

Defence Acquisition Change: Developing the Skills and Behaviours

by **Commander Stuart Young RN**

Stuart Young is Assistant Director – Management in the Defence Leadership and Management Centre at the UK's Defence Academy. He describes the changes in the training and education of acquisition staff that are being put in place to implement the recommendations of the Defence Training Review and the Enabling Acquisition Change report.

In 1998 the Strategic Defence Review recognised the importance of through-life management and Smart Acquisition as key elements in achieving its aim of acquiring and supporting equipment more effectively in terms of time, cost and performance. The MoD understood that successful implementation of Smart Acquisition would require a major change in culture, processes, systems and relationships across the Department. When reviewing progress in 2003¹ the National Audit Office noted that through-life management was still evolving as a corporate change programme and that the Department recognised the challenges its implementation presented. The report identified a number of areas where time, cost and performance benefits were being realised. However, there were also indications of areas, such as culture, behaviours and skills development, where we could have done better. There was evidence that long-term investment in acquisition training and education was needed to ensure the ongoing delivery of benefits, which was not taking place effectively enough. The MoD recognised that its people did not have the right skill sets to support the full implementation of Smart Acquisition.

In particular, deficiencies were noted in the areas of project and programme management, through-life cost estimating, commercial and managing supply networks.

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At about the same time, and as a result of the Defence Training Review of 2000², the Defence Academy was formed, with its main campus at Shrivenham, and, within it, the Defence College of Management and Technology (DCMT). The key constituent elements of DCMT were the Defence Management and Leadership Centre (DLMC) with its focus at the strategic level, the Defence Technology Group, and dbLearning, with responsibility for core competency training across the MoD. More recently, in April 2007, daLearning was formed from the old Defence Procurement and Management Training centre and the various Defence Logistics Organisation training centres, and integrated within DCMT. As a result, DCMT now has the capability to provide all business- and acquisition-related training and education across the MoD to fulfil its mission:

'To provide high quality education, training, research and advice in technology, management and leadership, together with relevant aspects of security and resilience, to students in defence in order to enhance the delivery of defence capability.'

People, Skills and Behaviours

The Defence Industrial Strategy, published in 2006, recognised the need to maximise our pool of talent and match people and their skills to the demands of the job. It placed a high priority on programme and project management skills and on ensuring that the recruitment, reward and recognition practices delivered people with the right skills and motivation. The subsequent Enabling Acquisition Change report³ examined the issues in more detail and concluded that:

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- Improved skills are key to improving the MoD's through-life capability management performance.
 - The skills agenda should be given prominence in the programming of implementing the changes recommended in the report.
- As a result, a People, Skills and Behaviours

work stream was established as a key element of the wider Defence Acquisition Change Programme with the Defence Academy responsible for delivering the associated training and education.

In parallel with this, the MoD's Skills Champions had been tasked with providing each element of the MoD with sufficient numbers of well-motivated, skilled and experienced civilian staff to meet its future needs. Three Skills Champions were seen as being critical to the success of the People, Skills and Behaviours work stream: Commercial, Programme and Project Management, and Integrated Logistics Support. Skills Growth Plans and Development route maps have been produced for staff working in these skills areas. These follow an Awareness-Practitioner-Expert model and form the basis for development of the professional skills that the MoD needs to carry out its tasks effectively. DCMT are now developing a range of courses to implement the route maps. These courses will be delivered using blended learning techniques, including e-learning, classroom-based activities, facilitated case-studies and expert-level master classes. The full range of DCMT resources, including daLearning, with its partner LogicaCMG, and DCMT's Academic Provider, Cranfield University, are working together to develop the courses and provide the coherence across the different skill levels, which was difficult to achieve in the past.

'The Enabling Acquisition Change report recommended a number of major changes to the way in which the MoD acquired through-life capability'

In addition to the Commercial, Project and Programme Management and Integrated Logistic Support programmes, two further elements were needed to complete the picture. The Enabling Acquisition Change report focused on the MoD's ability to undertake through-

life capability management (TLCM) and recommended a number of major changes to the way in which the MoD acquired through-life capability. As TLCM was developed further in the implementation phase, it became apparent that a major training and education programme was needed to enable the professional skills to be applied effectively to delivery of through-life capability and provide the benefits envisaged by the Defence Acquisition Change Programme. TLCM training and education thus became the fourth part of the upskilling element of the DACP.

The Defence Acquisition Management Education Programme

Finally, it was identified that there was a need to address the role and effectiveness of military personnel working in acquisition. Although it was agreed that the military played a key role in delivering effective capability to the front line, very often they did not have the range of appropriate skills needed to perform to the optimum level in the acquisition environment. The Defence Academy therefore took the lead in developing a pan-career package known as the Defence Acquisition Management Education Programme (DAMEP) (Figure 1), which mirrors the pattern of staff training delivered by the Joint Service Command and Staff College. This will be delivered in three phases. An eight-week Acquisition Employment Training course will be provided on a tri-service basis to all military personnel prior to undertaking their first job in acquisition, normally at senior captain or junior major level (and equivalents). Through a range of case studies, exercises and lectures, the course will introduce students to the concept of TLCM, provide them with the basic vocabulary and skills, including project management, and culminate in a short project of relevance to their future workplace.

The next phase is the Advanced Level. A four-week residential package is currently being developed for officers moving into more senior acquisition posts in Integrated Project Teams, the Capability Requirements area and elsewhere. Its timing is aligned to the Advanced Command and Staff Course, but can also be delivered to meet the requirements of an employing organisation. The aim of the course is to develop staff to deliver 'Best for Defence' solutions,

and therefore starts to introduce a more strategic approach. The course is taught and assessed at a Masters level and provides academic credits towards the Defence Acquisition Management MSc. This is a mature MSc programme which is currently being refreshed to reflect changes resulting from Defence Acquisition Change. In addition to a general acquisition course, modules will also be developed to provide supply network management and support solutions specialist options, with more to come in the future.

Finally, at the Higher Level, the current Defence Strategic Leadership, Management and Resource Management programmes will be expanded to include other five-day courses, delivered at the strategic level to one-star officers before they undertake key senior roles in acquisition, such as Integrated Project Team (IPT) Leaders. The package will be known as the Higher Education for Acquisition programme and will comprise courses on commercial management, portfolio and programme management and supply network management.

Complementing the complete DAMEP package will be a comprehensive research programme, with opportunities for MoD staff to undertake acquisition studies to doctorate level.

'A common theme has been the need to establish the right behaviours'

The major advantage of having all acquisition research, education and training within the auspices of the Defence College of Management and Technology is that it ensures that everything taught is coherent and reflects the latest thinking and developments. Furthermore, current practices can be challenged, influenced and improved through an active and relative programme of research. Flexibility is also required to ensure that the courses can be adapted quickly to meet current or anticipated challenges – this will be achieved through the development of a close relationship with the course sponsors.

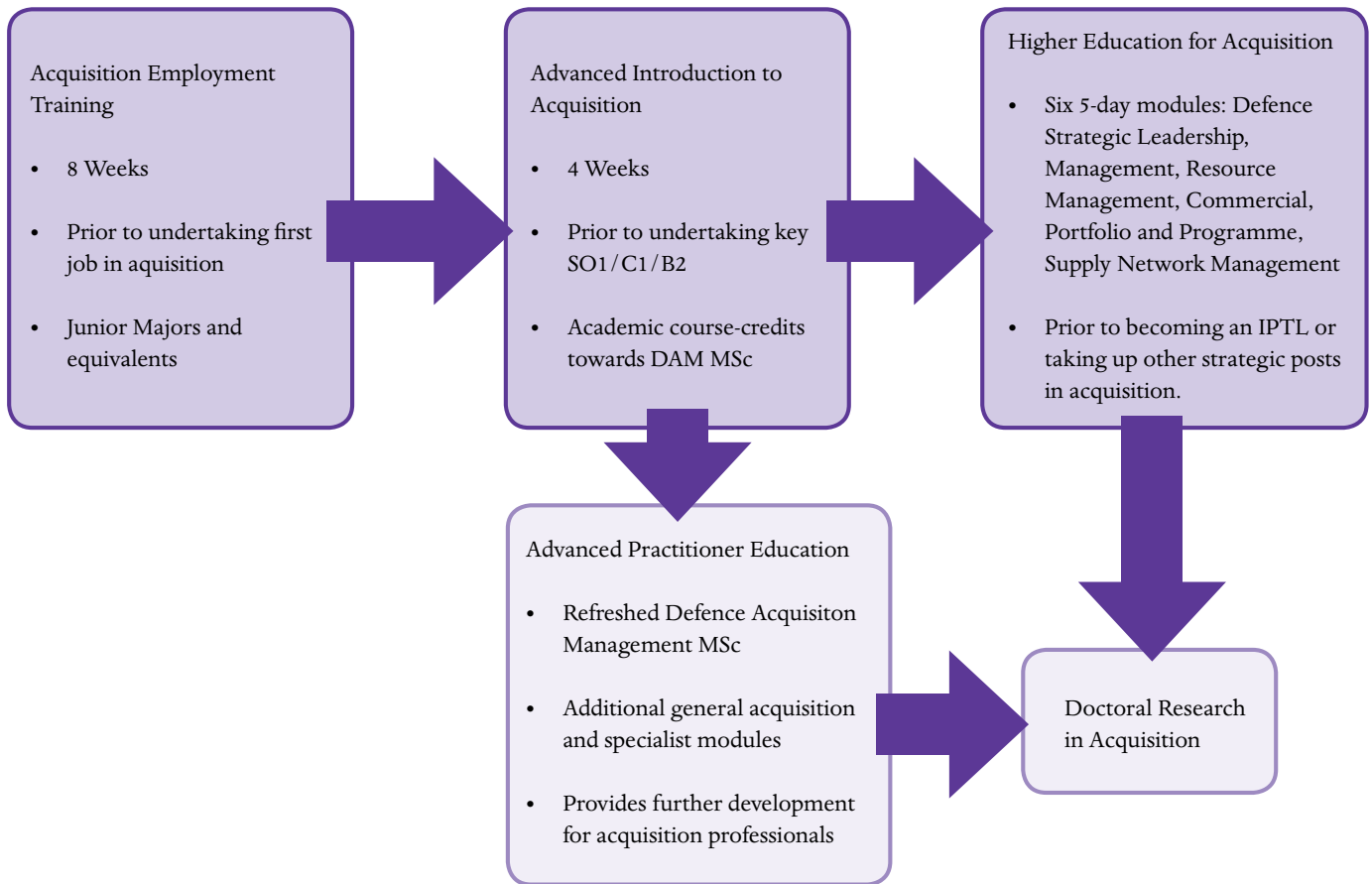


Figure 1 – Defence Acquisition Management Education Programme – DAMEP

A common theme has been the need to establish the right behaviours and, consequently, the Defence Values for Acquisition permeate through every aspect of the courses now being developed and refreshed. The danger of stovepipes being established in the skills areas has also been recognised. As a result, common acquisition awareness modules are now being introduced into all the courses being developed in support of the Skills Champion route maps.

Challenges in Delivery

Turning now to the challenges involved in delivering this new suite of courses and development packages, a major issue is achieving coherence in requirements across our customers, including the military services, the Top Level Budget holders across the MoD, the Skills Champions, and industry. The Defence Academy maintains a close relationship with all its stakeholders, but it is important that courses have a single sponsor who represents the pan-MoD customer base and can prioritise requirements, thus

enabling Defence Academy resources to be targeted to best effect.

A culture that recognises the benefits of through-career training and education also needs to be established to provide the necessary space for people to undertake development programmes and put their new knowledge into practice in the workplace. This is starting to happen within the Defence Equipment and Support organisation, where allocation of time to continuing professional development is mandated. Ultimately though, it will depend on the recognition by staff of the value of personal development, training and education, both for themselves and for all members of their organisation.

Finally, but very importantly, we need to develop a closer relationship with industry, not just in the joint utilisation of courses, but also in the development and delivery of courses. Industry has a huge range of experience and we must leverage this in identifying course objectives and associated syllabi, and inviting our industry partners to contribute case studies and teach on courses whenever it is appropriate.

With funding for development of the courses recently approved, work is now well under way to develop the e-learning courses in support of the skills route maps at awareness and practitioner level. The DAMEP programme is also progressing well with the first courses being phased in from November 2007. TLMC courses will also be introduced from this Autumn. As a result, the MoD will be in the position of having a comprehensive training and education programme in place to support the development of the skills and behaviours needed to achieve successful implementation of Defence Acquisition Change and deliver the benefits associated with effective TLMC. ■

NOTES

- ¹ Through-Life Management: Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General, HC698 Session 2002–2003, 21 May 2003
- ² Modernising Defence Training, April 2004
- ³ Enabling Acquisition Change, June 2006