

# Logistics Professional Education: A Reflective Practitioner Approach

**T**he Army Logistics University (ALU) invites you to read and discuss “Logistics Professional Education: A Reflective Practitioner Approach,” available at [www.army.mil/armysustainment](http://www.army.mil/armysustainment). I hope this draft white paper will provoke professional debate about logistics education both inside and outside our community.

In the tradition of past military-oriented white papers, the idea behind this document is to critically and creatively offer some ideas to the institution that may eventually lead to a significant change in philosophy or culture and even drive substantive changes with the future in mind.

With a similar intent, the Army recently formed the Logistics Professional Education Board (LPEB). The board’s voting members include the Army G-4, the Army Materiel Command deputy commanding general, and the Combined Arms Support Command commanding general.

The LPEB was designed to form a guiding strategic body to shape the future of Army logistics education. The board will give the Army logistics community the opportunity to synchronize its many learning initiatives. It will also facilitate the development of an integrated logistics education process that is tied to the

Army’s overarching strategies and priorities. However, as noted in the white paper, it is vital for the LPEB, its council of colonels, and its various working groups to seek the continuing advice of logistics professionals as well as professional educators.

Both the white paper and the LPEB will help us to educate and develop adaptive sustainers to have the skills and knowledge to excel in the future environment. I invite any and all professionals to join this interesting and necessary debate.

—John E. Hall  
President

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*Editor’s note: Below is an excerpt from the white paper “Logistics Professional Education: A Reflective Practitioner Approach.”*

## Educating for Novelty and Mission Command

Throughout our long military history, the U.S. Army has expected Army logisticians and their organizations to routinely face novel situations in highly complex environments. Therefore, logistics education must begin with envisioning the eventuality of having to challenge our military logistics apprentices with scenarios involving zones of indeterminate practice and exercising methods of action learning on the journey to becoming a reflective practitioner—influencing how they “think in- and on- action” along the way.

Action learning is a collaborative approach to facing novel, problematic situations for which ambiguous and emergent tasks become the vehicle for learning. By emergent tasks, we mean trying to figure out what to do when everything that we do is tied to a complicated and interactive milieu of incongruous actors and activities based in a setting that is interdependent, dynamic, and where convergent and assimilative forms or knowledge are inadequate to frame what is happening or not happening. By action, we are not just concerned about

behavior (the physical aspects of doing) but also finding new meanings during and after our acts. Hence, divergent and accommodative learning is acquired in the midst of collectively and critically reflecting “in-” action and “on-” action (the essence of professional practice). In short, education spurs the reflective military logistics practitioner to “learn to learn” more effectively in collaboration with others. Action learning, coupled with the ideal of reflective practice, is complementary to the central themes of both mission command and adaptive leadership. The need to exercise disciplined initiative and independent action drives an educational philosophy that helps professionalize logisticians to adapt effectively without reliable and detailed guidance from higher authority when faced with zones of indeterminate practice. To facilitate this overall intent of military logistics professional education, we propose the following conceptual framework. ...



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