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Role of HRDCs in the Indian Army: Need for Review



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Introduction

Future successes on the battlefield will depend on the Army's ability to leverage both kinetic and non-kinetic means to wage a war. As the character of warfare changes, soldiers are expected to be 'not only' technically proficient in war fighting, but also capable of supervising civil affairs, providing humanitarian aid and managing disasters and performing a range of activities related to civil authorities. Therefore, the soldiers would be required to become highly skilled in their respective fields, proficient in their warrior skills as well as possess knowledge of the language, culture, and cyber-related skills as per requirement of the area of operation. As networked technologies flatten command structures, new doctrine and revised training regimes are likely to be required in order to prepare the individual soldier to assume greater responsibility in the multi-domain 21st century battle

Key Points

- Future battlefield would require highly proficient technical and warrior skills.
- It is inevitable that, advanced level of training and learning is required for dealing with sophisticated equipment.
- Trainees are required to acquire skills for use of state-of-the-art technology and weapon systems.
- A trained, disciplined and motivated soldier can contribute immensely to the 'Make in India' campaign.
- Post-retirement employment of an extremely motivated, committed and disciplined soldier is an issue that is required to be addressed by decision makers.



space. As a result of these trends, we must begin to foster a military culture that is aimed at preparing the NCOs to become what has been described as 'strategic corporals'. The Army has long recognised the importance of the Officer Education System, particularly at the senior officer level. It needs to do the same for the soldiers. The aim of this paper is to highlight the need to review the role and contribution of Human Resource Development Centres (DRDCs) in the Indian Army. This should be done, keeping in mind post-retirement development of the personnel as well.

Present System

The Human Resource of Indian Army is its soldiers. Given its size, diversity and intricacies, the challenges that confront the Indian Army, when it comes to management of its human resource element, are many. Given the enormity of the tasks that, a soldier in service has to perform, it is necessary for the HRDCs promote a sense of responsibility, professional competence and dedication to the organisation and the Nation.

Division HRDCs. A Corps in the Indian Army generally comprises of three fighting divisions. Each of these division has its own HRDC where developmental activities takes place albeit at a low scale and on restricted fields for the soldiers and their dependent family members of the respective area of responsibility. Adequate Army Education Corps (AEC) staff is posted to run these centres under assigned Officers. Various activities which Division HRDCs undertake are:-

- Army Education Certificate Cadres, as required for non-matriculate soldiers of the Division zone. These have civil equivalence and are recognised by the state Boards of Education. They are of in-service and post-retirement value.
- Army English Certificate Cadres, for non-matriculate soldiers or matriculates without English subject mostly of technical arms and services such as EME, Signals and Engineers etc.
- Map Reading Cadre, for all the soldiers in a Division, in order to enhance their knowledge on terrain and professional growth. MR training is compulsory for all soldiers for their professional growth. The MR courses run at Brigade HRDCs are divided into MR III, II and I level as required.
- Hindi and Local Language Cadres, for soldiers depending upon the remoteness and operational deployment / requirement of the Division.
- Sports and adventure activities are coordinated by HRDC personnel for the troops of the units and subunits of the Division.



- Division HRDCs also provides technical academic services to all army schools and defence sector KVs that falls within the Division zone. AEC officers posted to Division HQ are technical advisors to commanders on all school matters as also, most of the time, are nominees chairman to KVs of the cantonment.
- The Divisions also maintains a well-stocked library for information and learning purposes.
- Guidance and Counselling Cells in Division HRDCs works directly under the AEC officers posted in Division HQs.

Brigade HRDCs. In the army echelon of hierarchy, Brigade or Regimental centre level HRDCs although is the lowest but their contribution in developing the soldiers is immense as it is the first step where the soldier is introduced to the lessons of orientation, integration and motivation. Each Brigade or Regimental centre in the Army comprises HRDCs with the adequate number of AEC personnel to supervise academic and training related activities for the overall development of the army personnel assigned to the respective Brigade/Regimental Centre. These activities can however be divided mainly into two categories:-

- **Formal activities.** In Brigade HRDCs, various academic subjects such as Hindi, English, Science, Computer, etc. are taught to soldiers for enhancing their educational qualification and train them accordingly so that they can handle their professional challenges more efficiently and effectively. The courses/cadres run in the Brigade HRDCs are important for the soldier's promotion as well. The certificates awarded to soldiers after the completion of such courses and cadres have also been accorded civil equivalence for post-retirement benefit of the soldiers. These are called Army Education Certificates at various levels. The various certificate courses that are conducted at Brigade HRDC are mentioned in table 1 below.

Table 1: Certificate Courses conducted at Brigade HRDC

Sr No.	Certificate	Equivalence	Required for Promotion	Remarks
1.	ACE – III	VI	Nk/L/Nk	Applicable to Non-Matriculate Only
2.	ACE – II	VII	Hav	
3.	ACE – I	VIII	Nb Sub	
4.	Rect Test	-	Rect to Soldier	-
5.	BFC	-	Rect to Soldier	For Matric Only
6.	Army Eng Cert III	-	-	-
7.	Army Eng Cert	-	-	-
8.	Army Eng Cert	-	-	-

Source: Annotated by the Author

In the formal educational activity of Brigade HRDC, training in local languages is also given to the soldiers. However, it is area-specific and as per the requirement of the deployment of the Brigade.

- **Informal Activities.** Informal academic training of HRDC comprises of the following activities:
 - Library and information services.
 - Information room cum motivation hall.
 - Cultural and recreational activities.
 - Career enhancement services.
 - Coaching, guidance and counseling services.
 - Sports and adventure activities.
 - Rajbhasha promotion work.
 - Public relation work.
 - Tech services to schools.
 - Personal development of soldiers.

Transformations

Over the years, there has been a complete transformation in the technical and tactical domain of the armed forces. With the Indian Armed Forces moving towards an integrated approach with respect to handling of threats, there has been an increased requirement of highly skilled manpower to handle the same. It is not only the changing dynamics in the armed forces but also the changes in the civil world which an individual has to adapt to



post-retirement. Hence, there is a need to review the role of the HRDCs. The fields that have been incorporated as part of the transformation of HRDCs are as under:-

- **Map Reading.** The most important facet of the army training in understanding the terrain and undertaking navigation using maps (digital or paper maps). This field of army training has evolved over years and adopted various methodologies and technologies during the evolution. To keep pace with the changing dynamics in the field, the following technologies has been adopted by HRDCs as part of the training curriculum:-
 - **Google Earth.** This is free software available on the internet which provides various functions to understand the terrain better and facilitate operational planning. The use of the software by all personnel in future entails basic computer education for all ranks and further training on the software. It gives an adequate idea of the features present in the particular place. It is important to have an idea of the geological landscape of the area.
 - **Satellite Imagery.** With the introduction of the space dimension in the armed forces, there is an inevitable need for training the personnel in the reading and understanding of imageries received from satellite and thereafter planning operations accordingly. With hyper- spectral imageries, coming into the realm of the satellite imagery, there is an increase need to train our soldiers to understand the same. It is significant for intelligence inputs as well.
 - **Use of GIS.** Integrating the Geographical Information System (GIS) technology into map reading training, would allow the trainees to develop their skills involved in the use of such state-of-the-art technologies, to facilitate better planning of future operations.
- **Language.** Impetus must be given to learning languages like Sheena, Pashtu, Balti and others, as used in Jammu and Kashmir, or the languages used in insurgency prone areas of the North East. The human resource management issues of learning, posting, career interests should be taken care of. Additionally, there is a requirement to train our soldiers on many other foreign languages to enable our forces to operate efficiently in overseas assignments and to intercept the transmissions of our adversary during conventional operations. With respect to the intelligence sector posting, learning the language would also help our forces to decipher codes, as



codes with related to operations are usually created in local languages by non-state actors in order to avoid the failure of their operation.

- **Computer Literacy.** It is ironical in the present scenario, wherein on one hand, we talk about the integrated operations in a larger picture and on the other hand, we have the maximum portion of the human resource of the organisation as computer illiterates. In the present scenario, the courses covers only the basics of computers, therefore, there is a need of advanced level training to deal with future equipments and challenges. Owing to the large size of the armed forces, there is first a need to inculcate the concept of '*training the trainers*', with adequate resources. However, this should be done at the battalion level for more efficiency.
- **Cyber Security.** With the shift in the nature of warfare towards information warfare, there is a need of adequately trained manpower, at all levels, to counter as well as launch information warfare on the enemy. This is the only domain which remains active even during peacetime and can cause maximum damage without being involved in direct contact battle. It is important, in the current scenario, to control this sphere, as it ultimately determines the strength of a Nation.
- **Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear Training (CBRN Training).** Though the threat is not imminent in the present context, however the future demands the force to be ready for all contingencies and hence trained manpower at the lowest level is required to deal with it.
- **Personality Development and Second Career Training.** Owing to the pyramidal structure of promotion in the armed forces, maximum soldiers retire at early ages and with the same qualification with which they got selected. This puts them in the back foot after retirement and hence while the individual is in service, adequate emphasis should be made to train the individual for his post-retirement employability and adaptability.

Modernisation Projects

Based on the evolving professional requirements in consonance with the emerging technologies, few equipment modernisation projects for the Corps are recommended as under:-

- **Hi-Tech Classrooms.** Upgradation of the existing classrooms, to classrooms with modern audio-visual equipment such as latest computers and video projection systems, would be of immense significance for the training of the personnel.



- **Intranet.** This would imply the automation of all functional areas, with nodes available for major functionaries and could be integrated with the Army Intranet, once permitted, after all security aspects are verified.
- **Instructional Monitoring System.** This would allow the senior management to monitor all instruction from a single location, thereby fostering greater accountability and commitment.
- **Internet and Media Connectivity.** Unlimited and undisturbed high speed internet connectivity is required to be harnessed and integrated with the day-to-day functioning of the AEC colleges. Networked terminal labs are proposed to be set up in areas of need. For security purposes, virtual private networks (VPN) could be used.
- **Fully Automated Library.** The libraries are to be fully automated with an integrated library management system to enhance functional efficiency.
- **Computer based Language Labs.** Computer based language labs, with requisite and latest software, would facilitate efficient and effective learning of English, Foreign and Regional languages.
- **Computer Based Training (CBT) Centre.** With the present emphasis on multi-sensory instruction, a modern, well-equipped CBT production centre at AEC Training College would facilitate the integration of CBT into all courses of instruction run by the AEC in various areas of functioning throughout the army.

The Future

To keep up with the pace of change, HRDCs may be required to undertake additional charters in the following areas:-

- Stress Management and Counseling.
- Clerks Training.
- Educational Rehabilitation and Civic Action.
- Training of Trainers.
- Training in Ethics and Morality.
- Computer Training for Recruits.
- Education of Wards of Servicemen.

Training and education are not mutually exclusive. Education complements training and experience, thus enabling soldiers to understand and judge the situations accordingly in a complex tactical environment. The general model, for the development of military leaders,



consists of a combination of training and experience along with mentoring and self-development.

Way Ahead after Retirement

An effective and assured transition to a second career postretirement will have valuable pay offs:-

- A trained, disciplined and motivated resource will be optimally utilised for nation-building. Due to inherent experience in human resource management and leadership imbibed during military service, the ex-servicemen will contribute immensely to the 'Make in India' campaign trainers/supervisors.
- The best talent from the country will be motivated to join military service due to an assured career post-transition and the ability to work until 60 years of age. Environmental awareness will also help retention.
- Professionalism and performance during service will improve immensely, as that will be the stepping stone for graduation to a career post-retirement.
- It will enhance a person's educational and technical qualifications, which will also improve the overall standard of services, and will generate healthy competition for promotion within the service.

Human resource management is one of the most important issue concerning the corporates, recruiting agencies and governments the world over. The armed forces are no exception, and in India a lot of progress needs to be done in this particular aspect. It has remained dormant and not received the response it deserves, especially in a country having one of the largest armed forces in the world. Unfortunately, the extremely motivated, committed and disciplined resource is allowed to fade, thereby violating the very principle of 'economy of effort'. It needs to be acknowledged that, transition is important for the nation, the armed forces and the society as a whole, and not just for an individual. As an organisation, the focus must remain on educating and enabling soldiers for professional growth during service and a fruitful career post-retirement— for those who would like to work after retirement.

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