

Cognitive Agility and Mental Resilience: Preparing Leaders for Future Challenges

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Abstract

One mission for the Marine Corps is prepare for combat. The purpose of this study is a mixed methods design exploring leaders' perception of preparedness to demonstrate cognitive agility and mental resilience for future challenges. Participants addressed perceptions of preparedness to exercise cognitive agility and mental resilience in planning, mission execution, and decision making for future challenges, the impact of Decision Forcing Cases to practice, and implications of a teaching and learning processes to develop flexible learning leaders. While leaders expressed refinements to education and training, they expressed deficit areas to self-prepare and prepare Marines to be proactive and reactive to fight in uncertain, complex, and ambiguous environments. Recommendations concluded with leaders' acknowledgement of curriculum design and implementation of an educative approach to prepare leaders for future challenges. Leaders related plans to explore three major areas of action for designing future education and training; 1) Ensure leaders understand and exercise cognitive agility and mental resilience, 2) Leaders develop courses and practical exercises that will prepare them for future conflict, and 3) Leaders will research, create, and incorporate focused Decision Forcing Cases (DFC), Tactical Decision Games (TDG), and Kriegspiels (KS) to evaluate Marines' cognitive agility and mental resilience in planning, mission execution, and decision making for future challenges.

Keywords: adaptive learning, reflective thinking, transformative learning, 21st century conflict, systems thinker