlined in MARADMIN 687/14,¹⁷ and have not exhausted their annual allowance. TAEP identifies select degree specializations that enhance a particular enterprise workforce and sponsors a Marine's pursuit in that career field at the point schools costs exceed TA allowances. For example, if a Marine pursuing a degree in Computer Engineering from Texas Tech University exceeds his TA allowance during the first six months of dedicated study, HQMC C4 Department could sponsor this Marine's college costs for the following six months.

Acceptance under TAEP would be based upon a Marine's grade point average, time left on contract, billet assignment, and available scholarships for the given year. This program recognizes that the majority of Marines attending off-duty education, do so in their off time, and rewards those efforts with financial support to continue those studies, and incentivizes others to follow similar paths. TAEP is a scaled program that starts at the bachelor level and works upward toward master's level study. All Marines who are eligible to re-enlist would be eligible for TAEP.

TAEP would also authorize full scholarships for low density, highly technical trade skills. Marines pursuing technical degrees, such as a Master's in Software Engineering, could find all tuition costs covered after a successful reenlistment and assignment. As a program of limited availability, qualified Marines would have to pass a comprehensive screening for selection.

- Occupational Professional Enhancement

The OPE program requires a synergistic approach to integration. Several initiatives on the surface may appear as separate, competing agenda items but inherently live within the same ecosystem. The goal centers on the professional enhancement of military skills. Degree completion and certificates are products of implementation and not the overall goal. Each channel of effort feeds into this integration.

First, articulation agreements must be created with colleges and universities that recognize formal training and career progression in college credit hours. TECOM would work with those institutions to have formal schools evaluated for maximum credit. Occupational Field Specialists must develop MOS specific degree paths that outline precise roadmaps for professional development and personal enhancement. With certified instructors teaching at each school and prerequisite instruction prescribed, career progression schools could follow similar models comparable to academia.

Second, the prerequisite academic classes for Supervisory and Chief level courses must be mapped to specific programs within a college or university. This approach uses the same off-duty education model as the previously mentioned in enhanced EPME. On-line classrooms offer new advantages for students

¹⁷ Sanborn, BGen (2014). MARADMIN 687/14 FY15 Tuition Assistance (TA) Guidelines Update. Para 2.

such as quick access to supplementary and on-line resources like virtual labs and simulation games.¹⁸ Prerequisite courses should align to MOS-specific T&R standards to alleviate classroom time and allow for a more rigorous learning environment during resident instruction. Those prerequisite courses can be resident at a regional institution or provided online by a SOC institution. Each acceptable course should be outlined in living career roadmaps.

Lastly, a precept to the promotion boards will need to be added that highlights a Marine who completes the OPE program as “eminently qualified” in their MOS, a status currently unaddressed in the promotion manual. This addition will encourage participation in the program and reward Marines for completion.

- Military Internships or Fellows Program

Several top corporations, businesses, banks, and research laboratories support programs for active and reserve military to intern on a temporary basis, developing work experience and practical skills in a given professional arena.¹⁹ These internships could expand to support any academic institution or industry (e.g. tech, DoD or finance) that is beneficial to the Marine Corps.

As an example, a Marine Corps electrician can spend six months with a construction company, wiring buildings and houses to code, earning apprenticeship hours toward Department of Labor certification, and returning to the Marine Corps with enhanced skills.²⁰ Other military occupations could follow a similar model, exposing Marines to industry practices and returning them to work solutions in the workforce. Internships is an untapped resource that presents an entirely new dynamic for relevant and up-to-date expertise; by incorporating specific follow-on payback tours, the Marine Corps ensures its investment is indeed re-invested in a meaningful manner. Internships would be offered to career Marines with more than eight to ten years of service. All interns will be boarded by an approved panel to ensure the selection of highly qualified professionals, and depending on location, mapped to the nearest Marine installation or command for administrative oversight.

- Career Intermission Program

Following a similar model to the internship program, CIP combines philosophies found in the Staff Degree Completion Program (SDCP) and channels senior enlisted Marines seeking graduate level study into an alternate path. High-end technical fields with rigorous academic work require full-time study to achieve maximum benefit. The Prisoners, Patients, Transients, and Transfers, (P2T2) account for manpower, which identifies all Marines in transients between duty stations, in a formal academic status,

¹⁸ Wisner, R.A., Olson, T.M. (2003). The Effectiveness of Web-based Instruction. *U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences*. 1-7. This research report was released in 2003 and identified on-line, web-based tools on par with traditional classes. 2016 has several improvements upon that model.

¹⁹ Morgan, J.P. (2015). Military Veteran Internship Program. *JPMorgan Chase & Co. Internship*.

²⁰ Lerman, R., Hanson, D., Tanamor, M., Blatt, L. (2015). The United Services Military Apprenticeship Program (USMAP): Implementation Study and Feasibility of Impact Study. *Urban Institute*. This research reports suggests that one in fourteen Marines participate in USMAP as of 2015, with about 100 separate occupations registered with the Department of Labor.

medically incapacitated, or incarcerated, has limited flexibility to support enlisted active duty education. Enlisted Marines are not categorized in the same capacity as Commission Officers. CIP addresses this gap by granting a small percentage of the senior enlisted workforce permission to participate in an academic sabbatical for personal and professional development. Agreements with specified institutions and specialized degree fields must match Marine Corps needs. The return on investment is evaluated through the performance of returnees coded in predetermined BICs throughout the force. For example, a senior enlisted Marine participating in a CIP to get his or her Master's in Supply Chain Management would receive a follow-on tour to MARCORSSYSCOM or Headquarters, Marine Corps Logistics Command.

CIP not only opens the door for graduate level studies in the enlisted force, but would also opens an opportunity for career Marines, to pursue doctorates degrees in specialized fields and return to active service. This small percentage of Marines would be presented an opportunity to give back to the Marine Corps what has been dutifully invested in them.

- Talent Management Program within HQMC

The Marine Corps faces many challenges concerning talent management, as previously mentioned. A modernized approach to the problem begins with empowering Occupational Specialists with additional tools to evaluate a Marine's individual skills. HQMC will need tools such as academic graduate coded BICs returning intern coded BICs, CIP completion coded BICs, certified academic roadmaps that map to occupational specialties, enriched relationships with a Marine Corps academic authority, health reports for skill proficiency across a community using academic data, expertise reports that show where academic and industry exposure have improved readiness, and data that categorizes robust and weak areas across the enterprise. Talent management requires a concerted, deliberate effort involving several teams to get it right, including supported processes, tools, and policies. Effective talent management begins with talent generation, or development, and a program's success is measured on its ability to efficiently employ that talent across a distributed workforce²¹.

An additional tool or system is also needed to highlight strong talent markers within the ranks. A system with features similar to the LinkedIn website, combined with a professional resume, and data currently available on Manpower & Reserve Affairs' (M&RA) Marine Profile website, could present a level of granular transparency that helps map the right talent to key positions, improving organizational performance. A significant aspect of retention is tied to an employee's view of how well they fit into the role, or job, that they have been assigned.²² Proper employment is the key to successful talent management. Human Resource professionals predict future shortages for skilled workers within the

²¹ Wellins, Richard; Smith, Audrey; Erker, Scott (n.d.). Nine Best Practices for Effective Talent Management. *Development, Inc.* 1.

²² Allen, D.G. (2008). Retaining Talent: A Guide to Analyzing and Managing Employee Turnover. *The SHRM Foundation*.10. This study shows statistical information from several surveys about the reasons people either leave or stay in their jobs.

United States, meaning the Marine Corps must present a firm stance and strategy when competing for talent.²³

6 Risks

There are several risks associated with this concept. One risk deals with off-duty time in internships and sabbaticals. Disconnecting from the Marine Corps routine for an extended period could alter behavior and impact the Marines' compliance to standards. Physical fitness and weight management are still required, and a method to ensure Marines keep those standards will need to be in place. Assigning Marines to a local recruiting station, I&I Company, or utilizing Marine Officer Instructor/Assistant Marine Officer Instructors could help alleviate this issue, and assist with maintaining a connection with the Marine community and operational culture.

The second risk deals with performance quality. Challenging programs are usually whittled down over time to cut costs, increase throughput, and save resources. While today's education includes new and improved resources in computer-based platforms, video conferencing, chat working groups, and tutoring, investing in the appropriate resources in a fiscally conservative environment will present a challenge. The risk will be identifying the right tools and ensuring investments are not wasted on improper resources.

A third risk is associated directly to retention. Progressing in highly technical fields increases an individual's marketability to the civilian workforce and will subsequently position the Marine Corps to compete with industry for talent. Although, this is a current conundrum and can be mitigated by increasing talent density in the Marine Corps, adding individual value will make Marines more attractive to the private sector.

The final risk is probably the most impactful and most dangerous. The risk of doing nothing and not executing this plan positions the Marine Corp for absolute failure. Military history is peppered with moments when the operating environment changed and military leaders held strong to their traditional ideals, resisting reforms throughout the entire process.²⁴ When young Marines look to the Army or the Air Force and notice institutional adjustments, new policies, and a re-alignment of resources to support academic education into their training models, and they return to the Marine Corps and find zero similar efforts, it disenfranchises the spirit of the institution. Marine Corps leaders must care for Marines' education as much as Army leaders care for soldiers and Air Force leaders care for airmen.

²³ Shotwell, L., Yewdell, A. (n.d.). Tapping into the Global Talent Market. *Perspectives: Talent Management and Engagement*. SHRM.

²⁴ Brown, R.B. (2015). Talent Management Concept of Operations for Force 2025 and Beyond. *United States Army Combined Arms Center*. 6-11. Lieutenant General Brown opens the research study with a forward about the Army's resistance to reforms, even in the eyes of surrounding and needed change.

7 Return on Investment

Costs associated to developing an official EPD&E program will be further refined during a DOTMLPF analysis. Initial assumptions as it pertains to additional military, government, and contract personnel for the Academic Authority conclude a need for an increase of staff. However, several mitigating factors, including a return on investment, must be considered in that analysis.

Employing an academic model using accredited colleges and universities could reduce training hours in formal school, saving costs in the care and feeding for extended Temporary Additional Duty (TAD). Those academic institutions, incentivized by student enrollment, have existing resources for registered students that could provide direct support to military learners.

Another factor involves the maturation of the force. Targeting career and Subsequent Term Alignment Plan (STAP) Marines illustrates a deliberate effort to invest time, resources, and funding for a senior force. That investment may incentivize Marines to stay on active duty and push for more competitive promotions. The attraction of this program may improve recruitment from older members of society. Both dynamics could shift the average age of the force, creating an older demographic, comparable to adjacent service components.

Recruitment and retention are areas which can be positively impacted. Strong opinions suggest that Marines enter active service for civil duty without goals of academic achievement. The EPD&E concept focuses specifically on professional enhancement in occupational skills vice college degrees. Diplomas, Certificates, and Degrees are a byproduct of the work, if one chooses, while others are free to pursue technical enhancement of their talents. The culture shift focuses on a strategic position for the enlisted workforce and increases the quality of all professionals retained. Retention and promotion will have additional attributes to measure and compare proficiency.

8 Conclusion

The EPD&E strategy supports the future operating environment and leverages existing resources across military, industry, and academic institutions. Professionals that can produce more with less are in growing demand. Non-conventional threats suggest that requirement will increase over time. The Marine Corps has an opportunity to meet the SecDef's design for the Force of the Future by revolutionizing an archaic approach to skill acquisition, maintenance, and enhancement. Technology will continue to advance, non-state actors will continue to intimidate, and cyber, electronic and information warfare will intrude into the maneuver battle space. Enabling the Marines to take advantage of this environment, excel in unexplored areas, and redefine expeditionary in the modern world, will ensure Marine Corps success for generations to come.