

Evaluation of Junior Leadership and Staff Officers' Curriculum for Career Progression of Nigerian Army Direct Regular Commission Officers

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Abstract: This study evaluated the Junior Leadership and Staff Officers' Course (JLSOC) curriculum and the career progression of Direct Regular Commission (DRC) officers in the Nigerian Army (NA). The study explored how well the curriculum's objectives and other components help develop the leadership, staff and managerial skills needed for effective military service and career advancement. Using a descriptive survey research design, the study was grounded in transformational leadership theory and constructive alignment theory. The population sample included JLSOC Directing Staff/instructors, curriculum planners/evaluators and DRC officers who had completed the course. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire and analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The findings showed that the curriculum is generally effective and relevant in providing DRC officers with the essential knowledge, skills and attitudes for junior command and staff roles. However, some gaps were noted in practical training, instructional resources and the incorporation of emerging security and operational challenges. The study concluded that while the JLSOC curriculum plays a significant role in the professional development and career progression of DRC officers, it requires periodic review and modernisation. The study therefore recommended continuous curriculum evaluation, improved teaching strategies and more resource allocation for operational effectiveness of the DRC officers.

Keywords: Curriculum Evaluation, Junior Leadership and Staff Officers' Course, Direct Regular Commission Officers, Career Progression, Nigerian Army.

Introduction: Background to the Problem

The NA DRC officers undergo structured training in the JLSO curriculum to develop their leadership skills and advance their careers. The course is aimed at playing a crucial role in shaping the career trajectory of this group of officers as it is heavily influenced by the training and education provided in the JLSO curriculum. This course also serves as a key intervention aimed at preparing these junior commanders, often professionals from civilian backgrounds, for effective roles in command, staff, and joint operations. Despite its

strategic importance and its role as a prerequisite for promotion to the rank of Major, there has been no known systematic or empirical evaluation of the JLSOC curriculum since its formal introduction in 2022. Thus, there may be inadequacies or areas for improvement within the curriculum that hinder the effective career progression of these officers and for the challenges of leadership and advancement within the NA. Therefore, the problem to be addressed in this study is basically to assess the efficacy of the JLSO curriculum in facilitating the career progression of DRC officers and to identify potential areas of enhancement or reform in order to optimise the professional development of these officers. Hence, this research aims to evaluate the alignment between the JLSOC and the career progression needs of NA DRC officers, by identifying strengths, gaps or deficiencies that may impede their professional development and advancement with a view to enhance the curriculum's efficacy in fostering leadership development and career advancement.

Developing military leadership is an important investment to make for the future of the army because it builds trust in relationships and units, prepares leaders for future uncertainties, and is critical to readiness and the army's success (Army Leadership, 2020).

Preliminary observations and literature suggest that while the JLSOC is ambitious in its scope, there may be critical gaps in its design, delivery, and alignment with the real-world operational demands of the NA. Concerns raised by scholars such as Ogbaji and Jeremiah (2022) and Ogunleye (2020) point to issues such as inadequate practical components, misalignment of content with field realities, and insufficient focus on contemporary military challenges like asymmetric warfare, counterinsurgency, and peacekeeping operations. Furthermore, despite ongoing curriculum updates, the performance of junior officers has reportedly continued to fall short of expectations, suggesting a potential disconnect between training objectives and leadership outcomes. This concern is echoed by Ogbaji and Jeremiah (2022), who observed that junior officers often lack the practical competencies needed for field effectiveness, despite undergoing structured training programmes. They attributed these shortcomings to inadequate practical exposure, misalignment between curriculum content and real-world demands, and an increasing gap between instructor capacity and trainee population.

Meanwhile, Yusuf (1997) conducted a foundational study on the integration of training programmes across segments of the Armed Forces of Nigeria. His findings highlighted how fragmented and overlapping training strategies led to inefficiencies, including duplication of efforts, bureaucratic delays, low morale due to unaccredited courses, and a lack of recognition by civilian institutions. These structural problems suggest the necessity of harmonised, targeted training curricula such as the JLSOC to ensure that officers receive relevant, streamlined, and career-enabling instruction.

Based on available literature, it is glaring that none of the previous researchers had attempted to evaluate the JLSO curriculum most probably it was introduced in 2022. Hence, no known research has assessed whether the curriculum addresses the unique needs of DRC officers, many of whom lack foundational military leadership exposure provided to their Regular Combatant counterparts. Nor has there been a comparative analysis of how learners and instructors perceive the curriculum's effectiveness across divisions, gender, ranks, or years of service. Thus, this has created a research gap within the existing doctrinal or military training curricula which this study seeks to fill. Guided by the Transformational Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) and Constructive Alignment Theory (Biggs, 1996), this study sought to evaluate whether the JLSO curriculum inspires the kind of leadership development necessary for strategic effectiveness, and whether its content, teaching methods, and assessments are coherently aligned with the learning needs and career advancement expectations of NA DRC officers. Therefore, this study evaluated the efficacy of the JLSO curriculum in facilitating the professional development and upward mobility of DRC officers within the NA, identify gaps or areas for improvement, and offer evidence-based recommendations for curriculum enhancement in line with modern military leadership development practices.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the effectiveness of the JLSO curriculum being run in the Nigerian Army College of Logistics and Management (NACOLM) and its role in the career progression and advancement opportunities for DRC officers. By addressing the key curriculum questions of who, why, what, when, where, and how (Lawal, 2024), the study sought to investigate:

- the extent to which the JLSO curriculum has identified the key characteristics of the JLSOC participants;
- the extent to which the JLSO curriculum has identified the problems/gaps in the NA training doctrine;
- the appropriateness of the goals in the JLSO curriculum content;
- the appropriateness of the objectives of the JLSO curriculum;
- the appropriateness of the intended learning outcomes in the JLSO curriculum;
- the appropriateness of the content of the JLSO curriculum;
- the appropriateness of the learning experiences in the JLSO curriculum;
- the appropriateness of the sequence of the topics in JLSO curriculum;
- the appropriateness of the learning experiences within NACOLM;
- the appropriateness of the learning experiences outside NACOLM;
- the appropriateness of the teaching methods (including techniques and resources);

- the appropriateness of learning strategies (e.g self-study, group discussion, library use, google search, social media networking, etc);
- the appropriateness of assessment procedures;
- the regularity of feedback measures;
- the appropriateness of feedback measures;
- the general level of achievement amongst the participants;

Methodology

This is a descriptive, mixed-method which evaluated the effectiveness of the JLSO curriculum in equipping NA DRC officers with essential leadership and staff competencies. The evaluation was anchored on Lawals' (2024) key curriculum development questions of WHO, WHY WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and HOW to learn, as well as Biggs' (2003) theory of Constructive alignment. It thus focuses on multiple dimensions, including the appropriateness of curriculum content, alignment with career progression goals, effectiveness of instructional methods, adequacy of assessment strategies and the overall impact on leadership development (Biggs & Tang, 2011; Glatthorn, Boschee, & Whitehead, 2020). In essence, this study examined curriculum objectives, learning outcomes, instructional strategies, assessment procedures and stakeholder perceptions – specifically those of learners and instructors (Reeves, 2021; Abbas & Balogun, 2021).

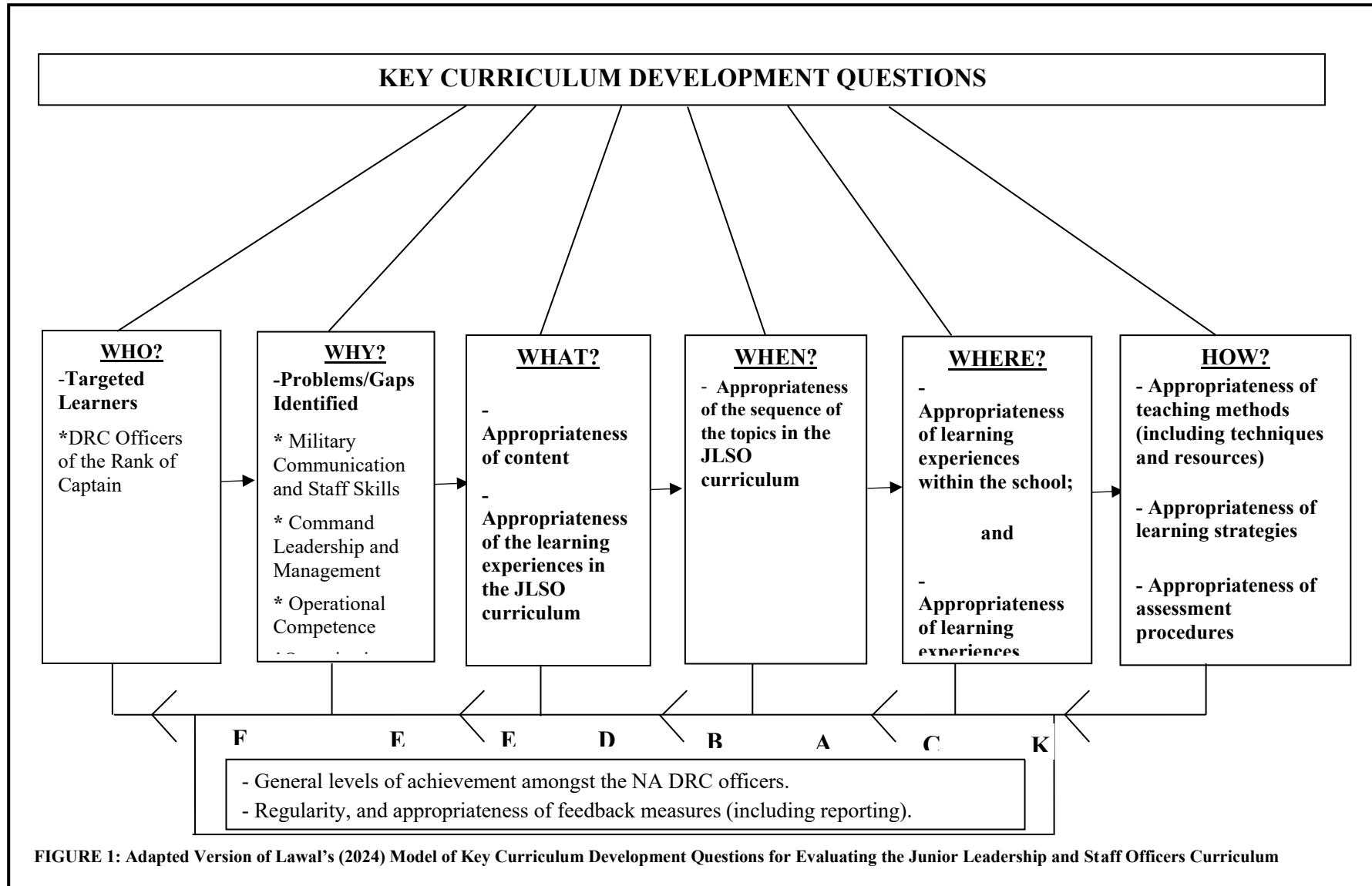
The population of the study were participants drawn from key cohorts and relevant stakeholders, including participants nominated from different NA Divisions who were members of JLSOC 1/2022, JLSOC 2/2023 and JLSOC 3/2024, Directing Staff and/or Instructors, past and present leadership at the NACOLM. This population provided a rich dataset, incorporating feedback from officers stationed across different NA Divisions. It is important to state that the inclusion of different NA Divisions in the sampling process enabled an examination of whether external factors, such as location-specific challenges, affect curriculum perceptions. The population were stratified based on the eight (8) NA Divisions that nominated the officers for the JLSOC. From each Division, 50 participants were randomly selected, ensuring proportional representation. Additionally, a sample of 150 instructors and key relevant stakeholders were included, out of which a purposive sample of 50 was selected based on their involvement in the JLSO curriculum implementation and evaluation. Therefore, making the total sample size of 400 participants.

Data collection was conducted using a researcher-designed questionnaire titled "Questionnaire on the Evaluation of Junior Leadership and Staff Officers Curriculum" (QUEJULESTOC), alongside structured interviews. The questionnaire featured a combination of closed-ended and Likert-scale questions to capture quantitative data while structured interviews allowed for qualitative insights into curriculum effectiveness,

instructional challenges and potential areas for improvement. Structured interviews further enriched the dataset, providing in-depth insights into the curriculum's impact and relevance. The descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation and percentage) and thematic analysis were used to address research questions 1 – 16.

Conceptual Framework

Figure 1, an adapted version of Lawal's Model of Key Curriculum Development Questions (2024), is both a curriculum development and evaluation model. The six questions it examines are: WHO, WHY, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE and HOW to learn as anchored on Biggs's (1966; 2003) Constructive Alignment Theory. The WHO profiles and analyses the target audience who are DRC officers of the rank of Captain, while the WHY queries the reason which centres around career progression. It also questions the WHAT which relates to the relevance, effectiveness and alignment of the curriculum content and learning experiences with the career progression needs of NA DRC officers, while the WHEN is targeted at content sequencing. On the question WHERE, it queries the location where instruction takes place within or outside the school or both, while HOW centres around assessing the existing curriculum's content, teaching methodologies, learning styles, learning outcomes and feedback from the officers that have gone through the programme. This would also consider best practices from comparable military institutions globally and seek input from stakeholders within the NA. Therefore, in this study, Lawal's (2024) Model of Key Curriculum Development Questions would be adapted.



Chapter Three

Research Methodology

This chapter provides information on the procedure that would be followed in carrying out this study under the following sub-headings:

- a. Research Type
- b. Population Sample and Sampling Techniques
- c. Instrumentation
- d. Procedure for Data Collection
- e. Data Analysis Techniques

Research Type

This study will adopt a descriptive cross-sectional survey research approach. This involves snapshot in time, descriptive analysis and survey method. This approach to research is chosen because it allows for the collection of data from a specific population.

The adapted model for this study, at Figure 1, retained the 7 components of Lawal's (2024) model, comprising six questions and feedback which loops back to the six questions for either progression, correction or remediation (Lawal, 2024). The first is the WHO which profiles and analyses the targeted audience who are DRC officers of the rank of Captain while the WHY queries the problems and gaps identified. In this case, it centres around enhancing military communication and staff skills, command leadership and management, operational competence and organisational skills of the participants. It also questions the WHAT which relates to the adequacy and appropriateness of content, as well as the adequacy and appropriateness of the learning experiences, while the WHEN is targeted at the appropriateness of the sequence of the topics in the JLSO curriculum. On the question WHERE, it queries the adequacy and appropriateness of learning within and outside the school within the JLSO curriculum while the HOW centres around assessing the appropriateness of teaching methods (including techniques and resources), appropriate of learning styles and strategies, as well as the adequacy and appropriateness of assessment procedures. Overall, the FEEDBACK assesses the general levels of achievement amongst the NA DRC officers that have gone through the programme, as well as the regularity, adequacy and appropriateness of feedback measures, including reporting.

Results

Table 1: Assessments of Dimensions/Components of the JLOS Curriculum

Identification of Characteristics	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Inference on a Scale of 1 – 4
The core characteristics of targeted learners?	432	3.1597	0.73364	Large Extent
The problems/gaps in the NA training doctrine?	432	2.8889	0.83523	Moderately Large Extent
The goals of the JLSO curriculum content in terms of quality?	432	3.2847	0.66392	Appropriate
The goals of the JLSO curriculum content in terms of quantity?	432	3.2222	0.73157	Appropriate
The objectives of the JLSO curriculum in terms of quality?	432	3.2708	0.68003	Appropriate
The objectives of the JLSO curriculum in terms of quantity?	432	3.1944	0.72038	Appropriate
The intended learning outcomes in the JLSO curriculum in terms of quality?	432	3.3194	0.67421	Appropriate

The intended learning outcomes in the JLSO curriculum in terms of quantity?	432	3.2639	0.67765	Appropriate
The content of the JLSO curriculum in terms of quality?	432	3.2778	0.72199	Appropriate
The content of the JLSO curriculum in terms of quantity?	432	3.1667	0.71769	Appropriate
The learning experiences in the JLSO curriculum in relation to the target learners?	432	3.3056	0.68063	Appropriate
The sequence of the topics in the JLSO curriculum in relation to the content?	432	3.2153	0.71927	Appropriate
Learning experiences within NACOLM in terms of quality in relation to the learners?	432	3.2014	0.68372	Appropriate
Learning experiences within NACOLM in terms of quantity in relation to the learners?	432	3.1597	0.70461	Appropriate
Learning experiences outside NACOLM in terms of quality in relation to the learners?	432	3.1528	0.68106	Appropriate
Learning experiences outside NACOLM in terms of quantity in relation to the learners?	432	3.0833	0.66220	Appropriate
The teaching techniques in terms of their quality within NACOLM in relation to the learners' experiences?	432	3.1944	0.73945	Appropriate
The teaching techniques in terms of their quantity within NACOLM in relation to the learners' experiences?	432	3.1875	0.69771	Appropriate
The teaching resources in terms of their quality within NACOLM in relation to the learners' experiences?	432	3.2222	0.72199	Appropriate

The teaching resources in terms of their quantity within NACOLM in relation to the learners' experiences?	432	3.1250	0.73565	Appropriate
The learning strategies (e.g self-study, group discussion, library use, google search, social media networking etc) in terms of quality?	432	3.1389	0.77918	Appropriate
The learning strategies (e.g self-study, group discussion, library use, google search, social media networking etc) in terms of quantity?	432	3.0903	0.76386	Appropriate
The assessment procedures in terms of quality?	432	2.9653	.85420	Appropriate
The assessment procedures in terms of quantity?	432	3.0139	.80876	Appropriate
The feedback measures in terms of quality?	432	2.9375	0.88466	Moderately Appropriate
The feedback measures in terms of quantity?	432	2.8681	0.87698	Fairly Appropriate
The feedback measures in terms of regularity?	432	2.9653	0.77741	Moderately Appropriate
The regularity of feedback measures in terms of quality?	432	2.9653	0.75006	Moderately Appropriate
The regularity of feedback measures in terms of quantity?	432	2.9097	0.76386	Moderately Appropriate
General level of achievement amongst the participants?	432	3.1458	0.63504	Appropriate
Achievement in the theoretical aspect of the training?	432	3.1875	0.62398	Appropriate
Achievement in the practical aspect of the training?	432	3.0694	0.68446	Appropriate

In addition to the quantitative data, this study equally employed the qualitative approach through open-ended questions in the instrument used for collection of data.

Additionally, structured interviews were conducted with some selected respondents. These research methods were used with a view to having an in-depth understanding from the respondents' perceptions. Through this, inferences were made for discussions and conclusions

Findings obtained from both the quantitative and thematic analyses are summarised as follows:

1. Majority of the respondents affirmed that the JLSO curriculum had to a large extent appropriately and effectively identified the core characteristics of the targeted learners, who are specifically DRC officers.
2. Many respondents affirmed that the JLSO curriculum had, to a moderately large extent, identified the problems/gaps in the NA training doctrine, but not completely especially in the aspect of limited integration of joint, inter-agency cooperations, doctrine harmonisation and modern warfare concepts.
3. Participants affirmed that the content of the curriculum was clearly articulated and appropriate, in terms of both quality and quantity, to the professional development of DRC officers.
4. Respondents confirmed that the goals and objectives of the JLSO curriculum were well-defined, aligned with training expectations and thus quite appropriate, in terms of quality and quantity.
5. Respondents agreed that the intended learning outcomes of the JLSO curriculum are largely appropriate; they were clear, well-defined and relevant to the anticipated roles of DRC officers, both in quality and quantity.
6. Respondents largely considered the content of the JLSO curriculum to be appropriate as it addressed key areas of leadership, management, analytical skills and military operations, fitting in both quality and quantity. However, the comparatively lower rating for content quantity, despite its quality, signified that the JLSO curriculum might not be sufficiently comprehensive to address current and emerging operational demands, particularly in areas such as counter-insurgency, intelligence-driven missions, and joint-service operations.
7. Respondents confirmed that the learning experiences in the JLSO curriculum were, to a large extent, quite appropriate and relevant to the target learners, as they matched the learners' needs via a balanced mix of theory and practical activities such as simulation,

discussion] and other related exercises. However, it was noted that introduction of more personalised and adaptive learning approaches could enhance the learners' engagement with different academic and professional backgrounds.

8. Respondents affirmed that the sequence of topics in the JLSO curriculum, in relation to the content, were appropriate as they progressed from basic concepts into more technical areas. However, there was the need for a stronger integration of theoretical modules and practical application in field and operational exercises.

9. Respondents affirmed that the quality of learning experiences within NACOLM in relation to the learners' learning experiences as well as in terms of quantity were appropriate, as it provided excellent opportunities for critical thinking and leadership development. However, the lower rating for quantity suggested that there was a need for more diverse and frequent experiential learning opportunities such as simulations and fieldwork to further enrich the educational experience.

10. Respondents suggested that the learning experiences outside NACOLM were appropriate, both in terms of quality and quantity, as they significantly enhance classroom instruction. However, the lower quantity score indicates that these external opportunities might not be as extensive or frequent as required to fully maximise applied learning.

11. Respondents affirmed that the teaching techniques and resources employed in NACOLM were appropriate in terms of both quality and quantity, via diverse array of effective teaching methods such as lectures, simulations, discussions, case studies etc. However, while the teaching resources were deemed sufficient, its rating was slightly lower than techniques, thereby suggesting a need for more updated and modern instructional materials such as e-learning platforms, digital tools and advanced simulation technologies to facilitate teaching delivery.

12. Respondents also affirmed that the learning strategies were appropriate, in both quality and quantity, as NACOLM employed self-study, group discussions and online research to enhance teaching. However, the lower quantity score signifies the need for a more structured opportunities such as research projects and digital collaboration exercises with a view to improve effectiveness.

13. Respondents submitted that the JLSO curriculum provided a range of assessment procedures such as tests, home assignments, group work and field assessment. However, the lower quality rating implies some shortcomings which may include lack of prompt

feedback, inadequate practical evaluations and overemphasis on traditional written examinations instead of performance-based assessments.

14. The respondents agreed that while the feedback measures were available, its application was quite inconsistent, as it often lacked regularity, structure and the needed details to foster ongoing improvement of the learners. The lower quantity points to a clear need for more frequent and thorough formative feedback opportunities.

15. Respondents confirmed that feedback in the JLSOC was regular, typically after assessments and exercises. However, the consistency of the feedback tended to differ from one module or instructor to another; some students received prompt and detailed responses while others experienced delay or limited feedback. However, the similar ratings for both quality and quantity suggested a generally steady feedback culture, though modest, that could benefit from a stronger institutional framework and oversight.

16. Respondents submitted that the general level of achievement amongst participants was high, in terms of both theoretical and practical aspects of the JLSO curriculum. While the higher scores in theoretical understanding reflected a solid grasp of leadership, management and staff roles, the lower practical scores suggested that respondents feel there is room for improvement in hands-on activities.

Discussion of Finding and Concluding Remarks

Based on the foregoing discussions on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the JLSO curriculum is quite effective and appropriate for its main goal: preparing DRC officers for junior leadership and staff roles within the NA. This is a noteworthy achievement for an institution like the NA, especially considering the ongoing security challenges Nigeria has faced for over a decade. The curriculum demonstrates a strong alignment with the needs of the learners, focusing on their characteristics, doctrinal alignment, curriculum design, instructional methods, assessment practices, feedback mechanisms and learning outcomes. Essentially, it identifies the key traits of its target learners, reflecting a clear grasp of their educational backgrounds, professional needs and the leadership roles they are expected to take on. This alignment boosts the relevance and practical value of the training programme. Thus, it can be concluded that the goals, objectives and intended learning outcomes of the curriculum were coherent, clearly articulated and appropriate in both quality and quantity.

These components provide a strong groundwork for structured learning and professional development. The curriculum content was also adjudged as appropriate and relevant, especially in leadership, management, analytical skills and military operations,

indicating that the curriculum effectively addresses the essential competencies required of junior officers. Moreover, the learning experiences provided, both within and outside NACOLM, as well as the sequencing of course topics, were equally perceived as appropriate for facilitating progressive learning and skill development. The field trips, syndicate discussions, simulations and field exercises etc., were appropriate and considered to have enhanced the competences of the participants. Similarly, the course content were systematically structured from simple to more complex topics with the intent to help the target audience develop an in-depth understanding and appreciation of the course content. The teaching techniques, instructional materials, and learning strategies were also generally considered as adequate to support effective teaching and learner engagement.

However, the study also concludes that the curriculum has not fully addressed some key contemporary operational demands, particularly when it comes to joint and inter-agency collaboration, aligning doctrines and modern warfare concepts like counter-insurgency, intelligence-led operations, cyber security and asymmetric threats. These shortcomings suggest the importance of periodic curriculum review to ensure its continued relevance in Nigeria's evolving security landscape. This supports the position of Aminuddin et al. (2025) which emphasises that military curricula must continue to evolve in response to technological advancement, asymmetric threats as well as joint operational realities.

Additionally, while the assessment procedures were deemed appropriate, the feedback mechanisms, both in terms of quality and regularity, were only moderately satisfactory. This indicates a gap in the instructional support system, which could hinder learners' opportunities for reflective learning and continuous improvement. Despite these limitations, participants rated their overall achievement in both theoretical and practical aspects of the course as high, demonstrating that the curriculum positively influences learning outcomes and professional competences. This indicates that while the JLSO curriculum demonstrates strong foundational structure, there is need for further pedagogical innovation to fully prepare officers for emerging operational demands.

As contributions to knowledge, the finding of the study has indicated that the JLSO curriculum at NACOLM is largely effective, relevant and well-structured to meet its core goals of developing junior leaders and staff officers for the NA. However, enhancing doctrinal integration, broadening the curriculum content to address emerging security challenges, and improving feedback practices would further enhance its effectiveness, sustainability and contribution to military professionalism in addressing contemporary security challenges. In addition, and more importantly, the adapted model for this study, Figure 1, is largely validated by the findings and conclusions of this study, since it covered the Lawal's (2024) Model of Key Curriculum Development Questions as well as insights

from Transformational Leadership Theory from Burns (1978) and Constructive Alignment Theory from Biggs (1996). The findings thus suggest a strong alignment among the seven major components of the key curriculum development questions as propounded by Lawal (2024), and therefore lend credence to the proposed model in Figure 1.

Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions from this study, the following recommendations are advanced for the JLSOC to support the effective career progression of DRC officers;

Nigerian Army should institutionalise periodic review framework for the JLSO curriculum to ensure its continuous alignment with the ever-evolving operational realities, such as counter-insurgency engagements, cyber threats, intelligence-driven missions and joint-service operations. It should also ensure stronger focus on integration of joint, inter-agency and multinational operational doctrines into the training of DRC junior officer to enhance their ability to work together and improve mission effectiveness. It should strengthen cooperation between operational units and training institutions to ensure that updates to the curriculum reflect real-world experiences and emerging security challenges. Equally, sufficient funding should be provided to support enhancement in the curriculum, training for instructors, acquisition of modern instructional technologies and the expansion of practical/hand-on training facilities.

Future Researchers should consider conducting empirical studies on the effectiveness of the JLSO curriculum in developing the leadership, operational and staff competencies of NA DRC officers. Such studies may examine the extent to which the course objectives align with the teaching methods, content as well as assessment procedures, using modern curriculum evaluation models such as Lawal (2024) key curriculum development questions model. It would also be interesting to explore how the course impacts officers' performance in real-world situations like counterinsurgency operations, peacekeeping missions and joint inter-agency efforts. Additionally, researchers may consider exploring the possibility of incorporating emerging security challenges like cyber warfare, artificial intelligence and hybrid warfare into the JLSO curriculum with the intent of ensuring its continued relevance in today's fast-changing security landscape. Attention should equally be given to challenges affecting the implementation of the curriculum, including training facilities, instructional resources, funding and evaluation procedures, with a view to improving the overall effectiveness of the course. Significantly, comparative studies between DRC officers and Regular Combatant officers who undergo similar course may also provide valuable perspectives on professional military education and leadership development in the NA.

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