



CREATING A NEW CURRICULUM TO TRAIN
ARMY STAFF OFFICERS

by

Ralph W. Ekwall Ed. D
Educational Specialist
CGSC, Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas



This paper begins with explanations and definitions needed to understand the remainder of the paper. The major topic is an explanation of the process by which the US Army developed a new program to train US Army staff officers. A step by step chronology of the curriculum development process is explained. The major emphasis is on the methodology used to develop the curriculum, but a topical summary of the content is included. Following the chronology, some specific topics such as strategy for implementation, planning activities, personnel, and other topics are discussed. The final section is a summary of lessons learned which may have application to other curriculum developers.



DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

1. BACKGROUND. To begin this presentation several definitions and explanations will be given to enable you to better understand the content. In June of 1978 the U.S. Army completed a study called the RETO study. RETO stands for Review of Education and Training of Officers. This study identified a shortfall in staff officer training and recommended the creation of a new school to train U.S. Army staff officers. The new program was developed by an independent cell of planners within the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. The name of the new school is CAS³ which stands for the Combined Arms and Services Staff School. This program is designed to train Army staff officers in the common or generic skills rather than in specific skills. Stated another way: CAS³ is not in the business of training logisticians or intelligence specialists: it is in the business of training staff officers.

2. LENGTH AND STRUCTURE. The CAS³ program consists of a 140 hour package of nonresident instruction, a qualifying exam, and a nine week period of resident instruction. The nonresident portion is also called phase I; the resident portion is called phase II.

3. PROGRESS. The first iteration of CAS³ was completed in June, 1981. In 1981, about 120 officers received CAS³ training. In 1982 about 720 officers will be trained; in 1983 and 1984 about 1000 officers will receive training. When fully implemented in 1985 and the years following about 3800 officers per year will receive CAS³ training. At full implementation nearly every Army officer will receive CAS³ training. Most of the CAS³ students will be captains in their 6th to 9th year of service.

The plan of the remainder of this presentation is to go through the major steps in the curriculum development process with a digression on the content of the curriculum and another digression of the characteristics of the two phases. Following the chronology there will be an explanation of some topics you may want to know about and some things that we want to tell you about.

STEPS IN CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

A review of the chronology shows that the curriculum development process was condensed into a relatively short period of time. The major portion of the curriculum development was completed in about 18 months. The amount of time allocated for program development was specified by the TRADOC commander. Intensive efforts were required to complete the job.

A systems approach was used in the curriculum development process. The model used in the initial stages was the general ISD model. The CGSC version of ISD was developed during the CAS³ curriculum development process and in the later stages it served as the systems model for curriculum development.

The first part of the curriculum development process was the Analysis process. At this stage of the process, resources were limited and CAS³ was under some time pressure, even so, staff members were able to do reasonably good job analysis of the work of an Army staff officer. A major effort at this time was the development of a task list. The sources of the task list were sources such as the following:

- a. Data from the RETO study
- b. Panels of staff officers
- c. Command guidance
- d. CGSC departmental input
- e. Borrowing from other job analysis programs
- f. Research and borrowing from other research

The general policy during the task list development stage was to include every suggested task without regard for duplication, level of specificity, scope or language. At one point the list contained about 400 tasks. After collecting task data, the task list was edited and refined. Duplicate tasks were eliminated; tasks judged to be more appropriate for enlisted men were eliminated; tasks written at very high levels of specificity were subsumed under other tasks or eliminated; tasks were edited so that they were stated in similar fashion and stated in behavioral terms. At the conclusion of the editing and refinement process the task list contained 66 tasks and 13 skills and knowledge statements. Examples of tasks: Formulate command operating budget; Develop a plan for employment of electronic warfare assets; Prepare a staff study. Example of skills and knowledge statements: Principles of management; Capabilities and limitations of Soviet weapons systems. The refined task list was used as a basis of a survey of officers attending CGSC who had served as staff officers. Each task was the basis of 4 questions. (1) How much time do you spend performing this task? (2) How often do you do this task? (3) How difficult is it to learn to perform this task? (4) What are the consequences of inadequate performance of this task? About 270 responses were analyzed. Our analysis of the survey data was the basis for our recommendation to the Critical Task Selection Board. The Critical Task Selection Board was a board consisting of 4 generals and the director of CAS³. For the most part the Critical Task Selection Board approved the recommendations.

At this time the first steps in the design process began. Based on the survey data and the philosophical concept developed by the CAS³ task force, a notional resident phase was created. A series of 7 exercises were planned. These exercises were planned so that the recommended tasks would be taught in the exercise. After the phase II exercises were planned, the phase I modules needed to support phase II were designed. This is probably a good time to look at the content of the curriculum.

Some of the material in the nonresident phase serves as a support for the resident phase, but other portions of the material contain general information useful for general professional development.

The phase I module is designed to be done on an individual basis in a self-paced mode. It provides instruction by means of several varieties of programmed learning materials. It is designed to be administered as a correspondence

program. Nearly all of the learning objectives are at the knowledge or comprehension level. The intent of phase I is to provide students with a common base of knowledge when they begin phase II. Phase II instruction is presented in 12 person staff groups guided by a senior lieutenant-colonel with battalion command experience. The learning activities in phase II are designed in such a way that interaction and coordination among participants is required. The learning objectives in phase II are those requiring a higher level of mental activity. Students are evaluated on an individual basis for the purpose of improvement; the emphasis is on skills rather than content. Phase II was designed so that the student would perform in much the same way as a real world staff situation. The student would do things that staff officers do; they would prepare staff studies; they would coordinate actions; they would interact, cooperate and exchange information; they would have an opportunity to make real world decisions without paying real world penalties for mistakes.

After phase I and phase II initial planning was completed, authors were assigned and trained. The first task of the authors was to develop TLOs and ELOs. Teams of Authors, with 1-3 members, corresponding to the Phase II exercise were formed. Senior authors for each team were appointed. Each team was responsible for the preparation of the phase II exercise and the phase I modules that supported it. A concurrent task was planning and presenting a detailed briefing of the planned content of each exercise. This briefing was presented to the director and the entire staff for comment. After suggestions for revision had been incorporated, curriculum writing began with phase I modules being done first followed by phase II exercises.

During the time that phase II exercises were being written, staff leaders were trained. Final work on curriculum writing was completed during the first iteration of the instructional program. Following completion of the first iteration, we have done some curriculum revision and we are now in the process of training additional staff leaders. This completes the chronology of curriculum development; your attention is directed to some special topics.

SPECIAL TOPICS

1. STRATEGY FOR IMPLEMENTATION. One of the design concepts for CAS³ was that phase II instruction would consist of instructional methods and materials that utilized simulations and/or practical exercises, case studies, discussion, and problem solving materials. To implement this concept the concept was presented to newly arrived authors or staff leaders at their in-briefing. The methods were modeled and promoted in author training. Authors were actively encouraged to prepare instructional materials that fitted the CAS³ philosophy of instruction. When staff leaders were trained, the methods were modeled and promoted and staff leaders were trained in their use. In this manner a curriculum was developed that conformed to our philosophical concept. The same method was used to implement the phase I-phase II concept and other aspects of the program.
2. SINGLE THREAD CONCEPT. The exercises in phase II are linked together by a single thread. This means that all of the phase II learning activities have

have a single setting. That setting is the 52nd division. In that setting students are trained as staff officers and then do staff work in areas such as budget and training; a roundout brigade is mobilized and the division is deployed to Europe. The final exercise is a combat exercise in Europe. Through all seven exercises there is a single framework, the 52nd division; this provides a common focus even though the situation changes with each exercise.

3. PLANNING ACTIVITIES. At the inception of the CAS³ program, the TRADOC, commander provided direction to CAS³ planners, and having given that direction, then allowed the CAS³ staff to do their job. Planning activities were necessary to accomplish the planned goals.

Throughout the entire program development process, planning activities helped to guide, motivate, and provide priorities for program and curriculum development. The leadership of CAS³ provided overall planning guidance and prepared milestone charts which were revised from time to time. Team leaders and individuals developed their own planning charts within the framework of the milestone charts prepared by CAS³ leadership. At one point a PERT chart was developed, but CAS³ lost the services of the officer who had developed it. Since there was no individual responsible for revising or updating the PERT chart, the program continued to use milestone charts which proved to be adequate.

4. PERSONNEL. You may wish to know more about the people who planned and developed the CAS³ program. There are two full-time civilian employees on the professional staff. One works mostly in the area of staff development and the other in evaluation. Most of the work in planning and curriculum development has been done by a staff that consists of mostly lieutenant colonels and a few majors. These officers were a select group, but had no specific training as authors or in subject matter areas. By means of the CAS³ author training program and intensive self-study they became experts in writing and in their subject matter areas. All of the instruction was provided by lieutenant-colonels who were, for the most part, former battalion commanders. These instructors, or Staff Leaders, were provided with an intensive training program to give the knowledge and skills necessary to function as Staff Leaders. The director of the program is a full colonel.

5. PROMOTING THE IMAGE. The CAS³ staff undertook a series of actions designed to promote the image of the CAS³ program. Since CAS³ functions as a department at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, some of these actions were directed to the Command and General Staff College. CAS³ used the other departments at CGSC in an advisory and consultive capacity. This provided access to a pool of expertise, developed some personal relationships and improved our standing. On a larger basis, CAS³ provided status briefings for the commandant and deputy commandant, for visiting generals and other VIPs, for National Guard and USAR groups, for regular students at CGSC, and to various special groups. The use of general officers on the Critical Task Selection Board helped to promote our image. Our program maintained a constant liaison with TRADOC. A POI was submitted to Army branch schools for review and comment; experts were invited to review and comment on our work. Not every one of these initiatives were undertaken for the purpose of promoting the image, but all served to improve our standing.

6. NEW PROGRAM. The CAS³ curriculum is unique because it is an entirely new program rather than a revision of an existing program. This meant that the innovative aspects of the program could be implemented rather easily. However, the writing of a new curriculum created some problems. No single text, field manual, or existing curriculum contained the necessary materials; therefore the writing required extensive research and extraordinary creativity. In certain areas, the authors found that a doctrinal base was inadequate or lacking. CAS³ authors managed by use of the following: adopt, adapt, borrow, modernize, and collect advice from proponent agencies.

LESSONS LEARNED

Finally, some lessons learned that you may find useful.

1. Quality leadership is essential for the success of a new program.
2. Careful planning and adherence to plans is an essential ingredient of success, but plans need to be continuously reviewed and revised.
3. A systems approach to curriculum development provides the needed framework for building a new program.
4. Promotional activities are an important ingredient of a successful program.
5. Control of a program is a necessary ingredient of success. In our case we were able to control things like the philosophy, methodology, author training, staff leader training, most of the content, the structure of the curriculum, and the administration of the program.
6. Defend the program. While we incorporated command guidance, we knew what we wanted to do and refused advice and suggestions that were contrary to our plans.
7. Preparation. Prepare carefully for briefings; make sure that plans are carefully thought out previous to important briefings. Have positive plans or positions prepared. Be ready to say "We plan to do..." or our position is that it should be done in this manner..." Don't be caught in the position of not knowing what you plan to do.

This is only a partial summary of lessons learned; other speakers will add to the lessons learned.