ADULT EDUCATION IN THE CANADIAN FORCES

By

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Integrated Studies Project

submitted to Dr. Jenny Wannas

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts – Integrated Studies

Athabasca, Alberta

July, 2008
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Introduction and Background

The Canadian Forces (CF) offers its officers and non-commissioned members (NCM) a wide variety of programs to upgrade and continue their education. The goal of this research was to assess and present these programs and to obtain opinions regarding these programs by Canadian Forces members.

In the *Military HR Strategy 2020* report that was produced by the Department of National Defence in 2002, education was highlighted as a very important human resource issue for both present and future needs. According to this report, the Canadian Forces is “…committed to promoting the intellectual development of its officer and NCM corps.” (National Defence, 2002, p. 23). The report goes on to say, “Formal education, either through in-service courses or at academic institutions, is an important tool in providing the professional knowledge and in developing intellectual skills that sustain military capability.” (National Defence, 2002, p. 23) Other articles looked at during this research reinforced this claim.

Education is the key to developing a workforce within the Canadian Forces that has the technical and information abilities to continue to grow and evolve. In furthering these goals, the Canadian Forces has created a wide range of educational programs, ranging from educational reimbursement programs to partnerships with educational institutes to financial assistance offered through low interest loans, all of which benefit the Canadian Forces members and, in turn, benefit the entire Canadian Forces.

For the purposes of this study, socialization is defined as the “process of learning the roles, statuses, and values necessary for participation in social institutions” (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p. 55). Socialization into the military is therefore considered an
important concept to consider in this research. The Canadian Forces has a culture of its own and within this culture there are particular values, attitudes and norms. The process of socialization into the military culture begins as soon as a new recruit enters the basic training course and the process continues throughout the member’s career. Fellow military members, the member’s superiors and even the organization itself, act as agents of socialization, which are the groups or contexts that have a “profound effect on the development of personality, self-concept, and the social roles we assume” (Brinkerhoff et al., 2004, p. 68). The agent of socialization, which in this case could be considered the organization of the Canadian Forces, influences the feelings and the actions of its members.

Since the Canadian Forces is committed to the intellectual development of its members, as is stated in the *Military HR Strategy 2020* report, to achieve this goal a cultural change must occur where education becomes more valued. According to Hausdorf and Zugec (2003), cultural change and leadership are intertwined. They state that “in order to facilitate cultural change in the CF, senior leaders’ role in assessment, feedback and communicating changes to the rest of the organization cannot be underestimated” (p. 36). A culture which values education within the Canadian Forces must be seen as an organizational goal that is supported by all levels of leadership. New members must be socialized into a culture where education is valued as a priority so that the commitments as set out in the *Military HR Strategy 2020* report will be respected.

While many Canadian Forces members believe that the educational programs presently offered to them are of great benefit, some members are not fully aware of what is offered to them, have negative opinions regarding what is offered or simply do not see
the value of continuing education. This project was meant to further the knowledge available by critically analyzing the subject of Adult Education in the Canadian Forces. This study investigated the programs offered to officers and non-commissioned members of the Canadian Forces for upgrading their education and also assessed the opinions of individual Canadian Forces members regarding these programs. Data was collected through research of the programs offered, through an Access to Information request submitted to the Department of National Defence, and through written interviews of 45 Canadian Forces members, both officers and NCMs.

**Brief Overview of the Study’s Data Collection**

The data received through the written interviews was used to assess the opinions of the Canadian Forces members regarding Adult Education programs within the Canadian military. The Queen’s commissioned officers, who are at the management level and/or are the leaders of the Canadian Forces, as well as the non-commissioned members (NCM) were interviewed. This study researched both programs offered to the Regular Force members, which is approximately 62,000 strong and also, looked at a program specifically offered to the Reserve Force which is approximately 25,000 strong. (National Defence, 2007a) According to the “Annual Report on Regular Force Personnel” that was written by the Department of National Defence, officers make up approximately 23% of the total Regular Force population (2006a). Research participants who responded to the interview question included officers and NCMs who were from the three elements (Army, Air Force, and Navy), had different levels of experience, were of
both genders, and were located in various locations across Canada. Participants were drawn only from Regular Force members.

**Literature Review**

The literature review that was done prior to beginning this research provided much information on the subject of the educational programs offered by the Canadian Forces. An interesting discussion by Last (2004) was found in the article, “Military degrees: How high is the bar and where’s the beef?” in the *Canadian Military Journal*. This journal article focused on the degrees obtained through the Royal Military College and the Canadian Forces College. The author discussed the value of officers having degrees from the Bachelor, Masters and Doctoral levels. He also differentiated between a diploma and real-life education for officers. He argued that an educated officer core is important but it is also important what the area of study would be. He outlined the educational requirements for the different military ranks and questions the worth of a doctoral degree for the higher ranked officers. The article called for officers to seriously consider the field of study they will undertake and he stated that Doctoral studies are not for every officer and that perhaps only one or two new candidates a year should be sponsored. This article gave a good overview of what education is expected from the Canadian Forces officers but it does not mention the possible educational opportunities available for non-commissioned members.

Foot (2006) also wrote an article regarding Adult Education in the Canadian Forces titled “Military education and the transformation of the Canadian Forces” and focused on education for the highest ranks that is offered at the Canadian Forces College.
He wrote about a transformation that is taking place in the Canadian Forces and at the school more specifically. “Everyone,” he stated in reference to officers’ education, “wishes to see the maximum output, the best value for money, and the most flexible and professional of results” (p. 14). He asserted that education must not simply be about tactical and leadership issues; a well-rounded officer must be the end goal of education. A well-rounded officer shows good sense and mature judgment, has military virtues and is competent and knowledgeable both operationally and strategically. He also stated that it is not only the accumulation of information that is important, but the officers must create a “habit of learning” (p. 19) that will continue throughout their career. Foot’s work sheds light on the Canadian Forces College, the programs offered, and the need for transformation in the education offered in the Canadian Forces.

A research project conducted by Ronald Pumphrey (2006) titled, “Meeting Adult Training Needs in Canadian Naval Schools” offers insight into the Canadian Forces Naval Schools. Pumphrey discusses how the Naval Schools differ from the educational centers of the other two elements of the Canadian Forces, the Air Force and Navy. He discusses the transformations that are needed and the potential barriers to change that exist. Although this research paper discusses training schools within the Navy alone, it offers interesting considerations on how to maximize adult learning potential in a military setting.

Background information on the programs offered by the Canadian Forces was found in the Canadian Forces publications such as the Defence Administrative Orders and Directives and the Canadian Forces Administrative Orders. Information was also found in an Internet search of the Canadian Forces websites on the various program
descriptions and the necessary prerequisites for the programs. Yet what seemed to be
missing in the literature was a complete picture of what is offered in terms of both
educational programs and financial support, and also on what the opinions of the
Canadian Forces members were regarding these programs. This is, in part, what sparked
the direction taken in my research.

**Aims and Methods of Research**

There were four main goals of the study: a) to present an overview of the
educational opportunities and programs available to Canadian Forces members; b) to
present information on the resources that the Canadian Forces invests in these educational
programs; c) to determine the numbers of Canadian Forces members who are taking
advantage of what is offered; and d) to assess the members’ opinions of the educational
benefits available to them. It was anticipated at the onset of this proposed study, that
through their responses to the written interview, the Canadian Forces members would
pinpoint issues that would critically assess the overall effectiveness of the information
availability and the quality of their educational programs. This research project
attempted to further analyze information available on the Canadian Forces’ educational
programs and critically evaluate it through the eyes and opinions of its own members.

Two main methods were used in this research. First, research took place
regarding the different programs offered to Canadian Forces members. This information
was found through an Internet and Journal search, through the educational institutions
that provide special programs to Canadian Forces members, and through a request
submitted through the Access to Information Act made to the Department of National
Defence. I requested information on the educational programs offered, on the numbers of members who are taking advantage of the programs and financial information, that is, how much is being spent on these programs by the Canadian Forces.

The second method of research was a written interview given to Canadian Forces members. 45 Canadian Forces members were interviewed on their opinions regarding the educational programs offered to them. The interview question gave the Canadian Forces members the opportunity to discuss whatever they felt was important regarding this issue. No statistics or generalizations can be drawn from the responses since no attempt was made to create a valid sample of the population of the Canadian Forces from the members who volunteered and were chosen to be participants. Instead the study is aimed at furthering knowledge in the field of the Canadian Forces and the knowledge and skills derived from the educational programs available. The interview responses were merely meant to open up the discussion on the benefits and drawbacks of the programs that are being offered. These opinions are meant to offer direction towards possible future research that could be conducted by the Canadian Forces or another independent researcher to shed light on any problem areas that are pointed out through the opinions of the members.

Data Collection

I requested participation in this study from fellow Canadian Forces members. I emailed participants an introduction letter with the interview question. The document had an individual number on the top that corresponded to their name on a master list. The introductory letter gave further information about my research and stated that the
opinions given would remain anonymous. It also listed my contact information in case they would like further information. I was successful in obtaining 45 respondents over a period of one month.

**Obstacles/Roadblocks in the Research**

The original proposal of this research included a survey that would be distributed to the Canadian Forces members who volunteered as participants. It was later found out that the Canadian Forces, however, requires that all researchers who would like to conduct a survey of Canadian Forces members submit an application to the organization. There are strict measures in place to decide who will be able to survey Canadian Forces members and for what reasons.

My application for approval to conduct a survey of Canadian Forces members was denied for various reasons, such as the fact that the research did not have the necessary level one sponsorship within the Canadian Forces. An example of a level one sponsorship within the Canadian Forces would be sponsorship from the Commander of the Army or some other equally high level. Another reason this proposed survey was denied was that this research did not attempt to create a representative sample so as to generalize to the entire population of the Canadian Forces. As this denial constituted a roadblock in my research, which is often part and parcel of the research process, an email was sent to inquire as to whether interviews of Canadian Forces members were permissible. After receiving a positive response, the research went forward only taking into consideration a written interview question where Canadian Forces members shared their individual opinions.
No attempt to collect statistics or generalize to the entire Canadian Forces population was made in this research project. The findings of the interview section are exploratory in nature but are interesting and worthwhile to consider because of the fact that they come from the first person perspectives of Canadian Forces members. The opinions of individual Canadian Forces members, however, cannot be seen as representative of all Canadian Forces members. The goal of these interviews was to open up discussion and to spur further research on this subject in the future.

What Is Offered

Educational Reimbursement Programs

My secondary data analysis on Adult Education in the Canadian Forces illustrated that there are five main educational programs currently available to the members of the Canadian Forces that offer reimbursement for educational advancement. Information on these programs was found through an Internet search of the Canadian Forces websites, through other documents created by the Department of National Defence and through an Access to Information request. These five programs are the main educational programs that members use to further their education and to have their tuition reimbursed. For each of these programs, the member is required to fill out an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) that must be approved prior to the start date of their programs of study. These five programs include: 1) Initial Baccalaureate Degree Part-Time For Regular Force Officers, 2) Advanced Degree Part-Time Program for Regular Force Officers, 3) Education Reimbursement for the Regular Force, 4) Skills Completion Program, and 5) Education Reimbursement for the Primary Reserve. (National Defence, 2008) Below is a summary
of each of these five programs along with some of the comments made by the interview respondents regarding these specific programs.

**Initial Baccalaureate Degree Part-Time For Regular Force Officers**

This program is specifically for Regular Force officers who do not yet have an initial Bachelor degree. According to the *Defence Administrative Orders and Directives* (DAOD) 5031-7, “The CF has established a goal to have all officers, with the exception of those commissioned from the ranks, hold a university degree. In support of this goal, the CF has established a program to provide subsidized education to eligible officers in pursuit of their initial baccalaureate degree” (National Defence, 2000).

The Initial Baccalaureate Degree program answers this goal by offering officers a maximum reimbursement of $25,000 towards attaining their Bachelor degree. This program does not cover a second Bachelor degree or any other advanced degrees. (National Defence, n.d.)

Since many officers entered the Canadian Forces before they were required to have a degree to enter as an officer, only about 72% of officers today have a Bachelor degree. (National Defence, 2006a, p. 17) The reimbursement program offers officers the financial aid to accomplish their degree on a part-time basis while continuing to work. This ability aids in their career progression since education level becomes an important issue as they rise in rank.
Advanced Degree Part-Time Program for Regular Force Officers

This program offers an officer who does not already hold a Masters degree or higher reimbursement for an advanced degree to a maximum of $25,000, subject to budget limitations. The member’s request must be approved by a delegated authority with a rank no lower than Brigadier-General/ Commodore. (National Defence, n.d.)

According to the background section in *ADM(HR-Mil) Instructions* 18/04, which gives instructions on this particular program, a requirement has been identified for an officer in the rank of Colonel/Captain(Navy) and above to have a graduate degree. This program has been created to help increase the numbers of senior officers who attain this level of education. To aid with the financial burdens put on a member in their attempts to attain advanced degrees, prepayments of the tuition fees directly to the educational institute can be requested when the annual costs are in excess of $3000. (National Defence, 2004a) This can be very helpful for a member who may have difficulty paying high tuition costs upfront every year.

This reimbursement program can be very encouraging to officers who aspire to attain graduate level degrees but do not want to be imposed by the financial burdens. In 2006, of the 72% of officers who held Bachelors degrees, only 16% of those also held a Masters degree (National Defence, 2006a, p. 17). As was mentioned in the Literature Review section of this research paper, there is presently discussion and debate regarding the need of graduate degrees for senior officers (Last, 2004). This program offers some officers the financial aid necessary to pursue advanced degrees but the number of members who can take advantage of this program is subject to budget limitations.
Education Reimbursement for the Regular Force

According to the instructions of this program found in *ADM(HR-Mil) Instruction 17/04*, “The Canadian Forces is committed to providing a continuous learning environment for officers and non-commissioned members, to enable and encourage them to improve upon educational and professional competencies in order to meet the challenge of an ever-changing defence environment.” (National Defence, 2004c, para. 1) This program answers this commitment by offering Canadian Forces Regular Force members, both officers and NCMs, 100% reimbursement for courses that lead to a degree, diploma, or professional certification that is seen to be in the interest of the Canadian Forces. (National Defence, n.d.)

The member must have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) approved and the courses must be aimed at general professional development and not hobbies or personal interest courses. Courses must be successfully completed before receiving reimbursement. Tutoring costs and the costs of some necessary instruments may also be reimbursed under this program at a rate of 50%. (National Defence, 2004c)

While the first two programs mentioned were solely for officers, this program also applies to Non-Commissioned Members. Some NCM aspire to obtain a degree to later be commissioned as an Officer. This program can offer important financial aid for an NCM to obtain the required degree to later apply to receive their commission.

Several interview respondents mentioned this program specifically. One junior NCM stated that this program is “quite user friendly, allowing any member to take advantage of opportunities not available in other organizations.” A senior Army officer mentioned in his interview response that he was using this program to work towards his
Masters degree part-time. He added that “it’s a great program and it gives a lot of flexibility.”

**Skills Completion Program**

This program is aimed at members who have at least ten years of service completed and it is available to members for up to two years after release. The maximum value of reimbursement is $5000 and its intent is to prepare a member for a second career. A member who already holds a university degree, college diploma, civilian professional certification or trade accreditation is not eligible (National Defence, n.d.).

This program can be very helpful for a retiring or retired Canadian Forces member to bring up their military qualifications to be acceptable in the civilian workplace for their second career. Since this program is meant to aid the member on their release and the training is not seen as being in the interest of the Canadian Forces, this reimbursement is considered a taxable benefit to the Canadian Revenue Agency unlike reimbursement under the other programs listed (National Defence, n.d.). Since many members have dedicated years to attaining skills that are mainly military-related, the Canadian Forces offers this program to aid these members in their second-career qualifications so that they can continue to enjoy the same quality of life after release from the Canadian Forces.

Only one member mentioned the Skills Completion Program specifically in the interview responses. As was mentioned earlier, members who already hold a degree are not eligible for this program. The senior Air Force officer who mentioned this program stated in her interview response that she had finished her degree over twenty years ago.
and felt that she should be eligible for this program. She believed that the program could have been beneficial to her in upgrading her skills prior to releasing from the military.

**Education Reimbursement for the Primary Reserve**

This program, specifically for the Reserve Force, offers Canadian Forces Reserve Force members, both officers and NCMs, 50% reimbursement for post-secondary courses leading to a diploma, degree or advanced degree at a university or college within Canada. Members must have finished their Basic Military Qualification course, must be presently active with their unit and not on Leave Without Pay (LWOP). Members must also complete an ILP and have it approved in order to be eligible for the reimbursement of courses. The maximum reimbursement is $2000 per year to a maximum of $8000 during the member’s career. (National Defence, n.d.)

This program is uniquely for the Reserve Force. Although Reserve Force members may only receive 50% reimbursement of their courses, they can choose to only work part-time. This option can be very appealing for someone who wants to study full-time during the days while holding part-time military employment.

Although the interview respondents in this research were all Regular Force members, some of these members had previously been Reserve Force members. One officer stated that he was aware of the program offered for Reserve Force members and that the program offered “reduced reimbursement rates”.
University Partnerships

The Military HR Strategy 2020 report points out the importance of civilian universities in achieving its goals of educating the Canadian Forces members. It states, “The CF must also commit itself to cultivating professional relations with a broad range of education institutions, whose programs impact upon the profession of arms” (National Defence, 2002, p. 23). Canadian universities offer special programs to Canadian Forces members in partnership with the Canadian Forces. These programs are also supported by the Canadian Forces. These universities often offer incentives such as lowered tuition prices and/or equivalencies for prior military training. Several examples of these universities are listed below.

Athabasca University is one example as it offers credits towards an Executive Masters of Business Administration degree to Canadian Forces members who have had leadership experience and certain training. On the Athabasca University: Centre for Innovative Management website under the heading of Department of National Defence, it is stated, “An agreement between Athabasca University (AU) and the Department of National Defence (DND) enables Canadian Forces College (CFC) graduates to build on their military management training and experience to acquire a complementary graduate business degree.” (2008, para. 1) It goes on to say that military members who are graduates from the Canadian Forces College program receive a $4000 tuition rebate compared to other students. By combining military experience, courses taken at the Canadian Forces College and a reduced admission price, Athabasca University and the Department of National Defence partner up to create, “strong leaders with exceptional
strategic thinking and decision making abilities who can manage in both military and non-military settings with ease.” (2008, para. 2)

Another example of a partnership program between a Canadian University and the Canadian Forces is the program offered by the University of Manitoba. A page on their website is titled “Military Support Office”. It says that, “The aim of the Military Support Office is to assist Canadian Forces personnel (Regular and Reserve), retired members, civilian employees of the Department of National Defence, as well as their dependants, in pursuing a university education on a part-time basis” (University of Manitoba, 2006, para. 1). Under a link that is provided titled “University Credit for Military Training and Experience,” the website states that “The University of Manitoba has evaluated many courses offered by the Canadian Forces and offers credit to Canadian Forces participants who have completed these courses” (University of Manitoba, 2006, para. 1). Under this link a military member can see which equivalencies for university credits can be attained for their military training. A maximum of 30 credit hours can be offered to Canadian Forces members based on their rank, their second language profile, and the courses they have taken through the Canadian Forces (University of Manitoba, 2006). These advance 30 credits could be a very motivating first step for a member who wishes to attain their Bachelor Degree.

A similar French language program is available through Télé-université du Québec (TELUQ), which is the distance education program through the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) for Francophone Canadian Forces members. Within an article in the Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter, under the subtitle “Your Military Education Does Double Duty”, the University of Quebec program coordinator Mr. Pierre
Lafleur stated, “The University of Québec, through Télé-université and CFUP, offers an ever-widening range of accreditation possibilities for military education and training” (National Defence, 2005b, para. 1).

Often these universities who have partnerships with the Canadian Forces offer special consideration for a Canadian Forces member in cases where military operations require them to request extensions on their deadlines or when they require more flexibility than other students. A pamphlet created by the University of Manitoba Military Support Office refers to the university as a “Forces-Friendly University” and states, “if a CF member’s studies are interrupted by unforeseen military duties, they can receive full refund of their tuition, and have no academic penalty. Alternatively, extensions to assignment deadlines and deferred examinations can also be arranged” (University of Manitoba, n.d., p. 3). The fact that these programs mentioned are offered by correspondence often makes it possible for the member to continue studying even while deployed on mission, while on military training, or in the case of a posting from one city to another. This can be very helpful to a military member who is trying to juggle their workplace commitments with their educational commitments. Although these three Canadian universities have partnered up with the Canadian Forces to offer programs and advantages to Canadian Forces members, members are always welcome to attend any university and apply to the Canadian Forces for reimbursement through an ILP. (National Defence, 2005b)
Officer Professional Military Education (OPME) Courses

The Officer Professional Military Education (OPME) program includes six courses that are meant to orient junior officers to topics that offer important knowledge on the military profession. These courses are offered free of charge through the Royal Military College and are offered by correspondence and often on-site. These courses must be completed by officers to be eligible for promotion to Major/Lieutenant Commander and to attend the Canadian Forces Command and Staff College. These courses are also available to NCMs, although officers have first priority in registration. (National Defence, 2007c)

These courses include the following: 1) Introduction to Defence Management; 2) Introduction to Military Law; 3) Canadian Military History: A Study of War and Military History, 1867 to the Present; 4) Survey of Technology, Society and Warfare; 5) The Canadian Forces and Modern Society: Civics, Politics and International Relations; and 6) Leadership and Ethics. The last four of these six courses listed are university level courses. (National Defence, 2007c) Since these courses are offered free of charge, they are often a good way for a member who does not hold a Bachelor degree to start building credit hours. Many universities such as the Royal Military College and the University of Manitoba recognize these courses and will credit them towards the completion of a Bachelor degree.

Some of the participants in this study mentioned these courses in their interview responses. One Air Force junior NCM said that they are a “valuable learning tool”. Another respondent, however, felt that it would be beneficial for the Canadian Forces to create a similar package of courses that was specifically for the NCM instead of
encouraging senior ranked NCM to complete these courses that were originally designed to orient junior officers.

**Financial Assistance**

Although the educational reimbursement programs within the Canadian Forces offer much financial assistance to aspiring students, sometimes further assistance is required. Under most of the educational reimbursement programs, the Canadian Forces refunds the cost of courses after the member has passed the course and so, for some members, it can be difficult to pay the tuition fees upfront. This is one reason why low interest education loans are available to members. Through SISIP Financial Services, the Canadian Forces Personnel Assistance Fund’s (CFPAF’s) Education Assistance Loan Program (EALP) allows members the opportunity to receive a low-interest loan to help them accomplish their educational goals. This program is offered to Canadian Forces members, both current members and retired members who have served at least one year, and to their dependents. The aim of the program, according to the SISIP website is, “to encourage and assist members, former members and recognized dependents of the Canadian Forces, Regular Component, in obtaining post-secondary education” (2008, Aim section, para. 1).

According to an article found in the *Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter*, the program offers members loans of up to $4000 a year and $16,000 over a lifetime. The member can choose to repay the loan over a period of 12, 24, 36 or 48 months and if active, can choose to have the repayments automatically deducted from their pay. (Igloliorte & Sharpe, 2006) The interest rate listed on the SISIP website is 3%. (2008,
The website explains that, “the amount of funds available to support the program is established by the Board on an annual basis. Consequently, the size of the loans made under the program is limited by the amount of funds available” (SISIP Financial Services, 2008, General section, para. 1). The CFPAF Education Loan Coordinator, Ms Andrea Ravnich, stated in a 26 April 2006 Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter article that “in 2005, CFPAF assisted almost 700 people through the EALP” (National Defence, 2006c, para. 4). It is clear to see that this avenue of financial assistance can be very helpful to a Canadian Forces member who wishes to advance their studies but who does not have the required finances to cover their tuition expenses upfront.

The programs listed in this section must not be seen as an exhaustive list as there are many other educational programs that make up the full picture of Adult Education in the Canadian Forces. The individual programs that I chose to explore in this research make up the majority of programs used to study on a part-time basis by members who continue to work while upgrading their education. Other programs include individual Canadian Forces schools that sponsor Canadian Forces members to attend colleges and universities throughout Canada for specific programs of studies that would benefit the Canadian Forces. (National Defence, 2008) Specialist training, such as training to be a military doctor or dentist, is also available under different programs of sponsorship (National Defence, 1988). Additional specific educational programs are also available at the time of recruitment outside of these programs mentioned, such as the Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) where one enters the military as an Officer Cadet and attends the Royal Military College and has their education subsidized while receiving a salary.
Findings of the Study

Individual Learning Plans

Part of this research included an Access to Information request to the Department of National Defence. The following was requested: “Information on the educational programs offered to the Canadian Forces members. Numbers of members who are taking advantage of these programs (for example the educational reimbursement programs, and the joint programs with universities such as the University of Manitoba and TELUQ, and the MBA program at Athabasca University) and the costs associated that are paid by the Canadian Forces. I am most interested in information from the past ten years or in reports comparing recent years to past years.”

The responses yielded some interesting information from the Canadian Defence Academy (CDA) on the numbers of active Individual Learning Plans (ILP) each school year as well as the associated costs for the Canadian Forces during that year. The ILP was introduced, according to the reply to the Access to Information request (National Defence, 2008), during the academic year 2002/2003 and became mandatory for academic year 2003/2004. According to a pamphlet titled, “Education Reimbursement Programs” created by the National Defence, “Effective 20 August 2004, the first step to any education reimbursement is the creation of the road-map of your goals: the Individual Learning Plan” (n.d., p. 1). According to the same pamphlet, the ILP is a form that is
filled out by the member. The member must provide an outline of their educational plans for the coming years, along with the associated costs. The ILP is then submitted to the local Base Personnel Selection Officer and is submitted for the approval of the Canadian Defence Academy. The ILP for members applying to the Advanced Degree Part-Time Program for Regular Force officers, however, is submitted directly to the Canadian Defence Academy.

The Access to Information Request File A-2007-01551 (National Defence, 2008) returned the numbers of ILPs per year since academic year 2003/2004. It is important to note that the numbers below represent the numbers of ILP per year and not an exact number of members who are taking advantage of the educational programs offered per year. The slight discrepancy occurs because of the fact that one member may have more than one ILP at any one time. The only numbers that were available through the Access to Information request were the numbers of ILPs per academic year. Regardless of this fact, the numbers returned as shown in the chart below give some indication of how widely within the Canadian Forces these programs are being used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Number of Individual Learning Plans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>Unavailable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>4645</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>4173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/2007</td>
<td>2240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>3271</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As can be seen in this table, the number of ILPs rose sharply after they became mandatory on August 20, 2004. The numbers were lower in academic year 2006/2007 and although no reasons were given for this in the return from the Access to Information request, one could surmise that perhaps the increased operational tempo that the Canadian Forces members are now facing with deployments to Afghanistan could be an important factor in the members’ time available towards their educational advancements.

Although information was also requested regarding the numbers of participants within specific university partnerships with the Canadian Forces in this Access to Information request, no information was returned. It is likely, however, that the individual universities would hold this information and perhaps not the Canadian Forces.

Associated Costs

The Access to Information Request File A-2007-01551 (National Defence, 2008) also provided the dollar amounts in associated costs for the Canadian Forces towards their educational reimbursement programs. Below is a table that shows the associated costs for the academic years between 2002/2003 to the present.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Year</th>
<th>Associated Costs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002/2003</td>
<td>$8,991,151.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003/2004</td>
<td>$9,154,468.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004/2005</td>
<td>$11,285,017.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005/2006</td>
<td>$8,426,519.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006/2007</td>
<td>$8,699,918.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/2008</td>
<td>$4,791,290.90</td>
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In comparison with the lower number of ILPs in the academic year 2006/2007, one can see from these numbers that the associated costs in that year remained quite steady. The numbers in the year 2007/2008 are much lower but it can be assumed that this amount is not complete since this academic year, which officially runs from September 1 to August 31 of the following year according to the Access to Information Request File A-2007-01551 had not yet ended when the information was provided. (National Defence, 2008) Looking at these figures, one can see that a large sum of resources is dedicated each year by the Canadian Forces to subsidize, reimburse and support the members in their educational pursuits through the five educational reimbursement programs that these numbers include.

Interview Findings

A group of 45 Canadian Forces members were presented with an interview question to gauge their opinions regarding the educational programs offered to them. The members who participated comprised of 17 officers and 28 NCMs. Many of the respondents mentioned that they had themselves taken advantage of the available programs but many did not mention it and presumably had not used the programs. Since these members were located at various bases across the country and even on mission in Afghanistan at the time of the research, the members responded to the written interview question by email. The question that they were presented was worded as follows: “Please give your opinions, positive and/or negative, of the educational programs offered to members of the Canadian Forces. Please discuss.” Some answers were long and detailed and some were concise and to the point.
The vast majority of the responses to the interview question above were extremely positive regarding the opportunities given to Canadian Forces members to pursue educational upgrading. There were some negative comments, however, and these were mainly in regards to specific aspects of the individual programs and regarding personal problems that the individuals faced in their educational pursuits. One comment that came up repeatedly in the responses was concerning the lack of information that many members had regarding the educational programs and benefits available to them. The members who responded to the interview question offered many suggestions on how they believed the programs could be improved and how the information regarding the programs could be better distributed.

Common themes emerged from their answers and direct quotes from their responses will be presented below to open a discussion regarding the positives and negatives of the Canadian Forces educational programs. Although from a research point of view, these responses can only be considered as individual opinions, the responses go a long way towards opening up the subject of educational programs in the Canadian Forces and how the members who are in the position to take advantage of them feel about what is offered.

Positive Comments

As mentioned above, many respondents were very positive in their opinions of the educational programs offered by the Canadian Forces. Respondents said that the five programs that were identified earlier are all “very valuable to members,” “have greatly increased in quantity as well as quality”, and “offer a good selection.” Words that were
used to describe the programs available through the Canadian Forces by the respondents were “excellent”, “good”, “great”, “positive”, “valuable”, “beneficial”, and “outstanding.” Other members said that the Canadian Forces’ initiatives regarding education were “second-to-none”, “first rate,” offered a “fantastic opportunity” and are a “great asset” for members.

One member stated that the educational programs, “allow the members to further advance their career and education at the same time.” Another member found this helpful as the programs offer the “education you want while you are still working and getting paid,” and another felt that the members were “very fortunate to have these programs available.” The educational programs, according to one member, are “well suited to the military life,” and as another member stated, can help the members to “prepare themselves for life after the military.” One junior Army NCM stated that when they had been provided with the information regarding the Canadian Forces educational programs available, they were “surprised to learn the scope of their programs.”

According to the statements of some respondents, these members found that the Canadian Forces is supportive towards the individual member’s educational pursuits. One member stated in their response to the interview question that the Canadian Forces is, “very supportive of their members.” One senior officer stated that “there are a lot of opportunities and support offered to Canadian Forces members via the many educational programs.” Other members’ comments showed that they felt that they were supported in their educational pursuits and that corporate time was sometimes even given to help the members achieve their goals. One Air Force officer stated, “It is rare to find a company that will allow you time for studying and at the same time pay you to do it.” Another
officer stated that, “The fact that the Canadian Forces pays for education and even sometimes gives free time during work hours to assist in courses motivates Canadian Forces members to improve their education levels.”

Negative Comments

Although the vast majority of responses were positive regarding the educational programs, benefits and opportunities offered to members, some respondents did have negative comments or critiques to make. Some members commented on how personally difficult it was for them to find the time to focus on their educational pursuits regardless of how good the Canadian Forces educational programs were. One member said that it is “extremely difficult” to find the time to pursue a school workload while working full-time. One senior ranked NCM mentioned the difficulties members have while studying due to the operational tempo of the Canadian Forces with “increased deployments, TD [temporary duty], etc.”

Other members, both officers and NCM, critiqued the requirements and prerequisites of some specific programs. For example, some NCMs mentioned that they did not like that some programs are specifically for officers and felt that “ALL programs should be offered to ALL members.” Some members felt that it is incorrect that the education pursued in some programs must be in the interest of the Canadian Forces. One senior ranked officer felt that it was incorrect that compulsory retirement age is sometimes taken into account for certain selection boards to be eligible for different educational training programs. One junior NCM brought up the financial burdens that the members sometimes face by having to pay for courses upfront without being
reimbursed until after the member had passed the courses. The member wrote, “… it limits the people who can’t afford to pay for these courses up front. Many people don’t have hundreds of dollars to put aside until you pass the course to be reimbursed.” The Canadian Forces Personnel Assistance Fund’s Education Assistance Loan Program (EALP) does, however, offer some low interest loans to help members financially accomplish their educational goals, as was mentioned in a previous section. No members mentioned this program in their responses in relation to the financial burden associated with the educational programs.

Awareness of Programs

The most common comment that the respondents gave, next to sharing their positive opinions regarding the opportunities available, was their belief that many members are not fully aware of the educational programs that are available to them. One member stated, “Information like this [regarding the educational programs], although widely distributed Forces wide, does not always reach low ranking individuals.” Similar quotes included, “they are not widely publicized,” “the regular soldier usually seems to only be vaguely aware of their existence,” and that regarding the available information, “out of sight out of mind.” It was often mentioned that it would benefit the members if the educational programs were better publicized. Several individuals stated that they had only heard about the programs by “word of mouth” and one said that they “found out about the programs almost by accident.” One member said that “it is hard to gather information on the different programs,” and another said that “if members do not know about the programs available, they are less likely to inquire about them.”
Several members mentioned that they did not feel that the Canadian Forces actively promoted, encouraged, or counseled members to pursue their education. A couple of respondents pinpointed the fact that the NCM were especially not receiving the information regarding the educational programs. One Navy officer stated that those “who have taken advantage of these opportunities have actively sought the information themselves, only to be surprised by what is available to them.” As one junior NCM, who so clearly shared his opinion of the situation, stated, “The only reason I was able to take advantage of the Canadian Forces’ educational programs was because a buddy of mine…. informed me of how to apply and where to get the information… it is hard to ask a question about something that you have never seen, or heard anything about.” Indeed it is!

Other members opposed this line of thinking saying that the information is available to the members if the members inquire. One NCM said, “It’s up to the individual to do his or her homework to find out what all the details are.” One officer stated, “It is really easy for Canadian Forces members to receive information on different programs through the BPSO [Base Personnel Selection Officer].” It was also stated that the “BPSO often gives presentations to inform members on all existing programs.” It seems, however, that not all members have experienced these presentations since this was one of the main suggestions that respondents made to better members’ awareness of what is offered.
Members’ Suggestions

The respondents gave specific suggestions as to how the Canadian Forces could better inform their members of the programs offered. One junior NCM suggested, “it would make more sense if all the programs were advertised during the recruitment process, and then again during meetings throughout recruit and trades training.” Another NCM said, “It would be nice if one day a year we could be seated down in a theatre and partake of a presentation by a Subject Matter Expert (SME) on Canadian Forces Educational Programs, what they offer and what we are entitled to. To generate more interest you have to actually attract people’s attention.” Another respondent stated that, “There should be seminars offered on a yearly basis to members who would be interested in pursuing their education and explaining to them the different programs that are offered by the Canadian Forces and how to go about enrolling in them.”

Other suggestions to increase the number of members taking advantage of the educational programs available included offering incentives to members who choose to increase their levels of education and recognizing the efforts of the members. One senior ranked NCM stated that in his opinion, “the Canadian Forces do not adequately recognize the sacrifices and successes of graduates… Diplomas should be presented to the graduates at Divisions [or parades].” A junior NCM also agreed with this line of thinking in his statement, “I also think that the Canadian Forces should offer some sort of incentive for those who have acquired an education…” It must be remembered, however, that the suggestions offered by these particular members do not necessarily show that these efforts are not being made by the Canadian Forces; it may merely show that these members have never encountered such efforts.
Overall, the interview respondents gave some insight into the opinions of the Canadian Forces members towards the education programs offered to them. Often the responses were contradictory, as some felt positive towards what was offered to them and others had some negative responses. We cannot derive statistics from their responses to the interview question, as each response was merely the opinion of an individual. These responses do, however, shed some light on the subject of Adult Education in the Canadian Forces by exploring first person perspectives of individual Canadian Forces members on the educational programs offered to them while also aiming to open up further discussion on the topic.

In general, the majority of the 45 members who were questioned felt positively towards what was offered to the members through the different educational programs. Many respondents also felt that many members were not aware of what was offered to them and where to find the information. It was repeatedly suggested that more could be done to inform the members of what was available to them so that each member could make informed decisions about the possibilities of advancing their educational levels within the programs offered by the Canadian Forces.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

As was mentioned in the introduction, the *Military HR Strategy 2020* report produced in 2002 stated that as the Department of National Defence looks towards the future, it is clear that education is a very important human resource issue for both present and future needs. In it, the Department of National Defence stated that it is “…committed to promoting the intellectual development of its officer and NCM corps”
(National Defence, 2002, p. 23). This research shed some light on what is actually being done in policy and procedures to achieve the goals of “providing a continuous learning environment for officers and non-commissioned members” (National Defence, 2004c, para, 1) in order to help “sustain military capability” (National Defence, 2002, p. 23) in the future.

This research has presented many of the numerous programs being offered today, (through reimbursement programs, partnerships with educational institutes, internal educational and financial assistance programs) to support Canadian Forces member in achieving their educational goals. Through an Access to Information request, information regarding the numbers of submitted Individual Learning Plans and the programs’ associated costs for each academic year was found and presented.

The research also provided insight into the opinions that 45 Canadian Forces members had regarding what was offered to them in terms of educational programs. Many members had very positive remarks regarding these programs while some others had some negative comments to share. Many respondents shared the opinion that many Canadian Forces members were not aware of what programs were available to them. Various respondents gave suggestions on how to improve the programs and how to make others more aware of what is offered.

Further research could be done to ascertain the actual level of information that the members of the Canadian Forces hold regarding the educational programs, in specific, and regarding all of their possible benefits, in general. It would be worth creating a cross-section in these findings to see if there would be a significant difference in the level
of information held between the officers and NCMs and in comparing the information held by members in each of the three Elements (Air Force, Army, and Navy).

Although not every educational program offered by the Canadian Forces was discussed in this research, an overview of some of the main programs offered to Canadian Forces members has been presented along with members’ opinions of these programs. By looking at the numbers of programs, the generous sums that are offered within the programs, and the total amount of financial support as a whole the Canadian Forces offers yearly, it is obvious that the Canadian Forces is making a large effort to support their members in their educational pursuits and in turn, to achieve the goals that were spelled out in the Military HR Strategy 2020 report.

According to the majority of members who gave their opinions during this research, the Canadian Forces members feel quite positive about what is being offered to them in support of their educational pursuits. A continued goal for the Canadian Forces should be to make sure that as part of the members’ socialization into the military culture, the member understands the importance of education and training throughout their career. Towards this goal, it is important that leaders ensure that all members are made fully aware of what is offered to them in terms of educational and financial support so that each member has the necessary knowledge to help them reach their personal educational goals. Education must be a priority as we face the future so that the Canadian Forces can continue to grow, evolve, and maintain capabilities in our ever-increasingly complex world.
References


