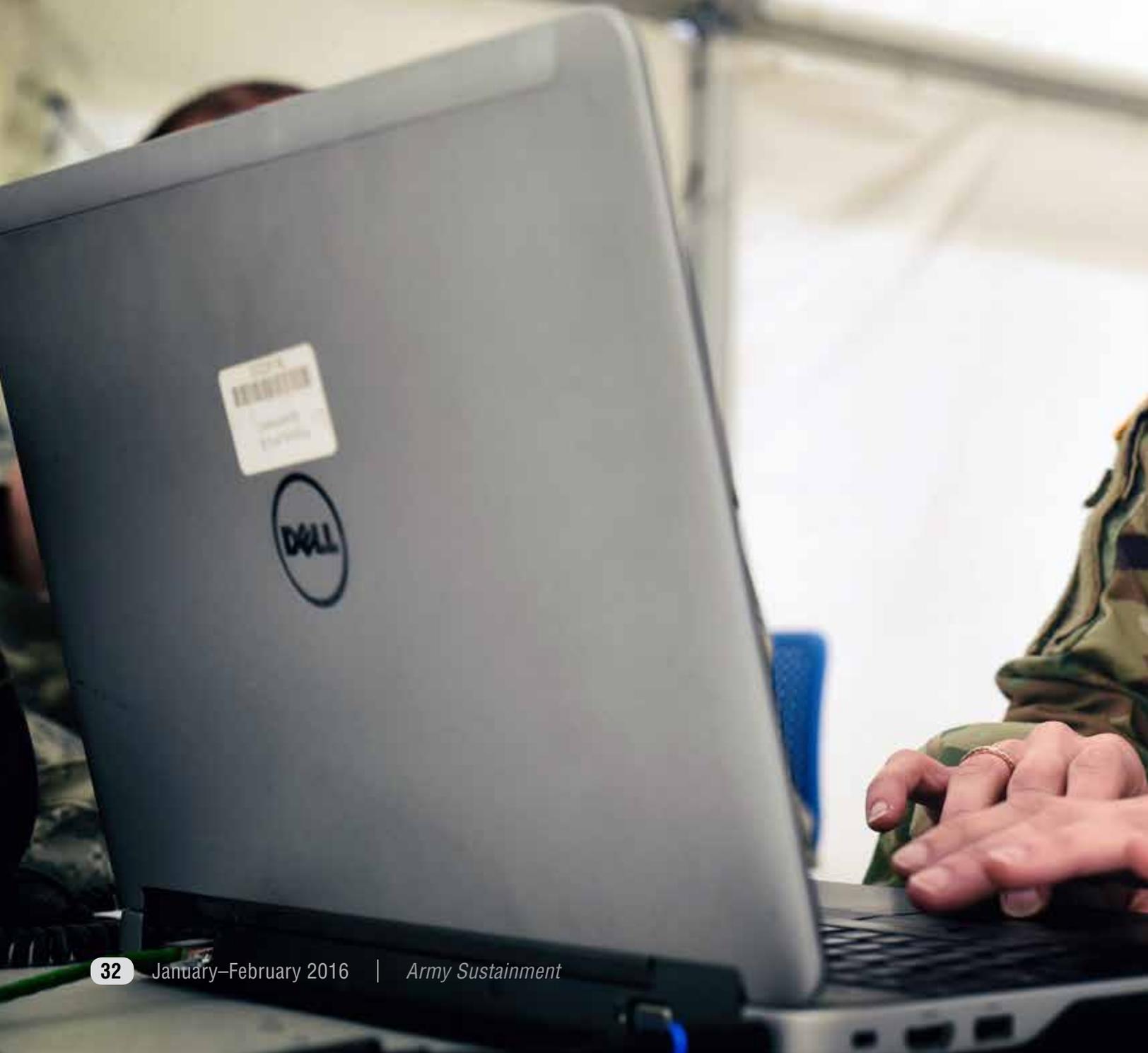


# Developing the Leaders of Tomorrow in Today's Schoolhouses

■ By Maj. Richard Strong





*Staff Sgt. Nicole Brittain, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the 213th Regional Support Group's personnel division, works on a personnel report during Exercise Trident Juncture 15 on Nov. 3, 2015, near Zaragoza, Spain. As part of recent initiatives, the Adjutant General School is staying connected to the field by posting videos on YouTube's "U.S. Army Adjutant General School" channel to show operators how to use human resources systems and products. (Photo by Sgt. Daniel Cole)*

## FEATURES

The Adjutant General School is modifying its curriculum to train human resources Soldiers to be more creative, flexible, and innovative.

The basic requirements and capabilities for leaders to be successful at all levels of leadership are common across all branches, warfighting functions, and components.

The Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) oversees 32 Army schools organized under eight centers of excellence, each focused on a separate area of expertise within the Army. Each of those centers of excellence provides blocks of instruction and dedicates time to enhancing basic leadership attributes and competencies and branch-specific training.

However, in order to prepare the next generation of leaders to handle the emerging operational environment, the changing responsibilities of different units (such as regionally aligned forces and surge forces), and the downsizing of the Army, some leadership attributes and competencies need to be emphasized more than others.

### Creative and Flexible Leaders

Leaders of tomorrow need to possess critical and creative thinking, flexibility, innovation, and mental agility to assess any situation in which they find themselves. They must isolate and understand the problem at hand and innovatively develop solutions.

One of Gen. Mark A. Milley's three priorities as the 39th chief of staff of the Army is to "do what it takes to build an agile, adaptive Army of the future." He explained in his initial message to the Army, "Developing a lethal, professional and technically competent force requires an openness to new ideas and new ways of doing things in an increasingly complex world."

Revolutionary changes that are within TRADOC guidelines can be made in Army schoolhouses in a relatively short amount of time. The operational environment is changing, and the Army needs to develop leaders who are problem solvers as well as experts in their trades.

### Adjutant General Curriculum

One of the most important qualities leaders need for success is to be technically and tactically proficient in their specific areas of concentration or military occupational specialties. The Adjutant General School (AGS) has implemented several changes within its curriculum to produce technical experts and flexible leaders who can think critically.

AGS has developed human resources (HR) validation and certification products, initiated the review and redesign of all professional military education (PME) courses, and strengthened the connection of the schoolhouse to the field. These initiatives allow the schoolhouse to train students to be relevant the moment they report to the operational force and to become enablers for leaders in the field.

### Current AGS Initiatives

Over the past 12 months, AGS developed and implemented several initiatives, such as the redesign of the Adjutant General Captains Career Course (AGCCC), HR systems training and qualification, HR gunnery tables, "AGTube," and the Brigade Strength Management Module (BSM2).

To ensure future leaders are prepared for a new type of operational environment, AGS looked at each of the PME courses. The school considered how to redesign them to incorporate more complex battle drills and problem-solving scenarios.

Curriculum needs to encourage students to be flexible and adaptive and help them apply what they have learned to develop solutions that might not be obvious. Leaders of tomorrow need to be aware of their surroundings in order to recognize problems and then think critically and creatively to develop viable solutions.

Many problems can have several solutions that could work, and students need to be able to explain why they decided on a certain solution.

## AGCCC Redesign

The redesigned AGCCC requires students to apply more critical thinking and analysis throughout the course. After analyzing AGCCC, AGS found that students were not using any HR systems until almost halfway through the course.

To maximize the time that students are in AGCCC, HR systems training was moved to the beginning so students can develop solid technical systems skills and use those skills throughout the course.

The course was redesigned into a “crawl, walk, run” format in which students are initially introduced to the HR systems, trained on how to use them, and taught the advantages and disadvantages of using each system in different situations.

Familiarization is gained by working through complex scenarios throughout the course and using repetition to develop muscle memory. Students are assessed during the “run” phase at the end of the course, which prepares them for their culminating staff exercise (STAFFEX).

## HR Systems Training

In the future operational environment, the S-1, S-1 noncommissioned officer-in-charge, and HR technician may not be co-located. Key personnel within the S-1 section will need to be interchangeable and understand the responsibilities and capabilities of everyone else in the section.

One person should not be the sole expert in any subject. Unfortunately, learning how to operate HR systems is often neglected because the HR warrant officer is considered the expert.

In order to reduce the long lines of people standing outside of chief’s office door and empower more members of the S-1 section to be able to update and retrieve data, AGS developed HR systems training and qualification to train and validate proficiency on HR systems such as the Enlisted Distribution and Assignment System, Total Officer Per-



*Sgt. Roger Lopez, right, and Spc. Brandon Vines, both human resources specialists, review postal plans on May 20, 2015, during Iron Will 15 at Vogelweh Military Complex, Germany. In the future operational environment, key personnel within S-1 sections will need to be interchangeable and understand the responsibilities and capabilities of everyone else in the section. (Photo by Sgt. 1st Class Alexander Burnett)*

sonnel Management Information System, Electronic Military Personnel Office, Army Human Resources System Enterprise Datastore, and Microsoft Office.

In the same way that Soldiers must qualify on their rifles and grenade launchers, HR professionals need to regularly qualify on HR systems that they use on a daily basis. HR systems qualification is a set number of tasks or questions for each key HR system. Before qualifying on HR systems, students receive detailed instruction and extensive hands-on training on each system.

The intent is not to turn the students into clerks but to grow leaders who are capable of employing HR

systems for maximum coverage on the HR battlefield (in the S-1 or G-1 sections). The end state is to produce HR leaders who are proficient on essential HR systems and capable of solving complex HR problems.

## HR Gunnery Tables

HR leaders must be able to recognize their HR systems capabilities in order to employ them and lead on the HR battlefield. HR gunnery tables were developed to apply critical thinking and analyze data within complex S-1 battle drills to solve problems.

The HR gunnery tables use rigorous and realistic scenarios. HR

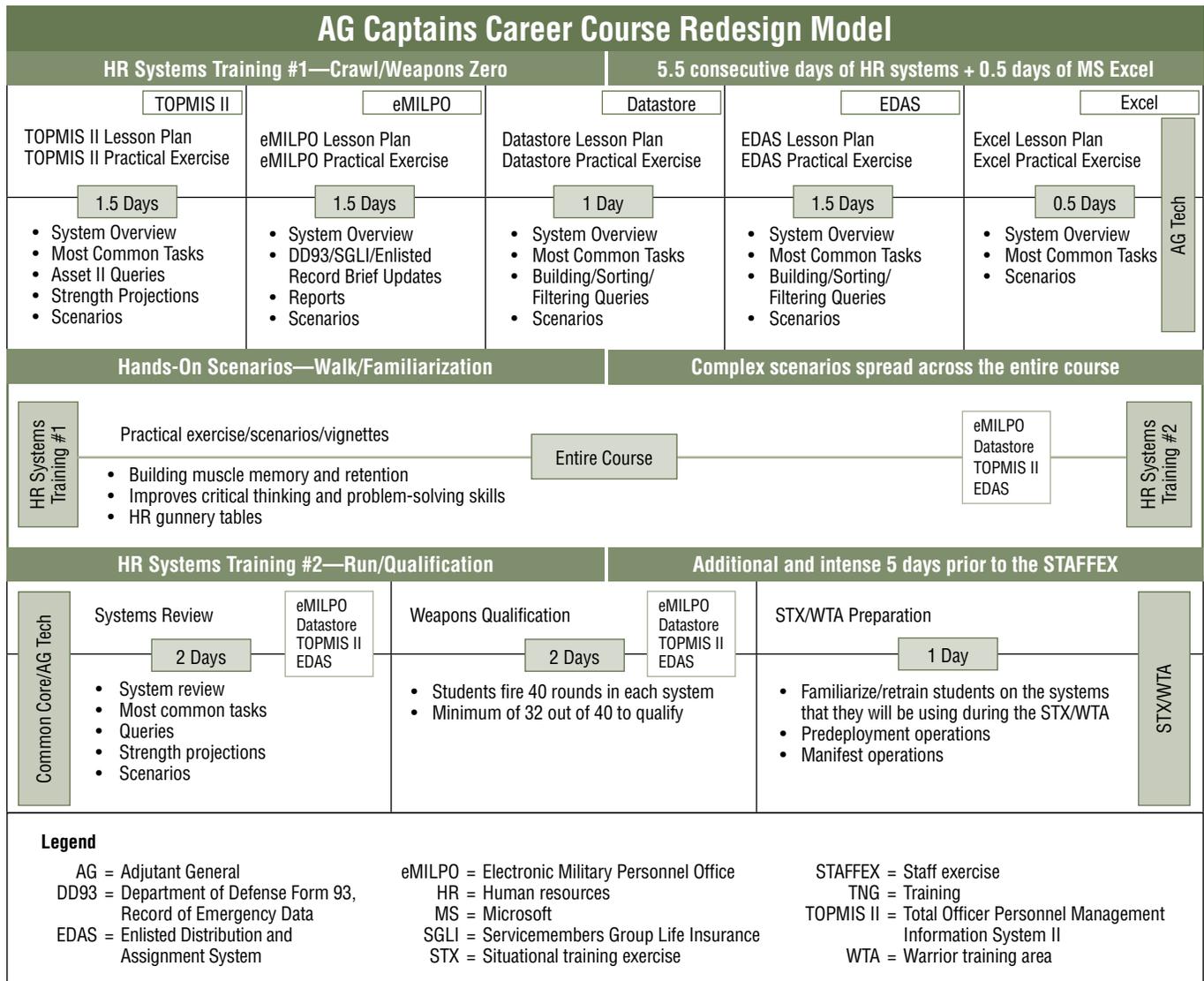


Figure 1. The Adjutant General Captains Career Course redesign model.

leaders can save products from the gunnery tables, such as formatted spreadsheets, slides, queries, and references, and reuse them at their next assignments.

During the HR gunnery tables, the most common HR battle drills, such as unit status reports, HR metrics, casualty operations, evaluations, and promotion list scrubs, are stressed. Problem-solving scenarios are implemented weekly to improve muscle memory and set conditions for HR leaders to make a difference the same day they report to their units.

### The STAFFEX

The HR systems qualification and

HR gunnery tables lead up to the culminating training event during the STAFFEX. The STAFFEX simulates a day in the life of an S-1 and incorporates everything the Soldiers have learned throughout the course.

The STAFFEX increases the stress level and requires students to use critical thinking and problem-solving skills to accomplish more tasks than time allows. Students are required to prioritize and innovate to be successful during this event.

### AGTube

AGS is staying connected to the field by using current technology to export solutions, receive feedback

from Soldiers, and develop solutions across the Army. To export solutions, AGS posted several videos on YouTube's "U.S. Adjutant General School" channel, which is also called "AGTube."

The channel consists of a series of videos that show HR operators working in S-1 and G-1 sections how to use HR systems and Microsoft Office products to save time and solve common HR problems. AGTube also includes postal operations videos to aid postal clerks in understanding and executing postal procedures.

The videos do not require a common access card login and can be ac-

cessed from any smart device at any time. Soldiers worldwide can access these videos when they have questions about a specific task or battle drill. AGTube supports the Army Learning Model because it blends self-development with institutional training while leveraging the most current technology.

Soldiers in the field provide recommendations and requests for potential demonstrations or videos that could be of value. Using this input, AGS remains current and fills the gap between institutional training and real experience.

## **BSM2**

Another tool created at AGS that benefits the entire Army is BSM2. It is an analytical tool that helps commanders to manage limited personnel resources within the guidelines of the senior commander manning concept and the sustainable readiness model.

BSM2 can save personnel sections countless man-hours by pulling data and turning it into information that commanders can use to make educated strength management and personnel readiness decisions. It serves as the one common tool that all HR operators can use at all levels.

## **The Way Ahead**

While the AGCCC redesign is in the pilot phase, all of the other PME courses are in the redesign planning phase. The courses will be updated to have more hands-on systems training, increased critical and creative thinking scenarios, and more battle drills.

The Basic Officer Leader Course, Warrant Officer Basic Course, Warrant Officer Advanced Course, Senior Leader Course, Advanced Leader Course, and advanced individual training courses will all be redesigned within the next year.

Increasing critical and creative thinking, flexibility, innovation, and mental agility throughout all PME courses comes with risk. Applying this approach to a particular prob-

lem set can generate many different solutions; several will work, some will work better than others, and some will not work at all.

This concept will put a strain on instructors because they will have to determine whether or not a solution is viable. The students need to be able to explain why they chose a solution, but the instructor will determine if that solution could work, even if it is not in the answer key.

The whole point of being more innovative and flexible is to create HR leaders who can come up with better solutions than the ones we are currently using.

This may require a stricter instructor selection process or require instructors to complete prerequisite training and certification before stepping on the platform. AGS has implemented a rigorous instructor training and certification program and will incorporate it into the faculty development program.

Feedback from students and instructors who have gone through the pilot HR weapons qualification, HR gunnery tables, and course redesign has been useful for improving the material.

The increase in HR systems training and the requirement to display critical and creative thinking throughout the course will benefit these students' future units. Exposing HR professionals to these training products between PME attendances will help to boost the knowledge base of the entire field.

One of the most important things AGS is focused on for the future is exporting these products for home-station training and certification. AGS wants to send these training products to all units and combat training centers. Combat training center cadre can use the products to validate and certify HR and postal platoons and S-1 sections.

A commander would not send infantry Soldiers on a deployment or rotation without ensuring that they

were all qualified on their weapons. Yet many HR professionals are still unfamiliar with primary HR systems when they deploy.

The end state is to change the mindset in the field so that commanders realize the importance of incorporating HR training and validation into the long-range training calendar. HR training and validation needs to receive training calendar space that is comparable to the training and validation of Soldiers of all other career fields.

The operational environment and unit responsibilities are constantly changing. How will leaders handle increased responsibilities with fewer resources and personnel? Leaders will be able to accomplish more with less by being more flexible, better at assessing and analyzing situations, and more creative with solving complex problems.

To achieve this goal, institutional courses need to incorporate more critical and creative thinking, flexibility, innovation, and mental agility. TRADOC leaders need to ensure that schools can quickly add, delete, and modify curriculum to stay current and remain relevant with the rapidly changing operational environment in order to allow students to report to their units with the most relevant tools.

The most important outcome of institutional courses should be educated and trained leaders capable of helping commanders at every level as soon as they arrive at their next assignments. The Army needs leaders who require little-to-no guidance and can be trusted to remain adaptive and creatively think of solutions within the commander's intent.

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