

Professional Military Education (PME) and Leadership

Peter PAPLER (SVN)

Military School Centre

Command, Control and Leadership Section

**Background:** Professional Military Education (PME) is in stagnation. Current PME paradigm and related understanding of leadership do not pace rhythm of modern world complexity. Senior Leadership and related education is critical part of Military organization adaptation. Titled ‘North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Senior Level Professional Military Education (PME) and Leadership’, the 2019 NATO Conference of Commandants<sup>1</sup> examined different aspects of PME and Leadership.

**Methods:** Extensive literature review was employed to design Conference Agenda to allow participant to response on major PME challenges. Conference was designed to analyze in plenary format (key note address as starter with follow on focused discussion) challenges in contemporary security environment and related leadership on senior level along with consequences synthesis for PME using focused groups’(Commandants, Deans, Subject Matter Experts) discussion. Effects were examined by Multinational Corporation CEOs, respective Scholars, Retired four stars General/Admiral, bestselling Authors and PME Institutions Heads. 147 participants representing 49 countries, 63 national institutions, 5 International organizations and 4 NATO institutions/agencies attended the conference. 79% invitation – attendance response rate was reached which allow us to generalize conference results.

**Results:** Discussions were mainly focused to address following questions: What to teach? How to teach? And How to support teaching and learning? Legitimate questions about the usefulness of PME are raised with regard to the legacy of current PME concept, based on the traditional ‘trinity’ of universalism, structure and objectivity while assuming a predictable environment: these features are prominent in military education syllabuses. It was therefore argued that the lack of systematic efforts to challenge the legitimacy of existing inherited PME concepts in favor of a paradigm, based on contextualism, constructivism and complexity against the backdrop of an unpredictable environment, could influence future wars outcomes.

Introduction of new teaching methods (e.g. flipped classroom model, radical candor, Mission Model Canvas,..); so, methods and concepts which motivates students with final output in use, design curricula to allow students to fall safely and consequently learn from mistakes only to allow them to learn faster in open environment.

Lack of systematic efforts to support teaching and learning; consequently to challenge the legitimacy of existing inherited PME concepts and practices was examined in favor of a PME to adopt some practices from entrepreneurship education, creative logic in their teaching.

Literature review before conference suggests further Leadership development as a profession. Approach was not discussed during conference but showed possible way ahead; education of

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<sup>1</sup> The Conference of National Defence Institute Commandants (Conference of Commandants) is a three-day annual conference, which brings together the Commandants of the national and other senior defense institutions of NATO, partners, private companies, universities, think-tanks and other academic bodies.

leaders, leader's certification, and exercising professional military leadership ethics and values as criteria to enter and stay in profession.

**Conclusions:** Participants did not challenge thesis that PME is stagnating. They believe that the PME institutions need to act on this.

**Relevance:** Research address disconnect between an outdated professional military education paradigm and contemporary war and social realities which could causes chaos and strategic shocks.