

Threshold Concepts in Professional Military Education for Developing Military Leaders of the 21st Century

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Keywords: threshold Concepts, transformation, military curriculum, leadership.

This paper discusses an on-going research into Professional Military Education (PME) at higher military education institution. Unlike other higher education systems, the military education programme is designed to transform civilians into soldiers and train military officers who are able to face the nation's future security challenges. Much is known in regard to the technical preparation of military personnel and military leaders but little attention has been given to understanding the difficult conceptual and personal shifts that such training entails. Threshold concepts theory may provide a helpful analytical tool to examine the process necessary for transformation from civilian status to thinking and practising as a soldier and consequently a military leader. Findings from the research will inform educators, military trainers and policy-makers in terms of developing military curricula and methods of teaching and learning. A further key consideration is the use of appropriate supporting curriculum materials and technologies to improve understanding and create the necessary conditions and environments in which cadets might transform themselves. At this point, the research will address the following questions:

- What are the key conceptual transformations and ontological shifts in the training of military cadets and leaders at military higher education institution from the specialists', trainers' and cadets' perspectives?
- What conceptual transformation and ontological shift cadets find difficult to grasp?
- How might threshold concepts theory be applied to military education curricula and pedagogy to further inform the development of professional military education?

The research adopts qualitative methodology, in the form of in-depth interviews and focus groups. This approach provides opportunities to explore the complex and often difficult ontological shifts involved in becoming a 21st century military practitioner.

References

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